

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357187012>

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Albanian apparel manufacturing industry

Conference Paper · November 2021

CITATIONS

0

READS

6

3 authors:



Ilda Kazani

Polytechnic University of Tirana, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Albania

39 PUBLICATIONS 456 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE



Elena Tomovska

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

11 PUBLICATIONS 49 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE



Sonja Jordeva

Goce Delcev University of Štip

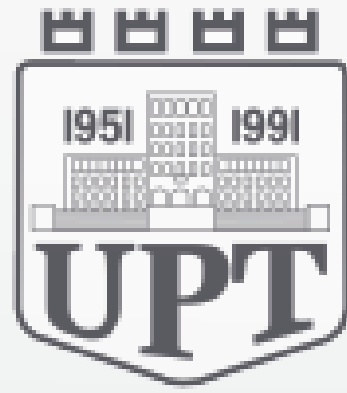
40 PUBLICATIONS 79 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:

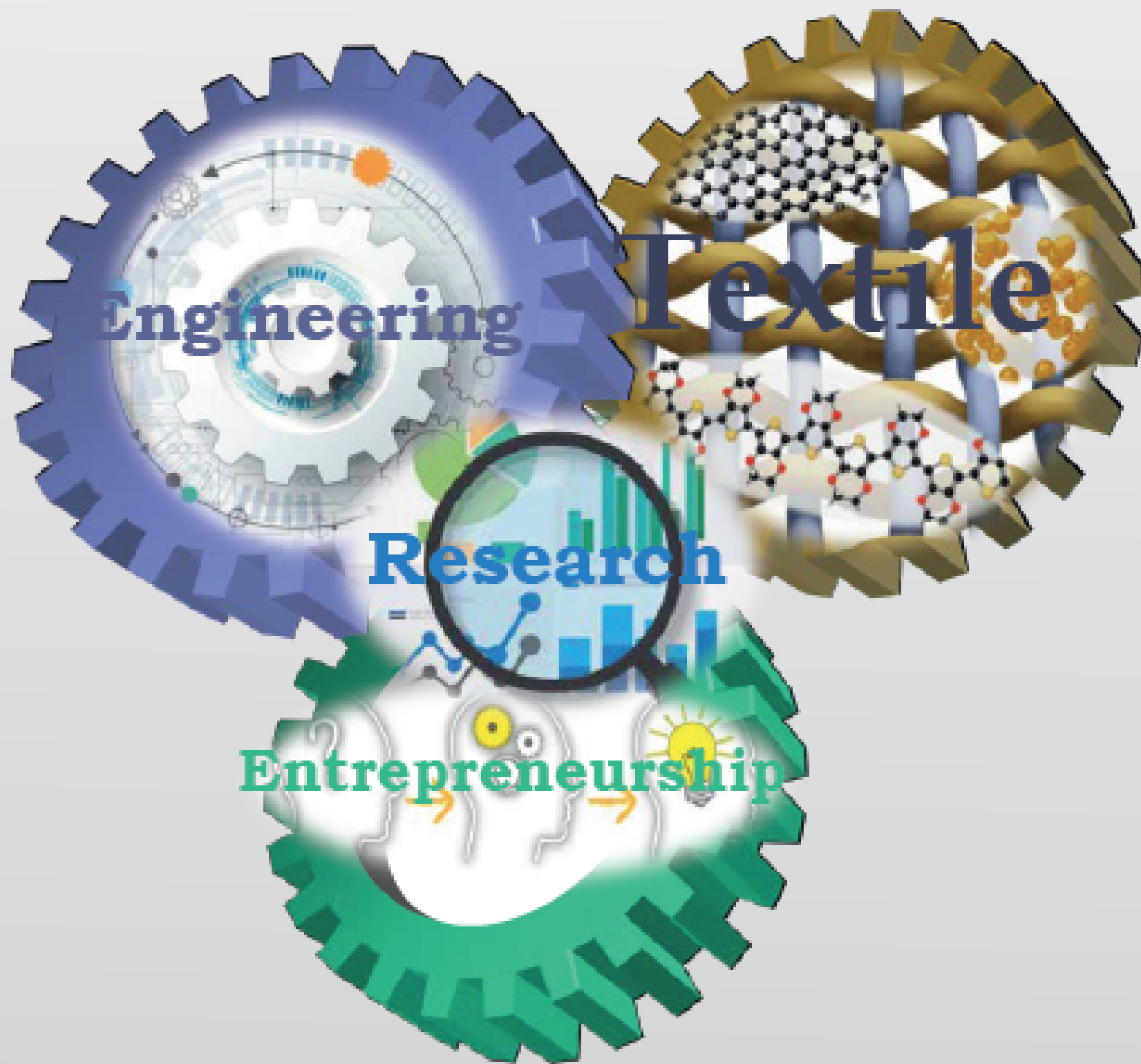


ERASMUS+ ICM KA1, GR-ALB: Mobility actions towards joint research in textile and wearable electronic components and circuits [View project](#)



**9th INTERNATIONAL TEXTILE CONFERENCE &
3rd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE on
ENGINEERING and ENTREPRENEURSHIP 2021**

Proceedings of 9th ITC & 3rd ICEE 2021



18-19 November 2021, Tirana, Albania





**9th International Textile Conference & 3rd
International Conference on Engineering and
Entrepreneurship 2021**

November 18-19, 2021, Tirana, ALBANIA

BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS

Organized by
Polytechnic University of Tirana
Mechanical Engineering Faculty

Topics of the conference:

- **Energetics**
- **Constructions & Transport**
- **Materials**
- **Production and Management**
- **Textiles (clothes, footwear and leather)**

Edited by:

PROF. DR. GENTI GUXHO

DR. TATJANA SPAHIU

DR. ARDIT GJETA

DR. VALMA PRIFTI

DR. ANIS SULEJMANI

ISBN: 978-9928-309-31-0

Conference Committees:

Organising Committee

Prof. Dr. Genti Guxho (Chairman)	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof.Asoc. Odhisea Koça	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof.Asoc. Altin Dorri	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Dr. Ermira Shehi	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof.Asoc. Majlinda Alcani	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof.Asoc. Koço Bode	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Dr. Ilo Bodi	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania

Scientific Committee

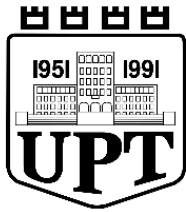
Prof. Ada Trauman	Institute of Engineering and Circular Economy, Estonia
Prof. Adnan Mazari	Technical University of Liberec, Czech Republic
Prof. Agus Pramono	University of Sultan AgengTirtayasa, Indonesia
Prof. Ahmet BEYÇIOĞLU	Adana Science and Technology University, Turkey
Prof. Akli Fundo	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Alemayehu Gebremedhin	Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Prof. Alfirano	University of Sultan AgengTirtayasa, Indonesia
Prof. Altin Dorri	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Amine Hadj Taieb	Superior Institute of Arts and Design, Sfax, Tunisia
Prof. Andonaq Londo Lamani	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Andrea Ehrmann	Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences, Germany
Prof. Andrea Maliqari	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Andrej Demsar	University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
Prof. Antonio Jimeno- Morenilla	University of Alicante, Spain
Prof. Artan Sinoimeri	Université de Haute-Alsace, France
Prof. Arzu Marmarali	Ege University, Turkey
Prof. Bedii Ozdemir	Technical University of Istanbul, Turkey
Prof. Bier Thomas	University of Mining and Technology , TUF, Germany
Prof. Blerina Kolgjini	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Carlos Roncero- Clemente	University of Extremadura, Badajoz, Spain

Prof. Chertenko Liliya Pavlivna	Kyiv National University of Technologies & Design, Ukraine
Prof. Dervish Elezi	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Elena Tomovska	University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius"- Skopje, North Macedonia
Prof. Elfrida Shehu	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Erald Piperi	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Eralda Xhafka	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Ermira Shehi	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Genti Guxho	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Georgios Priniotakis	University of West Attica, Greece
Prof. Guido Valerio	Sorbonne University, France
Prof. Henrique Almeida	Polytechnic Institute of Leiria (IPL), Portugal
Prof. Ilda Kazani	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. İlker KALKAN	Kırıkkale University, Turkey
Prof. Ilo Bodi	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Isak Karabegovic	Academy of Sciences and Arts Bosnia and Herzegovina
Prof. Jonida Teta	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Kiril Lisichkov	Univ. Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje, North Macedonia
Prof. Kirstin Hoffmann	University of Applied Sciences Zwickau, Germany
Prof. Klodian Dhoska	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Leonard Çomeni	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Lubomir Dimitrov	Technical University of Sofia-Bulgaria
Prof. Luigi M. Galantucci	Politecnico di Bari, Italy
Prof. Majlinda Alcani	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Miranda Kullolli	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Mirela Blaga	'Gheorghe Asachi' Technical University of Iasi, Romania
Prof. Muhammet Uzun	Marmara University, Turkey
Prof. Omar Cherkaoui	École Supérieure des Industries du Textile et de l'Habillement (ESITH), Marocco
Prof. Oscar Quevedo-Teruel	KTH Royal Institute of Technology Stockholm, Sweden
Prof. Özgür CEYLAN	Eskisehir Technical University, Turkey
Prof. Panagiotis Kyratsis	University of Western Macedonia -Greece
Prof. Petrit Zorba	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Recep Eren	Bursa Uludag University, Turkey
Prof. Reza Moezzi	Technical University of Liberec, Czech Republic
Prof. Riad Ramadani	University of Prishtina, Kosova

Prof. Saeed AHMED	TU Kaiserslautern, Germany
Prof. Sarghie Bogdan	"Gheorghe Asachi" Technical University of Iasi, Rumania
Prof. Savvas Vasiliadis	University of West Attica, Greece
Prof. Snežana UROŠEVIĆ	University of Belgrade, Serbia
Prof. Spiro Drushku	University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Stelios Mitilineos	University of West Attica (UNIWA), Greece
Prof. Suna ÇETIN	Cukurova University, Turkey
Prof. Shpresa Caslli	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Vincent Nierstrasz	University of Borås, Sweden
Prof. Vladimir Kasemi	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Prof. Vu Trieu Minh	Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia
Prof. Xhevat Berisha	University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina", Kosova
Prof. Zlatina Kazlacheva	Trakia University of Stara Zagora, Bulgaria

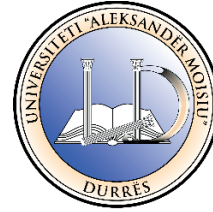
Scientific Secretariat:

Dr. Tatjana SPAHIU	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Dr. Valma PRIFTI	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Dr. Ardit GJETA	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Dr. Anis SULEJMANI	Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania



UNIVERSITY OF
WEST ATTICA
ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΔΥΤΙΚΗΣ ΑΤΤΙΚΗΣ

University of Ljubljana



CONTENTS

SECTION I:	1
<i>Textile (Cloth, Footwear and Leather)</i>	1
Textile Sample Dematerialization Using Case-Based Reasoning	2
In situ synthesis of ZnO nanoparticles on cotton with plant waste extracts	9
Effect of added hydrogen peroxide on textiles during household washing	11
Flame Resistance of Hand-Made Carpets from Wool.....	16
Analytical methods used in the restoration of some elements of Albanian folk costumes	17
A Textile RFID Meander Antenna for Military Applications.....	27
Solar Energy Harvesting with Photovoltaic Textiles.....	28
Simulation of mechanical behaviour of woven fabrics at the scale of yarns under multi-loading	35
SECTION II:	45
<i>Textile (Cloth, Footwear and Leather)</i>	45
Implementation and future trend of industry 4.0 Development in production processes of textile and clothing industry	46
Industry 4.0 emerging technologies for sustainable footwear manufacturing.....	54
Comparing and analysing contact and non-contact methods of anthropometric data collecting.....	60
Design and production of footwear using CAD/CAM systems.....	61
Modern Shoe Last Design and Challenges Encountered	66
Computational based product design: a 2D-pattern related case study.....	73
SECTION III	79
<i>Production & Management</i>	79
The past, present and opportunities of cultivation and processing silk in Albania	80
Albanian’s Fish Skin, Sustainability and circular economy	87
Analysis of Productivity Level in Garment Industry through a Case Study	93
<i>Influence of fabric characteristics and sewing specifications to the seam performance</i>	98
Fabric Wastage in cutting section, some factors that affect it.....	105
Sustainability Practices of Fashion Brands: The Case of Mavi.....	109
SECTION IV	113
<i>Production & Management</i>	113
Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Albanian apparel manufacturing industry	114
The need of marketing philosophy transformation for SMEs in Albania, impacted by Covid-19	121

Euro Depreciation and Minimum Wage Increase cross implication in Albanian Garment Industry	129
Realization of a Successful Project in E-Commerce and E-Business. Case Study: KLER Enterprise.....	133
Statistical Process Control & Control Cards	134
Attitudes towards Wearing Facemasks as a Fashion Accessory	139
SECTION V	145
<i>Materials, Transport & Construction</i>	145
Rolling Machine Design Planning to Improve Mechanical Properties of Strapping-band Steel and Low Carbon Steel type SHP 440.....	146
Alarm System for Earthquake Monitoring in Civil Constructions.....	154
Non-Destructive Testing of the concrete used in damaged buildings during the earthquake 2019 in Durres and Tirana.....	155
Cost and Time Benefits of Using Shotcrete to Strengthen the Masonry Building Damaged by 2019 Earthquakes	160
Performance evaluation of recycling concrete	166
Evaluation of granulometry, stability and flow of asphalt recipes.....	167
SECTION VI	175
<i>Energetics</i>	175
Wind Power Potential in NW part of Albania.	176
Climate Change Impact on Building Energy Demand.....	185
Natural Gas as an Alternative Energy Source for Space Heating Energy Supply in the City of Korça	191
Development of wood pellet processing industry and economic analysis compared with other fuels. A case study in Korca	199
Metallic constructions versus extreme wind event view in the climate context of Albania ...	207
Optimization of a reversible pump-turbine, for integration into a Pumped storage system.	216
SECTION VII	223
<i>Materials, Transport & Construction</i>	223
The landfilling of municipal solid waste (MSW) in Albania and proper selection of a regional landfill site	224
Maintenance, Inspection and Optimal Operation of Small Hydropower Plants. Case Study: Peshk HPP, Krastë	231
On the Explosive Area Instrumentation and its Application to a Wastewater Treatment Plant.....	238
Wall thickness and pressure head losses for the submarine lines	246
Assessment of tourism climate index of Dumre plateau and application of GIS technology in data processing.....	254
SECTION VIII	260
<i>Materials, Transport & Construction</i>	260

Software Analysis Comparison for the Behavior of an Aerospace Servocommand in Proportional Control Logic	261
Modeling and Simulation of High Precision Pneumatic Stepper Motors.....	262
Finding optimal transmission rate of the kinematic chain using genetic algorithm coded in Mathcad.....	263
Scanning, 3D GD&T Inspection for automotive plastic elements.....	264
Acoustic emission to evaluate the velocity of wave propagation in steel bars.....	270
Monitoring of acid mine drainage with multispectral data	277
On the statistical quality control tools for engineering processes	285
SECTION IX.....	292
Materials, Transport & Construction.....	292
Decarbonization of Transport to Zero Emissions Options and challenges	293
The correlation of car window films and reduction of global pollution	300
Study of Stability and Comfort of Railway Vehicles. Part I: Analysis.	307
Study of Stability and Comfort of Railway Vehicles. Part II: Results.....	315
Controlling on-street parking demand using Sensitivity analysis: Case Study, Tirana City	323
Impact of technical control on road safety and environmental pollution.....	331
SECTION X.....	338
Energetics	338
Analysis of a Stand-alone Photovoltaic-Thermal System Regarding to Energy and Temperature Profile of the Panel.....	339
Photovoltaic Potential in SW part of Albania.....	346
Exploiting of dams' surfaces in Albania for the installation of photovoltaic plants and their problems	355
Energy and Economic Estimation for a Residential Photovoltaic System equipped with Monocrystalline Modules under the North-Eastern Climate Conditions of Albania.....	363
Energy Efficiency in Fruit Storage Facility.....	372
Complementary study of renewable energy sources for the southern part of Albania.....	379
Life Cycle Cost of Electrical Energy Produced by Photovoltaics in Western Part of Albania	385
Optimal Inclination Angle of a Solar Collector to Assure Maximum Solar Energy for City of Korea	391
ZEiNANOF – From the plastic bottle to flexible nonwoven membranes	397



**Proceedings of
9th ITC & 3rd ICEE 2021**



Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Albanian apparel manufacturing industry

Ilda KAZANI^{1,2}, Elena TOMOVSKA³, Sonja JORDEVA⁴

¹ Albanian Young Academy, Academy of Sciences, Albania

² Textile & Fashion Department, Mechanical Engineering Faculty, Polytechnic University of Tirana

³ Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius"- Skopje, North Macedonia

⁴ Faculty of Technology, University "Goce Delcev"- Stip, North Macedonia

ikazani@fim.edu.al, e.tomovska@tmf.ukim.edu.mk, sonja.jordeva@ugd.edu.mk

Abstract

The apparel and leather manufacturing industry remains one of the main sectors of the Albanian economy. The last three decades, this industry is known as the "Façon" industry. Now this sector is trying to be oriented towards FPP (Full Production Package). The worldwide situation created by the COVID-19 crisis, as in every sector, has had a substantial impact on the progress of the apparel sector in Albania. As a result of this situation, during 2020, exports in Albania, the apparel and leather industry, have declined, as in other sectors of the economy. Despite this, regarding the INSTAT, the apparel and leather manufacturing industry remains the first for exports to Albania.

This study aims to address the important issues on how this global pandemic situation has directly influenced the Albanian apparel manufacturing industry, where companies were interviewed.

The companies in Albania, as over the world, were faced with an unexpected situation of the apparel manufacturing industry in international markets, followed by new and alternative solutions they had to figure out and/or adapt, by changing dynamics and expectations for the future.

Keywords: Albanian apparel manufacturing industry, COVID-19, global pandemic, "Façon" industry, apparel industry

1. Introduction

The apparel and leather manufacturing industry in Albania covers the main exports, where 65% of the companies are in the apparel sector and 35% of companies are in the leather sector (1). Moreover the apparel manufacturing industry is one of the important sectors for the Albanian economy, especially in terms of employment. This was due to the advantages of trade with Albania, which has cheap labor; geographical proximity to European markets; many years of experience with the most famous European firms; flexibility in the case of large and small orders; skilled labor; short deliveries on time to EU countries; relatively low transport costs in Europe; excellent foreign language skills; government support policies dedicated to this sector.

The last three decades, this industry is known as the "Façon" industry. During this period,

Albanian apparel manufacturing industry initially operated with neighboring countries, Italy and Greece, to carry out one or several work processes, and by gaining the experience created over the years and investment in technology, apparel industry has expanded the map of cooperating countries, has increased the volume of contracts and, already, it is oriented towards FPP (Full Production Package) production (2).

Besides, the ownership structure of companies in the manufacturing, apparel sector is 79.5% Albanian, 16.5% co-owned and 3.5% foreign (2).

Nowadays, the apparel manufacturing industry in Albania operates with three types of companies, the one that produce and export all of their product (77%), the second that partially produce and export the product (18%) and those that produce for the domestic market (5%) (2).

According to INSTAT, apparel manufacturing industry is one of the main export oriented industries of the country, where the export in 2020 was: Italy (66%), Germany (13%), Greece (9%), France (3%), Romania (3%), Bulgaria (2%), other countries (3%) (3).

The industry as such is a part of the global supply chain of textiles and is highly dependent on the free flow of goods. By the end of March 2020 the novel virus COVID-19 pandemic had been spread to 216 countries and territories (4). Due to this several countries have imposed restrictions that would severely affect the economic activities for a prolonged period. The circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, have greatly influenced the progress of this sector (5). As a result of the global pandemic situation, during 2020, exports have declined in the apparel and leather manufacturing sector, as well as in other sectors of the economy. The ITMF reports that global textile production decreased for 42% from March to June 2020 (6). Despite this, the apparel and leather sector remains the largest export of Albania.

As reported by INSTAT, exports in Albania were not largely affected in 2020 as the overall exports decreased from 39% in 2019 (Jan-Dec) to 38% on 2020 (Jan-Dec). However, in the first two months of 2021, exports of Façon marked had a decrease with over 11% compared to January-February 2020, when the pandemic crisis had not begun. The decrease is due to the closure of final markets situated in the EU, where the production and retail sales dropped by 15% and 9.4% for clothing and 7% and 9.7% for textile (7).

Regarding the importance of the apparel and leather sector the aim of this research is to see how the disruption of the global supply chain was reflected in Albania.

2. Research methodology

To understand the ongoing situation during the pandemic period an explanatory research approach was used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to capture the perceptions of the stakeholders involved. The interview themes revolved around changes brought by Covid 19 in supplies and delivery, issues in production and general strategy of the companies. While conducting interviews, a funnel approach was used to present the questions, i.e., general questions were asked in the beginning before moving to the specific questions vital to the interview themes.

Six companies, located in Central Albania participated in this study. As can be seen in table 1, the companies who participated in this study produce technical clothes, sports clothes, working clothes, fashion clothes and underwear, and mainly these companies are Albanian family

businesses.

Table 1. Production process data

No	Ownership	Sector	No. of employees	Salary	Annual production ('000 pieces)
A1	International group investment	Technical Sports	~ 600	> min	2000
A2	Foreign investment (Italian)	Technical Sports	~ 30	min	100-500
A3	Family business	Sportive clothes	~ 120	min	700-1000
A4	Family business	Underwear apparel	~ 200	min	3000
A5	Family business	Working clothes (Trousers)	~ 35	min	55
A6	Family business	Fashion clothes (shirts, blouses)	~ 50	> min	60

*> min= greater than minimal, min= minimal

The interviews were conducted with top level managers in the companies. Interviews were terminated when no new information could be gained, therefore the time span of the interviews varies. As can be seen from Table 2 most of the interviewed companies had social & quality audit and only one has obtained the OEKOTEX standard.

Table 2. Company fair employer certificate

No	Interviewee	Interview duration	Certificates
A1	Administrator	1h 14min	Social & quality audit
A2	Production manager	44 min	Social & quality audit
A3	Owner/Administrator	1h 52min	NA
A4	Owner/Manager	1h 33min	OEKOTEX standard
A5	Owner/Manager	1h 08min	NA
A6	Financial & logistic person	1h 17min	Social & quality audit

These companies carry out one or several work processes, for different, mainly western brands such as: Kalenji, B'Twin, Karpos, Diadora, Crazy Idea, Nabaiji, Quechua, Domyos, North Face, Dynafit, Salewa, Oberalp, Gucci, Arena, Moda F –Italy, Benetton, Gerry Weber, working clothes for Mercedes & BMW.

According to the ownership structure the production cycle varies. Foreign owned companies have production capacities located in Albania, whereas Albanian owned companies are contracted for the Cut-Make-Trim operations only. In the latter case contracts are signed yearly for both the summer and winter collections, or twice yearly for each collection.

3. Results and discussion

Supply and delivery

From the beginning of March 2020 global clothing supply chains faced difficulties due to the closure of Chinese production and difficulties in international transport. Albanian companies are not directly involved in material procurement, as fabric and trimmings are, in general, supplied by the client company. As materials are mainly sourced from European countries (Italy, Germany, Turkey, Romania, Poland, etc.) disruptions in the global supply chain did not significantly affect the production capacities. The geographic proximity of supplier countries was important, as in some cases Chinese suppliers had to be replaced with EU ones.

Regarding the delivery of products, the physical distribution channels were not disrupted. As with the supply issues the geographic proximity of the target market was key in keeping the supply network going. This demonstrates the strategic advantage of Albania as a European clothing producer in times of global disturbances. However, due to the decreased sales, warehousing issues arose in the final markets. Therefore, delivery rates were slowed down.

The production process during March-September 2020

The key issues facing the Albanian clothing industry during the pandemic period are systematized in table 3. Facing the newly arisen situation created by COVID-19 pandemic the Albanian government imposed strict curfews. In an overall atmosphere of panic most of the interviewed companies decided to close their production capacities at the beginning of March. As these companies mainly work for the Italian market, the closures mimicked their clients in EU by closing the companies for 3 months. In addition, safety work protocols were introduced. Apparel manufacturers were obliged to follow the Red Protocol of COVID-19 (8) prescribing social distance of 2 m between employees. This required time to reorganize the production lines, causing lower productivity during the initiation of reorganized lines. Some companies managed to stay open, however they faced a decrease in the daily production. The decrease was due to decreased orders, as well as decreased working hours due to curfews.

In the period of April – May, although the companies continued working, there was a decrease in daily production, leading in few cases to reductions in the number of employees.

In the period of June-July, the reduction of the signed contract orders continued, however due to lifted curfews working hours were normal.

In the period August-September, all of the companies continue working as in previous months, few with a decrease in the daily production and reduction in the number of employees. Changing market demands lead to change of production lines. For instance, one company oriented its production towards outdoor sport clothing (i.e. cycling), thus increasing employees' number and expanding production.

Table 3. Key Issues in daily production caused by COVID 19

Month	Key Issues
March	Closure of factories
	Introducing worker protection protocols
April/May	Decrease in daily production
	Mask orders to supplement daily production
June/July	Reduced production
	Problems in decreasing orders caused by COVID clusters in factories
August/ September	Decrease in new orders

Regarding the communication that the companies had with their clients during the pandemic situation, all the companies mention to have changed it from physical meetings in normal situation to online meetings in different platforms such as Skype, google meet, zoom, Microsoft team and WebEx.

The production of new products during March-September 2020

During the pandemic the requirements for *masks* were increased. Albanian companies actively participated in European efforts to boost face-mask production, however only one company was involved in sewing certified masks. The production of face masks was primarily undertaken to keep the companies open, and was used to fill in the production gap caused by decrease in normal orders. This is a demonstration of the capacity to adapt quickly to the requirements of the moment. Models for masks were supplied by foreign contractors, as well as domestic clients. In some cases companies developed their model at the department of modeling. Social responsibility was demonstrated by the donation of facemasks by companies, as well as production of masks for their employees.

Furthermore, the second product required in the market was the *certified PPE* (Personal protective equipment). However, for fashion apparel producers with highly skilled workers high volume production of relatively simple clothes brought no benefits.

Companies and Employees facing the implementation of the Red Protocol of hygiene, sanitary measures of COVID-19

The clothing industry is labor intensive by nature, demanding strict implementation of protocols in order to protect the employees. As well as social distancing in the workplace, a protocol for the transportation of employees, by reducing the number and increasing the transport schedules had to be implemented. Protocols were either put in place by the companies themselves or by contracted transportation companies.

Table 4. The production process during COVID 19 pandemic

No	Mar-20	April - May 2020	June-July 2020	August - September 2020
A1	Closed	Closed	Started working till they reached the full production	Continue working, even were increased with a new rented building and employees
A2	Closed	Started working 1 of May with decrease number of employees	Continue working with decrease number of employees	Continue working with decrease number of employees
A3	Closed	Closed	They started working but new products, masks	Continue the work
A4	Continue the work but the production decreased	Continue the work but the production decreased	Continue working, they even got a new client	Continue the work
A5	Continue the work but the production decreased	Continue the work but the production decreased	Continue the work	Continue the work
A6	Closed	Continue the work	Continue the work with reduction of the order	Continue the work with reduction of the order

The clothing industry has notoriously low wages and is often given as an example of unfair labor practices. Issues regarding socially responsible labor practices were in the public during the pandemic. For instance, Myanmar received Euro 1 billion financial support from the EU in order to mitigate the influence of the pandemic on the garment industry (9). In Albania self-employed persons, families with economic assistance and those with unemployment benefits had received financial assistance starting from 1 April. The "War Wage" was set to be awarded for three months in the context of the situation created by COVID-19 in the country. The decision was officially published and provided that all persons working in small businesses, that do not exceed the annual turnover of 14 million ALL, received a minimum wage of 26 thousand ALL/per month for 3 months. On the other hand, employees of entities with annual incomes over 14 000 000 (fourteen million) ALL, were eligible for a financial assistance of 40,000 ALL after government approval. Moreover, the Albanian government offered to all the companies in every field a Sovereign credit arranges with 0 interests, but only a couple of apparel manufacturing industry interviewed in this study got it.

Overall, the government provided financial help was found insufficient. Concerning the financial help from the government, almost all the companies have applied for the war wage, however few received assistance. Even those employees who were considered classified by the state to be paid, they got 40.000 ALL (330 euro) for 3 months. There were as well companies whose application was not considered.

From all the companies, only company declared, in this study, to have received benefits from the state, said about the grant of 4000 All (33 Euro) per employee for only two months, which was offset by the expenses they had to pay for following the protocol.

This led to individual decisions on how to pay the employees in the period companies were

closed ranging from full payment of employees to temporary firing all the employees in order to receive the social assistance. However, most of the interviewed companies did not report significant flux in employees.

Company's strategy for the future

Global crises such as the COVID 19 pandemic are a time to rethink established strategies and ways of conducting business. In the case of Albanian companies the ideas for rethinking the future range from return to "normality" to an acceptance of the "new normal". In the later situation online shopping was seen as the key difference in the way to do business. Moreover, they say that this situation has directed us to a more environmentally friendly work, which they think that in the future they can be directed to green, and changed into 100% recycling.

Product type and market are the key considerations for companies' success. Regarding products, fast understanding of the change in market was crucial in coping with the loss of orders during the pandemic. For instance, a sport manufacturer changed the products from indoor sports to outdoor sports clothes, which were more requested during Covid – 19. Lack of security in contracts led companies to search for new clients during the pandemic. Contracting new clients was the key to success for two companies.

The shock that companies got at the beginning of the pandemic, made them think a lot regarding the company strategy.

Some of them are open to new challenges that the new normality may bring, such as being involved to deliver the product to the customers for example. Some are willing to invest in new machines and increasing the performance of the employees. For one of them is impossible to change, they have tried it during the pandemic, as they are used to have quality and this decrease a lot the quantity. There are companies which do not think to change the way they do business, and continue with what they do normally, but for most of them the idea to go to the market with brand Made in Albania or Merchandising is still their dream.

The year 2020 was a very difficult year for all of them, not only because of the closure (for some time, for some of them) but as well with the extra added costs they brought such as the managing of the protocol, transport, disinfectants, etc.

One of the companies had to move to another location, due to the damages of the earthquake they had a few months before pandemic started, in order to follow the Red Protocol of hygiene sanitary measures of COVID-19, and this was an extra cost for them.

Another company in order to follow the Red Protocol, on social distancing, hired another location, which came out to be a great decision, followed by the increase in employee's number of 120 person, increasing in this way the income for the company.

For most of the companies, their clients are going towards a crisis, which is pushing towards the necessity to reduce the costs. On the other hand the companies have found themselves to added costs (only salaries occupy 80% of monthly expenses), especially when it comes to the salary, which should be increased yearly, and as it was shown in table 1 the most of the companies give minimal salary.

The risk for Albanian companies is to lose the competitively in global rank and the strategy to carry off, this is to be perfect for the production. In this way, they will never have competition on

the price.

4. Conclusions

In this paper the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Albanian apparel manufacturing industry was studied by interviewing six apparel manufacturing companies.

This pandemic situation has brought for the Albanian apparel manufacturing new and alternative solutions, by changing their dynamics and expectations for the future.

Different experiences were brought from all the companies which participated in this study. In order to survey to the situation caused by COVID-19, they all have tried to partially or completely change the products that they were used to work with, in their daily life, by adapting to the new products required by the situation created, just to make the company to survive.

All of the companies have produced masks for their employees, and most of them continue producing for the domestic and foreigner market, depending on the orders they got, moreover they even donate some of them. In addition, the second product required in the market was the Personal Protective Equipment, where not all the companies were involved with this production because there was no benefit for them.

There were companies that had to change completely the product from Fashion to other products which do not require the quality, and they could not adapt at all to the quantity, since their staff is qualified for the quality and this is not good for other products except for fashion clothes.

The shock that companies got from the COVID-19 pandemic, made them think a lot regarding the company strategy.

- Some of the companies have come up with new ideas to change the products from indoor to outdoor clothes, which were more requested during the experience with Covid – 19.
- Another idea and attempt for them was to look for new customers, but this was not very successful for most of them, and only some provide new clients.
- One company has totally changed market from German to Italian during this difficult period for them.
- The only company, which was contacted quite in a very difficult period for the others, and got a new client, was the one of the underwear apparel. They do not need to have a strategy in this direction as they get contacted often but cannot get other orders because can't afford it. However, this company has got the OEKOTEX standard, and their future strategy will be more directed to green, and changed into 100% recycling.
- Another idea was to be involved to deliver the product to the customers themselves as they are open to new challenges.
- Some of the companies are willing to invest in new machines and increasing the performance of the employees.
- On the other hand, there are companies which do not think to change the way they do business, and continue with what they do normally.
- Nevertheless, for most of them the idea to go to the market with brand Made in Albania or Merchandising is the strategy for the future.

References

1. **ProEksport Albania Association.** www.fason.al. [Online]
2. **Albanian Investment Development Agency.** https://www.aida.gov.al/images//PDF/broshura_-_tekstile.pdf. [Online] July 2021.
3. **Institute of Statistics.** <http://www.instat.gov.al/>. [Online]
4. *Impact of coronavirus outbreak on Indian textile sector.* **A. Panigrahi, K. Ashutosh, S. Mehta, Sh. Pasricha.** 2, 2020, Journal of Management Research and Analysis., Vol. 7, pp. 76-83.
5. *A shift in Paradigm for apparel Industry Post Covid 19.* **R. Baliyan, P. Diwan.** 13, 2021, Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education, Vol. 12, pp. 5203-5211.
6. **ITMF.** 4th ITMF-Survey about the Impact of the Corona-Pandemic on the Global Textile Industry. 2020.
7. **J. M. De Vet, D. Nigohosyan, J. n. Ferrer, A. K. Gross, S. Kuehl, M. Flickenschild.** *Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on EU industries.* European Parliament : Study Requested by the ITRE committee., 2021.
8. **COVID-19, Red protocol of hygiene sanitary measures.** https://e-albania.al/PopupBizneset/PROTOKOLLI_KUQ_BIZNESI_FASON.pdf. [Online] 2021.
9. **International Labour Organization.** *The impact of COVID-19 on Myanmar's garment sector.* s.l. : www.ilo.org, 2021.