

# AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMAGE OF KOSOVO AS A TOURISM DESTINATION

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## Abstract

This project investigates the image of Kosovo as a tourism destination. People's perceptions towards the country have been studied to discover how Kosovo is perceived by people in the UK. This research was carried out via self administered questionnaire, where one-hundred and one participants took part in the survey. The results obtained in this project reported that the image of Kosovo has been shown to be a significant influencing factor that steered people to form negative perceptions of the country. The study acknowledges that the cause of these negative images is the war, which took place in Kosovo during the late nineties. It has been identified that the respondents with the most negative image perceptions are the lowest likely tourists to visit Kosovo. The highest potential tourists are the people who seek unusual experience, prefer winter sport activities or enjoy interacting with different cultures.

## Introduction

Kosovo – a country of rich cultural heritage and exceptional natural beauty which strengthen the potential of Kosovo as a tourism destination. However, Kosovo is also a post-war country which weakens the potential of tourism development as war and political turmoil tend to intimidate tourists severely due to their extremely negative impact on the country's image (Hall, 1994). Various image studies have focused on the relationship between destination image and the intention to visit the destination (Goodrich, 1978) identifying that the image of a country is the main decision criterion for potential tourists to visit a destination, in particular, if there is lack of information regarding the attributes of the destination (Goodall, 1991). A potential traveller is, of course, likely to choose a destination with the most favorable image according to the traveller's subjective view (Gartner, 1989) whereas peace, safety and calmness are substantial (Sonmez, 1998). Thus, war and political turmoil result in negative influence on tourism demand and diverts potential tourists to safer regions (Mansfeld, 1995). In case of Kosovo, the ongoing war of 1990-1999 impacted badly on the country's image and consequently on its tourism industry (Judah, 2000). Furthermore, the aftermath of the war had an even greater impact on the tourism industry than the war itself because it is taking long for Kosovo's image to recover. According to Mihalic(1995) the reason for the slow recovery is that international public confusion of whether the war and conflicts have satisfactorily ended does continue to exist due to lack of knowledge on the present political situation, safety and tourism potential.

In this study, the image of Kosovo as a tourism destination is investigated by identifying the image people living in the UK and residents of Kosovo have. The study of destination images has been widely acknowledged in academia (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Etchner & Ritchie, 1993; Goodrich, 1978; Milman & Pizam, 1995); however, studies related to Kosovo rather focused on war and turbulence than the image of Kosovo. Thus, this research contributes to existing literature. Furthermore, the study provides deeper knowledge concerning the image of Kosovo having an influence on people's decision to visit the country as well as the residents' attitude towards tourism development in Kosovo. After having situated the research topic in the introduction, a literature review on people's travel motivations, the formation of perception and images as well as on residents' attitudes towards tourism development and the current state of tourism development in Kosovo is

undertaken in order to develop a conceptual basis. Thereupon, the methodology of the study is explained by evaluating the quantitative and qualitative instruments that were applied in order to gain knowledge on the images people have of Kosovo. Afterwards results are presented and discussed whereas particular attention is drawn, on the one hand, to the image people living in the UK have and, on the other hand, to the image residents of Kosovo have by comparing and contrasting them against each other. Finally, the study is concluded by summarising the main findings and drawing attention to limitations of this research.

## Literature Review

### *Travel Motivation*

The theory of travel motivation has received great attention from tourism academia since the 1960s leading to the development of a range of models that guide the empirical study of travel motivation (Hsu et al., 2010). However, despite achieving understanding of the topic there is no agreement on a theoretical framework (WTO, 1999) due to the variety of human needs (French et al., 1995), cultural differences (Kim & Prideaux, 2005; Pearce & Lee, 2005) as well as methodological problems (French et al., 1995). Models can be categorised as process (prediction of behavior when the organism is aroused) and content models (conceptualisation of needs) (Campbell et al., 1970). Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs represents a content model that has been widely applied in tourism research (Cooper et al., 2005); however, as it possesses a lack of evidence according to Huitt (2004) process models are considered to be more favorable to understand motivational factors in tourism (Mayes 1978). Arguing with Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory (a process model), motivation represents the desire and need to pursuit a certain goal with desires being extrinsic (human's expectations seeking to gain pleasure or satisfaction from an activity) and needs being intrinsic including emotional, spiritual and physical factors (Williams, 1992). According to Hsu et al. (2010:284) "motivation can be conceptualized as the product of expectancy and valence". The behavior of a person in a certain situation depends on the person's expectation combined with the value of the desired outcome of the behavior. Linking this to people's motivation to travel, it can be argued, that people travel because they expect a certain outcome from staying in a destination which is important to them. For example, people travelling to a destination full of cultural heritage might expect to increase their knowledge which they value highly.

### *Creation of Perception and Image*

Perception and images are mainly formed by two major forces: stimulus factors (external information sources, previous experience and the amount and the type of information perceived) and personal factors (person's social, psychological, motivation, personality, age and other characteristics) (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). The process of perception and image building is strongly influenced by the media which is defined as "technologies that communicate messages to audiences in different parts of a region, country or even the world" (Laughey, 2007:1). Laughey (2007) adds that these media can be more accurately described as mass media as it is such a powerful tool that can be used to persuade and manipulate an audience of billions. Linked to tourism media can change the success of a destination as pre-visit (and post-visit) perceptions and images of the destinations are formed and control behavior (Beerli & Martin 2004; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). In particular, news reporting has a major impact on people's perception and image because the provided information seems to be more neutral and accurate due to its independency from the destination (Gartner, 1993). Thus, if a destination experiences a major negative event the image of that destination will change almost immediately, affecting the pre-visit image and resulting in decline of tourism demand.

In order to reach potential target markets efficiently it is important to identify what influences pre-visit images (Brokaw 1990; Goodall 1990). According to Gunn (1972) people that have never visited a destination create 'organic' images about that particular destination from non-tourism specific sources such as history, newspaper, television etc. Gunn (1972) also states that organic images are largely beyond the control of the destination area. However, if organic images of a market segment are somehow negative because the destination experienced some sort of conflict in the past then 'induced' images can be directed by the destination's marketing efforts to a certain degree. They can influence the potential tourist to change their negative organic images to positive induced images by producing colourful brochures, making travel information available at mediators such as travel agents, exhibition centres, official destination websites, travel magazines and TV advertisement (Gunn, 1972). This would help influence people to visit the destination and as a result of their visitation they would create 'modified' images based on their personal experience. However, negative image creation based on their personal experience is damaging. This would be if the tourist does not believe the destination delivered the promises made in its marketing campaign. The tourist will go back with a negative modified image of that destination and will tell his/her bad experience to others and it will remain with them longer because the experience was personal. Thus, destination marketing needs to work closely with destination development in order to stay parallel and only promote 'reality' to potential tourists. Phelps (1986) refers to the latter stage as 'complex' images. To support this matter it can be argued that Gunn's model create a close relationship between the decision making process with the image formation development.

Positive image could be the outcome of non-travel (generic) media if the destination is portrayed positively which is most frequently achieved by travel related media (Long et al., 2004). In disagreement with Long's views travel related media alone cannot always have the most positive affect without an input from other factors as Um & Crompton (1990) argue that social stimuli (recommendations from friends and relatives or word-of-mouth) are equally affective as symbolic stimuli (promotional efforts of a destination through media). Woodside & Lysonski (1989:52) note that "Neutral images may result from a lack of awareness of an area as a vacation destination". This is reinforced by Gurevitch et al. (1982:262): "while the media may not be able to tell people what to think, they may be able to tell people what to think about". Consequently, people who have a neutral or weak image of a destination might not consider it in their destination choice (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989).

There are various marketing implications when aiming to attract potential tourists. The tourism industry is growing tremendously with high competition between destinations battling over the tourism market. This is where major challenges are created for tourism marketers. It is suggested by Lesien (2001) that the high cost and the great range of media force marketers to utilise their limited budget for promotion, so that in return it generates increased visits and growth. Correcting negative images provides major challenges and is likely to be a difficult and time-consuming task (Crompton, 1979). This means that it is more difficult for destinations to "change a negative image into a more positive one because once a negative image is established in the minds of potential travellers, even a full range of marketing activities cannot entirely reverse it" (Ahmed, 1991: 24,25).

### *Residents' Attitude towards Tourism Development*

Residents' attitudes have been the focus of several studies dating from the seventies, eighties (Belisle & Hoy, 1980; Murphy, 1985; Pizam, 1978). Throughout the years the attention of the studies involved covering perception towards tourism development and its economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts (Ap, 1999). According to Murphy (1985) the majority of residents have been found to perceive tourism positively as it can improve the quality of life of residents; however, due to unequal distribution of benefits within the community tourism development is also perceived negatively (Pizam, 1978; Cooke, 1982;). Inskeep (1994) argues that residents are important contributors of tourism; thus maximum involvement of the local community is needed as they can hinder or assist the success of tourism development (Inskeep, 1991). Residents involved in tourism related industry such as business owners are found to be more positive towards tourism than other residents (Pizam, 1978). However, it can be argued that some residents with no potential benefit from tourism may still have positive views towards the industry purely because they are proud of what their country offers and want tourists to see and enjoy these resources.

### *Tourism Development in Kosovo*

Kosovo is a territory in the centre of Balkan Peninsula and does not have access to a sea (CIA, 2009). Since almost

50% of its population is younger than twenty, Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe (Statistical Office of Kosovo, 2009). Tourism development in Kosovo is at an early stage – with regard to Butler’s (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle it can be placed within the involvement stage. Alongside a continental climate with warm summers and cold, snowy winters, Kosovo’s main attributes are its landscape & nature including national parks such as the Albanian Alps and the Sharr Mountains and its heritage & culture that includes UNESCO-World heritage sites. Kosovo is easy to access due to its international airport in Pristina which is served by flag- and low cost-carriers and has a good infrastructure. According to the Bradt Travel Guide many visitors who have been to Kosovo agree that the residents make travelling to the country very special (Warrander&Knaus 2007); however, Kosovo’s tourism industry lacks of basic needs as human resources to provide qualitative service. Annually, Kosovo receives approximately 130,000 international tourist arrivals who are people from United Nations (UN) mission as well as diplomats, soldiers or development consultants (Warrander&Knaus 2007). There are also a small number of independent travellers who follow irregular visitation patterns according to Warrander&Knaus (2007). As there is only little literature relating to tourism detailed information e.g. tourist spending is not available (Euromonitor, 2010).

**Methodology**

The research was designed to serve the exploratory purpose of the research study. The rationale of the study was to investigate the image of Kosovo as a tourism destination by identifying, comparing and contrasting the views of UK and Kosovo citizens. Primary and secondary research was applied to synthesize existing and develop further knowledge about the topic. Primary research was undertaken by employing quantitative and qualitative methods which is considered advantageous for collecting data in order to avoid bias and increase the reliability of results (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). “The combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon” is also known as triangulation (Denzin, 1970:297). Secondary data was utilised for reviewing the literature in order to develop awareness of people’s motivation to travel, the creation of images about a destination and the linkage between both aspects. Furthermore, secondary data was employed to introduce Kosovo and its resources as well as to identify the current state of tourism development.

**Quantitative Research**

The quantitative instrument used in this project was a self-administered (respondent-completed) questionnaire; however, the interviewer was within sight in order to collect

the questionnaire sheet immediately after completion. This approach increased the reliability of responses as it was assured that the survey was conducted with the intended participant (Saunders, 2007). The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first part was based on a yes/no approach and focused on general preferences respondents have concerning their holidays such as what type of holidays they are interested in, where they would stay and how much they would pay. The second section was aimed at producing qualitative and quantitative results concerning the awareness about Kosovo as a country and as a tourism destination. Qualitative responses in this section were interpreted into quantitative data in order to integrate all of the questionnaire responses into the SPSS analysis. Thus, it was feasible to obtain percentages for each variable. The third section had taken the form of a likert scale which is a widely applied approach in survey such as questionnaires (Vaus, 2002). The aim was to acquire perceptions and attitudes of people towards Kosovo while focusing on whether the respondents associated Kosovo with war and turmoil or tourism, whether they would feel safe to go, their knowledge regarding Kosovo’s natural and cultural attractions and whether they would like to know more about the country’s tourism potential. By using a likert scale approach it was possible to discover the level of agreement concerning a particular statement so that essential insights could be gathered that wouldn’t be obtained by employing a different method. The levels of degree of the variables from the questionnaire were identified using cross-tabulations from the latest version 16 of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The study compares cross-tab questions against each other to identify any significant differences between the respondents. Cross-tabs were carried out to discover various matters in relation to the image perceptions of Kosovo using demographics as base questions. The final section included demographical questions in order to identify different views and contradictions of answers with regard to gender, age groups and occupation statuses. This analysis was carried out on cross-tabulation using chi-square tests on SPSS.

The questionnaire survey was conducted throughout March 2009 starting on 6<sup>th</sup> of March and ending of 25<sup>th</sup> of March. Due to a limited time frame convenience sampling was applied and data was collected within Sheffield Hallam University and other locations within the city as it is presented. Ninety-seven questionnaires were completed (mainly) with students from Sheffield Hallam University encompassing different gender, age groups and occupations as it is illustrated in the following table.

Gender	Age	Occupation
43% Male 57% Female	Both Genders: 60% respondents aged 18 - 29 17% respondents aged 30 - 39 6% respondents aged 40 - 49 N/A respondents aged 50 +	Both Genders: 62% Students 38% Employed

After conducting the questionnaire survey the data was inputted into SPSS to analyse and to discuss the results. The researcher carried out cross-tabs between each questions including the likert scale statements.

**Qualitative Research**

The qualitative research method applied in this study was structured email interviews which can be characterised by a high level of convenience for the researcher due to cost and time efficiency as well as for interviewees as it allows them to take as much time as needed to answer the questions (Powney& Watts, 1987; Blaxter et al., 2001). Furthermore, interviews are considered particularly useful for research studies with exploratory purposes (Veal, 2006). In this exploratory study the conduction of the interviews was aimed at obtaining knowledge of Kosovo residents' perceptions regarding the image of Kosovo and its tourism potential. The following table presents the four questions that were used to interview residents of Kosovo.

Questions covered in the interviews
1. What image perceptions do you have of Kosovo as a tourism destination?
2. Do you think Kosovo has sufficient tourism resources to attract international visitors?
3. Is safety a problem in Kosovo and would it damage tourism development?
4. Do you as a citizen of Kosovo visit the tourism resources and what are your thoughts of the country in general?

Thirty-two residents have been asked to take part in the interview survey; however, only five participated.

#### Results & Discussion

##### *Travel preferences*

The study revealed that independent travel is the preferred type of travel as nearly 90% indicated preference as opposed to packaged tours. Furthermore, it was found that beach holiday is the most frequent type of travel of all respondents; however, differences were identified in relation to age groups. While people between the ages of 18-29 go most frequently on winter/sports-holidays people of the ages of 30-59 chose beach holidays and city breaks as their preferred type of holiday. It was also shown that people between the ages of 18-29 travel more often than the people of the age of 30-59 as 67% of 18-29 age group travel overseas more than once a year and only 40% of 30-59 age groups travel overseas more than once a year. A significant number of participants (42%) stated that they spend on average £250-£499 on holidays which was followed by 19% spending on average £500-£749. The preferred accommodation type was self-catering & hostel with 30% followed by Hotel 1-3Star, Hotel 4-5Star. For the age group of 18-29 the main accommodation type appeared to be Bed & Breakfast as this option was ranked the highest in the graph with 36%. In contrast people between the ages of 30-59 mainly chose self-catering and 1-3Star hotels as their adapted options. Gender cross-tabulation illustrates that females have selected self-catering, 1-3 stars hotels and 1-5 stars hotels as their most frequent answers whereas the highest option in the males' category is Bed & Breakfast. The three main holiday reasons all age groups have selected are sun, sea and beaches, to see new places and cultures and sporting activities. Male respondents have selected sporting activities (30%), to see new places and cultures (30%) and sun, sea and beaches (24%) as their three highest options. Female respondents have also selected the same three options however in different order of importance; sun, sea and beaches (28%), see new places and cultures (28%) and rest and relaxation (26%). Most of the respondents (94%) irrespective of age and gender have selected 5-10 days and 11-15 days for their length of stay on holiday. The majority of the respondents (79%) have selected that they go on holiday with at least one, two or three other companions.

A potential target market for Kosovo could be independent travellers due to the high preference of survey participants in independent holidays in connection with the situation in

Kosovo as no package holidays are offered yet. Cambell (1987) argues that people seek new and independent travelling experience to unusual and exploratory destinations and as a result of this consumers are continually selecting new products or new places to visit. Cooper (2003) includes that tourism industry is experiencing a transformation in distinctive modes of consumption, from mass tourism to more individual experience due to changing variety of consumer preferences and behaviour. Poon (1993) calls this a 'new tourism'. Kosovo could attract those visitors seeking new experience and to see new places and cultures as tourism development is at early stage and thus not overcrowded as other tourism destinations. However, it needs to be acknowledged that although a significant number of participants (42%) would not prefer travelling to an established destination, a high number (35%) did prefer and 23% were unsure whether they would travel to established destinations rather than Kosovo. Furthermore, winter sport holidays describe a potential market that that can be promoted to young active people due to their high preference for winter sports. Kosovo can provide such facilities needed; however, Kosovo's ski resort is not very known outside the Balkan region as it is currently undeveloped (IPAK, 2007). In addition, the group's preference for B & B, hostels and 1-3Star hotel can be provided by Kosovo's accommodation sector (Qorri, 2008).

##### *Knowledge about and the Image of Kosovo*

The study revealed that the majority of respondents (89%) have heard of Kosovo; however, they have never visited the country. It was identified that mainly due to a lack of knowledge concerning Kosovo as a tourism destination (over 90% of respondents stated that Kosovo as a tourism destination is unknown to them) respondents were not sure whether they would like to travel to Kosovo. Utilising Goodall's (1991) argument that the image as main criterion for potential tourists to visit a destination is strengthened if there is a lack of knowledge of the destination's attractions, it can be argued that Kosovo's image is the major barrier for attracting tourists. The study discovered that a high number of questionnaire respondents (71%) associate Kosovo with war and violence. The majority of them (57%) still view Kosovo as a 'war torn country'. The knowledge respondents had of Kosovo originated from extensive news reporting of the war in 1999. It is well documented especially in the theories of Galtung&Ruge (1965) and Harcup (2004) that TV news has a tendency to focus on negativity i.e. 'bad news is good news' leading to a bad image of the country.

In addition, media companies are reticent to give follow-up reports which Schlesinger (1991) describes as 'Dumbing-Down'. According to Dyer (1984) this leads to an overall perception people have of a country. As people did not get any positive news on Kosovo after the war they were left with the image of Kosovo as a war torn and ravaged country. This was confirmed by the study as some respondents still believed that the country is under similar condition as it used to be during the war as one respondent argued that *"it is a war country and a dangerous place to visit"*. Another respondent stated *"I know the country has recently experienced war but I'm not sure whether the war still exists "...." I haven't seen anything on the news regarding any improvement"*.

In accordance with Mihalic (1995) it can be argued that it takes long for a country's image to recover due to lack of knowledge regarding Kosovo's political situation and safety. 49% of questionnaire participants indicated that they worry of Kosovo being unsafe. It seems that respondents are still very much concerned with the issue because no other information regarding Kosovo was delivered to them that would have changed their views as 32% were not sure whether it is safe to go to Kosovo. The substantiality of peace, safety and calmness (Sonmez, 1998) in combination with the negative image people have of Kosovo hinders potential tourists to travel to Kosovo. The study is consistent with Mansfeld's (1995) view that effects of war divert tourists to considered safer regions as it was found in the study that those people that have strongly associated Kosovo with political turmoil and war would be less willing to visit the country. One respondent who has never been to Kosovo stated that *"I don't know much about it, first heard of it on news in the context of war, conflict so I doubt that I would like to go there"*.

According to Baloglu&McCleary (1999) image formation is influenced by stimuli and personal factors. However, this study discovered that personal factors (e.g. gender, age) have made very little difference of the way the respondents have reacted or responded towards the image of Kosovo. Referring to the thesis of Um & Crompton (1990) stimuli factors in order to reach potential tourists have failed. Over 90% of respondents stated that they have never come across holiday offers to Kosovo and one respondent added *"I don't know much about it, never seen it advertised"*. Although this high number can be relativized as tourism development is at an early stage, it is, particularly essential at this stage, to apply promotional efforts to raise awareness among potential tourists. One reason for the failure of market reach in the UK by Kosovo promoters could be due to the fact that they have mainly focused their marketing activities on different European countries (Qorri, 2008).

#### *Contrasting UK residents' and Kosovo residents' views*

Research on Kosovo residents' views discovered a completely different picture of the country concerning safety. One resident argued that *"there is no danger here, Kosovo is one of the safest country in the region and in Europe, it is hard for people to believe this because of its past but Kosovo has a lawful infrastructure, which fully supports foreign visitors and investors."..." the country has*

*the lowest crime rate in the region. This fact makes it obvious that Kosovo is a safe place to visit"*. Another interviewee supported this view and strengthened the safety of the country by arguing that *"up to now there have been lots of visits from domestic and foreign people but no incident has ever occurred"*. Comparing results from the questionnaire survey and interviewees it was visible that the views of UK citizens and Kosovo residents concerning safety issues contradicted immensely. Thus, Sonmez' (1998) and Lexow&Edelheim's (2004) argument that consequences of media will be present for a long period of time as people tend to remember disturbing images and bad news longer was confirmed by the survey as 55% of the respondents referred to war as a current issue in Kosovo and only 12% of the respondents had positive images. Natural and cultural resources as the two main influencing factors to visit Kosovo according to Gowing (2008) were positive associations which respondents were interested in: 45% agreed to be interested in Kosovo's cultural attractions and 51% agreed to be interested in enjoying its natural beauty. A Kosovo resident emphasised *"Foreign tourists would not imagine that something they would love to see and experience can actually be found in a place like Kosovo"*. The study also indicated that Kosovo residents have positive attitudes towards tourism development and usage of resources as a resident stated that *"Kosovo has exceptional potential to develop summer and winter tourism because of the natural and cultural resources it has"*.

To the statement "I would love to visit Kosovo" 29% of questionnaire participants agreed while the majority of 49% was unsure. The study showed that this is mainly due to lack of information concerning Kosovo and its tourism industry. A participant argued *"because I don't know what it is like there I can't really tell if I would like to go or not"* and another respondent with preference for winter-/sports-holidays stated *"as far as I know Kosovo does not have any mountains for snowboarding during winter so I don't think I would consider going"*. Reasonably nearly 90% of questionnaire respondents stated that they would like to know more about Kosovo. Both arguments highlighted the importance of promotional efforts at this stage in order to raise awareness about tourism in Kosovo. The lack and inefficiency of promotion is also acknowledged by Kosovo residents as interviewees stated *"the Kosovo promoters and developers are not working effectively to support the tourism in our country"* and *"up to now the institutions of Kosovo have done very little to promote tourism development"*. However, promoting Kosovo as a tourism destination to identified target markets can be successful as the study revealed that people are interested in visiting 'new places' as the following statements underline: *"I would like to see Kosovo as I like visiting unusual places which are different from Western Europe countries"* and *"it is a country I have never visited therefore I would be interested in finding out more and seeing what it has to offer"*.

#### *Conclusion*

This study investigated the image of Kosovo as a tourism destination by evaluating people's image perceptions towards the country using quantitative research in the form

of a questionnaire survey conducted in the UK. In addition, perceptions of Kosovo residents were studied by employing qualitative research in the form of email-interviews. The views of UK and Kosovo residents were contrasted in order to identify issues that hinder the development of tourism in Kosovo.

The study revealed that the images of UK citizens differ significantly from Kosovo residents' perceptions. This is mainly due to a lack of information about the country as people living in the UK still have the image of Kosovo as a war-torn country which hinders potential tourists from travelling to Kosovo. While UK residents seem to be very concerned about safety issues, Kosovo residents describe the country as safe for local as well as for international people. Thus, it is argued that negative images of a country last longer, in particular, because media does not provide positive images (Mihalic, 1996; Sonmez, 1998; Lexow&Edelheim, 2004). Thus, it is essential to influence the negative image to a more positive one so that potential tourists consider Kosovo in their destination choice. Alongside travel related media (Long et al., 2004) various marketing tools that reinforce social and symbolic (Um &

Crompton, 1990) can be employed to improve the image, raise awareness about Kosovo as a potential tourism destination and stimulate tourism demand. To realize marketing effectiveness and efficiency the study identified potential target markets: independent travellers who enjoy natural beauty and/or cultural heritage. In addition, winter-sports holidays are considered as a potential market that can attract tourists.

However, it needs to be acknowledged that reliability and validity of the results are limited due to different reasons. Firstly, as most of the questionnaire survey was carried out within the university it needs to be assumed that participants have an 'educational background'. Furthermore, a higher number of participants would have been desirable; however, it was not in scope of this study. Concerning qualitative research it would have been useful to conduct the interviews face-to-face which are considered to be a superior data collection technique due to its flexibility and potentiality (Leeuw, 1992). Utilising face-to-face interviews for this study could have provided the opportunity to create valuable debates on the subject.

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