

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR TOWARDS THE TOURIST OFFER IN KOSOVO - WITH A FOCUS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF MOUNTAIN TOURISM

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to present a summary of knowledge on the behavior of consumers towards tourist offers and its impact on the development of mountain tourism in the territory of Kosovo, given the great importance of this industry in economic development.

We know that methods in the social sciences are essential research tools that enable us to achieve new results and knowledge, or to correct existing ones.

To study consumers and their behaviors can be based on some basic methodological directions such as: observation, interviews and observations, experimentation, through which I have tried to determine the behaviors of consumers towards mountain tourist offers in the country.

People all over the world organize tourist trips with the aim of relaxing, having fun, doing various activities so that they get away from their work routine and their work responsibilities.

Therefore, this paper provides a theoretical approach to consumer behavior towards tourism offers, as well as the impact of effective and efficient management in increasing the number of tourists and visitors and increasing the use of mountain tourism capacity in Kosovo.

Based on the available data, local and foreign tourists show a special interest to visit the natural beauties that our country has, in all seasons, which enables the development of tourism in the country as a reference point in the absence of the sea.

Investing in the further development and promotion of these tourism products, would be of particular importance, as it would inform the public about the natural beauties of Kosovo, which should be visited.

Based on the available data on the topic in question, we can conclude that the development of tourism depends on the promotion of products and the attitude of consumers towards them, so our recommendation is that local institutions pay more attention to the strict implementation of long-term strategy of tourism development, thus investing in mountain infrastructure and its promotion to be done through various cultural and artistic activities, as well as informing the general population about them through various media.

Keywords: natural beauties, tourist products, mountain tourism, consumer behavior.

1. CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Consumer behavior is an applied social science, based on the theories and concepts of the disciplines of psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics and statistics. As a fairly new science, the study of consumer behavior emerged in the late 1940s, when many companies moved from production and sales orientation to the study of consumers for the products they sought and needed (Kardes, Cronley, Cline 2011).

Each individual possesses different characteristics that distinguish him from other individuals. Individuals also differ among themselves in terms of the character and type of personality they have. Therefore, on this basis we can say that different individuals have different behaviors in terms of consumption of goods and services.

But what exactly is consumer behavior?

The study of consumer behavior initially focuses on the individual. Individuals united across groups or organizations would undoubtedly have their own particular consumer behavior. Consumer behavior is about how individuals united in groups or institutions make the choice of products and services by providing them in a variety of ways in order to use and meet needs and the impact of this whole process on the individual.

1.1. Understanding and importance of studying consumer behavior

According to the marketing concept, studying and understanding customer behaviors is one of the main tasks of marketing management.¹⁶

Therefore, the study of consumer behavior towards tourism offers in the country, helps the relevant institutions to improve their marketing strategies related to the topic in question.

There are many applications of consumer behavior, which enable us to understand the reason why its study has occupied a very important place today. Here we can distinguish:¹⁷

- Consumer behavior determines the economic well-being of a nation,
- Consumer behavior determines the success of marketing programs,
- Consumer behavior determines the economic well-being of everyone,
- Consumer behavior helps in drafting public policies,
- Consumer behavior influences personal policies,
- Consumer behavior influences social marketing

1.2. Methods of studying consumer behavior

To understand consumer behavior, it is necessary to know what is going on inside the minds of consumers, so we need to know their psychology towards the perception in this case of tourism services. This requires the application of methods that will enable us to do so. In some cases, it is the various experiments or direct interviews with them to understand changes in consumer behavior.

But, to study consumers and their behaviors we can rely on some basic methodological directions which are:¹⁸

Methods of studying consumer behavior		
Observation	Interviews and Surveys	Experimentation

Fig.1. Methods of studying consumer behavior

1.3. The main factors influencing consumer behavior

Consumers do not make their own purchasing decisions in a "vacuum".¹⁹

A large number of different factors influence when making purchasing decisions. According to Philip Kotler, these factors are:

Cultural factors	Social factors	Personal factors	Psychological factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Culture, ➤ Subculture, ➤ Social strata. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reference groups, ➤ Family, ➤ Role and status in society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Age and phase of the life cycle, ➤ Es Profession, ➤ Economic conditions, ➤ Lifestyle, ➤ Personality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Motivation, ➤ Perception, ➤ Learning, ➤ Beliefs and attitude.

Fig.2. Factors influencing consumer behavior

2. TOURISM IN KOSOVO

By tourism we mean the movement of people for the purpose of recreation, entertainment, healing and the expansion of cultural knowledge.²⁰

Tourism in Kosovo is a growing sector with many tourists visiting the country every year.

¹⁶ 'Marketing Basics', Prof.dr.Nexhmi Rexha and Prof.dr.Nail Reshidi, p.93

¹⁷ "Consumer Behavior", Prof. Dr. Semiha Loca, p.14

¹⁸ "Consumer Behavior", Prof. Dr. Semiha Loca, p.32

¹⁹ 'Marketing Basics', Prof.dr.Nexhmi Rexha and Prof.dr.Nail Reshidi, p.95

²⁰ https://sq.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turizmi_n%C3%AB_Kosov%C3%AB

Although Kosovo is a small geographical area, with its natural and human motives, it offers good opportunities for the development of some types of domestic, regional, international, stationery and transit tourism. Kosovo has tourist destinations that can be used by its population for excursions, sports, recreation, leisure, culture, education and training

Kosovo, although it has no sea, has many tourist resources that create the opportunity for the development of other types of tourism. It has many natural beauties that create opportunities to benefit economically but also in terms of presenting the values of culture, both to foreign and local visitors.

With its natural and human motives, Kosovo offers good opportunities for the development of several types of domestic, regional and international tourism, which makes it a very attractive and open place for all.

2.1. Natural characteristics of tourism in Kosovo

Although Kosovo has no sea, it is characterized by rare natural beauties, where many local and foreign visitors show interest to visit and spend beautiful moments of recreation and vacation.

Among the natural features we can single out:²¹

o Drini i Bardhë: It is located in the north of Peja. Drini i Bardhë is the largest source in Kosovo.

o Rugova Gorge: It is located in the north-west of Peja, with sloping walls that reach up to 300 meters.

o Brezovica: Ski resort located in the Sharr Mountains National Park in southern Kosovo.

o Prokletije National Park: A national park proposed since 2001 in the area of Prokletije Mountain in Western Kosovo and part of the great Dinaric Alps.

o Gadima Cave: An underground marble cave in the village of Gadimje, near Lipjan, which was discovered in 1969 by Ahmet Diti. There are Stalagmites and Stalactites.

2.1.1. Mountain tourism

Kosovo has a host of natural features. It is surrounded by mountains.

Kosovo as a whole is divided into 5 tourist regions:²²

- Tourist Region of Pristina
- Sharr Mountain tourist region
- Anamorava Tourist Region
- Albanian Alps Tourist Region and
- Central tourist region of Kosovo where at the same time enters the tourist region of Pristina.

➤ Tourist Region of Pristina

Pristina has a number of parks such as the City Park, Taukbahqe Park, Arberia Park and the most famous Germia National Park. Germia is a place rich in flora and fauna, with more than 75% of its territory covered with forests and its highest point is 1,050 meters above sea level. There are several sports fields, walking and biking trails, several restaurants and a lake-sized pool.²³

➤ Sharr Mountain tourist region

The Sharr Mountains are located to the south and southeast, on the border with Macedonia, while the Kopaonik Mountains lie to the north. Sharr Mountains National Park: Covers 39,000 hectares in southwestern Kosovo. They border the Republic of Macedonia and are known for various species of animals including bears, wolves, deer and foxes.

➤ An Anamorava Tourist Region

Anamorava consists of the valley and mountainous parts of the Karadak Mountains on the right and the Zhegoc and Koznik Mountains on the left. Anamorava consists of the plain of Viti, Gjilan and Dardana (Kamenica) with an area of about 650 square km, with a length over 40 km and width over 16 km, with a high end of 500 m and high sides up to 1000 m. Most of Anamorava lies in the Upper Morava and the Lower Morava, and there are different opinions on the natural definition of these two parts, both in the literature and in the people.²⁴

➤ Albanian Alps Tourist Region

Kosovo has rehabilitation baths and natural resources which are proven healing in terms of Air and Water that it has especially in the Albanian Alps (ie in the Deqan Mountains). Their effectiveness is multifaceted, taking into account the variety of plants and clean air offered by the height of the Alps with an altitude of 2656 meters-Peak of Gjeravice-Deqan. Therefore with an investment in infrastructure this will be sustainable and will bring 100% cure to those people who suffer from respiratory diseases and many other diseases which directly affect the human lungs.

²¹ https://sq.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turizmi_n%C3%AB_Kosov%C3%AB

²² https://sq.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turizmi_n%C3%AB_Kosov%C3%AB

²³ https://sq.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turizmi_n%C3%AB_Prishtin%C3%AB

²⁴ <https://sq.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anamorava>

➤ **Gjeravica**

The southwestern borders with Montenegro and Albania are also mountainous, where the highest peak of the country, Gjeravica, is located, with a height of 2,656 m. The central region is mainly hilly, except for two large plains which are located in the west and east of Kosovo.

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Creating a competitive tourist destination with attractions and activities promoted effectively, aims to stimulate the growth of the number of tourism enterprises which offer a wide range of services.

Increasing the number of visitors to tourist places, especially mountainous ones, will be a driver for increasing investments by relevant local institutions.

Increased revenues from the development of tourism, will enable public institutions and businesses to address obstacles in infrastructure and create better and more attractive conditions for people interested in visiting these places.

Also, the tourism sector which is growing and which will provide new jobs for the unemployed.

A key component in realizing this vision is the functioning of the private-public partnership with concrete programs for the development of well-coordinated tourism, which will advocate for the creation of public goods infrastructure and effective marketing.

Through it, the demand for tourist offers in the country will increase, as well as the interest of visitors for these attractive parts of Kosovo will increase.

3.1. Activities

In the behavior of consumers towards the tourist offer in Kosovo, an important role is played by the various promotional activities through which the impetus for the selection of concrete tourist packages is created.

The promotion of tourist services and the recognition of tourists for these services is done through various promotional activities such as:

- Marketing services for tourism enterprises,
- Promotion of domestic tour operators,
- Product development system,
- International promotion of tourist packages,
- Effective promotion and branding of the destination,
- Information through print and electronic media,
- Various slogans and leaflets distributed throughout the field, as well as other promotional forms of informing visitors.

It is also worth mentioning the information portal at MTI, <https://visitkosovo.rks-gov.net/>, through which all potential visitors can be informed about the tourist places in the country as well as the way of easier access to possible in these destinations to visit.

3.2. Goals

Tourism enterprise marketing services help tourism enterprises to use low cost online tools, especially Google maps, Open Street maps and Trip Advisor.²⁵

This is an intervention that brings immediate benefits, and addresses the weaknesses of the following market services:

- Lack of tourism promotion at the enterprise level and marketing services
- Lack of qualified human resources

The interest of tourism enterprises is to increase profitability by selling activities to international visitors / tourists.

On the other hand visitors / tourists will experience a pleasant experience from visiting the natural tourist beauties.

This particular contribution is only part of the overall tourism product development intervention

Improved enterprise marketing efforts are expected to increase the number of customers in the tourist MNVM.

Referring to the undeniable cultural potential, historical tradition and real opportunities for cooperation, the long-term goal remains to increase the level of visitors to mountainous countries, as a good opportunity for the development of tourism in the country.

In this way, mountain tourism would be given the place it deserves as an important influence on the development of tourism in general.

4. CONCLUSION

²⁵ https://ppse-kosovo.org/file/repository/Tourism_Albanian.pdf

The state of mountain tourism in Kosovo is analyzed under the lens of 10 strategic flow of visitors. Each stream constitutes a certain segment of passengers, who have a certain motive and to some extent follow a similar activity. Consumer behavior focuses on "Why" and "How" consumers make specific decisions and behave in certain ways, what motivates them, what attracts their attention, what makes them often be loyal to tourist services and offers . The treatment of tourism at the level of streams, among others, enables to understand more clearly the profile of the visitor, his / her interaction with the destination, the motive and impact of the arrival, as well as in general the tourist offer with its advantages and challenges.²⁶

Advantages and challenges may involve more than one stream of visitors. However, in order not to repeat, they have been attempted to appear only in the stream which is most relevant.

- What is the origin of the visitors?
- How old are they?
- How long is their stay?
- What are their main activities?
- What motivates them to visit the destination?
- What influenced their arrival?
- What works?
- What is not working / missing?
- What are the challenges?

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²⁶ Tourism development strategy (rks-gov.net)