

**UNIVERSITY "ST.KLIMENT OHRIDSKI" – BITOLA**

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**THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF  
KOSOVO IN THE EUROPEAN TOURISM MARKET**

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*// a self-assessment of the doctoral thesis //*

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Tourism is an economic activity that consists of several activities that are mutually coordinated to meet the needs of tourists and visitors. Today, tourism is presented as an industry, a sector that seeks to utilize natural resources, human and financial capital for the creation of tourism products and services, and it must be mentioned that such exploitation or development should be done according to the principles of sustainable development. The tourism industry is an important sector that has influenced the increase in the economic activity of many countries in the world.

Tourism is an economic and international activity that encompasses economic, political, social and environmental factors, which have their own complex nature and, in some cases, conflicting relations. Today tourism is characterized by constant and rapid development and with a great sensitivity.

Facing uncertain internal and external factors, tourism attracts worldwide attention, often in the direction of finding and selecting strategies and plans that will adapt to the latest geopolitical, social, economic, technological and environmental changes.

Tourism has great potential and plays an important role in complementing the major macroeconomic goals that relate to economic growth, employment, sustainable economic and social development. In this sense, tourism influences can have economic, social, natural or environmental, political and cultural characteristics . Of all the mentioned categories of tourism influences, the economic impact is of utmost importance for the overall development.

Tourism and the subject of this research cover many aspects of the contemporary society we live in. Tourism aspects have social and economic characteristics, and the significance of tourism from the aspect of social character is perceived in the influence on preservation of the psychophysical capabilities and health of the population. Then on preservation of the level of culture, care for protection and maintenance of the values of the cultural heritage and the links that exist between countries and different regions of the world. The same applies to the political aspect that affects the interstate relations of countries in the world.

Tourism contributes to increasing national income, creates opportunities for new jobs, reduces trade deficits, strengthens the economic development of less developed regions of a country, encourages businesses that are engaged in the production of products and services for tourists, and it all helps in complementing or fully meeting and meeting tourist needs.

Studying this complex phenomenon, and considering the size of this activity from the aspect of the economy, it is necessary to look at tourism from other aspects. To better

understand the whole and form of tourism, it should be seen as a system that provides new approaches to solving many problems during the development of tourism.

The research and study of the phenomenon called tourism, from the point of view of the system concept, contains four main elements:

1. tourists (individuals or groups),
2. tourist operators and intermediaries,
3. tourist offer,
4. The social aspect (changes in society, culture, technology and politics).

It should be noted that in recent years there has been increased interest by researchers and scientists dealing with the impact of tourism on the economies of countries, especially those factors that affect tourism and the overall economy of developing countries such as the Republic of Kosovo.

Because of these factors that the Republic of Kosovo should focus mostly on the economic policies of the state in order to better promote tourism in the international tourism market, with particular reference to the tourism market in Europe.

This is also due to the fact that tourism has a positive impact on the economic development of the country, and this should be used to improve or enhance the competitive position of regional and wider tourism markets.

Each government should consider tourism as a real potential for economic development and all relevant stakeholders (municipalities, businesses, civil society, tourism operators, etc.) should be invited to a comprehensive dialogue that will produce a strategic approach to the development of tourism. The main characteristics of the current situation with tourism make Kosovo in a region containing many tourist attractions and values, but with insufficient tradition.

The spatial characteristics, biodiversity, geo-communication position, climate and other natural features are a good basis for inclusion of this type of tourism in the overall tourist offer in Kosovo. The large number of tourist resources are not valued enough in a way that will enable successful placement on the tourism market inside and outside the country.

Although it faces several problems in different phases of development, the development of tourism in the Republic of Kosovo is already moving in the same direction as the overall development of the country's economy. The Republic of Kosovo has sufficient tourism potential, and yet that potential is not sufficiently exploited. Naturally, the development of

tourism will contribute to the increase of the total GDP of the state, which will mean a higher place of ranking the economic development of the country.

On the other hand, tourism is not very developed and identified as one of the least developed branches in the Kosovo's economy. Therefore, a national strategy is needed where the state should first identify, develop and apply a modern concept for tourism and attract domestic and foreign tourists.

Being located in the center of the Balkan Peninsula, Kosovo, as a tourist destination, represents an important area that can be included within the tourism development of the region of Europe. For this reason, the title of this scientific paper is: "THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF KOSOVO IN THE EUROPEAN TOURISM MARKET", which aims to analyze the current state of affairs with the tourism in Kosovo and the perspective of the development of tourism in Kosovo within the European tourist market.

The main goal of this paperwork is to understand the perspectives of the development of tourism in Kosovo within the European tourism market and thus to contribute to the economic development of the country and to be a more competitive tourist destination in comparison with other countries in the narrower region and with the more developed European countries.

This research will help in the creation of new strategies that will be based on analysis and synthesis of all research results, as well as comparing the existing strategies and practices of developed European tourist destinations with the position of Kosovo in the tourism market so that they can be found better solutions for the development of tourism in this country.

The subject of the research of this paperwork is to determine the role and significance of the development of tourism and on this aspect we can find the best way to achieve the goals set by the local and central authorities competent in the field of tourism, travel agencies and tour operators in business (inclusion and survival of the market, higher profits and increase in the volume of operations on the market, etc.) and from other stakeholders that directly or indirectly affect the development of tourism t, that is, on meeting the requirements and needs of tourists.

We aim to analyze the potentials, the current situation and future prospects for the development of tourism in Kosovo as an important tourist destination in the Balkans and the European tourism market. We think that this research will contribute to reflecting the development of tourism on the national economy and the country's position in regional and international tourism flows.

The realization of the goals set in this research is based on the combination of certain methods, and we will be guided by the inductive method (exploring the specific to the general, where conclusions are obtained according to the existing facts and premises, in order to verify the data and operationalization of concepts) and the deductive method (exploring the general to the special).

The quantitative method is also used in this research, because the data collected is more structured, the survey involves more respondents compared to the qualitative method, as well as due to the fact that data can be more easily replicated and compared directly with other data.

The development of this topic uses primary and secondary data, that is, official data presented in all types of documents, and analyzes the most relevant data and information for confirming the actual aspects of the situation in this system. On the basis of these data we will try to construct appropriate conclusions. The research of this thesis is being based on desk research, while field research is realized with the help of the Internet as a medium containing a large number of data.

In the research of the doctoral dissertation, we start with the following general hypothesis:

1. The development of tourism in Kosovo is a perspective for entering the European tourism market.

As special hypotheses in the research the following will be used:

- 1.1. The development of tourism in Kosovo is an important factor for the development of the country's overall economy.
- 1.2. Kosovo is an important tourist destination on the Balkan Peninsula and has increased opportunities for access to other international tourism markets.

The research carried out in this paperwork should give some results for the development of tourism in Kosovo. We should expect that there is and will continue to be a consensus among all the stakeholders in the tourism in Kosovo that if tourism is not considered a priority sector, then the development and the impact of tourism on Kosovo's economic development will continue to be limited or stagnated.

Studying the thesis, we expect to learn about the basic and most important characteristics of tourism, which in the future should rank Kosovo higher in the list of tourist destinations compared to those from this region, because of their tourist attractions and values.

Spatial features, biodiversity, geo-communication position, climate and other natural features are a good basis for creating a tourist offer for Kosovo. The large number of tourist resources are not valued enough in a way that will enable successful placement on the tourism market inside and outside the country.

Furthermore, it is expected that the place of Kosovo as a tourist destination will be in the region, together with neighboring countries and other European countries, as the most important tourist region in the world. Kosovo is a small country, but with great natural and historical and cultural resources and values that can help raise the level of development of tourism in this country. The future of Kosovo's tourism development is in Europe.

This doctoral thesis consists of six parts. Part 1, "Theoretical and Methodological Approach in the Research", explains the subject and purpose of research on this paper, the methods used in the research and the methodological approach to study. As an integral element of this section is the presentation of the basic and special hypotheses, which in the course of the work and in the end should be accepted or rejected and finally the expected results are also presented.

Part 2, "The position of Kosovo and the perspective of tourism development" aims to show the real situation and position of this country in terms of the development of tourism in general. This section consists of two chapters. The first chapter explains the position of Kosovo with all the features in terms of showing this country as a tourist destination (geographical position, regional connection with neighboring countries and local connectivity of the tourist spots in Kosovo).

The second chapter explains the development of tourism in Kosovo (the most important trends in the development of tourism by the end of the last century, the position of the country's tourism within the former federal state and the problems that Kosovo faced in this sector, as well as the situation of tourism in Kosovo in the last years and further directions for tourism development. We explain a period of fifteen years, during the time of war conflicts and after the independence of Kosovo as the youngest country in the world, and present the problems and potentials for the development of tourism in recent times.

Part 3, "Factors for the Development of Tourism in Kosovo" aims to explain the factors that influence the development of tourism, and this part is composed of two chapters. The first chapter deals with the basic division of factors for tourism development: factors of tourism

demand (objective and subjective factors), factors of the tourist offer (attractive and receptive factors) and factors of tourist intermediation (travel agencies, transport, tourism policy and tourist promotion).

The second chapter aims to show the factors for the development of tourism in Kosovo as a tourist destination, which are considered as potential for tourism development. First of all, natural resources will be mentioned as a factor for tourism development (geological and geomorphological resources for tourism development, hydrographic status as an important tourist resource, biogeographical resources for the development of tourism in Kosovo and climate conditions as factors for tourism development).

Furthermore, the second point in this chapter is the anthropogenic values due to the fact that Kosovo is a rich country (tourist destination) in terms of cultural and historical resources: archaeological sites, old architecture, museums and galleries, festivals, arts, songs and dances, religious rituals and events, traditional cuisine, crafts etc.

The third point in this chapter explains other factors that are not mentioned elsewhere, which we consider important to be mentioned in this paper: capital infrastructure, financial factors for tourism development, level of education as a factor of development, culture, customs and laws, traffic development and political factors.

Part 4, "The Role of Tourism within the Global and European Tourism Market" aims to familiarize ourselves with the basic trends of international tourism. This part consists of two chapters, in the first chapters it is about the world's most important tourist trends according to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), while in the second chapter we will explain the main tourist flows within the European tourism market, by subregions, in order to have a clearer picture of neighboring countries in Kosovo, and we can then make a comparative analysis and thus find out the true position of Kosovo as a tourist destination.

Part 5, "Analysis of the situation with the development of tourism in Kosovo for the period 2012-2016" is the most significant part of this paper, which is precisely the analysis of the situation with the tourism in Kosovo at the moment. This section consists of three chapters.

The first chapter will analyze the number of tourists and overnight stays in Kosovo for the period 2012-2016 (number of domestic and foreign tourists and realized overnight stays by domestic and foreign tourists for that period), number of tourists and overnight stays by statistical regions for the period 2012-2016 (number of domestic and foreign tourists by regions and realized overnight stays by domestic and foreign tourists by statistical regions), as well as the country of origin of tourists visiting Kosovo for that period (by number and achieved the same nights).

The second chapter of this paper will analyze the accommodation and catering facilities of Kosovo for the 2012-2016 period. Firstly, we will focus on the accommodation capacities at the state level (types of accommodation facilities, basic accommodation accommodation facilities, complimentary accommodation accommodation facilities, number of rooms and beds in the basic and complementary capacity for accommodation and capacity utilization for accommodation of guests), and after that will be shown catering facilities for providing food services according to the types of catering facilities and according to the number of catering facilities in the regions of Kosovo.

Part 6, "Perspective of Kosovo as a Tourist Destination within the European Tourism Market" is the last part of this paper and consists of two chapters. In the first chapter it is about analyzing and comparing the relationship that exists between the tourist movements of Kosovo and other European countries as a world tourist region. Here we will try to compare the tourist movements between Kosovo and the neighboring countries (Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro and Serbia), and then with other Balkan countries, and finally we will show the position of Kosovo tourism in terms of more developed European destination destinations.

In the second chapter we will try to identify the problems that Kosovo's tourism faces, and more important are those in the area of: the institutions of the national economy, tourism entities, cultural heritage, environmental degradation, lack of professional personnel in tourism and problems in the field of legal regulation in tourism. In the second and last point of this section, we will try to give our perspective insights on the development of tourism in Kosovo.

At the end of the paperwork will be presented the concluding observations of the research, the factors for the development of tourism will be realized, and precisely because of these factors, the Republic of Kosovo will have to focus mostly on tourism policies in order to better promote tourism on the international tourist market , with particular reference to the European tourism market.

Based on the research in this paper, we come to the following conclusions:

- Kosovo's geographical position has a big impact in creating a positive tourist position of the country as a tourist destination within the Balkans and Europe (Kosovo is at the center of many important regions such as Panonia to the north, Black Sea to the east, Aegean Sea to the South and the Adriatic Sea to the West),
- The position of Kosovo from the aspect of space and geopolitics can be used to create a new tourist offer and participate in a common tourism market that covers a wider area



where greater benefits will be achieved from the movement of people, goods, services and capital,

- Kosovo's connection with neighboring countries and Europe is not at an appropriate level, because the road network and infrastructure is not so developed (the roads were built fifty years ago and not maintained), rail transport takes place only in short terms within the country, there is only one international airport, international highways are not built according to international standards, but today there is an ongoing construction of several national roads that will connect Kosovo with Macedonia and Albania,
- During the period from 1970 to the beginning of 1990, major problems arose in tourism in Kosovo (restrictive measures for catering companies, a large number of workers from this sector were out of work, more legal measures were introduced in the area of social capital, the started investments were interrupted)
- During that time period, the tourist turnover decreased, the capacities for accommodation of tourists decreased, the number of domestic and foreign tourists decreased, as well as the number of nights spent by domestic and foreign guests,
- In the period 1998-1999, the tourist potentials and capacities, the wealth that has been created over the years, have been greatly destroyed in Kosovo, which in turn led to the destruction of the entire economy,
- After the end of Kosovo's military conflict, tourism started to take a significant place in the economy, and according to data from the research, we can conclude that tourism in the country's GDP is over 1% (the GDP was almost 6 billion euros in 2016), while revenue per capita in that year was 3440 euros,
- Today, 3360 tourism companies are registered in Kosovo, where almost 10,500 employees are employed, i.e. 10.5% of the total number of enterprises are in the field of tourism, and 7.2% of the total number of employees at the state level are in this sector,
- There are relatively good conditions for the development of tourism in Kosovo, because this country has great natural resources (geomorphologic forms, hydrography and climate and other attractive elements), whose exploitation will make Kosovo one of the most attractive destinations in the region and in Europe,
- In Kosovo can be developed winter, sports, health, hunting and transit tourism, because it has the potential to build several centers that could offer excellent conditions for the development of these types of tourism according to European or international standards,

- Important tourist attractions also are considered the Waterfalls of Mirusha, the River Nerodim, the thermal mineral waters of Banja Peja, Banja Klokot and Banja Mitrovica, since the curative power of these thermal waters can be compared with the famous baths of the region. However, at the moment there are not enough accommodation facilities for accepting and staying tourists,
- Kosovo as a tourist destination in Europe is also known for its anthropogenic values, as an integral part of the tourist offer, which could be used to extend the length of the stay of tourists and to increase revenues on the basis of cultural tourism (visit of cultural and historical monuments, museums, galleries, sports events),
- Kosovo as a tourist destination is also known for its traditional cuisine as one of the most representative kitchens in the Balkans, with certain influences from the neighboring countries, but also from the Mediterranean elements of food preparation, so we believe that the Kosovo cuisine needs to be strongly promoted and be integral part of each tourist package arrangement,
- The financial factors for the development of tourism are not at the appropriate level, because neither state organizations nor private entities do not invest enough in this aspect, and on the other hand there are big problems in providing favorable credits for subsidizing tourism entities in general,
- In Kosovo there is a lack of professional staff in the field of tourism and catering, hotel managers do not have a sufficiently adequate level of education, and the working staff is composed of young inexperienced and under-qualified persons who do not have opportunities for further education and training,
- Only a few secondary schools have tourism and catering as a teaching subject and only three higher education institutions (two colleges and one public university) offer study programs on tourism,
- According to the statistical division of Kosovo, the Agency for statistics of Kosovo points out that in Kosovo, in seven statistical regions, there are 109 hotels that are categorized by law, 2512 rooms with 3770 beds. However, the total number of hotels is 194, and together with the other types of accommodation facilities, the number of accommodation facilities is 495 entities, which has about 7000 rooms with almost 11000 beds. We consider that the number of hotels, rooms and beds is not sufficient for welcoming and accommodating a larger number of domestic and foreign tourists,
- In the 2012-2016 period, there has been a gradual decline in the number of domestic tourists (a decline of 50,000 tourists in 2012 to 46,000 in 2016), and contrary to this

there is an increase in the number of foreign tourists (an increase of 49,000 tourists in 2012 to 84,000 tourists in 2016), while the total number of tourists in this period increased from 99,000 tourists to 130,000 tourists,

- The overnight stays by domestic tourists register some fluctuations in the period 2012-2016, but there is an increase, so from 52 thousand overnight stays in 2012, this number reaches 62 thousand nights. On the other hand, the increase in the number of overnight stays by foreign tourists is higher compared to the domestic tourists, which is 91 thousand overnight stays, that number increased to 132 thousand nights, while the total number of overnight stays in that period increased from 143 thousand nights of 194 thousand nights,
- The most visited region in Kosovo according to the number of tourists is Pristina (76 thousand tourists in 2016), second place takec the region of Peja (24 thousand tourists in 2016), and in third place is the region of Prizren (visited by over 16 thousands of tourists in 2016),
- According to the number of overnight stays, also the region of Pristina is in the first place (120 thousand overnight stays in 2016), while the second place takes the region of Peja where 33 thousand nights were realized in 2016, and in the third place is the region Prizren where over 21,000 overnight stays were made in 2016,
- Tourists who visited the most the country of Kosovo in 2016 are those coming from Albania, in second place are the visitors from Germany, and in third place are the tourists from Turkey. The same is the situation with the number of overnight stays, in the first place are the guests from Albania, the second are those from Germany and in the third place come the tourists from Turkey,
- Regarding the capacities for accommodation of guests, the region of Pristina has the highest number (78 facilities with 1569 rooms and 2245 beds), in second place is the region of Peja where there are 58 facilities with 760 rooms and 1533 beds, and in the third place is the region of Prizren with 54 facilities with 808 rooms and 1702 beds,
- A very big problem arising in the accommodation capacities is the utilization of the capacities for accommodation of guests, and according to the data from the Agency for Statistics, the percentage of utilization of accommodation capacities at the level of the state of Kosovo is very low, amounting to 9.29%,
- Region with the highest number of catering facilities for food is Prishtina, where 227 facilities are functioning, followed by the Prizren region with 162 food facilities, and the third place is the region of Peja with 154 facilities for eating,

- When we talk about Kosovo's tourism movements within the European tourism market, we note that Kosovo does not exist in UNWTO statistics due to the fact that this country is not yet a member of this world organization,
- Regarding the neighboring countries, in 2015, Kosovo takes the last place as a tourist destination according to the number of tourists (about 140 thousand) who visited this country (in the first place is Serbia, visited 2.5 million tourists, in second place is Montenegro with over 1.7 million tourists, while the third place is Macedonia with over 816 thousand tourists and the last place is Albania with about 800 thousand tourists),
- Kosovo is the last place in terms of the number of overnight stays (202 thousand overnight stays), in 2015, Montenegro is in the first place where over 11 million overnight stays were made, followed by Serbia where more than 6.6 million nights were made, while third place is Albania with over 4.1 million overnight stays, Macedonia has 2.4 million overnight stays,
- Regarding other Balkan countries, Kosovo is a very small tourist destination, because all countries in this region are visited by millions of tourists who have made tens of millions of overnights in 2015, and therefore Kosovo cannot be compared in any case with other countries-tourist destinations in the Balkans,
- The position of Kosovo's tourism in relation to European countries is better only if compared to Liechtenstein and San Marino, where in 2015 in these two countries were noted 57 thousand, i.e. 54 thousand international arrivals, while in Kosovo there were 79 thousand international arrivals made,

The above conclusions from this paperwork are the basis for accepting or not accepting the basic and specific hypotheses. The basic hypothesis of this paper is:

- The development of tourism in Kosovo is a perspective for entering the European tourism market.

According to the research and statistical data on the tourist movements of Kosovo, we can say that the basic hypothesis of this paper IS ACCEPTED, because only the development of tourism in Kosovo will contribute, this country to join the international tourism markets, especially towards the European tourism market as the most developed in whole world.

In this thesis, we noted the tourist resources and potentials, at the same time and the most significant problem that Kosovo still faces in the sphere of tourism. We believe that

overcoming the difficulties will contribute to achieving a higher level of development of tourism in the country, which in turn means a greater perspective on inclusiveness in the most important tourism markets.

The first special hypothesis of this paper is:

- The development of tourism in Kosovo is an important factor for the development of the country's overall economy.

Namely, as in every country, as well as in Kosovo, tourism plays a very important role and is a very important factor for the development of the national economy, so we believe that the first special hypothesis of this paper IS ACCEPTED. This is because many years ago, Kosovo's economy was ruined for many reasons, but immediately at the beginning of this century, the economy began to recover slowly, and tourism has its own contribution.

However, it should be noted that tourism is still not as developed as it is in neighboring countries, in the countries of the region, and in particular, it cannot be compared to the level of tourism development in European destinations, from several aspects, yet there is a visible progress in tourism development.

Today in Kosovo there are over 3,300 tourism entities employing over 10 thousand workers, tourism created over 67 million euros in 2016, representing over 1% of the GDP of the country. Although indicators of tourism development are not at an appropriate level, we can still say that the development of tourism in Kosovo is a very important factor for the development of the economy.

The second special hypothesis is:

- Kosovo is an important tourist destination on the Balkan Peninsula and has increased opportunities for access to other international tourism markets.

After all, Kosovo has natural resources and rich cultural and historical heritage that makes this country an important tourist destination in the Balkans. Although it has small accommodation facilities, however, Kosovo still has untouched nature, a diverse fauna and flora, endemic species, high mountains, mountain lakes and rivers that can be used for the development of many types of tourism.

All this can mean real potential for attracting domestic and foreign tourists to meet specific tourist needs, increasing the number of tourists will mean greater promotion on foreign

markets, and then immediately create certain conditions that will help increase opportunities for the appearance of the more significant international tourism potentials, with a focus on the European tourism market.

In addition, Kosovo is a place with a rich historical and cultural past, where both material and intangible heritage can be used to attract tourists, which in turn means the development of cultural tourism that will help to extend the time of residence of domestic and foreign tourists.

In Kosovo, there are many archaeological sites, religious buildings from several different religions, historical buildings and monuments, museums and galleries, festivals of domestic and international character, religious rituals and pilgrimage, old crafts and the like, which are a special interesting aspect of the visit and very important tourist segment of the international tourist markets.

Thus, Kosovo is increasing its opportunities to become an important tourist destination on the Balkan Peninsula and to have its participation in the tourism markets, which means that the second special hypothesis of this paper IS ACCEPTED.

The place of Kosovo as a tourist destination is in the region, along with neighboring countries and other countries of Europe as the most important tourist region in the world. Kosovo is a small country, but with great natural and historical-cultural, resources and values that can help raise the level of development of tourism in this country. The future of Kosovo's tourism development is in Europe.