

## Situation of Tourism in B&H (Agencies Perspective and New Solutions)

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**Abstract** *The main objective of this study is to define current situation of tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to suggest proposals for improvement. Survey was prepared based on eight variables: travel planning, tourism decision, tourism marketing, customer satisfaction, technical capabilities, service quality, types of tourism, and customer characteristics. 102 respondents were surveyed. General results say that tourism situation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is in a quite good level, but there is still significant space for improvement. For further improvement of tourism sector, it is suggested that Bosnia and Herzegovina should work on elimination of visas requirement for tourists from the Middle East as an important target group, work more on development of family tourism and creating tourist villages that enable privacy for families and appropriate environment for kids. Additionally, more promotion of tourism of Bosnia and Herzegovina could be beneficial for the country as well. Since there is lack of literature about this issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this research may be good stimuli for writing on the same issues in the future, and finding new solutions for existing problems.*

**Key words** Tourism, sustainable Tourism, Improvement, Bosnia and Herzegovina

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### 1. Introduction

Tourism can be defined as the temporary movement of people from their place to different countries with the aim of fulfilling their socio-cultural and psychological needs such as sightseeing, resting, learning, and having fun. Despite tourism has both social and cultural dimensions, its economic aspect is generally assessed. It has had positive influences especially in the economies of developing countries since the 1980s (Kar, Zorkirişçi & Yıldırım, 2004).

According to Agency for Foreign Investment Promotion, the top seven investment sectors of FBiH are: Tourism, Agricultural and Food Processing, Energy, Wood, Transport, Mining and Metal Processing and Automotive industries (FIPA, 2008).

This study aims to assess the situation of tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, identify its weaknesses and propose solutions for improvement and weaknesses elimination from the tourism agencies' perspective. Survey and interviews are conducted in order to achieve data. The collected data is analyzed descriptively. Furthermore, the study is supported by the interviews. The results revealed a positive agreement level in terms of travel planning, tourism decision, tourism marketing, customer satisfaction, technical capabilities and service quality. The paper is concluded with overall evaluation and recommendations for future studies and practice.

### 2. Literature Review

Soojin, Lehto, Morrison, and Jang (2011) tried to provide empirical evidence for an alternative view of traveling decision making and to examine the different stages of decision making process. They employed personal interviews for data collection. They aimed to identify the stages of travel decision-making process (before purchase, at time of purchase, after purchase, after arriving at destination) with multiple decision choices for a vacation trip. Their results show that travel decision making is a hierarchical multidimensional process. They identify that travel decision making is at the core of tourist psychology. They suggest tourism marketers understand information needs of tourists across the different travel planning stages in order to be more efficient in releasing tourism information and communicating with their target markets.

Sara, Kaiser, Lazarevski, and Leisch (2011) aimed to introduce a new clustering algorithm for market segmentation analysis to be successful in tourism, since the successful firms define their strategies depending on segmentation. They suggest biclustering algorithm to overcome limitations of both traditional clustering algorithms and parametric grouping algorithms. They identified that segments as a result of biclustering are very distinct but small.

Cathy, Haemoon Oh, and A. Assaf (2011) proposed a customer-based brand equity model to be used in global branding efforts and research and identified that it enhanced Customer-Based Brand Equity. They adopted the traditional guideline by Churchill (1979) to develop the measurement scale and obtained a strong support for the validity and reliability of their proposed Brand Equity model for the lodging industry.

Kim, Ritchie, and McCormick (2010) want to develop a valid and reliable measurement scale to understand the concept and enhance the effective management of the memorable experience by following Churchill's (1979) and Hinkins (1995) process. They developed a 24-item memorable tourism experience scale which includes hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement, and novelty for most destination areas.

Látková and Christine (2011) examined residents' attitudes to enhance current and future tourism in some rural areas by employing a questionnaire survey. They divided the target population into three groups. They used Social exchange theory and Destination life cycle model to examine the influence of tourism development on resident attitudes with a community's total economic activity. Their results show that residents who benefit from tourism and who perceive tourism as development strategy evaluate tourism more positively and support further tourism development.

Björk (2010) aimed to identify website features of tour operator websites to enhance emotional response by applying an interview guide based on the PAD-structure of Mehrabian and Russell. He discussed the website quality by proposing a model linking atmospherics to emotional response. He identified that the emotional responses by the help of atmospherics are then explored and aggregated in his Atmospheric-Response model where the emotional response dimensions are analyzed dimension-by-dimension to track the atmospherics. The results showed that website quality should be searched more by also including the interaction between the user and the website. He suggested linking Emotional responses to the consumer decision process and the given task beside to atmospherics.

Bosnjak and Osti (2010) summarized six papers about the different stages of consumer behavior in tourism and offered new perspectives in information search, market stimuli and consumption phase. They reported mobile advert games as a new marketing communication vehicle, atmospherics on tour operator websites, the influence of the perceived cultural proximity of a destination on destination image, and the tendency to avoid undesired stereotypical destination images.

Bosnjak (2010) aimed to apply the product-based construct of undesired congruity, or consumer tendency to avoid undesired stereotypical images about web-based vacation destination information search intentions through potential first-time visitors. He gathered the data from potential first-time summer vacationers (in Croatia). He found that undesired congruity appears to override the influence of established self-congruity factors and important in early destination decision-making phases.

Çeltek (2010) tried understand the qualities and potentials of the mobile advert game as an advertising and marketing tool in the tourism industry by focusing on the mobile advert game practices in the tourism industry by employing a content and SWOT analysis. He identified that the games were successful in branding and city integration, but ineffective in viral marketing as very expensive devices are necessary to play these games. He suggested advert gaming as a great opportunity for integrated marketing efforts. He reported that

engaging users forced companies to develop games to both enhance the interaction level and their database and advert gaming enhances awareness and recall.

Kastenholz (2010) analyzed tourists' perceptions about the effect of cultural proximity in North Portugal as a rural holiday destination by conducting a survey on 2280 tourists staying in rural areas in North Portugal. She identified that 'cultural proximity' influences the image of North Portugal as a rural tourist destination. The results confirm the relationship, however not exactly in line with the expectations of product-self-congruity theory. Both visitors closest and most distant in terms of 'cultural proximity' are found to have the most positive destination image.

Rodrigues, Kastenholz and Rodrigues (2010) searched about hiking and wellness tourism. They found hiking proper to be integrated into a wellness tourism context as a recreational and tourism activity in many European countries. They conducted a survey to 100 'non-hiking' Portuguese, 100 Portuguese hikers and 100 hikers from other nationalities in order to evaluate respondents' environmental perceptions, ecological sensitivity and restraining factors from hiking. They reported that integrated rural tourism has been increasingly popular and Wellness tourism grows fast.

Volo (2010) aims to evaluate the value and experience of tourists by using blogs as the data source to assess their influence on the decision-making process of prospective tourists. She preferred blogs to identify cultural differences in the way tourists use blogs. She realized that the internet enables investigation of tourists' spontaneous annotations in the form of a travel journal or diary. She identified that travelers provide detailed description of their trip. She concluded that the travel blogs help effectively collecting data and have potential for a variety of tourism related research problems in Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Şenol, Ay and Dinç (2012) analyzed previous works and popular statistics websites in their work. Beside the other factors, they suggested that foreign trade deficit can be reduced by the tourism incomes.

Kušen (2010) aims to present a new system of tourism attractions by evaluating the past research on tourism attractions, especially about their definitions, to propose functional classification of tourism attractions and to test it through the series of case studies. The author has developed a general tourism system of a tourism destination by stressing on tourism attractions and tested continuously and refined accordingly the model's applicability.

Jelinčić (2009) tries to define relatively new concepts of creative and hobby tourism and to propose possible application of push/pull factors to creative/hobby tourism. She concluded that postmodern lifestyles influences postmodern tourism in terms of its segmentation. Further changes in everyday life provide more free time to be dedicated to hobby and creative activities.

Smajić (2009) suggested convincing the Bosnian authorities that Bosnia has great tourism potential and exploring/exploiting this potential by considering the previous studies and related webs to get necessary information. He reported that most visitors love the country and wish to come back to visit Bosnia and Herzegovina. He suggested using this opportunity to develop and sustain BiH tourism.

Baltaci (2010) suggested enhancing tourism for Bosnia and Herzegovina's economy. He determined the types of policies to be followed in order to increase the share of global tourism market by considering previous studies and related webs. He suggested planning studies for attaining the pre-determined targets and preparing attentively National plans for economic development. They suggested Bosnian government determining policy and planning of economy for tourism sector in order to sustain the development of Bosnian economy. They first suggested determining the tourism resources and advantages starting advertisement activities for the target markets, encouraging tourism investments and infrastructure, following the activities of its rivals in the tourism sector, etc.

Voigt (2010) aims to understand Wellness Tourism and advance it by investigating wellness tourists and their characteristics, examining the influence of wellness lifestyle on positive psychological well-being. She identified that the majority of wellness tourists did not regularly have an overall wellness lifestyle.

### **3. Research Methodology**

After analyzing all articles, the reviewed articles have been used in order to develop the survey. The following table presents the explanation of variables used in the study is provided.

Table 1. Explanation of variables

No	Variable Name	Explanation
1	Travel Planning	Travel planning has a direct effect on the tourism and the customer satisfaction
2	Tourism Decision	While agencies developing travel plans, they should make decision where it influence the customers and increase their awareness of destinations
3	Tourism marketing	Marketing is the main factor for success in tourism including websites, social media and others.
4	Customer Satisfaction	Customer satisfaction measures the excellence of tourism
5	Technical Capabilities	Every tourism process needs to be connected to a qualified information system in order to support/enhance tourism services
6	Service Quality	Having a various packages/different prices and providing innovate service can enhance tourism excellence
7	Types Of Tourism	The diversity of tourism in the country enhances turnout of individuals from all over the world
8	Customer Characteristics	Considering customer characteristics while providing tourism services can increase customer loyalty

### Data

Two methods are used in this study in order to get more credible and reliable data. First method to get data is through the questionnaire which is fully conducted in B&H through tourist agencies and companies, individuals and main hotels in B&H. Number of tourism agencies significantly increased in the last two years, that because Bosnia has become a major tourist target for tourist from all over the world, specifically from Turkey, Croatia, Austria, Germany and countries from Middle East and North Africa.

The survey was conducted between people of different ages and genders in different positions. The survey is conducted by the traditional way because it is more difficult to apply it online in the tourism sector. The survey is created, and the papers are spread to 120 potential participants. Response rate is 85% (102/120) from distributed surveys. The collected data is then inserted into SPSS spreadsheet and analyzed descriptively.

The research employed also interviews with some managers in the main agencies focusing on those who deal with people from Middle East and North Africa.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Demographics

Demographics information includes respondents' position within the agencies, their education levels, gender and age. This survey is responded by both males and females. They have doctoral degree (3), master degree (19), undergraduate degree (54) and other (26).

The positions of the respondents are grouped according to their similar characteristics. There are 41 clerical workers, 26 tour guides and 21 receptionists, while 14 are in other ranked positions.

Table 2. Positions of the Respondents

Positions	Frequency	Percent
Clerical Workers	41	41.04
Management	7	7.01
Finance	3	3.01
Guides	26	26.01
Marketing	4	4.01
Reception	21	21.02
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 4.2. Descriptive Analysis

##### Travel Planning

The respondents agree that the agencies are ready for planning and facilitating trips and diversity plans commensurate with the mentality of the tourists (Table 3).

Table 3. Travel Planning

Travel Planning	Mean	Std. Deviation
We can plan the travels of different types of costumers easily	4,05	.973
We can plan timing of the travels easily depending on different travel decisions	4,01	.937
We can easily perform multistage sequence of travel planning	3,91	1.027

##### Tourism Decision

Perhaps the decision-making process is one of the most important points in the tourism program. The following table demonstrates the agreement levels of respondents about the items related to the decision making of tourists. According to the results, they seem to have special programs to influence potential tourists, to increase their awareness and therefore to facilitate their decision-making process (Table 4).

Table 4. Tourism Decision

Tourism Decision	Mean	Std. Deviation
We have special programs in order to influence potential tourists' decision making	4.00	.853
We have special programs in order to increase the awareness of our destination by potential tourists	4,04	.947
We are using cultural proximity to influence the decision of tourists	3,93	1.081
We have developed an influencing image about the destination in order to effect tourists' decisions	4,00	1.021
We have certifications of popular agencies in order to influence tourists' decision	3,88	1.048

##### Tourism Marketing

The results revealed that tourism agencies have marketing programs to influence potential customers. They seem to be using their websites, social media, old customers' experience and different services for different customer segments (Table 5).

This section also includes a question about the target counties. It is identified that Turkey and Middle East countries are the most targeted and followed by European countries.

Table 5. Tourism Marketing

Tourism Marketing	Mean	Std. Deviation
We are using our website in order to influence potential costumers	4,27	.851
We have presences in social media in order to influence potential costumers	4,01	1.064
We are using our old customer's experience to have influence on the potential costumers	4,09	.975
We have different services for different segments of costumers	4,16	1.045

##### Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction can be seen as the main criterion for success in any business. According to the results, the surveyed agencies are detected to have motivation, personnel and services to increase the satisfaction levels of their customers. Furthermore, agencies are detected to have a measurement system in order to observe the satisfaction levels of customers (Table 6).

Table 6. Customer Satisfaction

Customer Satisfaction	Mean	Std. Deviation
We want to have satisfied costumers	4,47	.896
Our personnel is well-trained to increase the satisfaction of our customers	4,22	.875
We have a measurement system to observe the level of our costumer's satisfaction	3,99	.907
Our services are designed in order to increase customer satisfaction	4,12	.916

### Technical Capabilities

The tourism agencies are observed to have technical capacity in order to perform their services and enhance their operations. They have qualified information system to enable the flow of information and provide service for their customers online (Table 7).

Table 7. Technical capabilities

Technical capabilities	Mean	Std. Deviation
We can provide online purchasing	4,23	.920
We have a professional designed web (social) presence	4,16	.850
We have a qualified information system to support our services	4,01	.831
Our website (or social presence) is qualified enough to support our business	4,16	.877
Our website (or social presence) provides the necessary information to the costumers	4,14	1.000

### Service Quality

In terms of their service quality, the agencies are highly rated by their employees. They are detected to offer different packages with different prices and well-experienced personnel. They are also observed to be efficiently/effectively running their services (Table 8).

Table 8. Service Quality

Service Quality	Mean	Std. Deviation
We offer different packages to the costumers	4,11	1.057
We have different pricing options	4,28	.926
Our personnel is well-experienced in their dialogs with the costumers	4,25	.941
We can efficiently run our services	4,15	.809
We can effectively run our services	4,26	.757
We want to provide innovative services	4,25	.880
We want to be competitive and agile in our services	4,38	.814

### Types of Offered Tourism Services

Here this variable shows the strength of companies which various types of tourism they can provide and which these types of tourism can be offered in B&H. In this variable the results were not the quantitative but the qualitative, and the respondents had possibility to choose more than one choice in order to know all types of tourism can be offered by them. So the table shows number and percent of each type chosen by respondents. The agencies seem to mainly offer historical, cultural, religious, health, wellness tourism and rafting (Table 9).

Table 9. Types of Offered Tourism Services

Types of Offered Tourism Services	Num	Percent
Health Tourism	60	13.4%
Cultural Tourism	71	15.8%
Wellness Tourism	54	12.0%
Rafting	58	12.9%

Types of Offered Tourism Services	Num	Percent
Hiking	29	6.5%
Rural Tourism	41	9.1%
Historical Tourism	70	15.6%
Religious Tourism	66	14.7%
Total	449	100.0%

### Customer Characteristics

The agencies are observed to be considering their customer’s health, lifestyle, priorities and emotion while providing their services. However, they do not assess much their well-being, beliefs, and psychology (Table 10).

Table 10. Customer Characteristics

Customer Characteristics	Num	Percent
Costumer’s emotion	58	15.3%
Costumer’s priorities	66	17.5%
Costumer’s well-being	45	11.9%
Costumer’s beliefs	40	10.6%
Costumer’s psychology	32	8.5%
Costumer’s lifestyle	67	17.7%
Costumer’s health	70	18.5%
Total	378	100.0%

### 4.3. Interview Results for Tourism in B&H

In order to strengthen this study with more detailed information about tourism in B&H and to identify the most important strengths and weaknesses in tourism in B&H, and identify the most important suggestions to improve the situation of tourism in B&H, some interviews were conducted with some managers in the tourist agencies. They are all agreed that Bosnia has a beautiful nature and a fertile ground for tourism. But the lack of interest of governments in this sector has prevented its development and prosperity.

One of the managers in tourist agencies said that “...tourism plans always fit with the nature of the tourists. Agencies should focus on marketing and consider marketing as the basis to attract tourists to B&H.” He also stressed on the importance of customer satisfaction as the key to the success of tourism in the country to satisfy the customers (20.06.2013, Personal interview).

Executive Director of a tourism agency stressed on the most important weaknesses in tourism in Bosnia. He told that “...the difficulty in obtaining visas to B&H and the lack of government marketing for tourism by the competent ministry in this regard are important weaknesses”. According to him, the main tourism strength in B&H is the good treatment of Bosnian people on tourists and relatively cheap prices compared to European countries. He added that Bosnia is suitable for the tourists from Muslim countries and psychologically comfortable. Finally, he suggested Bosnian government improving tourism situation in Bosnia by allocating budget for tourism and facilitating visa procedures for countries from Middle East and North Africa” (20.06.2013, Personal interview).

In another interview, the manager of Tourist Company said that his company has a variety of programs for all age groups and they offer a variety of programs to increase the awareness of tourists. He stressed that one of the most important reasons for their success is continuous communication with the customer through social networks through their system. He also stressed that B&H is rich in wellness and entertainment tourism (20.06.2013, Personal interview).

Adnan Maglić, the owner of the largest company dealing with tourists from the Middle East and owner of the first Twitter account that deals with the Middle East Arab tourists, said that tourism is one of the most successful business in B&H and Bosnia has a wonderful nature makes it one of the strongest countries among the neighbor countries. He said that they have different plans and programs which are always flexible and compatible with the weather on that day. He also suggested pursuing customer satisfaction and the quality of service provided. According to him, marketing and daily follow-up with clients via social networking are

necessary. He finally recommended government improving tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Maglić, A., 20.06.2013, Personal interview).

## 5. Conclusion

The main aim of this work is to evaluate the tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, identify its weaknesses and propose solutions for improvement and weaknesses elimination. This study discussed tourism of Bosnia and Herzegovina with special focus on period after 2010, since this is the period when this country became a tourist target and important destination for not only tourists from many countries located in the Middle East, but also from European countries. For the purpose of this study, a survey is developed and the data is analyzed descriptively. Furthermore, the study is supported by the interviews.

From Table 11, it can be concluded that this study has reached a positive overall agreement level by 4.11.

Table 11 - Overall Variables

Variable	Mean
Travel Planning	3,99
Tourism Decision	3,97
Tourism Marketing	4,13
Customer Satisfaction	4,20
Technical Capabilities	4,14
Service Quality	4,24
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,11</b>

According to interview results, it is suggested that visa barriers needs to be resolved as soon as possible since it is reported to be the main obstacle for tourists, especially those ones from the Middle East. Ministry of Foreign Affairs will have to deal with this, and support tourism sector through creating specific agreements which will be beneficial for Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is especially important for GULF countries when considering proportion of tourists who are coming from those countries.

Additionally, allocation of places for family tourism in B&H, creation of tourist villages that would facilitate privacy of families shall be conducted as well. Also, promotion of tourism in state level and participation in World Tourism Exhibition would be inevitable for development of tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This research is limited in that it only discovers some variables related to Situation of Tourism in B&H. Therefore, future research can involve more variables and more solutions in order to reach the best level of tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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