

## Quality of air services, as criteria for development of tourism in Kosovo

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### Abstract

*Tourism is among the largest industries in the world (pre-pandemic period), creating more jobs than most other sectors. Countries in the early stages of tourism development, such as Kosovo, have the opportunity to reap the many benefits of tourism, such as poverty reduction and increased economic development. The tourism industry can only function with the availability of other tourism equipment such as transport, accommodation, entertainment, food, etc. Of all the above, transport is the most important contributor to the tourism industry. In general, the main function of transport is transit, the transportation of people and goods from one destination to another. People use transportation services to travel from one place to another in search of tourism or to deliver tourist goods. This is why traffic is becoming more and more part of the tourism system, which allows tourists to reach their destination, and leave when their stay is over. Transportation is by far one of the most important components of the tourism industry. A well-developed and functional transport system means a well-structured opportunity to reach different markets and provide the best possible services for the passenger. People, tourists are increasingly interested in how they arrived at their destination. "How far have you traveled?" becomes a fundamental issue. Air transport has reduced travel time from long to short travel and increased long distance travel. Air travel has become the most popular way of traveling in modern society. Air transport has made travel possible for those who have been long distance travel in the short term and has increased the demand for long distance travel. Thus, according to the*

*World Tourism Organization (WTO) confirmed that in 2015, 54% of tourist travelers in the world used this type of transport.*

**Keywords:** tourism, travel, information, air

## INTRODUCTION

The growing importance and use of air transport, as well as increased competition, have contributed to significant changes in the behavior of potential airline users on the airline demand side. As a result, price pressures have increased and passenger loyalty has dropped significantly. Due to the increasing intensity of travel, passengers have become experienced and critical both in assessing the quality of services provided and in comparing the quality of services in relation to the price of these services, which has forced airlines to constantly adapting to new and growing passenger requirements. A company that is unable to follow the cost-cutting trend should try to improve its competitive position by seeking reserves in other areas of operation, because only in this way can they survive in the fight for passengers. Therefore, air traffic quality is increasingly measured by the key role in developing their competitiveness. Because the tourist offer consists of a variety of products and services, including transportation service, it is very important to suit everyone with their qualities that consumers demand. In this way, passengers will come to the conclusion that this is a continuous chain, which is a closed concept of services, which was expected, airlines will be able to take advantage of the money and time spent on the development of quality services and significantly improve profitability, and the tourist destination will be able to adequately respond to the latest market challenges. Given the above, it can be said that air transport not only has an impact on the tourism industry and developed countries, but there are some that have made a major impact on developing countries and their economies. It is therefore necessary to emphasize the evolution of global trends in air transport and its impact on the development of tourism in Kosovo, as it is a key factor for its development.

The tourism industry in Kosovo is in its infancy compared to other Southeast European countries. This is mainly due to the lack of investment for many decades, inadequate tourism programs and

offers from the private sector, lack of educated tourism staff, inadequate investor policies and lack of coordination between private actors and government agencies. Although the number of tourists and the length of their stay in Kosovo has increased significantly in the last ten years, the number of international visits per year is well below the regional average. Most tourists visit Kosovo during the summer, this is believed to be mainly due to the diaspora, which, when they return every summer, brings with it a great impact on the local economy and especially on the tourism sector.

Currently, Kosovo does not have a comprehensive tourism strategy and the current Tourism Law is not fully implemented. The mandate for the development of tourism in Kosovo is divided into local and central level. However, the government has the greatest authority to act because it has a larger budget than local governments and has the authority to draft laws and develop strategies. Among other things, the central government is establishing legal and institutional facilitation of strategic investments and coordinating dialogue between stakeholders.

Significant improvements in infrastructure have contributed to improved transport and this has a positive impact on the influx of tourists to Kosovo's economy. For example, the Pristina - Tirana highway opened in 2011, while the second Pristina-Skopje highway is operational up to the border with Northern Macedonia and is expected to further increase the influx of international tourists. Pristina Airport, Kosovo's only commercial airport, was taken over by a Turkish-French consortium in 2010 and a new terminal was built in 2013 that doubled the airport's capacity and modernized its infrastructure. Given the above, in continuation of this point we will try to make a brief analysis of tourism in Kosovo, starting with an analysis of the number of visitors and overnight stay in Kosovo.

**Table 1. Number of guests and number of nights spent in Kosovo**

Years	Number of guests		Nights	
	Local	External	Local	External
2008	19678	24616	22602	46910
2009	52631	36318	54876	76042
2010	44662	34318	45123	76394
2011	42044	30349	44757	65584
2012	49973	48790	52008	90968
2013	45380	50074	54867	83883
2014	46477	61313	55274	102066
2015	60200	79238	81371	120669

Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics

The analysis of participation in Kosovo shows that the total number of guests in 2015 was 139,348 of which 60,200 are domestic guests, while 79,238 are foreign guests. If we analyze the total number of visits of local guests we can see that in 2008 the number of guests was 19,678, and in the entire analyzed period that number is constantly increasing, and in 2015 the number of guests in hotels is 60,200. Regarding the number of foreign guests in hotels in Kosovo, there is a continuous increase, so from the total number of visits of foreign guests in 2008 which was 24,616, their number in 2015 to increase to 79,238.

According to the number of nights spent in hotels in Kosovo, we can see that the total number of nights in 2015 increased compared to 2014. Namely, the total number of 102,066 in 2014 increased to 120,669 overnight stays in 2015. If looking at the structure of tourists we can say that we have a significant increase in the number of overnight stays of foreign tourists, as well as an increase in the number of overnight stays of domestic tourists. If we consider overnight visits and stays as a percentage, we can say the following. Namely, in 2015 the number of local visitors increased by 29.53%, compared to 2014, while the number of overnight stays for the same period was 47.22%. We have an increase in the number of foreign guests by 29.24% during the visit, while the number of overnight stays increased by 18.23%.

**Table 2. Number of visits and overnight stay of domestic and foreign guests by regions**

Region	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
	Visiting	Accommodation	Visiting	Accommodation	Visiting	Accommodation	Visiting	Accommodation	Visiting	Accommodation	Visiting	Accommodation
Gjilan	1976	2400	2251	3101	1937	2731	1718	2364	1552	2081	1635	2142
Mitrovica	2894	3289	2646	2890	2875	3088	2915	3147	2631	2689	2247	2434
Peja	8337	9677	6633	7170	7593	11184	6630	9597	11534	18751	21707	33857
Prizren	4663	9210	5434	6946	6212	7962	8109	10360	8615	11144	16316	21396
Pristina	49172	83694	46636	80620	68537	102846	68687	102846	77167	114489	89050	130269
Ferizaj	9972	10923	7153	7584	10012	12731	5878	8887	4229	4450	6214	6719
Gjakova	2031	2324	1640	2030	1597	2434	1517	2072	2062	3736	2269	5224
Total	79045	121517	72393	110341	98763	142976	95454	138750	107790	157340	139438	202041

Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics

**Table 3. Tourist overnight stays, by country of origin**

Countries	2012	2013	2014	2015
Austria	1107	1226	1727	3365
Albania	6395	10515	12942	23872
Belgium	139	65	469	1654
Bosnia & Herzegovina	549	775	522	1649
United Kingdom	4071	3623	4018	1183
Germany	6276	6497	8254	9888
Greece	287	396	591	1116
Italy	6365	5280	3873	3939
Poland	142	62	63	619
Netherlands	850	111	296	1406
Macedonia	977	1432	1990	4860
Slovenia	7085	4627	5088	5299
Serbia	1074	1418	2340	4210
Turkey	8627	8237	6608	8373
France	875	1537	1793	2850
Croatia	3344	3795	3667	5235
Montenegro	1099	639	582	2646
Switzerland	2157	5039	6608	8373
Spain	84	58	26	581
USA	7670	9315	10037	9331
Other countries	31792	19237	29608	16819

Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics

From table no. 3 we can see a positive trend of tourist visitors from Turkey, Germany and Switzerland where in the last three years we have a big jump of their increased presence in Kosovo. The other indicator through which we will analyze the state of tourism in Kosovo will be accommodation facilities. They have a dual meaning in tourism. On the one hand they are the most important accepting factor of tourism development, and on the other hand they are an indicator or indicator of the level of development. In Kosovo in 2016 the number of rooms was 2512 with a total of 3770 beds. We can say that most hotels in Kosovo (over 30% of the total number of hotels) are located in Pristina. The capital Pristina also has the largest number of rooms 1053, the largest number of beds out of the total number of beds available for the hotel industry in Kosovo. This is not surprising given the fact that most investments in commercial buildings are located in Pristina, almost all foreign missions, state institutions and almost all economic activity are located here.

### **The main elements for the quality service of the airline (flights)**

Quality management is always a complex and ongoing process. There are two key elements to successful airline quality management:

- Air services are very complex and have many components that all together form a continuous chain or so-called integrated air transport services. It is very important that the airline provide potential passenger services based on an equal level of service principles, and all its components are provided and it is constantly striving to improve services in order to be better and faster than the competition. All this requires constant monitoring of the wishes and needs of travelers.

- Employees should be aware of the need for quality services. They should be actively involved in all decision-making processes, but should have equal consequences and / or receive credit for achieving or not achieving the defined quality levels. The quality of services should be defined in such a way that each employee easily understands it and contributes personally to its realization. Quality should be based on the number "Negotiation with defined passenger requirements".

This means that all employees will do what has been agreed between them and the management regarding the satisfaction of the passengers who have chosen the airline. The quality thus defined eliminates any risk of subjectivity and focuses employees' attention on passengers and their specific needs, desires and expectations.

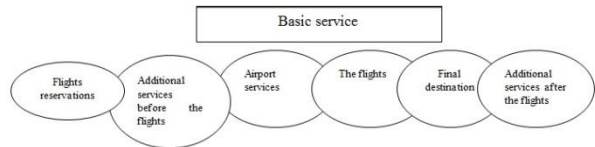
In creating each individual element of air transport services provided to potential passengers, airlines should:

- Be able to listen to and understand the wishes of potential travelers and find a suitable way to fulfill those wishes and at the same time expect a profit;
- Defining a service strategy to be offered in a market where potential passengers have already been identified;
- Defining service standards, but evenly the instruments for controlling the set standards;
- To educate and train employees to perform their duties, but also to stimulate and reward them by ensuring good performance, become aware of their competitive advantages.

From the passenger point of view, the quality of the flight is what meets his or her expectations and needs in every aspect of the service. Services are evaluated by each passenger based on individual criteria. This is seen as the journey that should be taken as a continuous chain of services consisting of a large number of connections. The traveler is

not interested either in the individual elements of the services, or in their individual services, but exclusively in the quality of the service as a whole.

**Figure 3. Elements in the airline air transport services chain**



Source: Doganis, R., (1991), *Flying of course: the economics of international airlines*, Routledge, London

The uninterrupted chain has three additional links: Flight reservation services (for example, good timetable, transparency and availability of services), additional pre-flight service (good airport - train, bus, and public transport links) and additional in-flight services (good city connections - transport, bus, public transport).

**Air traffic in Kosovo**

Air traffic in the territory of Kosovo is performed by the international airport in Pristina, which is located in Saltine near Fushë Kosovë. Pristina International Airport is used for civilian and military use, as a significant contingent of military forces has been stationed on the territory since 1999. Based on the Public-Private Partnership Agreement signed on 12 August 2010, the airport is operated by the Limak and Airport consortium De Lyon. They built a 42,000 m2 facility with accompanying amenities. The airport was handed over to this consortium for a period of 20 years<sup>1</sup>. Table 4 shows the number of flights and passengers for them in the period 2000-2015. It can be concluded that the number of passengers at the airport is increasing from year to year. In 2014, passengers decreased by 13.7% compared to a year ago, but by 2015 this number has increased by 10.3%. Of the European countries, Germany is the largest single market, and the number of departures is about 30% of total departures from Pristina. In 2015, the most popular destinations were Zurich, Basel, Dusseldorf, Munich and Geneva, which is not surprising given the important Albanian diaspora in these countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Pristina Airport, [www.airportpristina.com](http://www.airportpristina.com)

**Table 4. Summary of passenger numbers and number of flights in Kosovo 2000-2015**

Years	No. of passengers	Changing	No. of flights	Changing
2000	396.717		2176	
2001	403.408	↑ 1.7%	3902	↑ 79,3%
2002	844.098	↑ 109%	4171	↑ 6,9%
2003	835.036	↓ 1,1%	4163	↓ 0,2%
2004	910.797	↑ 9,1%	4716	↑ 13,3%
2005	930.346	↑ 2,1%	4983	↑ 5,7%
2006	882.731	↓ 5,1%	4077	↓ 18,2%
2007	990.259	↑ 12,2%	4316	↑ 5,9%
2008	1.130.639	↑ 14,2%	4928	↑ 14,2%
2009	1.191.978	↑ 5,4%	5709	↑ 15,9%
2010	1.305.532	↑ 9,5%	6143	↑ 7,6%
2011	1.422.302	↑ 8,9%	6738	↑ 9,7%
2012	1.527.134	↑ 7,4%	6947	↑ 3,1%
2013	1.628.678	↑ 6,6%	7305	↑ 5,1%
2014	1.404.775	↓ 13,7%	5994	↓ 18 %
2015	1.549.198	↑ 10,3%	6334	↑ 5,7%

Source: Civil Aviation Authority of Kosovo

Given the efforts to make tourism an important economic branch in Kosovo, it is necessary to know that tourism is an important driver and in some cases a stimulus to changes in air traffic. Such a change is, for example, the model during the tourist season of so-called charter flights. These advantage over "regular flights" is the direction of the route from start to finish, without delay and fear of unscheduled flights. It is also useful that standard economic service is usually available for these flights. For the strategic development of the tourist destination it is necessary to clearly define the air traffic policy. With the adoption and implementation of international regulations in the field of air traffic, the government of the country also influences tourism and air traffic in the territory in which it operates.<sup>2</sup>

In the field of air traffic there is a need for significant improvement in its implementation. The Government of Kosovo has

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Bieger, Andreas Wittmer. Air Transport and Tourism-Perspectives and challenges for destinations, airlines and governments. Journal of Air Transport Management, Volume 12, Issue 1, January 2006 pg 40-46.



not reached an agreement with the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), although the airport belongs to the common European airspace (European Sky Initiative). Some progress has been made in establishing the Air Navigation Services Agency (ANSA) with the task of providing aviation infrastructure and services<sup>3</sup>. The bottom line is that tourists in different parts of the world who go for fun and relaxation use the most convenient modes of transportation. Factors influencing the decision that Westlake and Robbins single out in their work are: travel, distance, status, comfort, safety, price use, geographic region, and competition<sup>4</sup>. In the territory of Kosovo it is necessary to meet many preconditions for the development of transport infrastructure, which will significantly contribute to the development of tourism and the quality of tourist services. All the shortcomings that exist in the field of transport are clearly presented and the emphasis was placed on "the lack of transport policy that hinders further progress, the need to strengthen capacity in all sectors and the urgent need for improvement and tourism very important for transport combined for which there are currently no preconditions in Kosovo "<sup>5</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The quality of services provided by each company is a key factor for the success of that company. Therefore, airlines are not exempt from that rule, the airline that wants to be successful should not forget it. Rather, she must constantly feel the pulse of the passengers in order to react quickly and accurately. In this way, the airline will satisfy the demands of its passengers, profit from the money and time invested in improving the quality of its services, will significantly increase its profitability, and at the same time will become a link of strong and unbreakable in the chain that forms the tourist offer of your country. Without that connection and without others forming the tourist offer, tourists in a certain destination cannot be offered the quality services they expect and are willing to pay a certain amount of money. Only

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<sup>3</sup> OFFICIAL GAZETTE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVA / No.28 / 28 APRIL 2014 LAW NO. 04/L-250 ON THE AIR NAVIGATION SERVICES AGENCY.

<sup>4</sup> Westlake J, D Robbins. Transportations. In Chris Cooper , Fletcher, John, , Gilbert David Fyall Alan, and Stephen Wanhill (eds) Tourism Principles and Practise, 3rd edition Pearson Education Limited, Essex, (2005).

<sup>5</sup> European Commission, Kosovo EU Progress Report 2016.

with such a perception of the quality of tourist services is it possible to create conditions under which the tourist destination, in our case Kosovo, can be competitive and attractive to tourists.

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