

The impact of consumer ethnocentrism on purchase intentions: Case of Kosovo

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Abstract- This study aims to determine the impact of consumer ethnocentrism on purchase intentions towards domestic and foreign products. Due to the fact that Kosovo is a developing country, and taking into consideration its last political conflict with Serbia, the emphasis is specifically placed on products imported from Serbia and products from European Union countries. Data was collected through a questionnaire which was distributed online to a representative sample, consisting of 150 individuals. Data was analyzed using the SPSS software. Factor analysis and Spearman correlation coefficient were used to test the research hypotheses. Study results show that the consumer ethnocentric tendencies are positively related to intention to purchase domestic products and negatively related to products from Serbia and the European Union.

Index Terms- Cetscale, consumer ethnocentrism, ethnocentrism, Kosovo, purchase intention.

I. INTRODUCTION

Being influenced from rapid market globalization, marketing experts are increasingly interested in cross-cultural market analysis and customer characteristics influenced by cultural factors, as well as by other factors on basis of which markets differ from each other. "With growing globalization of the global market and ever-increasing competition in the field of international products and services, consumers are increasingly concerned about their cultural and ethnic identities. And obviously their concerns and ethnic sentiments are reflected on their consumer behavior, making them inclined towards domestic products (such an approach is known as the ethnocentric consumer orientation) or, on the other hand, an increased inclination of consumers towards imported products is noted, which in marketing is known as the polycentric customer orientation." (Vida and Fairhurst, 1999).

Despite the major changes and movements in the global markets, consumer ethnocentrism has emerged as a result of the love and care of individuals towards their country, and as a result of the fear that the high level of import of products and services from other countries may have negative consequences to the local economy. Consumer ethnocentrism today is a concept that is given special attention and is used extremely often whenever it comes to the consumer opinions and approach towards foreign products. Shimp and Sharma (1987) were the first to use the term "ethnocentric consumer tendencies", claiming that consumer ethnocentrism represents "consumer beliefs about the appropriateness, the morale of purchasing foreign products, and the consumer loyalty towards products produced in their own country. "They also developed a standard format named Cetscale (Consumer Ethnocentric Tendencies Scale), consisting of 17 statements that aim to assess the degree of ethnocentric tendencies among consumers.

Even though the consumer ethnocentrism concept was introduced and used for the first time in studies on US consumers, later experience has proven that this concept and Cetscale are not limited to studies related to one culture only. Cetscale was integrated as part of the questionnaire used in the present study, in order to assess the ethnocentric tendencies of Kosovar consumers.

Globalization has also affected our domestic market. Kosovo is characterized by a low export rate compared to imports. Only in November last year, data from Foreign Trade in Kosovo show a trade deficit that is higher by 4.3% in the month relative to the same period of 2015. The export of goods in November 2016 amounted to 32.1 million Euro, while imports amounted to 234.8 million Euro (KSA, 2017).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the impact of ethnocentric consumer tendencies in purchasing intentions towards domestic products and the intensity of ethnocentric tendencies towards European countries' products and products imported from Serbia. Serbia was selected because despite the fact that Kosovo still has not completed two entire decades since the end of the conflict with Serbia, the latter country is now among the largest importers in Kosovo. In addition, it is assumed that the recent war may be a key factor that may have contributed to an increase in the ethnocentric tendencies of Kosovo consumers. While concerning the selection of European Union countries. The selection was made on basis of geographical proximity, cultural similarities, common

history and mutual competition. Likewise, the study aims to test the validity and reliability of CETSCALE, used to assess the ethnocentric tendencies of Kosovo consumers.

The results of this study will provide valuable guidance to local Kosovo companies, enabling them to undertake strategic actions in order to improve their performance in a developing market such as Kosovo.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Definition of Consumer Ethnocentrism

The term "consumer ethnocentrism" is a concept adapted from the general concept of "ethnocentrism" first mentioned by Sumner in 1906 (Shimp & Sharma, 1987) and it was defined as a "view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it." Kwak, Jaju and Larsen, (2006) pointed out that an ethnocentric consumer strongly supports traditions, symbols, icons and products of his culture while at the same time underrating the traditions, symbols, icons and products of other cultures.

Ethnocentrism initially became known as a sociological concept. This is supported by Levine and Campbell, according to whom ethnocentrism was initially simply a sociological concept, which then became a psychosocial construct important to personality systems at an individual level, as well as to the more general cultural and social and analytical frameworks.

Ethnocentric consumers believe that it is wrong to buy foreign products, as this damages the domestic economy, increases unemployment and is an unpatriotic gesture. Without a doubt, the ethnocentric consumer phenomenon has its own consequences, and the following can be mentioned: (1) overestimating the quality and value of local products or underestimating imports, (2) the moral obligation to buy local products, and (3) an intensive preference for local products (Sharma et al., 1995, p. 27). In particular, ethnocentric consumers point out the positive aspects of products coming from their country (Jain & Jain, 2013).

Highly ethnocentric consumers buy local products even when they are aware that a foreign country is known for developing high quality products. In addition, domestic products are seen as superior, while foreign products are negatively rated thus discouraging purchasing them (Auruskeviciene, Vianelli & Reardon, 2012). Non-ethnocentric consumers, however, rate products on basis of their objective attributes, regardless of the country of origin (Shimp & Sharma, 1987).

However, in spite of what was said above, consumers with ethnocentric tendency cannot always be defined in such a "radical" manner. In cases where the product perception is related to the country's image (e.g., level of industrialization or economic development), the ethnocentric consumer will continue to consider certain local products as superior products, but at the same time, foreign products will be positively rated and will not be underestimated. In addition, Sharma et al. (1995) claim that the concept of ethnocentrism cannot be generalized to all brands and product categories equally.

Thus, to conclude with definitions of consumer ethnocentrism, we can say that consumer ethnocentrism can be considered as a "general tendency" to avoid purchasing foreign products as against domestic products (Shankarmahesh, 2006).

B. Consumer ethnocentrism tendencies depend on the degree of the development of a country

In accordance with existing literature, consumers' ethnocentric tendencies depend on the degree of the development of a country. Initially, the original concept of consumer ethnocentrism emerged in developed countries, where consumers generally and usually rated the quality of local products positively (Herche, 1992; Elliot, Cameron, 1994; Ahmed et al., 2004). Some other research (Suppeyle, Gronhaug, 2003; Reardon et al., 2005; Klein et al., 2006) has shown that the same concept is applicable in the context of developing countries. Recent research in Central and Eastern Europe has confirmed the increase of ethnocentric tendency as a result of limited cosmopolitanism (Vida, Fairhurst, 1999; Vida, Reardon, 2008).

C. Measurement of consumer ethnocentrism

Measurement of customer ethnocentrism was made possible with the development of Consumer Ethnocentrism Tendency Scale (Cetscale). Shimp and Sharma (1987) were the first to develop an effective instrument for measuring ethnocentric tendencies affecting consumer's purchase decisions. They proved that consumer ethnocentrism may explain and provide an answer as to why and to what extent consumers prefer local products as opposed to foreign ones. Therefore today, Cetscale is a successful predictor of consumers' beliefs and attitudes, and is widely used to measure consumer ethnocentrism tendencies in many studies in developed and developing countries (Luque-Martinez, et al., 2000; Chrysochoidis et al., 2007, Teo, et al. Mohamad, Ramayah, 2011). Although many similar instruments were suggested in addition to Cetscale, Cetscale is still considered to be the most commonly used instrument in measuring consumer ethnocentrism (Chrysochoidis et al., 2007).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Considering the great availability of imported products in the Kosovo market and the limited availability of local products, a review of Kosovo consumer preferences and tendencies was deemed to be very reasonable and necessary in this context. The aim of this research is to determine the level of consumer ethnocentric tendencies in Kosovo and the impact of such tendencies on the process of product rating and their willingness to buy domestic or imported products.

A. Research Instrument

The instrument used in this quantitative study is a structured questionnaire which applies the well-known Likert's scale (1 = completely disagree, 5 = strongly agree), where respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement related to the statements given in the questionnaire. The questionnaire used in the study is composed of three parts. The first part includes the standard form of the well-known Cetscale questionnaire, consisting of a total of 17 statements in which the respondents expressed their individual attitudes using the Likert's scale. The second part of the questionnaire uses 9 statements, which aim to determine the purchase intentions of Kosovar consumers towards domestic products and products imported from Serbia and from the European Union countries. The last part of the questionnaire, summarizes the demographic characteristics of respondents, including age, gender, education, and monthly family income. Such data were presented in the study as the characteristics of the selected sample.

B. Research Hypotheses

Based on the aims of this study, the research hypotheses were raised. Also we took in considering the findings of some similar studies conducted in other developing countries and related to the impact of consumer ethnocentrism on consumer purchase intention.

Hypothesis 1: Consumer ethnocentrism is positively related to consumers' intentions to purchase domestic products.

Hypothesis 2: Consumer ethnocentrism is negatively related to consumers' intentions to purchase products imported from Serbia and from the European Union countries.

C. Sample characteristics

Table I: Sample characteristics

| Characteristics | N (out of total of 1000 respondents) | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Age: | | |
| 15-24 | 81 | 67.5 |
| 25-34 | 28 | 23.3 |
| 35-44 | 5 | 4.2 |
| 45-54 | 5 | 4.2 |
| 55-65 | 1 | 0.8 |
| Sex: | | |
| Female | 93 | 77.5 |
| Male | 27 | 22.5 |
| Education: | | |
| Elementary school or less | 8 | 6.7 |
| Secondary /qualified workers | 1 | 0.8 |
| Bachelor | 97 | 80.8 |
| Master | 12 | 10.0 |
| PhD | 2 | 1.7 |
| Household income (€): | | |
| Without incomes or to 150€month | 9 | 7.5 |
| 151-400€month | 30 | 25.0 |
| 401-650€month | 30 | 25.0 |
| 651-900€month | 22 | 18.3 |
| 901-1150€month | 12 | 10.0 |
| 1151-1400€month | 3 | 2.5 |
| 1401€month – | 14 | 11.7 |

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents data analysis and aims to test the hypotheses of this paper. Since the number of variables included in the analysis is very high, this section uses factor analysis and principal components to reduce such number. For this reason, some analyzes are initially carried out, using which a reduced number of factors will be derived, and such factors will be included in the next section in a regressive analysis to test the presented hypotheses on how Kosovar consumer behavior is influenced by ethnocentric factors.

Several tests are used to test how relevant the data is for a factorial analysis and how reliable the data/results of such an analysis can be. A measure of the adequacy of data for performing the factor analysis is the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measurement, which must have a value greater than 0.5 and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, which must result as statistically significant. Both tests are based on exploring the correlation matrix. Therefore, there must be a correlation between the variables taken into consideration for the analysis.

KMO may obtain values between 0 and 1, but researchers recommend that its value must be over 0.6. The Bartlett test of sphericity tests the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is a unit matrix, therefore the elements of the main diagonal are 1 and the elements outside the diagonal are 0. This is an ideal case in which the variables under consideration have no relation to each other. The Bartlett test of sphericity relates to the importance of the study, thus showing the validity and adequacy of the responses collected through questionnaires to address the problem being studied. The analysis is considered appropriate if the test value is less than 0.05, in which case the null hypothesis of lack of correlation between the variables at the 5 percent level is rejected, thus confirming the factor analysis precondition for correlated variables.

A. Reliability Analysis

Before the factor analysis was performed, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated for the variables included in the analysis, which resulted in 0.923 for the 17 variables included in the analysis. This number indicates that the data have a relatively high stability, therefore the reliability of the scale is good for performing a factor analysis (Table 2).

Table II: Reliability Statistics - Reliability of Cetscale

| | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | Number of variable |
| ,923 | 17 |

In addition, two other tests on the data adequacy were carried out at the start of the factor analysis. Specifically Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was performed and the KaiserMeyer-Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy was calculated. The conclusions of the above tests are presented in Table 3. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity resulted statistically significant at the level of 1 percent, while the KMO measurement indicates a very good sample for performing a factor analysis. This guarantees reliable results of the analysis.

Table III: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity of Cetscale

| | | |
|--|--------------------|----------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .904 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 1039.476 |
| | df | 136 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

B. Principal Components Analysis (PCA)

Principal Components Analysis (PCA) is a technique used to summarize the information collected from several observed variables in a smaller number of factors. The purpose of this analysis is to derive a reduced number of components by not including all initial measurements but taking into consideration the information generated from such measurements. Factors are a linear combination of observed variables. The principal component analysis starts with calculation of the eigen values of the matrix. A positive eigen value determines the number of dimensions needed to present a result without losing information, hence an eigen positive value (eigen > 1) determines the number of factors. Using eigenvectors, a factor matrix is calculated. After construction of the factor matrix, the factor loading is calculated simply by calculating the correlation between the observed variables and the factors. There are two criteria to be taken into consideration when calculating the principal components: first, the new variables (principal components) must be selected

such that the first factor describes the vast majority of variance variability, the second component must be responsible for the vast majority of the residual variance and so on, and second, the new variables are not correlated (Field, 2000).

Table IV: Total Variance Explained for Cetscale

| Component | Initial Eigen values | | | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings | | |
|-----------|----------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| 1 | 7.874 | 46.319 | 46.319 | 7.874 | 46.319 | 46.319 |
| 2 | 1.182 | 6.951 | 53.270 | 1.182 | 6.951 | 53.270 |
| 3 | 1.014 | 5.964 | 59.233 | 1.014 | 5.964 | 59.233 |
| 4 | .904 | 5.319 | 64.552 | | | |
| 5 | .863 | 5.075 | 69.628 | | | |
| 6 | .735 | 4.322 | 73.950 | | | |
| 7 | .647 | 3.807 | 77.757 | | | |
| 8 | .616 | 3.622 | 81.379 | | | |
| 9 | .541 | 3.181 | 84.560 | | | |
| 10 | .473 | 2.782 | 87.343 | | | |
| 11 | .467 | 2.749 | 90.092 | | | |
| 12 | .366 | 2.153 | 92.245 | | | |
| 13 | .343 | 2.019 | 94.264 | | | |
| 14 | .312 | 1.836 | 96.100 | | | |
| 15 | .271 | 1.593 | 97.693 | | | |
| 16 | .251 | 1.474 | 99.167 | | | |
| 17 | .142 | .833 | 100.000 | | | |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The principal components analysis is the most commonly used data analysis in order to determine how many factors or components will remain after reducing the variables. How many will be used in the further data analysis.

Based on factorial analysis we know that the rule is that factors or components having an eigenvalue greater than 1 (eigen > 1) must be retained, and all other factors or components having a value less than 1 are not kept for further processing.

Based on the above rules, we may observe that in our case the first three factors or components can be used for further data analysis. Therefore, 17 variables were reduced into 3 components. Which means that the first three components are considered adequate to explain the relationship that exists between all the initial variables.

The best way to determine how well the components or factors retained for further analysis explain the correlation between variables is to stop and analyze the percentage of variance or variability of the retained factors. And in our case the first factor is calculated at 46.319% of variance or variability, the second factor is at 6.951% of variance, and the third factor is 5.964% of the overall variance. In fact, the best choices in practice are considered values ranging between 40% and 60%. Selections under 40% are usually not considered sufficiently strong, thus based on these results, the only factor that will remain for further analysis of data is factor 1, which will also be called consumer ethnocentrism.

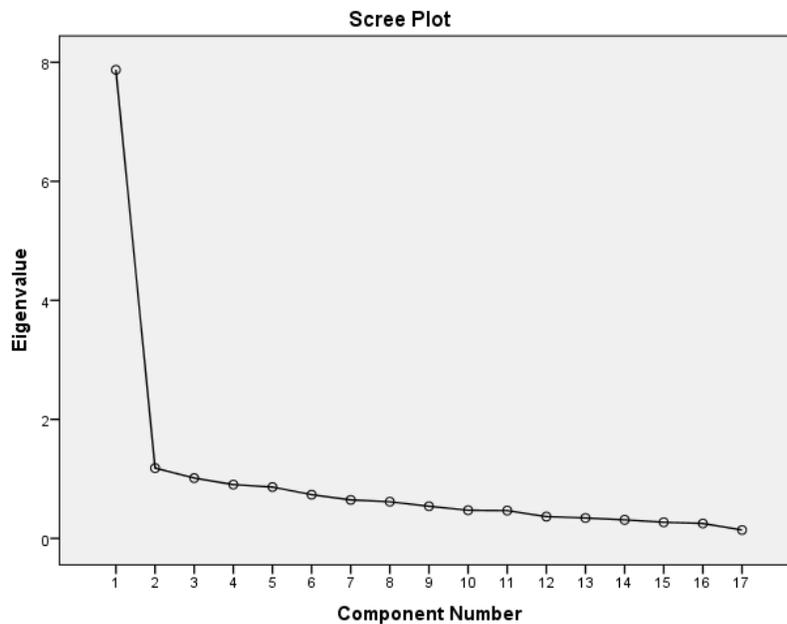


Figure 1: Principal Components Analysis, presented visually

The Figure 1 shows visually that for further data analysis, only the first factor or component will be used. This is because, as can be seen from the graph, the value of factor 1 is the highest value in the graph, and is the only value standing above the line that permeates values that do not differ much from each other.

C. Analysis of the correlation between consumer's ethnocentrism tendency and customer purchase intentions towards domestic products

Hypothesis 1: Consumer ethnocentrism is positively related to consumers' intentions to purchase domestic products.

In order to determine the internal consistency of the measurement scale of consumer purchasing intentions towards domestic products, the Chronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated, the results of which are shown in table below. Questions that were used to assess the consumer intention to purchase domestic products have resulted in an acceptable level of reliability ($\alpha = 0,700$).

Table V: Reliability of purchase intentions scale towards domestically product

| Cronbach's Alpha | Number of variable |
|------------------|--------------------|
| .700 | 3 |

Spearman's correlation coefficient (rho) was used to determine the relationship existing between ethnocentric tendencies and the consumer intention to purchase local products. The table below shows the results of the performed correlation analysis in order to test the H1 hypothesis.

Table VI: Correlation analysis between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intentions towards domestic products

| Sperman's rho (Correlation Coeficient) | I would feel guilty if I did not buy products produced in Kosovo. | I always buy only products produced in Kosovo. | Whenever possible, I buy products produced in Kosovo. |
|---|---|--|---|
| ↓ | | | |
| Consumer ethnocentrism | ,598** | ,486** | ,299** |
| | ,000 | ,000 | ,000 |

Correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho) obtains values from -1 to +1. Values from 0.5 to 1.0 show a strong correlation between the variables. Values from 0.3 to 0.49 show an average correlation. Values from 0.1 to 0.29 indicate a weak correlation and the values from 0 to 0.09 show a very weak correlation or no correlation between variables. The same categorization applies to negative values. Based on such data, the correlation analysis in our case shows a positive, statistically significant relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and consumer purchasing intentions towards domestic products. Although in the three analyzed variables directly related to domestic products, the correlation coefficient is increasingly weaker, we can draw the conclusion that this relationship between such two variables is an average positive correlation.

In terms of the other value shown in the tables above (Sig. =.000), this is a value that indicates whether there is a real correlation between the variables or if the null hypothesis is confirmed. If this value is smaller than .05 this means that there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis and to automatically accept the hypothesis we have raised which in our case assumes a positive relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and consumer purchasing intentions towards local products.

Based on this analysis, as a conclusion of this section, it may be said that the Kosovar consumers show marked ethnocentric tendencies which urge them to have pronounced preferences towards domestic products.

D. Analysis of correlation between consumer's ethnocentric tendencies and the purchase intentions towards products imported from Serbia and the European Union countries

Hypothesis 2: Consumer ethnocentrism is negatively related to consumers' intentions to purchase products imported from Serbia and from the European Union countries.

The results from the data analysis show a high Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale used to assess consumer purchasing intentions towards products imported from Serbia (0.810), as well as a good Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale which is used to assess consumer purchasing intentions towards products imported from European Union countries (0.797). These coefficients indicate a high level of reliability of data collected in the field. The following tables show Chronbach's alpha coefficient.

Table VII: Reliability of purchase intentions scale towards products imported from Serbia

| Cronbach's Alpha | Number of variable |
|------------------|--------------------|
| .810 | 3 |

Table VIII: Reliability of purchase intentions scale towards products from countries of the European Union

| Cronbach's Alpha | Number of variable |
|------------------|--------------------|
| .797 | 3 |

To test hypothesis 2, the correlation coefficient known as Spearman's rho was used. The table below shows the results of correlation analysis between consumer ethnocentric tendencies and consumer purchasing intentions towards products imported from Serbia.

Table IX. Correlation analysis between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intentions towards products imported from Serbia

| Sperman's rho (Correlation Coefficient) | I would feel guilty if I would buy products imported from Serbia | I would never buy imported products from Serbia | Whenever I can, I avoid buying imported products from Serbia. |
|--|--|---|---|
| Consumer ethnocentrism | ,302** | ,351** | ,241** |
| | ,000 | ,000 | ,000 |

The above findings show a positive, statistically significant, moderately weak relationship between ethnocentric tendencies and consumer purchasing intentions towards products imported from Serbia.

The table below shows results of the correlation analysis between the consumer ethnocentric tendencies and consumer purchasing intentions towards products imported from European Union countries.

Table X. Correlation analysis between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intentions towards products of European Union

| | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| Sperman's rho (Correlation Coefficient) | I would feel guilty if I would buy products imported from the EU countries. | I would never buy imported products from any EU country. | Whenever I can, I avoid buying imported products from any EU country. |
| Consumer ethnocentrism | ,256** | ,187** | ,260** |
| | ,002 | ,000 | ,002 |

The results found show that consumer ethnocentrism affects consumer purchasing intentions, because a positive correlation coefficient was achieved which in fact indicates the correlation between these two variables and is statistically shown to be significant. However, it should not be forgotten to mention that this link is weak and it cannot be said that Kosovar consumers do not prefer products from the European Union. Therefore, based on the results from both two tables above it can be deduced that Hypothesis 2 is confirmed.

V. CONCLUSION

The results show three statistically significant correlations between the consumer ethnocentric tendencies and consumer intentions to purchase domestic products. Although correlation coefficients are generally low, the results imply that consumers are more likely to prefer domestic products over foreign products. Therefore, we conclude that hypothesis H1 has been confirmed.

It is worth noting that a low correlation coefficient indicates that purchasing only domestic products will not be the only consumer choice. This is because this study does not take into consideration other factors that may clarify such an outcome, and this is considered to be the main limitation of this study, in a way.

The research results show that consumer ethnocentric tendencies have a significant impact on customer purchase intentions towards foreign products. According to the results, such tendencies lead the Kosovar consumers towards rejecting products imported by Serbia and the EU countries. On this basis, H2 has been confirmed. However, it must be pointed out that we are dealing with statistically significant correlation coefficients, but which are moderately weak. Without simpler explanation, on basis of these results, we can say that the Kosovar consumers do not strictly reject products imported from Serbia and the EU countries, but they prefer domestic products, and as much as they can, avoid buying foreign products.

As in many of the studies mentioned above in this paper, this study confirms that consumer ethnocentrism affects its purchasing behavior. Precisely the consumer ethnocentric tendencies and their measurement are factors that may assist managers and executives of companies to develop successful marketing strategies.

Overall, it can be concluded that Kosovar consumers show weak but significant preference towards domestic products, and on the other hand there are more pronounced ethnocentric tendencies especially towards products imported from Serbia.

Future studies on this matter are recommended to include a certain number of additional factors, which also presents the main limitation of this study. It is also recommended a comparison of the results of the present development period of Kosovo, with potential results of a future period in which a similar study would be conducted.

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