GREEN MARKETING
Diploma thesis

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ASSIGNMENT OF DIPLOMA THESIS

For: Ivana Knežević
Field: Business Management
Title: Green Marketing

Principles of thesis writing:

Objective of the thesis:

Objective of the thesis: The main objective of the thesis is to analyze the chosen managerial problem related to green marketing issues and to formulate proposals for marketing management.

Approach and methods used:

1. Literature search on all relevant topics (e.g. green marketing, demand, green image, perception of customers etc.),
2. Analysis of the research problem,
3. Proposals, formulation and conclusions.

Methods: All relevant methods for the research problem, e.g. secondary data analysis, primary research (e.g. in-depth interviews, etc.) according to the character of the problem.

The extent of graphical works: according to the supervisor's guidelines

The thesis length without appendices: 60 – 80 pages
List of specialist literature:


Diploma thesis supervisor: doc. Ing. Alena Klapalová, Ph.D.

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Department Head
Dean

In Brno, date: 2016/04/13
Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine connection between green marketing and ecotourism development, concretely in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moreover, this thesis investigates the ecotourism sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina and green marketing techniques which can be used to unlock full ecotourism potential of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the purpose to make suggestions for the future development and better recognition of ecotourism.

First part of the thesis is theoretical background about ecotourism and its core values and principles, as one of the important drivers for future sustainable development. The theory provides an insight to green marketing origins, together with presenting different types of green consumers. Further on, linkage between green marketing strategies and ecotourism development has been presented. Second part of the thesis is empirical part, in which the interviews with several stakeholders were combined with various secondary sources for gathering needed data about ecotourism and green marketing in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The overall results of the gathered and processed data showed that there is a high ecotourism potential which is still mostly unexpressed, due to lack of a national strategy, a clearly defined vision of the sector and insufficient technical knowledge and skills of the stakeholders involved. On the other hand, there is a critical mass of local entrepreneurs with promising ecotourism offer which if properly supported will secure sustainability and real development for the community. Green marketing can be considered as an effective approach able to fill gaps in ecotourism of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It can empower entrepreneurs by providing them the knowledge they need to develop their offer and raise awareness about the role of ecotourism in future sustainable development.

Keywords: green marketing, ecotourism, Bosnia and Herzegovina, sustainable development, environmental awareness, ecotourist, green consumer, eco standards
Statement of Authorship

I hereby declare that the Master thesis “Green Marketing” and relevant research in its background is entirely my own work, supervised by Ing. Alena Klapalová, Ph.D., and has not been taken out of the work from others. The used literary resources and other specialist resources have been cited and acknowledged within the text of the thesis and listed in the References according to the relevant legislation and regulation.

In Brno________________                                    ______________

Ivana Knežević
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Moreover, I would like to show my warmest gratitude to Ing. Anida Krajina, whose meticulous comments were an enormous help to me. Thank you for being critical as a professor and supportive as a friend, at the same time. Additionally, I would like to thank Faculty of Economics and Administration for allowing me to be their student and to all the professors who contributed to enrich my knowledge, in the past two years.

Greatest appreciation and special thanks to Borislav Janković and Nedeljko Branković, ecotourism entrepreneurs, and above all visionaires, who shared their ideas and ecological stories with me.

Furthermore, I would like to express deepest gratitude to the Alterural NGO and its members for providing me with their rich experience in the field and giving me valuable insight that were crucial for the findings of this thesis.

I owe my sincere gratitude to Dijana Đuričić and Lejla Brčkalija, from entities’ touristic organisations, as their long experience in public touristic organisation helped me to present complete picture of ecotourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Also, I want to thank Dragana Ristić and Sanda Redžić, from entities’ ministries, which have gave me proper insight to government’s point of view in the field of ecotourism and green marketing.

After all, enormous thank you goes to my family for their unconditional love and support in everything I did, do and will be doing in the future. Without their guidance, sacrifice and encouragement I would have never become the person I am and this thesis would not be possible. Also, special thanks to my friends who were supportive through the entire process of this thesis and made my study years unforgettable.

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

We live in a world where huge environmental issues, as climate changes, are being part of everyday life. Concerned people from all over the world are trying to make their contribution for solving these issues. Since consumerism is the biggest part of modern society many efforts have been made to promote responsible consumption and production to help improve sustainability of our planet. The number of green consumers is constantly in rise, as well as the number of suppliers which are trying to make their products and services environmentally responsible and sustainable. Real green consumers are making their lives in environmentally responsible in almost every aspect: they build eco-friendly houses, eat organic food, support fair-trade, etc.

Since tourism industry takes big part in overall world’s consumption, one of the ways of contributing to green consumerism is ecotourism or green tourism. Ecotourism, as one type of sustainable tourism, has several principles:

- Non-destructive use
- Protection and restoration of biodiversity
- Promotion of environmentally sustainable development
- Education and interpretation, awareness
- Direct economic benefit for local people, alleviation of poverty
- Health, well-being of stakeholders. (Bricker n.n.)

Many research studies and market surveys show that ecotourism, as a way of responsible travel, is becoming more and more popular between green consumers, as well as between non 100% green consumers, but just people who love nature, domestic food and non-conventional ways to spend their holidays.

This year is perfect time to raise awareness on the contribution of sustainable and ecotourism to development among public and private sector decision-makers and the public since The United Nations 70th General Assembly has designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. Being in alliance with the universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the International Year aims to support a change in policies, business practices and consumer behaviour towards a more sustainable tourism sector. With the leadership of The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and together with governments, relevant organisations of the United Nations system, international and regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders, the International Year will promote tourism’s role in the following five key areas:

- Inclusive and sustainable economic growth – because: there is 4% or more annual increase in international tourist arrivals since 2009, tourism makes 7% of total world exports and 30% of world services exports, US$ 1.5 trillion in exports from international tourism in 2015 and 10% of world GDP.
- Social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction – because: one in every eleven jobs globally is in tourism, and almost twice as many women employers than in
other sectors, tourism is largest export category in many developing countries, and 57% of international tourist arrivals in 2030 will be in emerging economies.

✓ Resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change – because: tourism sector must sustainably manage an expected 1.8 billion international tourists in 2030, raises financing for conservation of heritage, wildlife and the environment and can be a vehicle for protecting and restoring biodiversity.

✓ Cultural values, diversity and heritage – because tourism: revives traditional activities and customs, empowers communities and nurtures pride within them, promotes cultural diversity and raises awareness of the value of heritage.

✓ Mutual understanding, peace and security – because sustainable tourism is a resilient sector that recovers quickly from security threats which breaks down barriers and builds bridges between visitors and hosts, provides opportunities for cross-cultural encounters that can build peace and can be a tool for soft diplomacy. (www.tourism4development2017.org, 2016)

Looking at those five key areas and impacts of sustainable tourism in today’s society it is clear that any country which puts focus on development of sustainable tourism or its different types will create an enormous opportunity for itself in terms of economic development and sustainable growth, and become a part of “positive change movement” for our planet.

If we look at sustainable tourism and ecotourism as a part of green consumerism, we can say that one of the most important tools to develop and promote this kind of tourism, as well to influence consumers, in this case tourists, is marketing. And especially, green marketing, since we are talking about green consumerism and developing of green and sustainable consumer behaviour.

Green marketing can be defined as the study of all efforts to consume, produce, distribute, promote, package, and reclaim products in a manner that is sensitive or responsive to ecological concerns. Green marketing has positive influences on multiple participants in the economy. The environment, developing economies, consumers, corporate strategy, the product, production processes, and supply chain benefit from green marketing (Dahlstrom 2011).

Green marketing and ecotourism will be in the spotlight of this study. Both of them have the “green origins” and through this research their origins and values are going to be intertwined in order to discover innovative strategies and approaches which can help to establish basics for sustainable development of ecotourism. As previously said that each country in the world should put in focus some type of sustainable tourism, this study will try to connect ecotourism and green marketing in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a small and developing country in the Balkans. With the assumption that Bosnia and Herzegovina has potential for developing ecotourism, this research will aim to provide green marketing management suggestions for decision makers, which will be employed in development and better recognition of ecotourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
1 GOALS AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Problem explanation and research objectives

Being a developing country, Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) has usually been associated with post-war conflicts and unstable economic and political situation, when on the contrary, things which should be put in first row about this country are its wild and untouched nature, unique flora and fauna, domestically produced food, and one of Europe’s most amazing sites for adventure sports. It’s not questionable that Bosnia and Herzegovina has a nature wealth, richness and diversity which represent a huge potential for green tourism, but the questions which arise are: what has been done for establishing the pillars of ecotourism and how to turn this potential in real development for ecotourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as it is recognised in Europe or the world.

As mentioned, it is our belief that the approach proposed by the green marketing can help in finding a solution to the above mentioned questions. Therefore, this thesis puts focus on ecotourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina and green marketing techniques which can be utilized for its development and better recognition. The aim of this study is to investigate the current situation in ecotourism of B&H, to find out how do decision makers in ecotourism perceive green marketing and what is currently being done for the promotion of ecotourism in order to make proposals which could be helpful in the future and which could lead Bosnia and Herzegovina to a full achievement of European standards in ecotourism.

To be more specific about the challenges and issue this thesis is going to investigate and address, several concrete objectives were defined which will further help to formulate the research questions of this study. Those concrete goals, explaining better purpose of this thesis, are the following:

- Explore potential for development of eco-tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Examine how far is Bosnia and Herzegovina from European and world’s standards in eco-tourism.
- Analyse effectiveness of marketing techniques which are currently being used in B&H for development of eco-tourism.
- Investigate how familiar are decision makers in B&H’s tourism sector with green marketing.
- Determine benefits of green marketing for eco-tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Make suggestions for decision makers about green marketing techniques which could be effective in development and better recognition of eco-tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
1.2 Research questions

According to above mentioned goals I determined eight research questions which will help me accomplish goals of this study.

RQ1: Is there potential for development of eco-tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina?
RQ2: What is the current situation of eco-tourism in B&H regarding European standards in eco-tourism?
RQ3: Are there any specific tools being used to assess and evaluate supply of eco-tourism in B&H, according to mentioned eco standards?
RQ4: Do tourist demand certain certificates as a proof of eco standards fulfilment?
RQ5: Which marketing techniques are currently in practise in ecotourism sector in B&H and how is their effectiveness measured?
RQ6: How familiar are decision makers in B&H`s ecotourism sector with green marketing?
RQ7: What are benefits from usage of green marketing in eco-tourism supply of B&H?
RQ8: Which green marketing techniques can be used to develop and improve eco-tourism in B&H?

1.3 Methodology

Following section explains the methodology adopted to conduct this research, i.e. the approaches, steps, inquiry methods, tools used. According to Kothari, research methodology, as a way to systematically solve the research problem, includes various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying of his/her research problem. Mentioned steps consider the logic behind the methods we choose to use in our research study and explain why a research study has been undertaken, how the research problem has been defined, in what way research questions have been formulated, how data collection has been done, why particular technique of analysing data has been used and similar other questions are usually answered when we talk of research methodology (Kothari 2004).
This research was no exception and therefore it has been developed in three different steps, which are visualised in the following figure and will be described more in the next paragraphs.
1.3.1 Step One: Definition of purpose

Before beginning of any research, it is important to define purpose and goals of it or in other words it is important to know why we want to study and solve exact problem or answer some questions and which results we want to accomplish. Purpose of the study and its goals are the core characteristics and without definition of them there is no point in starting any academic or scientific work.

Therefore, reasons for doing this research have been stated in the Introduction section, through the problem explanation and posing of research questions. In the same section, clear goals have been defined, as the answers to research questions and together with them will serve as guidelines which will keep this research journey on the right track.
1.3.2 Step Two: Research planning, research approach and methods

1.3.2.1 Justification of qualitative research approach

In order to conduct the research for this work, the qualitative approach was chosen for several reasons. This choice was due primarily because of the characteristics of the qualitative research, described by Creswell, which show how they fit with the purposes of the study:

- Natural setting: data are collected in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study.
- Researcher as key instrument: data are collected directly by the researcher through examining documents, observing behaviour, or interviewing participants.
- Multiple sources of data: multiple forms of data are gathered, such as interviews, observations, documents, and audio-visual information.
- Participants’ meanings: in the entire qualitative research process, the focus is on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research.
- Emergent design: this means that the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed, and some or all phases of the process may change or shift after the researcher enters the field and begins to collect data.
- Reflexivity: the inquirer reflects about how their role in the study and their personal background, culture, and experiences hold potential for shaping their interpretations, such as the themes they advance and the meaning they ascribe to the data.
- Holistic account: a complex picture of the problem or issue under study needs to be developed. (Creswell 2014)

During the research on the field, both in the planning and the implementation phase, all the above-mentioned issues were considered and led the whole process. Also, this qualitative approach was selected because it is a) interpretive, as it is focused on the meanings of human affairs as seen from different views and acknowledges the fact that findings and reports are researcher–subject interactions; b) it is experiential, empirical, field oriented, as it emphasizes observations by participants, what they see more than what they feel; c) it is situational being oriented to objects and activities, each in a unique set of contexts; d) it is personalistic and empathic, working to understand individual perceptions. It seeks uniqueness more than commonality. It seeks people’s points of view, frames of reference, value commitments. (Stake 2010).

The two central issues we faced during the research were connected to the reliability and validity of the measurements. According to Neuman, reliability ‘means dependability or consistency. It suggests that the same thing is repeated or recurs under the identical or very similar conditions’ (Neuman 2007:115). On the other hand, validity ‘suggests truthfulness and refers to the match between a construct, or the way a researcher conceptualizes the idea in a conceptual definition, and a measure. It refers to how well an idea about reality “fits” with actual reality’ (Neuman 2007:115).
Being this a qualitative research, the focus was more on authenticity than validity. In this case, this means giving a fair, honest, and balanced account of social life from the viewpoint of someone who lives it every day. We were therefore less concerned with trying to match an abstract concept to empirical data and more concerned with giving a candid and real portrayal of social life that is true to the experiences of people being involved in the research.

1.3.2.2 Justification of the interview approach

As for the tools to be adopted for the data collection, the first concept considered was the specific typology of the qualitative data, described as follows: ‘data for qualitative researchers sometimes is in the form of numbers; more often, it includes written or spoken words, actions, sounds, symbols, physical objects, or visual images’ (Neuman 2007:110). Therefore, the most appropriate tool to be used in order to gather the necessary information and data was the qualitative interview, where, in general, ‘the researcher conducts face-to-face interviews with participants, telephone interviews, or engages in focus group interviews with six to eight interviewees in each group. These interviews involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants’ (Creswell 2014). The validity of the approach selected is even clearer if we consider that one of the primary goals of an interview is to obtain ‘unique information or interpretation held by the person interviewed’ (Stake 2010:95).

An interview protocol has to be established in order to facilitate a smooth conduction of the interview itself. In this case we followed the suggestions given by Creswell, who includes the following elements:

- A heading, including details such as date, place, interviewer, interviewee.
- The questions, including some ice-breaker questions at the beginning followed by a few questions organised in four clusters, followed by a concluding statement.
- Spaces between the questions to record responses.
- A final thank-you statement to acknowledge the time the spent during the interview.

(Creswell 2014)

During the whole research process, and particularly in the phase related to the interviews, any related ethical issue was kept in consideration. More specifically, we strictly followed the indications and suggestions given by Creswell:

- Respect the site, and disrupt as little as possible. Researchers need to respect research sites so that they are left undisturbed after a research study.
- Make sure that all participants receive the benefits. In experimental studies, investigators need to collect data so that all participants.
- Avoid deceiving participants. Participants need to know that they are actively participating in a research study.
- Respect potential power imbalances. Interviewing in qualitative research is increasingly being seen as a moral inquiry.
- Avoid exploitation of participants. There needs to be some reciprocity back to the participants for their involvement in your study.
- Avoid collecting harmful information. (Creswell 2014)
1.3.3 Step Three: Data collection and Data analysis

Data analysed for the purpose of solving the research problem, were collected, both, through the primary and secondary research. The primary research includes data which are collected afresh and for the first time, and thus happen to be original in character. On the other hand, secondary research considers data which have already been collected by someone else and which have already been passed through the statistical process (Kothari 2004).

1.3.3.1 Data collection

Secondary research
As for the secondary research, qualitative data was collected from books, websites, publications, researches, studies, articles. First part of the research was searching information about green marketing and ecotourism, as those two terms are in the main focus of this study. It was mostly about reviewing definitions, core characteristics and, in case of green marketing especially, looking for strategies, techniques and practices which can be used effectively used in ecotourism businesses. Collection of this information was followed by detailed analysis in order to choose strategies and techniques which can be applied and adjusted for the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Simultaneously with this analysis, a review of ecotourism sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been done using the studies and research which have been previously done in that field. Unfortunately, there are only few of these studies, almost all of them are out-dated and don’t examine ecotourism sector from marketing point of view. Nonetheless, adopting different sources and combining secondary data with primary data collected through detailed interviews with experts and entrepreneurs in the ecotourism sector, allowed this research to provide a general picture of these topics in B&H.

Interviews
As justified before, interview method was chosen for conduction of primary research, aimed at collecting qualitative data among different relevant actors in the eco-touristic sector. The interviewees were selected as they represent all the relevant stakeholders involved in ecotourism, being therefore able to provide different points of view on the topic. These represent the three main sectors involved in the development of eco-tourism in B&H, whose role will be defined throughout the research:

✓ private investors/entrepreneurs: these are local entrepreneurs and owners of the businesses which represent the actual offer of eco-touristic services in B&H.
✓ public institutions: from both the entities which constitute the country, which are directly connected to the touristic sector.
✓ civil society organisation: non-governmental organisation (NGO) which deals with eco-tourism and aim at empowering and developing the whole sector by supporting local businesses through different projects and programs.

To be more specific, we conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews, which were audiotaped and transcribed in a few cases while in other they were sent via email.
The initial plan was to have all the interviews conducted face to face, for the advantages they offer:

- Face-to-face interviews have the highest response rates and permit the longest questionnaires.
- Interviewers also can observe the surroundings and can use nonverbal communication and visual aids. (Neuman 2007)

Unfortunately due to different professional obligations of some of the interviewees it was not possible to conduct all these interviews face to face and therefore some were provided via email. Regarding the questions, the open ended approach was preferred, as it allows ‘the interviewees just comment or tell stories (structuring them around their own emic issues)’ (Stake, 2010:95). The following table shows the seven interviews that were conducted. All the interviews were conducted by the author of this study and lasted between half an hour and an hour.

Table 1: Interviews conducted during the research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N.</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Type of Organisation</th>
<th>Role in the Organisation</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Borislav Janković</td>
<td>Zelenkovac Ecological Movement</td>
<td>Ecotourism Business</td>
<td>Founder and owner</td>
<td>11/01/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nedeljko Branković</td>
<td>Ethno Village – Museum Ljubačke Doline</td>
<td>Ecotourism Business</td>
<td>Founder and owner</td>
<td>14/01/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sarah Devisme</td>
<td>Alterural</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Project Coordinator</td>
<td>12/01/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Danijela Bošnjak</td>
<td>Alterural</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Project Assistant</td>
<td>12/01/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boris Trogrančić</td>
<td>Alterural</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Communications Officer</td>
<td>12/01/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dragana Ristić</td>
<td>Ministry of Trade and Tourism – Government of Republic of Srpska</td>
<td>Public Institution</td>
<td>Assistant of the Minister</td>
<td>19/04/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sanda Redžić</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism – Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Public Institution</td>
<td>Special Advisor for Tourism</td>
<td>27/03/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dijana Đuričić</td>
<td>Tourist Organisation Republic of Srpska</td>
<td>Public Institution</td>
<td>Special Advisor/Project Manager – Department of Tourism Development</td>
<td>10/01/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lejla Brčkalija</td>
<td>Tourism Association of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Public Institution</td>
<td>Special Advisor for Promotional Activities</td>
<td>02/02/2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the interviews were led following the three stages proposed by Neuman:

1. Introduction and entry: during this part the interviewer and the interviewee introduced themselves, and some more detailed information was given, such as the scope of the
research, the interview protocol, the further steps. Also, the interviewees were asked the permission to record their answers and explained any ethical implication.

2. Main part: the questions in the interview were asked to the interviewees, and the answers were recorded. Also, some notes were taken in a written form.

3. Exit: the interviewees were thanked for their time, and promised a copy of the study upon completion. (Neuman 2007)

More detailed description of organisations involved in the research will be provided in Appendix section, as well as some examples of transcripts together with interviews’ structure and questions.

1.3.3.2 Data analysis

The collection of relevant data through the various research methods above described, is followed by a detailed analysis. Data analysis is crucial because it allows the researcher to answer properly the research questions and to make conclusions, which will be used further to make suggestions leading to or supporting in the resolution of the problem.

In other words, ‘by handling the data records sensitively, managing them carefully and exploring them skilfully, the researcher ‘emerges’ ideas, categories, concepts, themes, hunches, and ways of relating them’ (Richards 2014:86).

The whole process of analysing and handling the data was done following the advice and suggestions given by Richards. First of all, after recording the interviews, some transcripts were made to ease the investigation of the information. Then, the so called ‘taking off from the data’ process (Richards 2014: 89) was completed through the following different steps:

1. We took a first data document and read it. Skim reading first, then started again by reading the text very thoroughly, line by line.
2. We recorded and noted all the most interesting facts about the text.
3. When these interesting facts were noted, we recorded an explanation.
4. Then we focused on all the passages that were especially interesting and relevant for the research; they were then compared with other similar situations.
5. Lastly asked the question ‘Why is that interesting?’ and recorded the answer. (Richards 2014)

This apparently simple process allowed us to start from the detail of the document (i.e. the data and information collected during the interviews), then get to the concept (why these data are important), which finally led to the focused abstraction (i.e. how these data are relevant to the research and how to use this information to answer the research questions) (Richards, 2014).

The concrete results will be explained later in the chapter ‘Findings’.
2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Ecotourism

2.1.1 The essence of ecotourism

The most clear, specific and elaborate definitions of the term ecotourism have been developed in the academic world from the 90s, but we can find traces of the key elements that led to these definitions in the middle 60s.

At that time, the word ecotourism had not been mentioned yet, and the term commonly used was sustainable tourism. The first attempts to define it arose from the need to research and explain the relationship between the tourists and the cultures and environments in which they interact.

In his work, Hetzer identified four pillars that would define and had to be followed for a more responsible form of tourism:
1. Minimum environmental impact;
2. Minimum impact and maximum respect for the host cultures;
3. Maximum economic benefits to the host country’s grassroots;

This can be considered highly innovative as the research comprehends both the tourists and the ‘places’ where these tourists go, with a strong focus on the host culture and benefit. (in Fennell 2015)

In order to understand better the real meaning of ecotourism and to which area it belongs to, we might have to firstly define the two main categories in which the tourism is most commonly classified (Wearing, Neil 2009).

The first one is the so called Conventional Mass Tourism (CMT), the conventional standard large scale tourism, while the second broad category has been defined as Alternative Tourism (AT), which includes many diverse approaches and typologies, with one thing in common: they are opposed to the CMT. In general, the forms which fall within the category of the AT share some elements: small scale, low density, dispersed in non-urban areas, the users have mainly a higher education and better income.

The AT can be defined as a form of tourism that sets out to be consistent with natural, social, and community values and which allows both hosts and guests to enjoy positive and worthwhile interaction and shared experiences (Wearing, Neil 2009:4).

A less broad category belonging to the AT is the Sustainable Tourism, whose general definition encompasses and further develops the four elements above mentioned, and was given by the The World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2005). In simple words, it can be defined as a form of ‘tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities’ (UNEP and UNWTO 2005)

Therefore, according to the WTO, to be considered as sustainable, tourism should:
1. Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.

2. Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

3. Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Furthermore, two other requirements should be met: the first is the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building; the second is focused on the tourists, whose satisfaction should be high and who should be provided with a meaningful experience, as well raising their awareness about sustainability issues. (UNWTO 2005)

After explaining these categories and general concepts, we can see ecotourism as a form of alternative and sustainable tourism. As a first definition, in simple terms, ‘ecotourism can be generally described as a low key, minimal impact; interpretative tourism where conservation, understanding, and appreciation of the environment and cultures visited are sought. It is a specialized area of tourism, involving travel to natural areas, or areas where human presence is minimal, with the ecotourist involved in the ecotourism experience expressing an explicit motivation to satisfy the need for environmental, social and/or cultural education and awareness through visiting and experiencing the natural area’ (Wearing, Neil 2009:4).

Ecotourism can be also defined in less words as a general activity which implies ‘traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas’ (Boo 1990, in Fennel 2015:9).

In other words, practicing ecotourism means to travel to a natural area, with the aim of understanding the whole environment and with a special interest in the broad ecosystem (flora, fauna, geology) of that area. But the observation is not the only element: ecotourism implies a proactive approach, seeking a positive contribution and impact to the conservation and if possible development of the destination area and/or host community.

Many authors have identified the key elements which are essential to define ecotourism, and explain its core values and concepts.

Wearing has indicated four elements:
   1. The notion of movement or travel from one location to another.
   2. Nature-based, which means that the focus is primarily on an experience based on the natural environment of the area visited.
3. Conservation-led, as the need for ecotourism arose from an increasing global concern for disappearing cultures and ecosystems and as a repudiation of inappropriate tourism development which leads to a degradation of the destination areas. This also means cultural and environmental awareness, environmental conservation, and empowerment of local people. More in general, ecotourism should give a contribution to a sustainable future, through a maximum level of respect to both the environment and local populations.

4. Educatve role, which implies an awareness of nature related issues and a desire to learn more about the environment (Wearing, Neil 2009).

According to Honey, ecotourism requires an holistic approach to travel, where the participants proactively show respect and interest towards the environment and the local communities, striving for a mutual benefit. Therefore, ecotourism, to be considered real, needs to have the following seven characteristics:

1. Involves travel to natural destinations: often remote areas, and usually under some kind of environmental protection.

2. Minimizes impact, by using either recycled or available local building materials, renewable sources of energy, recycling disposals of waste, and environmentally and culturally sensitive architectural design. This also means a behaviour which ensures a limited damage to the ecosystem.

3. Builds environmental awareness, which means education for both tourists and local communities.

4. Provides direct financial benefits for conservation, by raising funds for environmental protection, research, and education through different mechanisms.

5. Provides financial benefits and empowerment for local people, which means that the local community must be involved with and receive income and other tangible benefits.

6. Respects local culture, that is being less culturally intrusive and exploitative than conventional tourism.

7. Supports human rights and democratic movements (Honey 2008).

Another interesting view can be found in the six principles described by Wallace and Pierce (1996). According to these two authors, tourism becomes ecotourism if it manages to address all of the following:

- Minimal negative impacts to the environment and to local people.
- Awareness and understanding of the local system (natural and cultural) and active involvement in any related issue.
- Conservation and management of natural areas (whether legally protected or not).
- Full participation of local population in the decision making processes related to tourism (policies, strategies, etc.).
- Social and economic benefits directed to local people in a complementary approach (i.e. not replacing nor overwhelming any existing practice such as fishing, farming, or any social system).
Maximum provision of opportunities for the local population to visit the areas (i.e. increasing the local 'self-awareness') (Fennell 2015).

There is also an internal distinction which identifies two different types of ecotourism. Acott et al. (1998) have defined these as shallow and deep ecotourism. When we talk about shallow ecotourism, then we refer to a 'business-as-usual attitude to the natural world, nature is seen as a resource to be exploited in maximising human benefits, management decisions are based on utilitarian reasoning and sustainability is viewed from a weak or very weak perspective' (Fennell 2015:12). Conversely, deep ecotourism is characterised by 'small-scale development, community identity, community participation and the notion that materialism for its own sake is wrong' (Fennell 2015:12).

As a general definition, we agree with Fennel, who defined ecotourism as a 'travel with a primary interest in the natural history of a destination. It is a form of nature-based tourism that places about nature first-hand emphasis on learning, sustainability (conservation and local participation/benefits), and ethical planning, development and management' (Fennell 2015:1)

After reviewing different definitions and approaches, we can identify the most common and recurring themes and elements in the description of ecotourism:

1) nature-based;
2) preservation;
3) education;
4) sustainability;
5) distribution of benefits;
6) ethics/responsibility.

2.1.2 The Ecotourist

As the research about the ecotourism and its core concepts and approaches developed and gathered momentum in the early 90s, the academic and scientific world began to show a growing interest and curiosity about the user of the ecotourism, i.e. the ecotourist, aiming at understanding the motivations of such tourists and giving some classifications.

Despite the research on typologies conducted until recent times, there are some critics against this literature which is considered to be 'inconclusive at best in defining who the ecotourist is because there is just too much variability in socio-demographics and psychographics among the various studies in profiling this group' (Sharpley 2006, in Fennell 2015:30). According to this approach, the term 'ecotourist' is becoming increasingly meaningless, especially because the tourists may be demanding new, different products, such as ecotourism, yet the conventional reasons for participating in tourism are unlikely to have changed.

It is our belief that the classifications and definitions provided by the studies described below give a detailed and real picture, which reflect the actual ecotourist.
One of the first researches on the topic was conducted in 1991 by Lindberg (in Fennell 2015), who in his work adopted parameters such as dedication and time, in order to understand and describe the expectations, the desired destinations and the ways of traveling. Four main typologies of ecotourist were identified (please note that in the original study the ecotourist is referred to as ‘nature tourist’, being at that time ecotourism synonymous with nature tourism):

- Hard-core nature tourists: scientific researchers or members of tours specifically designed for education, removal of litter, or similar purposes;
- Dedicated nature tourists: people who take trips specifically to see protected areas and who want to understand local natural and cultural history;
- Mainstream nature tourists: people who visit specific destinations primarily to take an unusual trip;
- Casual nature tourists: people who experience nature incidentally as part of a broader trip.

In a study conducted a couple of year later, Mowforth (1993), adopted a slightly different approach and used other parameters to investigate and describe the ecotourist. This classification is based on age, type of travel, organisation of the event, budget and type of tourism, and led to three different types of ecotourist:

- the rough: young to middle-aged, travels individually or in small groups, independent, on a low budget and seeks sport and adventure;
- the smooth: middle-aged to old, travels in groups, depends on a tour operator, on a high budget and seeks nature and safari type experiences;
- the specialist: young or old, travels individually, independent and relies on specialist tours, on a mid to high budget and ranges from scientific interests to hobby pursuits (Fennell 2015).

Another research conducted by Perkins and Grace (2009, in Fennell 2015) shows that there is a distinct market of ecotourists as different from the general market. The results of this research are based on a self-report survey of 255 tourists, and are useful to understand the differences between the mainstream tourist and the ecotourist. These can be shortly described as follows: ‘the motivations for ecotourism experiences were qualitatively distinct from those of mainstream experiences. Moreover, and somewhat surprisingly, the motivations for ecotourism-type experiences expressed in this study seem entirely consistent with the key themes expounded in the agreed definitions of ecotourism, namely nature as the focus of the experience, environmental education, and environmental conservation.’ (Perkins and Grace 2009: 234, in Fennell 2015:32)

Adopting a different approach, Wearing and Neil described the ecotourist according to demographic and psychographic characteristics. The 'demographic segmentation involves defining the market by variables such as age, gender, life cycle stage, occupation, income and education’ (Wearing and Neil, 2009:196), while a 'psychographic profile is qualitative, analyzing in-depth data such as values, motivations and pre-established images of the ecotourist' (Wearing and Neil, 2009:196).
In general, we can say that ecotourists usually have higher than average incomes, largely hold tertiary qualifications and there tend to be more female ecotourists than men. According to The International Ecotourism Society the ecotourists are ’experienced travelers who are more likely to have a college/university degree (compared with the general tourism market) and have a higher income bracket' (International Ecotourism Society 2008, in Wearing and Neil 2009:196).

Refining the market profile of ecotourist characteristics, Wight (1996, in Wearing and Neil 2009) made a differentiation between the general consumers interested in ecotourism and the experienced ecotourism travelers. These were very highly educated, more so than general tourists interested in ecotourism, and had a tendency to travel as couples (61%), limited family (15%) and some singles (13%), compared to general tourists who usually travel as couples (59%), with 26% traveling as a family. But the most interesting result of this research is about the expenditure: experienced ecotourists show a will to spend more than general tourists.

Generally, ecotourists demonstrate the following eight psychographic characteristics (Wearing and Neil 2009):

- Possession of an environmental ethic.
- Willingness not to degrade the resource.
- Focus on intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation.
- Biocentric rather than anthropocentric in orientation.
- Aiming to benefit wildlife and the environment.
- Striving for first-hand experience with the natural environment.
- Possessing an expectation of education and appreciation.
- High cognitive and affective dimensions.

We agree with Williams, who described the ecotourist and ecotourism as ’more than a simple leisure activity. It is a style of travel that reflects and promotes a particular orientation to not only travel, but also to significant lifestyles, behaviors and philosophies: Ecotourists are expecting discovery and enlightenment from their ecotourism experience. Personal growth in emotional, spiritual,as well as intellectual terms appear to be expected outcomes from ecotourism travel for the majority of these travellers' (Williams 1990, in Wearing and Neil 2009:199).

### 2.2 Green Marketing

#### 2.2.1 Origins and definitions

To be able to understand concept of green marketing it is important to define marketing in general. The American Marketing Association defines marketing as the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (AMA, 2013).
This definition recognizes that marketing is an organizational function and set of activities undertaken to bring about exchanges of goods, services, or ideas between people and that marketing is a philosophical orientation to the practice of doing business which emphasizes the satisfaction and value that customers, clients, partners, and society realize due to marketing action (Dahlstrom 2011).

The roots of green marketing can be traced back to the wave of environmental concern of the 1970s which generated the ‘ecological marketing’ concept and was largely concerned with those industries with the highest environmental impacts, and consequently with the development of new technologies to alleviate these environmental problems (Hennison and Kinnear(1976) in Baker, Baker, 2003).

Ottman pointed out the main differences between the conventional marketing as defined in the previous paragraph and green marketing: 'conventional marketing refers to developing products to meet customer needs at affordable prices, and communicating the advantages of these products in a convincing way', while 'green marketing is far more complex and serves two purposes (Ottman 1998:45)':

✓ To develop products which strike a balance between the requirements of consumers for quality, practicality, performance and affordable prices, and ecological acceptability in terms of minimum environmental impact.
✓ To create an image of high quality, including environment friendliness, which relates to the properties of the product, as well as to the manufacturer and its achievements in the field of environmental protection (Ottman 1998).

In order to understand the actual concept of ‘green marketing’ which has developed recently we need to analyse it as a response to the green movement of today. Also, it has to be considered as an integration and expansion of the ideas embedded in the ecological and societal marketing concepts.

The first definition was given by the American Marketing Association in 1975, according to which green marketing is 'the study of positive and negative aspects of marketing activities on pollution, energy depletion, and depletion of non-energy resources' (in Meler, Ham 2012:136).

But a more comprehensive and broad definition can be given as follows, in which we can see the main themes of the green marketing: the holistic management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying the needs of customers and society, in a profitable and sustainable way (Baker, Baker 2003:727).

Another interesting definition was given by Polonsky, who highlighted three key determinants:

✓ green marketing is a part of the overall marketing activities,
✓ both positive and negative activities are taken into account,
✓ the relatively narrow range of environmental issues is taken into account.
Using these three as a starting point, the author widened the concept of green marketing and suggested the following definition: ‘green or environmental marketing is a set of activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchange intended to satisfy human needs or desires in a way that meeting those needs and desires causes minimal negative impact on the natural environment’ (Polonsky 1994:2).

Conceptually speaking, we can say that green marketing belongs to the socially responsible marketing, and according to Meler and Ham ‘green marketing has emerged as a natural result of the social marketing concept’ (Meler, Ham 2012:135). That is because green marketing strategies imply a high level of cooperation between sellers and suppliers, partners and rivals as well, as the goal is to achieve an environmentally sustainable development through the whole value chain. At the same time, internally, it requires a close cooperation between all the business functions, led by two main principles: on one side, profit, while on the other a long term and positive contribution to the environment (both in terms of natural surrounding and society).

Although as described above the origins of the green marketing concept can be found in the societal marketing, the first representing a sort of evolution of the second, there are some key differences that can be summarised as follows:

- An emphasis on the physical sustainability of the marketing process, as well as its social acceptability.
- A more holistic and interdependent view of the relationship between the economy, society and the environment.
- An open-ended rather than a long-term perspective.
- A treatment of the environment as something with intrinsic value over and above its usefulness to society.
- A focus on global concerns, rather than those of particular societies.

Another important new dimension introduced by the green marketing was the fact that socio-environmental issues can be seen as a potential source of innovation and opportunity for marketers, while in the ecological and societal marketing concepts, the emphasis on socio-environmental issues for marketers has mostly been reduced to costs and constraints (Baker, Baker 2003).

According to Dahlstrom (2011) green marketing is the study of all efforts to consume, produce, distribute, promote, package, and reclaim products in a manner that is sensitive or responsive to ecological concerns. The inclusion of all efforts means that green marketing is not activity oriented and undertaken only by consumers, on the contrary it involves many entities such as: governments, non-government organisations, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, services firms, etc. This definition also points out that production, distribution, and reclamation of the products have to be part of green marketing effort. Also, promotion is very important part of green marketing and has to be managed in a way to gain consumer’s trust and support of ecologically responsible products (Dahlstrom 2011).
At this point, we might agree that combining these two elements, environmental concern (which traditionally encourages conservation), and the discipline of marketing (which aims at stimulating consumption) can appear paradoxical, at least at first glance. Sustainability is the pillar of the green marketing philosophy, which can resolve this apparent paradox. A sustainable approach to production and consumption means enjoying a material standard of living today (i.e. marketing and consumption), which is not at the expense of the standard of living of future generations (i.e. environmental concern and conservation).

This apparently simple concept comprises two parts:
1. Using natural resources at a rate at which environmental systems or human activity can replenish them (or in the case of non-renewable resources, at a rate at which renewable alternatives can be substituted in).
2. Producing pollution and waste at a rate which can be absorbed by environmental systems without impairing their viability.

Green marketing’s key concepts of sustainability and holism are both apparently simple, but can be extremely difficult to translate into action. This is due to the fact that ‘conventional management wisdom emphasizes reductionalism and specialism, and is founded on economic theories which mistakenly treat environmental resources as limitless, free or worthless. Green marketing attempts to relocate marketing theory and practice away from the economic hyperspace it has evolved in, and bring it back down to earth and reality’ (Baker, Baker 2003:728-729).

As pointed out by Meler and Ham, green marketing can be implemented in practice when environmentally acceptable strategies are applied.

The key components of such strategies can be summarised in the following:
- Creating and developing environmentally sensitive market segments;
- Systematically monitoring, evaluating and auditing all market activities and all product lines, based on the latest environmental requirements and standards;
- Redefining quality strategies and product packaging;
- Redefining strategies of promotional activities and communication with market and the public at large, with environmental groups and organisations, individual countries, etc.;
- Creating new environmental standards and launching new environmental initiatives;
- Embracing environmental forms of product labelling. (Meler, Ham 2012)

Therefore, we agree with Polonsky, according to whom green marketing claims must:
- Clearly state environmental benefits;
- Explain environmental characteristics;
- Explain how benefits are achieved;
- Ensure comparative differences are justified;
- Ensure negative factors are taken into consideration;
- Only use meaningful terms and pictures. (Polonsky 1994)

Unfortunately, green marketing can be used in a wrong and false way, as a deceiving marketing tool which has nothing to do with the green marketing as explained in this chapter.
This practice is called ‘greenwashing’, and it happens when ‘a company, government or other group promotes green-based environmental initiatives or images but actually operates in a way that is damaging to the environment or in an opposite manner to the goal of the announced initiatives. This can also include misleading customers about the environmental benefits of a product through misleading advertising and unsubstantiated claims (Dahlstrom 2011).

As we can see, the idea behind this practice is an attempt to create a benefit by appearing to be a green company in any possible way (e.g. higher stock price, more customers, partnerships with green organisations, etc.). A different set of tools can be used, such as press releases about green projects or task forces put into place, energy reduction or pollution reduction efforts, and rebranding of consumer products and advertising materials. In reality, the company or group might be simply ignoring any green concern and avoiding any commitment to green initiatives, or sometimes they might be also operating in a way that damages the environment or the society.

2.2.2 The Green Consumer

After defining the green marketing, its core concepts, themes and strategies, it might be useful to understand the green consumer, and identify who these consumers are and most importantly the reasons behind green consumerism and what motivates purchases of environmentally marketed products and services.

Both academic researchers and market research agencies have given effort and spent resources in deeply investigating the relationship between peoples’ environmental concerns and their purchasing choices, i.e. how a general environmental behaviour turns into a purchasing behaviour.

According to Baker (2003), many different factors have been proposed as influences on green consumer behaviour, and the most common are: changing consumer values, demographic factors, knowledge of environmental problems and alternative products, perceived personal relevance, and the ability of the individual to make an effective contribution. All of these efforts have been led by the need to discover a reliable basis upon which green consumer segments can be defined and targeted.

Socio-demographic criteria such as gender, age and income have been often used as well, but with contrasting results, as Wagner (1997) comments: ‘socio-demographic attempts to profile the green consumer have not always yielded strongly indicative results, and the results produced in one study have been repeatedly contradicted in another’ (in Baker, Baker 2003:736-737). Other segmentation attempts of the green consumer have used parameters such as environmental attitudes, environmental knowledge, level of education, social consciousness or related behaviours.

However, even adopting different approaches and criteria, the results might be considered as not enough consistent, and sometimes inconclusive or contradictory. The reasons of the difficult isolation of the green consumer have been summarised by Baker in the following issues:
It overlooks the point made by Kardash (1974) that all consumers are ‘green consumers’ in that, faced with a choice between two products that are identical in all respects except that one is superior in terms of its eco-performance, they would differentiate in terms of the environmentally superior product.

By attempting to relate a consumer’s environmental concern to purchases, marketing researchers may be looking in the wrong place. Many of the most significant contributions that consumers can make towards environmental quality come in product use, maintenance and disposal, or in delaying or avoiding a purchase through a ‘make do and mend’ mentality.

Environmental improvements in products are often entangled with economic or technical benefits.

Different answers are achieved depending on what is defined as constituting green consumer behaviour, and whether the environmental issues that it is linked to are defined in general or specific terms. General environmental concern is often measured by researchers, but it is less easily related to products than specific environmental issues. (Baker, Baker 2003)

Nonetheless, it is necessary to operate a segmentation and give a description of the green consumer. This process might be improved by a change in perspective: if we want to understand the green purchasing behaviour then we should focus on trying and understanding the purchase rather than the purchaser. As mentioned above, if we accept the proposal that, all other things being equal, most customers would rather choose the greener products, then understanding environmental purchasing behaviour (or the lack of it) is assisted by investigating at the extent to which all the other aspects (i.e. the non environmental ones) are not ‘equal’. This means that many green purchases involve some form of compromise over conventional purchases. This compromise can take a variety of forms, which have been summarised and described by Baker:

- Paying a green premium. This can be imposed by economic necessity where improving eco-performance increases production costs, or, on the other hand, it can be created by marketing strategies in which greener products aimed at green market niches are given a premium price irrespective of production costs.
- Accepting a lower level of technical performance in exchange for improved eco-performance (an example is given by the rechargeable batteries, which provide less power but are ultimately cheaper and greener).
- Travelling to non-standard distribution outlets (e.g. some products might be on sale only in specific or alternative shops). (Baker, Baker 2003)

Every time there is a compromise involved in a greener purchase, a key factor which will ultimately determine whether or not this is acceptable, is the confidence the consumer has in the environmental benefits involved. In order for a customer to go for the green purchase, some issues have to be clear and resolved positively; in other words, the consumer needs to be sure and confident that:
- the environmental issue(s) involved are real problems;
the company’s market offering has improved eco-performance compared to competitor or previous offerings;
- purchasing the product will make some sort of material difference. (Baker, Baker 2003)

Analysing green purchases considering primarily the compromises and confidence involved can help to explain and solve some of the inconsistencies in the research findings about the green consumer behaviour. In general, we might say that most of the consumers have concerns for the environment, express a desire to buy greener products and are ready to pay more for them or accept technical performance reductions. On the other hand, the number of consumers who significantly change their purchasing behaviour becoming green consumers is much less. This non correspondence between intentions and behaviours can be interpreted as a failure to back up these intentions with purchase and a tendency to overreport social and environmental concerns (Wong et al., in Baker, Baker 2003).

After describing the main issue related to the definition of the green consumer, we can now proceed with a proper market segmentation: the most common approach adopted by researchers and analysts is the psychographic segmentation, i.e. using attitudes, opinions, motives, lifestyles, values, interests and personality. One of the most interesting segmentations is given by the marketing research firm Roper Starch Worldwide, which was primarily focused on investigating the consumers' orientation towards sustainability.

Five different market segments have been found and described:

1. True blues: consumers with strong environmental values that seek to bring about positive change. Individuals that identify with this segment are also inclined to be politically active in their pursuit of sustainability. These individuals are four times more likely to avoid products marketed by companies that are not environmentally conscious. 31% of consumers fit this category.

2. Greenback greens: these consumers are interested in sustainability concerns, but they are not inclined to be politically active. Importantly, these consumers are more willing to purchase environmentally friendly products than average consumers. This group represents 10% of the population.

3. Sprouts: these consumers appreciate the merits of environmental causes, but they do not take this appreciation with them to the marketplace. Although these consumers will be unlikely to spend more for green products, they can be persuaded to do so given the appropriate appeal. This group accounts for approximately 26% of consumers.

4. Grousers: these consumers tend to be cynical about their ability to bring about change, and are relatively uneducated about ecological concerns. Research suggests that grousers believe that green products are too expensive and do not perform as effectively as their non-green counterparts. Approximately 15% of consumers fit this category.

5. Apathetics: these consumers do not concern themselves with sustainability or green marketing practices. They represent about 18% of the population. (Dahlstrom 2011)
2.3 Green Marketing and Ecotourism

2.3.1 Ecotourism: economic relevance and benefits

After reviewing the concept of ecotourism and exploring its origins, definitions, characteristics and approaches, with a description of the ecotourist, we will now proceed with a more concrete analysis of the economic dimension of the ecotourism. We will explain why and how this practice can be considered a source of development and wellbeing, not only from an economical perspective: in other words, we will see the benefits for the local communities who decide to adopt this practice.

The economic importance of tourism both in developing and developed countries is a matter of fact: according to the UNWTO, tourism is the fourth most important export sector after chemicals, automotive products and fuels (UNWTO(2004) in Becken, Hay 2007). One of its most peculiar aspects is that it is the only export sector where the customer travels to the product and not vice versa.

As reported by Becken, tourism contributes to the economic wellbeing of a country in different ways: foreign exchange earnings, revenue generation through taxes and levies, and employment, both directly and indirectly. Tourism usually stimulates infrastructure development (e.g. airports, ways of communication, services) and more generally contributes to regional development. Furthermore, when tourism activity occurs in peripheral regions, it has the potential to counteract trends of agglomeration of industries, population and investment in urban and core development areas. As for the population, tourism potentially provides an opportunity for people to find employment and business in their region (Becken, Hay 2007).

We therefore agree with Highman, when he states that ‘the discipline of developing tourism for the purposes of economic development must become part of the larger economic development strategy approach that is applied to all nations’ (Higham 2007:180).

If we consider the developing countries, then ecotourism with its focus on tourism to natural areas is even more relevant: it has the ‘particular advantage of helping with rural development those countries where poverty is extremely persistent and not responsive to alleviation through trade liberalization approaches’ (Higham 2007:180).

It is therefore quite obvious that new investments need to be made in this kind of tourism, with a specific focus on the sustainability following these three main directories:

- Expanding sustainable tourism business opportunity and investment on a larger scale.
- Increasing sustainable planning of tourism.
- Targeting assistance to regions where traditional economies are in genuine need and the sustainable tourism economy can break new ground. (Higham 2007)

One of the most significant aspects of ecotourism in terms of development is its focus on the link between conservation and communities. More specifically, ecotourism has the ‘potential to deliver benefits to communities remote from centers of commerce, benefits that do not involve widespread social or environmental destruction’ (Wearing, Neil 2009:115).
Ecotourism has often been considered as a way of solving some of the issues that have arisen in developing nations through inappropriate economic growth. Tourism is a complex and decentralised industry, which affects different sectors of any local economy. It is a 24/7 labour-intensive industry, able to create employment opportunities across all sectors and skill levels. However, if we consider conventional tourism, we see that it usually brings with it many of the problems related to the exploitation of developing nations already seen in the past: it is often driven, owned and controlled by the developed nations with a high return to these nations (for example utilizing local people through the use of their resources and labor at a minimum or zero cost to the operator). Furthermore, local employment is often seasonal and lowly paid in contrast to the profits of the investors and operators.

We therefore agree with Wearing when he states that ecotourism has 'the potential to create support for conservation objectives in both the host community and in the visitor alike, through establishing and sustaining links between the tourism industry, local communities and protected areas' (Wearing, Neil 2009:117). In this perspective, social and environmental benefits are essentially interdependent, where social benefits received by the host communities as a result of ecotourism might ultimately increase the overall standards of living, as a direct consequence of the localised economic stimulus provided by the increased visitation to the site. Similarly, environmental benefits increase as well, as host communities will be persuaded to protect their natural environment in order to sustain economically viable tourism. As we have seen in the previous pages, nowadays many tourists, and especially ecotourists, are sensitive to any environmental issue of an area arising from its development. As a consequence, any form of degradation of the natural environment will severely reduce visitor demand in a long term perspective, as the natural attributes on which ecotourists depend and which they search for will be perceived as less attractive or not existing, thus unable to provide satisfying ecology-based experiences.

Before presenting the potential benefits that ecotourism can bring to local communities, we need first to understand who are the main groups forming these communities and which different interests they have. Wearing has identified three of them, whose issues are summarised as follows.

The first group is composed by the tourist industry, which primarily seeks a healthy business environment with:

- financial security;
- a trained and responsible workforce;
- attractions of sufficient quality to ensure a steady flow of visitors – who stay longer and visit more often;
- a significant return on investment.

In the second group we can find all those interested in the natural environment and cultural heritage issues, who:

- seek for protection of the environment through prevention, improvement, correction of damage and restoration;
- motivate people to be more aware, by convincing other to ‘care for’ rather than ‘use up’ resources.
The third group is composed by the other community members, who are more interested in a healthy place in which to live with the following characteristics:

- food, adequate and clean water, health care, rewarding work for equitable pay, education and recreation;
- respect for cultural traditions;
- opportunities to make decisions about the future. (Wearing, Neil 2009)

As we can see, each group has different interests, requests and needs, but we can find some common areas which are relevant to all of them:

1. issues of access, such as when, where and how tourists visit and move from place to place;
2. host and guest issues, such as cultural impact or common use of infrastructure;
3. land use issues, such as hunting and wildlife habitat, agriculture and recreation, preservation and development, etc. (Wearing, Neil 2009)

Even if each group of stakeholders belonging to the community might have different interests, there are still valid reasons to choose ecotourism and accept its practice. The first is the desire to be part of a strong growth in tourism generally and more specifically to see the potential of catering for special-interest tourism (i.e. niche markets). Another one is related to the an awareness of the high value of natural attractions and their potential. Also, the local population might (or better, should) have empathy for conservation ideals and feel the need for sustainable tourism. One more reason is given by the desire to responsibly restore and boost the local tourist industry (Wearing, Neil 2009).

As already mentioned, one of the main principles of ecotourism is its ability to maximise the benefits of tourism, not only related to the income to a region but also in regards to the preservation of local culture, social infrastructure and the conservation of the biosphere.

Therefore, we can make a list of benefits for the local communities who wish to invest in ecotourism:

- increased demand for accommodation houses and food and beverage outlets, and therefore improved viability for new and established accommodation facilities (i.e. hotels, motels, guest houses, farm stays, etc.)
- additional revenue to local retail businesses and other services (e.g. medical, banking, car hire, souvenir shops, tourist attractions, etc.);
- increased market for local products (e.g. locally grown produce, artefacts, value-added goods), thereby sustaining the traditional culture, customs and practices;
- employment of local labor and expertise (e.g. ecotour guides, retail sales assistants, restaurant table waiting staff);
- source of funding for the protection and enhancement/maintenance of natural attractions and symbols of cultural heritage;
- funding and/or volunteers for field work associated with wildlife research and archaeological studies;
- heightened community awareness of the value of the local culture and the natural environment. (Wearing, Neil 2009)
By reading these benefits, we can finally say that ecotourism 'is about attracting visitors for the 'right' reasons, and not simply promoting tourism for the sake of the 'tourist dollar' at the expense of a community's natural and cultural attributes' (Wearing, Neil 2009:121).

One of the most important benefits mentioned above is related to the improved employment opportunities and the consequent generation of income for the host community. In this perspective, ecotourism has the potential to improve ‘the economic opportunities of local beneficiaries through income and employment generation, increased local entrepreneurship and improved proficiency in time management resulting in rises of labour productivity’ (Tokalau 2005: 173, in Wearing, Neil 2009:126). The benefits of employment as a result of tourism impacts on three main economic areas include:

- **direct employment** (associated service industries such as hotels, restaurants, concessions)
- **indirect employment** (as a result of increasing industry inputs such as employment at a retail souvenir outlet, interpretation centers, protected area land manager, etc.) (Beeton, 1999: 7–8, in Wearing, Neil 2009))
- **induced employment** (as a result of increased spending capacity of local residents due to increased receipts from tourism) (Healy, 1989: 21, in Wearing, Neil 2009)

To be more specific, the primary employment opportunities through ecotourism are in the areas of hotels, craft makers, shop owners, tour operators, government agency staff, park wardens/rangers, guides and the like. Another peculiarity of ecotourism is that the majority of the businesses are small in scale and family owned.

### 2.3.1.1 Potential Issues in Ecotourism

After seeing the potential positive effects of ecotourism on the local communities, we have to mentioned the issues and problems that might arise. These can be summarised as follows:

- The lack of opportunities for involvement in decision-making relating to ecotourism.
- Inadequate responses from governments when administrative or legislative mechanisms have been established to involve them in such decision-making.
- The lack of financial, social and vocational benefits flowing to these communities from projects that commercially exploit what they regard as their resources.
- The need to establish better tools for evaluating socio-cultural impacts and ensuring this is completed over the more emphasized environmental impacts on the natural environments which are usually of more interest to the outside investors and conservation groups.
- Impacts on community cohesion and structure.
- The rapidity of tourism development that in many cases significantly accelerates social change. (Wearing, Neil 2009)

Although these issues might seem quite differentiated, we can still trace a common line that links all of them, which represents what we might consider the main problem in ecotourism: the inadequate level of participation (real or perceived) of the local communities in the management of what they regard as their traditional domains (i.e. the local environment).
When we talk about participation, we do not mean only employment opportunities. Local communities must be involved in the complete tourism development process, from the planning stage to the implementation and management of projects, through different means (e.g. consultations, partnerships, etc).

This aspect appears even more important if we consider that ecotourism has three typical characteristics: protection, economy, and community participation. What does ‘protection’ in ecotourism exactly mean? ‘The protection of ecotourism means protecting the environment and resources of ecotourism destination—including local communities. The economy of ecotourism means developing the economy of local communities of tourist destination. Both the protection and economy are the targets of ecotourism development; well the community participation is the effective method to realize the targets mentioned above’ (Mostafanezhad et al. 2016).

The local community is the tie that binds the protection to the economic income and social benefit, and it is the core of stakeholders of ecotourism. Therefore, community participation in ecotourism can make a positive promotion to the protection of ecotourism environment, by avoiding the neglect of environmental and social benefits, or preventing from such choices as acquiring short-term benefit by sacrificing long-term benefit and environmental protection. Community participation can mobilise all the social resources to administer the environment of the local area and environment.

In this perspective, it is clear how important it is to implement ‘inclusive strategies not only within the context of heritage presentation and interpretation but also involving local communities in the tourism planning and development process’ (Chhabra 2010:60). These strategies will ‘provide inherent social benefits and facilitate sustainability’ (Chhabra 2010:60). This kind of approach has another important benefit if followed: since information can be exchanged and negotiated, in case of misunderstandings or protest, these can be mediated to obtain a desired response, therefore conflicts can be managed with positive outcomes such as reconciliation, compromise, and enhanced awareness, avoiding negative consequences. Furthermore, this can also improve the acceptance of the tourists by the local population, by minimising any negative perceptions towards them.

Participation is the key that can help in resolving the issues mentioned above, and maximise the benefits for the local communities. Therefore, local communities must be in an empowered position, which enables them to have autonomy over their culture, its artefacts and rituals, its direction, while engaging in and with cultures (i.e. tourists) that interact with them with no exploitation. In other words, local communities can benefit from ecotourism ‘if they play a greater participatory role in the tourism process. The greater the control over tourism in their region, the more culturally sustainable they will become’ (Wearing, Neil 2009:125).
2.3.2 Green Marketing: strategies and approaches

In the previous chapter, we have described green marketing by explaining its origins and background, and we gave some definitions and presented its core issues and innovations. We can now investigate more deeply and see green marketing through its new strategies and approaches, explaining why these are worth to follow.

We completely agree with Dalton, who stated that green marketing ‘has positive influences on multiple participants in the economy. The environment, developing economies, consumers, corporate strategy, the product, production processes, and supply chain benefit from green marketing’ (Dahlstrom 2011). We will describe the benefits related to each one of the aspects above mentioned:

- Environmental Benefits. The first obvious benefactor of green marketing is the environment. Green marketing initiatives are focused on product development strategies aimed at reducing the need to rely on old, non-renewable and highly polluting forms of energy (i.e. fossil fuel, coal, etc.).

- Developing Economies. The low income, underdeveloped assets, and economic vulnerability endemic to these economies results in high dependence on the agricultural sector. Climate change has catastrophic consequences on different factors (agricultural productivity, water stress, ecosystems’ transformation, human health), which combined contribute to hunger and poverty in these developing markets. Green marketing and production stand to reduce climate change and consequently limit hunger and poverty.

- Consumer Benefits. These benefits influence consumer decisions making, and consumers will vary in the extent to which they value these benefits. Initially, consumers know that they are doing their part to reduce climate change. These consumers are likely to favour corporate efforts to reduce pollution over efforts to raise corporate profitability. Consumers also value the opportunity to be associated with environmentally friendly products and organizations. But consumers want ecologically friendly products without sacrificing other valuable features: current marketing efforts, however, enable some firms to offer green products that provide initial product savings, lower energy costs, and access to new technologies.

- Strategic Benefits. Companies that incorporate ecological consciousness into their mission statements and strategy enhance their images among their stakeholders (i.e. consumers, employees, investors, insurers, the general public). First, some consumers have strong affinities toward green products (i.e. the green consumer), and approaching the market with an ecological focus enhances image of the brand among these consumers. As for the workforce, some potential employees may decide whether to interview with a firm based on the company’s environmental image. Considering the financial markets, many investors are flocking to companies that can help alleviate some environmental issues (e.g. emissions, fuel consumption). Furthermore, green marketing also provides a strategic advantage that enables companies to develop alliances with interest groups outside the organisation.
Product Benefits. Product benefits refer to components related to production outputs or services designed to benefit the consumer. Green products must improve environmental quality and customer satisfaction: achieving that, they will increase their likelihood to succeed. However, we need to keep in mind that the green attributes of a product rarely stand on their own and must complement other benefits to increase consumer value and ultimately consumption.

Production Process Benefits. Production processes focus on organizational efforts to produce the highest-quality products at the lowest possible cost.

Supply-chain Benefits. Partners in the supply chain seek the ability to trace products throughout the supply chain. As an example, companies that adopt green strategies for the production and distribution of food products provide a level of insurance of product quality. However, the ability to trace components throughout the distribution process is not limited to food, as other industries have also adopted forms of traceability. (Dahlstrom 2011)

As mentioned, companies need to recognise that environmental responsiveness is something that customers, investors and other stakeholders take an interest in, and understand that these are basically opportunities for innovation and competitive advantage. Marketers’ response to the green agenda can be summarised in two different approaches: proactive and reactive. Reactive strategists tend to emphasise compliance with the current legislation, and simply respond to any specific customer pressure for improvements to socio-environmental performance. The proactive approach, on the other hand, tends to emphasise communication with stakeholders, and implies keeping ahead of legislation and customer demands for improvement, and participation in debates about social and environmental issues.

Once marketing strategists understand the potential impact of the green agenda on their business and its customers, the next step is to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of the company’s eco-performance.

The competitive advantage deriving from a good eco-performance has been clearly described by Baker, who has identified four different kinds of opportunities:

- New market opportunities, through access to growing green markets. In markets such as financial services and tourism, green products represent the fastest growing area for new business.

- Differentiation opportunities, in terms of product placement and added value of the services or products offered.

- Opportunities for cost advantages: investments using a more radical, clean technology approach are being shown to be capable of reducing material and energy inputs, and cutting inefficient pollution and waste.

- Niche opportunities: in the short term, greener products such as organic food and cruelty-free cosmetics have succeeded within market niches comprised of the most environmentally aware consumers and marketed at premium prices. However, when such products catch the imagination of the mass market, the niche can rapidly expand to encompass the bulk of the market. (Baker, Baker 2003)
Another interesting approach has been given by Levinson, in his ‘Guerrilla Marketing Goes Green’. We agree with his statement regarding the necessity for the marketing to go green: ‘Green Marketing Is a Mandate from Nature’ (Levinson, Horowitz 2010:28). Although the first step towards green marketing is related to the social agenda, we can give three reasons why this social concept is important: first, consumers avoid buying from companies they perceive to be unethical; second, consumers prefer to buy from companies that support their social agenda (in this sense, consumer are demanding social and environmental responsibility from the companies); third, customers, investors, and workers like this socially and environmentally responsible approach. (Levinson, Horowitz 2010)

This leads to the six reasons why socially and environmentally companies perform better:

1. Clean-hands companies don’t have to pay expensive lawsuit settlements around pollution, safety violations, or discrimination.
2. When customers fall in love with the way a company does business, they start recruiting other customers. They actually become that firm’s unpaid sales force, and that leads to greater profits through reduced marketing expenditures.
3. Ethical and eco-friendly companies are much more likely to build a lasting business, and build it more easily. When customers believe that you have their best interests at heart, they come back again and again.
4. Joint ventures are much easier to organize, because the other partners expect that they’l be treated ethically and respected for what they bring to the table.
5. The high value of goodwill will be factored into the sale price if the business is sold.
6. If you tell only the truth, you don’t have to worry about being caught in an embarrassing and profit-killing lie. (Levinson, Horowitz 2010)

As we have mentioned above, customers prefer to do business with companies who share their values: in these days, those values include strong awareness of climate change and other environmental issues. This is why the environment has penetrated our collective consciousness deeply enough to move a whole lot of people toward Green lifestyle changes. At the same time, technology developments have made it possible to run a global business with little or no staff or resources, and without a big infrastructure, and ‘this opens all sorts of opportunities for the Green Marketing Guerrilla who honestly fits into this market’ (Levinson, Horowitz 2010:107).

Levinson has summarised the advantages of running a green company, and therefore adopting a green marketing approach, as follows:

- Green goods and services are much easier to market.
- They often command a premium price, and thus are more profitable.
- Green goods and services are better for the environment: They use fewer resources, less energy, and more organic and natural materials—and thus create less pollution, have a smaller carbon footprint (which means they don’t add to the global warming problem), and are easier to dispose of.
- Against conventional wisdom, they can actually be cheaper to produce, if properly designed. (Levinson, Horowitz 2010)
An interesting and innovative contribution can be found in ‘The Green Marketing Manifesto’, by author John Grant. Traditional marketing has identified in the four P’s the key elements to consider when drafting a strategy and defining the marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion). Grant added to these four P’s other five I’s, which explain what green marketing should do and achieve through its strategies:

1. Intuitive – Making Better Alternatives Accessible and Easy to Grasp. It’s about making breakthrough green stuff seem normal. For the majority of people, living, shopping, working, travelling and enjoying life in a sustainable way appears difficult and arduous: the job of the marketing people is to make it intuitive, second nature, just common sense. Organic, recycling, Fairtrade and carbon neutral are examples of how important the choice of a word, a cultural reference, a human sense of things is.

2. Integrative – Combining Commerce, Technology, Social Effects and Ecology. The breakthrough idea was sustainability, which is an approach to improving quality of life, both now and for future generations, by combining economic development with social and environmental development. Sustainability also allows a balanced view where one evil doesn’t get replaced by another. It is also a big breakthrough for commercial traditional marketing, which has in the past considered green and social objectives only as a means to a business end.

3. Innovative – Creating New Products and New Lifestyles. People have started using the term g-commerce (like e-commerce but green). In fact it’s not just an analogy; some developments are enabled by the internet (e.g. the ability to collaborate in design, build communities, etc). Some of these changes will hurt incumbent brands though, although green isn’t intrinsically anti-brand or anti-revenue. There are more ways of making money than encouraging needless waste and extra consumption of precious resources.

4. Inviting – A Positive Choice Not a Hair Shirt. Green now is partly a design challenge. And green products are often better: more efficient, durable, healthy, affordable and so on. But we also need to tackle the culture of green lifestyles, create new myths and codes which are joyful and fun.

5. Informed – Lack of Knowledge Is What Most Distorts People’s Behaviour. The classical ‘brand’ is a substitute for having to give matters much thought. The green marketing proposed in this Manifest has very little to do with brand image – it’s about education and participation. There is revolution going on in health, lifelong learning and citizenship due to the new accessibility of information. (Grant 2007)

Considering these green objectives plus the commercial ones, Grant divided green marketing into three sorts of activity:

- Green: setting new standards > communicate: having commercial objectives only (where the product, brand or company is greener than alternatives, but the marketing is straightforward about establishing this difference).
- Greener: sharing responsibility > collaborate: having green objectives as well as commercial objectives (the marketing itself achieves green objectives, for instance changing the way people use the product).
Greenest: supporting innovation > cultural reshaping: having cultural objectives as well (making new ways of life and new business models normal and acceptable). (Grant 2007:36-37)

To conclude, we can mention the green marketing challenge proposed by Grant, who claims that marketing should do much more than simply spreading a current good practice, but ‘it must help innovate; bring thousands of dramatically better substitutes – products/services and habits – that haven’t even been thought of yet to mainstream acceptance. These step change innovations will seem outlandish at times, but marketing can help with that too; marketing is great at normalising things which are otherwise too new and different to be readily accepted’ (Grant 2007:65).

2.3.3 Green Marketing and Ecotourism: powerful alliance

In this paragraph, we will try to investigate, understand and explain the connections between ecotourism and marketing, with a special focus on green marketing, and how these two concepts are strictly related and represent a perfect combination.

First of all we need to keep in mind a peculiarity of tourism as an industry: it does not produce close substitute products, as does the manufacturing industry, but it comprises different sectors, each of which produces closely substitutable products. These sectors include accommodation, attractions, carrier, coordination, promotion and distribution, tour operators, wholesalers and miscellaneous groups. Therefore we might say that ecotourism ‘is not an industry per se but it does draw from products produced by the many sectors of the tourism industry’ (Wearing, Neil 2009:172). If we consider that marketing can be shortly described as that business activity which is designed to plan, price, promote and distribute products, services and ideas for the benefit of the target market to achieve an organisation’s objectives, two questions arise: ‘what should the primary objective of an ecotourism operator be – sustaining the environment or profitability? Can the two objectives be pursued successfully and simultaneously?’ (Wearing, Neil 2009:173)

In a few words, we can describe markets as places where buyers and sellers meet to engage in exchange, which implies that prices are determined and quantities produced according to the amount of demand for a particular product. Tourism is no different in this respect, and tourism marketing is demand-led, which means that if there is a demand for a certain product or service by consumers, it will be supplied and marketed by profit-maximizing organisations. This demand orientation determines that the ‘requirements of the tourists are given highest priority and the destination area seeks to provide services to meet those requirements’ (Ashworth and Goodall, 1990: 227 – in Wearing, Neil 2009:175). But in ecotourism issue such as social impact of the tourism product on destination sites, the needs and wants of destination communities and the natural resource management of the supplier country and destination sites become imperative. Therefore, if we want to establish the best methods and approaches for marketing an ecotourism destination 'it is important to stress the necessity of marketing to be a holistic enterprise, working with community groups, indigenous and other private voluntary organization programs' (Wearing, Neil 2009).
After these considerations, it is clear that the approach and discipline to follow is the green marketing, for the simple reason that it 'differs from traditional marketing as it relates to the marketing of ecotourism as it involves the promotion of products and services with positive ecological outcomes to environmentally concerned consumers' (Wearing, Neil 2009:176).

More in general we can say that in the service sector, for service businesses (such as ecotourism) green initiatives are becoming extremely effective in terms of cost control, greater profitability and investment in building customer loyalty.

As mentioned, these strategies can be applied to ecotourism and its supply providers, with three major effects of green marketing on businesses as reported by Polonsky and Rosenberg:

1. Cutting back costs. The greening of production processes often results in the more effective use of resources and, through this, to changes in cost patterns.
2. Differentiation relative to rivals. By offering new products on new markets and/or creating value added for existing products, a business may gain access to new market segments, enhance customer loyalty, and increase profitability – in other words, improve its relative position on the market.
3. Revitalisation of a business. A business can use the greening process as an opportunity to revitalise its product, as well as its overall corporate strategy, culture, mission, vision, etc. by applying the guidelines and rules of green marketing. (Meler Marcel, Ham Marija 2012)

We therefore agree with Meler and Ham when they state that 'green marketing represents a variant of marketing that should be implemented in green (eco) tourism. The role of green marketing in green tourism is primarily derived from the fact that green marketing has at its disposal the knowledge referring to environmental awareness, ways of enticing and raising this awareness, as well as its operationalization in terms of relevant environmentally oriented behaviour' (Meler, Ham 2012:138).

It is then clear which is the primary role of green marketing in serving the ecotourism: it should ensure that decision makers at all levels (national, regional and local) including at the level of individual supplier of ecotourism products, are constantly provided with information, guidelines and tools based on the latest research, with a special focus on the area of market segmentation and profiling, according to the level of environmental awareness and environmental actions taken in reality. As we are dealing with market segments, there is a strong need to identify and describe target consumers, in order for the ecotourism suppliers to be able to effectively approach them and meet their needs, in a general framework of specially designed marketing programs and strategies.

Another important role is related to the communications: that is to say, green marketing has to ensure the accessibility of such information via specific and ad-hoc communication channels, tailored on the different information needs of the priorly identified market segments. On a larger scale, green marketing has to educate all participants in green tourism and the general public.

If we look at the financial point of view, the role of green marketing is to find new approaches and mechanisms to support conservation activities (for the environment) as well as training programmes (for the local stakeholders) from the revenues generated by ecotourism.
If we consider it in a broader sense, i.e. as a business philosophy, green marketing represents a specific way of designing and planning marketing activities and implementing adequate strategies, tools and models aimed at achieving the objectives of ecotourism. It is then absolutely clear that 'green marketing is a necessary prerequisite for the functioning of green tourism. Green marketing and ecotourism are indeed interdependent, having a reciprocal and correspondent mutual impact' (Meler, Ham 2012:138).

With the support of green marketing, ecotourism increases its potential of becoming a sustainable form of tourism: on one side, because it is focused on the protection of the natural and cultural heritage, while on the other side it is able to provide economic benefits and enhance the well-being of the local population, the latter resulting mainly from the focused entrepreneurial activities of the local population.

We can summarise the role of green marketing in ecotourism in the two following aspects:

1. to identify and describe the target consumer, i.e., user groups;
2. to strategically determine the modalities for the satisfaction of needs and desires of such identified target groups in a green marketing sense. (Meler, Ham 2012)

We can see the importance of green marketing and its successful application if we consider that the prefix 'eco in ecotourism stands for ecology, but it also means economy. For an ecotourism company to succeed, it must achieve both its environmental goals and its financial goals' (McGahey 2012:234). It is therefore of the utmost importance for an ecotourism supplier to be able to offer a product and service that attract enough customers for the destination to remain viable and stay in business. A failure in this aspect, i.e. the ecotourism becomes unprofitable at the destination, can cause two main problems which might undermine the existence of the ecotourism itself:

- if the community stops being an ecotourism destination, the opportunity that has been presented to diversify its economy, enhance its standard of living, and help preserve its natural environment is lost;
- once an ecotourism destination is developed, if it fails, it might continue operating, but without staying true to ecotourism principles. In this situation, ecotourists can become dissatisfied with their experience, unwittingly cause harm to the destination, and lose confidence in the ecotourism concept. (McGahey 2012)

### 2.3.3.1 Green Marketing Mix in Ecotourism

If we consider the performance of ecotourism, and we wish to avoid the situations above described and improve the profitability and, in a long-term perspective, the sustainability of any eco-touristic business, we agree with Kimani and the four aspects mentioned in her work, which have to be carefully taken in consideration in the planning and implementation aimed at improving the performance (Kimani 2015).

The first is the green product, i.e. the cornerstone of the marketing mix: it is fundamental to match demand and supply in order to achieve 'sustainable tourism development as mismatches can result in dissatisfied tourists, economic loss by tourism operators and impacts on social and physical environments' (Gunn and Var, 2002 in Kimani 2015:11). More specifically, three main components of the green product must be considered: the experience,
which refers to what the ecotourist sees, uses and experiences during the journey; the place, i.e. the destination as place of consumption of the green experience; the specific ecotourism product, composed by individual products such as accommodation, attractions, restaurants and souvenirs.

The second aspect is the green price and its definition. Consumers need to be educated and made aware that paying a little more for a green product is worthy. This added value may be due to improved performance, function, design, visual appeal, or taste. Green price 'involves producing affordable products that are cost effective to the consumers locally and internationally' (Kimani 2015:13)

The third is the green place, which is particularly important for the ecotourism suppliers as it allows them to differentiate themselves from the competitors. In order to maximise this aspect, ecotourism places 'must rely on infrastructure that has been developed in harmony with the environment, minimizing use of fossil fuels, conserving local plants and wildlife, and blending with the natural and cultural environment' (Kimani 2015:15)

The fourth is the green promotion of products and services that are environmentally friendly, causing no harm to the environment and minimal negative effects to the health of the consumers. The key aspect here is to promote and 'cultivate a positive cultural, economic and social economic status to positively impact on environment conservation and direct economic benefits to local people and further provide opportunities for consumers to enjoy goods and services that have minimal effects on their health' (Kimani 2015:15). One of the most important tools is represented by the ecolabelling, which will be further described.

### 2.3.3.2 Green Marketing Tools for Ecotourism

According to the Global Ecotourism Conference held in Oslo in 2007, green marketing in ecotourism should accomplish the following tasks: (International Ecotourism Society, 2007)

- Ensure the latest information and research results about the ecotourism market and facilitate access to this information through the most efficient channels possible, such as Web pages, online forums and groups, mailing lists, Web media, etc.
- Provide a well-formulated interpretation of the natural environment and culture as key elements of high quality and authentic ecotourism; encourage innovations, secure funding for education centres and training programs, the effectiveness of which should be assessed through attendance numbers and through the programs that are in demand.
- Cooperate with the media and take advantage of its role as an effective educational tool for promoting accurate and informative reporting on ecotourism, while avoiding greenwashing, and enhancing the sector’s profile and encouraging support to ecotourism principles. (Marcel, Ham n.n.)

But how to accomplish these tasks by making sure that the message is received in the most effective possible way? Guerrilla marketing might help in providing some practical advice on how to maximise the effects of any marketing initiative aimed at supporting ecotourism.

At first, Levinson in his Guerrilla Marketing Goes Green gives a checklist which we consider a very useful tool to evaluate if the marketing initiative is effective and the message is
properly conveyed and is able to reach the target group (i.e. the ecotourist), which is below referred as ‘prospect’:

- Incorporate top-quality customer service into every aspect of your business. Train your staff in how to greet customers in person and over the phone, how to resolve complaints and follow up to make sure they’re resolved—and how to go the extra mile so the customer really feels special. Empower your workers as much as possible to satisfy customers.
- Target your marketing to your exact audience - and, as much as possible, only your exact audience. Don’t waste your money annoying people who are not your prospects.
- Treat your prospects as intelligent, thinking, feeling people. Don’t ignore their emotions, but create marketing materials and campaigns that engage your prospect both intellectually and emotionally.
- Be sensitive to the cultural nuances of your target audience. This means knowing the demographics and psychographics, using the right media to reach your particular set of prospects, and creating marketing that resonates with the people you most want as customers.
- Be scrupulously honest in every headline, claim, or offer, but still use copy that makes your audience sit up and take notice.
- Always take advantage of every honest chance to build your reputation. Turn your customers, your employees, and your competitors into evangelists for your business. (Levinson, Horowitz 2010:127)

We then agree with Levinson when he states that Guerrilla Marketing will ‘enable you to take advantage of some of the very best low-cost, high-impact marketing tools’ (Levinson, Horowitz 2010:137). We selected these tools as they represent, in our opinion, an effective way of achieving the results mentioned previously in this paragraph, and best fit with the characteristics and requirements of ecotourism:

- Media Publicity. Coverage by the media conveys an implied endorsement by an objective, trustworthy source, which is something that can’t be bought with any amount of advertising.
- Coverage in do-it-yourself media. In today’s wired world, it is easy to set up a blog or e-zine or print newsletter that anyone can become a media outlet in minutes. Also, it is much easier to get coverage in these tiny, obscure outlets than in the big mainstream newspapers and magazines.
- Twenty-first-century toolkit. Your media tools have to evolve along with your definition of media: a) Incorporate social media and/or multimedia features in your release to make it easy to share; b) Figure out the real news angle; c) Target the right audience; d) Remember that the media no longer stands between you and your public; e) When possible, be personal.
- Speaking. This will give the chance to sell informational products, to distribute handouts that include information not only about your topic but also about how you can help your prospects, and how to get in touch. And if you provide solid, useful information then prospects in the audience seek you out to consult, to buy your products, or to hire you for another speech.
✓ Internet discussion groups and social networking sites. What makes the Internet so potent for marketers is the incredible segmentation of interest groups, and one of our very favourite items in the Internet marketing toolkit is participation in discussion groups. These different technologies accomplish the same thing: they draw a group of like-minded people together to talk about something they all have in common.

✓ User-friendly websites with newsletters. The site should be quick to load, easy to navigate, and genuinely useful to your prospects and any journalists, investors, and other constituencies that might visit. If they find helpful information and a sense that they can trust you, visitors will buy from you at all hours, whether you’re open for business or sitting at your computer. It is also crucial to have a way to capture e-mail addresses and include as many ways as possible to contact you: e-mail, phone, Twitter, social networking profiles, fax, and postal.

✓ Apparel and premiums. The whole idea is to be seen by people encountering the person wearing your shirt.

✓ Highly targeted advertising and direct mail. Though they’re relatively expensive compared to the other tools in our toolbox, there is a place for traditional advertising methods, both online and offline and for direct mail. One key is to make sure that you have targeted so carefully that the vast majority of people seeing or hearing the ad, or receiving the letter, will be actual prospects.

✓ Guerrilla gifting and sampling. It has long been known that giving something away can be very good for business. (Levinson, Horowitz 2010)

2.3.3.3 Verifying the message: Eco-standards and certification

Importance of green marketing management in ecotourism can be also seen through achievement of existing standards in ecotourism and ecotourism certification. Improving green marketing management, ecotourism businesses can get ecotourism certification which can be potential powerful marketing tool for the future.

For ecotourism businesses, certification, as a way of ensuring that an activity or a product meets certain standards, provides a seal of quality and authenticity for their product, shows their commitment for mitigating environmental and social impacts, and enables them to market their products more effectively. Certification also helps to differentiate authentic and real ecotourism from those who abuse term “ecotourism” and just promise an ecotourism experience, but fail to deliver it. (McGahey 2012)

Before we get to know about standards and certification of ecotourism and green marketing in it, let’s see what standards, certification and green labelling mean in general.

All types of activities among organisations and individuals can be subject to standardisation. According to Brunsson and Jacobsson (2000) standardisation emerges as a general new form of regulation in modern globalized life, alongside traditional legislation and normative community. When it comes to eco standardisation, eco-standards are addressed towards solving or dealing with environmental problems (whereas economic and social aspects could be incorporated as well). (Bostrom, Klintman 2008)
As a kind of eco-standardization, green labelling is market-based and consumer-oriented and based on the standardization of principles and prescriptive criteria. Green labels are markers which are presented to consumers or professional buyers, and which symbolize beneficial consumer choices in terms of environmental, health, quality, solidarity or other matters. If businesses want to use a label for their products and services, they must comply with certain standards and normally pay a licence fee. Those standards are not usually strict and definite, because many labelling programmes express a vision of adjusting, developing, and sharpening labelling principles and criteria in a continuous manner, in the light of new knowledge and market opportunities. (Bostrom, Klintman 2008)

One more essential characteristic of green labelling is symbolic differentiation. Green labelled product sends a message that it is different from others, often discursively signalled as ‘conventional products’. In other words, green label symbolizes that a particular product has a quality that equivalent products (or substitutes) lack. Also, it symbolizes beneficial consumer choices in terms of environmental, health, quality, solidarity or other matters. This symbolic differentiation can be very useful as identity construction, marketing, positioning, and scheme development. (Bostrom, Klintman 2008)

Also, it is good to know that it is possible to do the certification in two ways. First is procedural and it requires only that business is nominated as by an already certified company. It’s needed only to fulfil application, pay a fee and wait to see if anyone objects. Another way is substantive, which is more rigorous and successful and managed by either government agencies or industry associations. It requires technological expertise, completion of a training course, passing an exam, and acceptance into an ecotourism association (Buckley, 2009 in McGahey 2012).

Environmental certification of tourism services began in Europe with the Blue Flag Campaign for beaches in Denmark, in 1987, which is now worldwide. This was followed by the 1992 “Earth Summit,” held under United Nations sponsorship in Rio de Janeiro, where the event called “Agenda 21” was organised as a call for environmental and social responsibility of all sectors of society in the world, including governments, nongovernmental organizations, and businesses. By 2007, as many as 80 environmental tourism certification programs were developed or were under development, although many smaller programs have ceased to certify new businesses. Most of them were in Europe and all were voluntary. In 2000, in Mohonk Mountain House (a 120-year-old sustainable tourism hotel in the mountains of New York) the most important sustainable and ecotourism certification programs met to begin to develop a common language and common minimum standards, as they were aware of the dangers of uncontrolled proliferation such as confusion of the consumers, lack of brand recognition, and widely varying standards. Result of this conference was informal consensus, called the Mohonk Agreement, among the programs about the minimum standards for certifying sustainable tourism and ecotourism, as well as establishing a clear distinction between these types of tourism. After this informal agreement, formal feasibility study was established, entitled the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (STSC). During this study consultation workshops were held worldwide and establishment of minimum standards for the certification of sustainable tourism was recommended through direct communication with
more than 1000 organisations and professionals in 26 countries. The establishment of harmonized standards in Europe (the VISIT standard) and in the Americas (the baseline criteria for the Sustainable Tourism Certification Network of the Americas) were among main concrete results of this study. (Bien n.n.)

In 2010, one of the most recent and ambitious organisations to tackle the challenge of sustainable tourism certification on an international basis was established. Entitled the Global Tourism Sustainability Council (GTSC), it was launched by merging the Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria and the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (Harms, 2011). Led by the Rainforest Alliance in partnership with UNWTO, UNEP, and the United Nations Foundation, with assistance from multiple industry associations, the Global Tourism Sustainability Council accomplished to provide a unique service for the development of certification schemes worldwide by providing criteria and indicators upon which to develop certification standards for destinations, tour operators, and hotels. The GTSC approves certification programs and endorse accreditation bodies, but it does not do the certifying. (McGahey 2012)

Since, Europe has been a leader in eco-labelling and ecotourism certification and is the world’s leading tourism region it is important to mention two programs established for fulfilling ecotourism standards in Europe.

First is the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) which was launched by European Commission in 2013 aiming to help destinations to monitor and measure their sustainable tourism performance, by using a common comparable approach. The ETIS has monitoring results based on self-assessment, observations, data collection and analysis by the destinations themselves, it is voluntary management tool and does not provide any certification. It provides 27 core indicators and 40 optimal indicators, which are divided four categories: 1. destination management, 2. social and cultural impact, 3. economic value, 4. environmental impact. (ETIS Toolkit 2016)

Second, The European Ecotourism Labelling Standard (EETLS) will be used for the purpose of this study, since the one of the objectives of this research is to find out about the current situation in ecotourism of Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the standardisation and certification and how far Bosnia and Herzegovina is from achieving European standards in ecotourism. As EETLS is concentrated specifically on ecotourism it is more appropriate than any other programs to support fulfilling one of the goals of this research.

The European Ecotourism Labelling Standard (EETLS) was initially developed by the Leonardo da Vinci-funded ECODESTINET project and revised by ECOLNET with aim to establish a universal set of standards that will serve as an “umbrella” for existing ecotourism labels or sustainable tourism labels, aiming to expand their applicability to the ecotourism market. The EETLS offers existing ecotourism or sustainable tourism labels in Europe the opportunity to strengthen their market value by assuring their compliance with a European quality standard, while sustainable tourism labels may extend their coverage to ecotourism businesses and claim European applicability by complying with the Global Sustainable
Tourism Council (GSTC), which has fully recognised EETLS (European Ecotourism Knowledge Network 2013).

The EETLS is designed to be adapted to local conditions and supplemented by additional criteria for the specific location and activity, but still it is created along the lines of GSTC and follows its “four pillars of sustainable tourism”:

A) Demonstrate effective sustainable management - The implementation of a long-term sustainability management plan which considers environmental, socio-cultural, quality, health, and safety issues in compliance with all relevant national or local regulations and legislation is required in this criteria group. Special emphasis is put on employee training and the quality of services offered to visitors, through the interpretation and awareness raising regarding the host destination’s natural, cultural, social and political conditions.

B) Maximise social and economic benefits to the local community and minimise negative impacts – This group includes one of a core principle of ecotourism which is supposed to result with: employment of local people, support of initiatives for social and infrastructural development which improve quality of life and the opportunity for local entrepreneurs to sell products that are based on the area’s nature, history and culture.

C) Maximise benefits to cultural heritage and minimise negative impacts - The C group of criteria include respecting local cultural codes of conduct, protecting cultural sites, incorporating local traditional elements in the company’s facilities and activities and preserving and promoting local culture.

D) Maximise benefits to the environment and minimise negative impacts – this group focuses on the responsible use of natural resources by implementing a purchasing policy which favours environmentally friendly products, increasing efficiency in the consumption of energy and water and in the management of waste and controlling the interaction between tourists and wildlife.

To comply with the EETLS, an ecotourism business must fulfil above mentioned groups of criteria and implement the recommended measures, which are organised in: 38 criteria, 94 sub-criteria reflecting good practices by current European and global ecotourism businesses that operate under existing eco-labelling initiatives, 94 indicators for certifying agencies and 94 indicators for businesses further elaborated by 130 implementation indicators.

One more thing that should be noted about the EETLS is that it can be managed by a national or regional agency and exist as a label in its own right, if other ecotourism or sustainable tourism labels do not exist in a country. (European Ecotourism Knowledge Network 2013).
3 FINDINGS

3.1 Ecotourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina

3.1.1 ‘The heart shaped land’

Bosnia and Herzegovina lies in the heart of southeast Europe, in the Balkan Peninsula, where eastern and western civilizations met, sometimes clashed, but more often enriched and reinforced each other throughout its long and fascinating history. Name Bosnia and Herzegovina comes from: Bosnia, derived from word ‘bosana’ (old Indo-European word meaning water), which covers north and centre part of the country and southern region Herzegovina, ancient Hum which was named Herzegovina during the Ottomans invasion. This small, heart shaped country, that covers only 51,209.2 square km and has population of 3,518,298, prides with hospitality, stunningly beautiful landscapes, wild and untouched nature, together with long traditions and culture (www.bhtourism.ba).

Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided in two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBH) and the Republika Srpska (RS). The FBH is divided into 10 cantons: Goražde, Livno, Middle Bosnia, Neretva, Posavina, Sarajevo, Tuzla Podrinje, Una Sana, West Herzegovina, and Zenica Doboj. There is also Brčko district, in north-eastern Bosnia, an administrative unit under the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina, not part of either the RS or the FBH, the district remains under international supervision. Further, B&H has 141 municipalities: 79 in FBH and 62 in RS. Bosnia and Herzegovina shares boundaries with Croatia on the north, west and south, Serbia and Montenegro on the east, with a total boundary length of 1,459 km. Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, http://www.bhas.ba). Capital city Sarajevo is surrounded by the Olympic Mountains: Bjelasnica, Igman, Jahorina and Trebević and has estimated population of 438,000.

Covered in forests (around 50%), B&H is a mountainous country: 42% is made up of mountains, 24% of hills, 29% of karst areas and 5% of lowlands. The average altitude is 500 m, and the highest point is Mt. Maglić (2,387 m). The longest river is Drina (346 km), while other important rivers are: Una, Vrbas, Bosna, Sava, Neretva, and Trebišnjica. The largest lake is Buško Lake (55.8 sq km). B&H is also rich in river lakes (on Pliva and Una Rivers) and mountain lakes (in the Dinaric area), as well as in resources of terminal and geothermal subterranean waters. Thanks to the country’s topography, diverse flora and geographic position, three kinds of climate are dominant in B&H: moderate continental, mountain continental, and Mediterranean (FIPA 2005).

3.1.2 Tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Still unknown tourism destination for major markets, with natural wealth, good geographical location, wonderful hospitality of people, rich heritage and history and gastronomy offerings, Bosnia and Herzegovina has all preconditions for an extremely successful tourism story. Unfortunately, tourism is a relatively small sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina, directly contributing to 2.5% of GDP, but if the indirect and induced impact of tourism is included, it
accounts for 9.3% of GDP, or USD 1.7 billion, and is forecast to grow by 4.9% per year between 2015 and 2025 (OECD 2016). But tourism market in B&H is gradually increasing and country becomes an emerging tourism destination.

According to the World Tourism Organization, Bosnia and Herzegovina is defined as one of only three tourism destinations in the world with overall tourism market growth potential in excess of 10% annually through 2020. As UNWTO Secretary General, Mr. Taleb Rifai stated: “The country has immense opportunities for tourism development given its rich natural and cultural heritage, its unique mix of cultures and religions, as well as its strategic location close to major European source markets.” (FIPA 2015)

Positive factor, which follows above mentioned forecast is that tourism is starting to be seen as one of the key factors for the country’s development. National authorities are putting more and more focus and attention on tourism development, since there are no any other developed industries in the country. Mostly all of the production has been destroyed during the war events, and very little has been re-established so far.

“B&H has been promoted as “the year-round destination” and tourism has been one of the most important branches in the economy. Especially cultural and historical tourism, as more than 40% arrivals are in that sector of tourism. In 2015, we noted that the number of tourists from Arabic countries is highly rising, due to their fascination with authentic natural beauty of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Another positive thing is introducing of more and more air lines, which connected B&H to Europe and other world’s destinations. There are low budget companies such as Wizz Air in Tuzla and Sarajevo and this year Qatar airlines should start operating, which will connect B&H with more than 30 direct and numerous indirect destinations.” (Brčkalija 2017)

Both, people and authorities are starting to realise the opportunities and advantages which Bosnia and Herzegovina has for becoming recognised touristic destination in Europe and wider. During last couple of years many more tourism businesses have appeared as people in country have become aware of potentials they have, such as good geographic location in the centre of Europe that creates opportunity to attract large number of potential tourists within range of up to three hours flight and unique cultural and historical heritage including religious sights, which are major advantage for development of creative tourism offer in this segment. Another very important factor, are relatively low cost of services and good food and drink offer, as they make B&H a destination recognised as “good value for money”. And of course hospitality which credited for overall good experience and repeated visits to Bosnia and Herzegovina, as exit polls show that tourists are highly satisfied with this aspect of tourism service in B&H (FIPA 2015).

Development of tourism has been noted in statistical data, as well, which have recorded constant growth and increase in tourist arrivals. For example in the period from January to December 2016 has been realised 1,148,530 tourists arrivals which represent the increase by 11.6% and 2,376,743 overnight stays which is increase by 10.9% as compared to the same period of 2015. The number of domestic tourist nights increased by 2.5% and number of foreign tourist nights increased by 15.1% as compared to the same period of 2015. Domestic tourist’s share of total number of overnight stays was 30.9% and foreign tourists share was 69.1%. Concerning the structure of foreign tourist nights, most of them (49.0%) were realised by tourists from Croatia (11.9%), Serbia (8.4%), Turkey (8.1%), Italy (6.5%), Slovenia
(6.0%), Poland (4.1%) and Germany (4.0%). Tourists from other countries realised 51.0% of tourist nights. Regarding the average detention of foreign tourist stays, on the first place comes Malta with average stay of 5.5 nights, South Africa with 3.9 nights, Ireland with 3.5 nights and Lithuania and Kuwait by 3.4 nights (www.bhas.ba 2016).

Unfortunately, statistical data don’t represent properly current situation, due to high number of not registered arrivals and since the huge part of people camping, staying at relatives’ homes or in private guest rooms are not considered by these statistics. It is believed that total number of tourist arrivals in Bosnia and Herzegovina is four times higher than official statistics data show. Another problem connected to statistical data is that there is no segmentation for different types of tourism, which, in case of this research doesn’t allow representing of tourist arrivals and there interest in ecotourism offer of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Anyway, as the highest potential of Bosnia and Herzegovina is in its untouched and wild nature, together with long traditions and culture, it is clear that ecotourism and similar kind of nature based tourism are most important drivers of tourism industry.

In the following text, more about nature potential and attractions will be elaborated, together with the stakeholders opinion and experiences, with the purpose to address the RQ1 and to investigate Bosnia and Herzegovina’s potential for ecotourism development.

3.1.3 RQ1: Ecotourism potential of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Nature-based tourism, rural tourism and ecotourism cover a wide range of activities, including: hiking, bird watching, camping, kayaking, fishing, hunting, nature photography, scuba diving, park, farm and waterfront visits. Natural wealth, diverse and contrasting landscape, with spectacular mountains, forests, rivers, lakes, unique national parks and beaches represent a strong base for development of ecotourism in B&H. The canyons, lakes, beautiful rivers, waterfalls, springs, and many more unspoiled natural resources have created a unique ecotourism product. Furthermore, the villages in mountain regions, offer tourists the possibility to enjoy the special rural ambient with traditional hospitality, and rich culinary offer of domestic products.

There are many ecotourism attractions and among main definitely are already established national and nature parks:
  - Sutjeska national park
  - Kozara national park
  - Una national park
  - Hutovo Blato nature park
  - Barđača nature park
  - Blidinje nature park.

Sutjeska National Park is the oldest such reserve in B&H, with a thousand-year-old rainforest of Perućica and the only remaining rainforest in Europe. There is also mountain Maglići, with the highest peak in B&H (2,963m). For mountaineers and nature-lovers, the fact that this rainforest is accessible from the National Park is particularly challenging. The river Sutjeska has for thousands of years been cutting through a canyon between the massifs of Zelengora (2,014m) and mountains Lelija, Maglići and Volujak, as well as through the very heart of the
national park that covers the area of 17,500 hectares. One can freely say that Sutjeska National Park mountains, lakes, rivers, forests and its untouched nature make this site one of the most magnificent ones in Europe.

Kozara National Park was established in 1967, a tame mountain with all sorts of species, which make it a rare preserve in this part of the Balkans. The Park is well connected with the Zagreb-Belgrade highway and with the roads to Prijedor and Banja Luka. Kozara National Park is a true attraction, both, for summers and winters alike.

Barđača, at the north, and Hutovo Blato swamp at the south, are natural parks and favourite refugee for migratory birds. They’ve been announced as Ramsar destination by the Ramsar-International convention and for years they are included in different programs of Italian, American and German organisations taking care of the preservation and prosperous development of border-line areas (FIPA 2005).

In the context of tourism based on natural resources, there is also the adventurous tourism of B&H, whose destinations can compete with many top destinations. Many parts and natural attractions in B&H provide an excellent environment for different and fantastic opportunities for the lovers of nature and adventure sports. Probably the most interesting for the adventure sports are the mighty rivers Una, Sana, Vrbas, Drina, Tara and Neretva, and certainly the clearest and the cleanest rivers in the Balkans. In 2009, World Rafting Championship was held on the rivers Vrbas and Tara, which made them widely famous among active tourist and professionals in water sports. Canyon of Tara, whose 1,300 meters of depth puts it the second next to the Colorado, enable the most comfortable yet most interesting rafting, canoeing and kayaking in Europe. Very popular is river Una as well, due to its annual regatta, where the guests from all over the world come to navigate its crystal-clear waters, before facing its wild and extremely strong waterfalls. Also, Neretva river, which flows through a 100 km long wild canyon towards the Adriatic is home to endemic sorts of trees and flowers. River Drina, longest river in B&H, offers many benefits for those who are interested in fishing, swimming, kayaking, water skiing (has two artificial lakes) and rafting. The natural environment around the river offers additional opportunities for hiking, climbing, hunting and watching wildlife (Study of FTCBH 2011).

Alongside mountains of Jahorina, Bjelašnica, Treskavica, Trebević, Romanija, Ozren, Crepoljsko, Bukovik, Vlašić, Vranica, Prenj, Velež, Čvrsnica, together with Prokoško Lake, waterfalls of Skakavac, Bijambare Cave and the Canyon of Rakitnica also offer the possibilities for development of sporting disciplines: alpine climbing and rock scaling, hunting, fishing, golf, tennis, snowboard, skiing, mountain biking, paragliding. (FIPA, 2005) Proof that Bosnia and Herzegovina has a potential to become Eastern Europe’s year-round centre for adventure, nature based and ecotourism is the fact that world’s media are writing about it more and more.

For example, National Geographic ranked Bosnia and Herzegovina among the 10 best adventure destinations for 2012. Among the destinations that offer excellent rafting, mountaineering, skiing and other adrenaline sports, B&H was named as offering the best mountain biking trails (National Geographic 2012).

Another article from National Geographic, writes about one the most attractive, recently discovered places, very important for ecotourism, The Dinara Mountain Range, with crystal-clear mountain creeks and wells and first-class possibilities of rafting and fishing. As Crevar
writes: ‘In 2017, for the first time after years of expansion, the 1,200-mile Via Dinarica trail will be completely mapped with stage information compiled from a growing community of hikers. The trek, which stitches together ancient trading and military routes, traverses the Dinaric Alps, linking the peninsula from Postojna, Slovenia, south through Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Serbia, Kosovo, and Macedonia. During homestay layovers in nomadic shepherd settlements and isolated village, you might find yourself drinking coffee cooked in a copper pot on an iron stove, with a hospitable farmer with work-worn fingers and a sun-creased face. “The Via Dinarica has replaced politics with nature. What could be more beautiful?” says Thierry Joubert, the owner of Green Visions, a Bosnia and Herzegovina-based tour operator.’ (National Geographic 2017)

And according to the Green Global Travel five top eco attractions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, that make it an up-and-coming ecotourism destination, are:

1. Kravice Waterfalls - Located 40 km outside the city of Mostar and stemming from the Trebižat River, the Kravice Waterfalls attract thousands of visitors every year. Visitors can swim in the clear waters and enjoy the view from the base of the falls, or go climbing up and behind the falls, exploring the natural basins and curtains of water. For thrill-seekers, there’s a rock in the center that’s around 30 feet high, which you can jump off of into the deeper waters below.
2. Hutovo Blato National Park - If birds are your thing, there’s no better place in Southeast Europe to see them than Hutovo Blato National Park, which has over 240 migratory bird species and dozens of others that make the marshlands their home.
3. Vrelo Bune (“Buna Spring”) - Source of the Buna River, the spring, which runs through a cavern, one of the largest and most beautiful in Europe. The Blagaj Tekke (a monastery) was erected next to the water source back in the 17th century, and sits tucked under the enormous vertical cliffs, creating picture-perfect scenery for visitors to enjoy.
4. Vjetrenica Caves - largest in B&H. Located in the Popovo Polje valley, named for the cold air which blows from the entrance in the warmer parts of the year (Vjetrenica means “wind hole”). The cave houses the largest subterranean biodiversity in the world, with over 200 species. It’s currently sitting on the UNESCO World Heritage Site list, waiting to be approved for protection.
5. Sutjeska National Park - attracts both nature and history lovers alike. Established in 1962, it’s the oldest national park in B&H. The park features the highest peak in the country, Maglić. It also contains the Perućica Forest Reserve (one of only two primeval forests left in Europe), which hides the 246-foot tall Skakavac waterfall. The park was the location of the 1943 Battle of the Sutjeska during World War II. With over 300 species of birds, and other animals Sutjeska National Park is a must-see for any animal lover visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina (Higgins 2013).

Beside nature wealth and beauty, there are several other potentials for enriching the ecotourism offer of Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as unique gastronomy with quite exceptionally tasting food, in particular concerning meat, cheeses and other milk products, but also vegetables and fruits naturally produced in an organic way. The most famous dish is certainly pita, a traditional meal since Ottoman times. The different sorts of “pitas” are: Burek (meat-filled), Zeljanica (filled with spinach and cheese), Sirnica (fresh cheese-filled) and
Krompiruša (filled with potatoes and spices). There are lots of other typical Bosnian dishes from different cultural influences (Turkish, Austrian, Hungarian, etc.), most of which are only prepared at home or in the countryside households. Also, an advantage for Bosnia & Herzegovina are its traditions and culture, as most of the traditions have disappeared from daily life in European countries, especially compared to the other ecotourism destinations’ offers in Europe, which generally cannot present authentic lifestyles anymore. Plus, any citizen of the Europe could be interested in this offer can feel since B&H is located at the crossing of influences between western and eastern cultures and traditions (Alterural’s Study of Rural Tourism in B&H 2009).

More and more tourists have been attracted to number of vineyards, especially in rural areas of Herzegovina. The recent development of the "Wine Route of Herzegovina" project has considerably improved the regional tourist profile and brought together the wine soured rural communities. Number of local entrepreneurs who use the advantages of the natural environment and cultural heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina for tourism and development of small tourism enterprises is particularly in rise in this area (Study of FTCBH 2011).

Except the fact that the world’s public is becoming aware of the B&H's ecotourism offer, more important is that decision makers in tourism sector are seeing opportunities for development of overall touristic offer in Bosnia and Herzegovina. From ministries, both Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism and Ministry of Trade and Tourism Republic of Srpska, they believe that the ecotourism is one of the most promising types of tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As Ristić (2017) states: ‘Ecotourism is perhaps the most significant tourism development potential in the Republic of Srpska, which occupies an increasingly important place in the overall touristic offer of RS, more and more every day. The Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Srpska for the period 2011-2020 recognised that and distinguishes the following destinations as the key for tourism development: Tjentište, Kozara, Zelengora, Knježevo, Janj, Ribnik, Maglići, Bardača and Borik. The main advantages in ecotourism development in Republic of Srpska are in an environmentally diverse and preserved area, an increase in interest in eco-tourism, an increase in demand for healthy food.’

Also, Redžić (2017) notes: ‘Absolutely, the potential of Bosnia and Herzegovina is enormous and with organised forced and coordinated work, it could be quickly put into function of the economic development of the country. Bosnia and Herzegovina can be positioned on the tourist market as a destination rich in clean rivers, lakes, mountains and so on! Each of the rivers, lakes and mountains offers an abundance of attractive content, from fishing, rafting, hiking and other sports activities that can become a new brand in tourism, on a very attractive and demanding tourist market.’

As we can see from the statements above, ministries still have to work on the proper classification of ecotourism and its segmentation as a specific type of tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in order to provide legal regulation and strategy for its development. This strategy and legal regulation would serve as guidelines for the touristic organisations of entities, which will further provide support for ecotourism suppliers.

‘It is anticipated that the greatest growth in world tourism will come from tourism based on ecologically healthy destinations. Ecotourism is one of the tourist offerings that meets the tourist needs of modern man and is characterized by a rapid growth. Ecotourism in the

From the Tourism Association of Federation of B&H had a lot to say about ecotourism in B&H and seem to be very aware of its potential.

‘Travel packets of Tourism Association of Federation of B&H are not created to promote mass tourism at all. Everybody in the association is familiar with the ecotourism and other forms of sustainable tourism. Ecotourism has not been classified separately as type of tourism before, but lately, as stakeholders on the all levels are becoming aware of its importance, it starts to get more and more attention and differentiate from other types of tourism. Our rich, untouched natural heritage is definitely something which differentiates B&H from some other touristic destination. Some of our rivers are strong, clean from source to mouth and are one of the best places for adventure sports in the world. In 2015 and 2016, there has been more and more interest from world’s famous travel magazines which write about B&H as “not to be missed destination”. Also, very important for ecotourism is our traditional cuisine and gastronomy. In 2015, visits to national parks have been doubled in regard to 2014 and there is possible to control the usage because visitors have to pay entrance tickets. We have seen opening to far away markets such as China, Japan, South Korea, South America, etc. One of the advantages is that our untouched nature is so close to urban areas and tourist don’t have to make long ways to have access to the wild nature. During the Via Dinarica project, number of mountain guides has been educated according to European and world’s eco-standards and principles of controlled use of natural sites. There are many different investment funds for ecotourism, lots of EU projects, and some small grants from our ministries, investments from Arabic countries in natural heritage. As there are more and more entrepreneurs in ecotourism, they affect other people around them and as the awareness that is possible to earn and live from this type of tourism is rising, the wish to develop it also rises.’ (Brčkalija, 2017)

Examples which confirm Brčkalija’s statement about entrepreneurs are definitely Alterural members and their improvement: ‘Close to Sarajevo there is Djeca Vjetra association for horse riding, which is now very well known. Also, Umljani, first they were just selling food and now they have accommodation as well, they become a real destination.’ (Devisme 2017)

Point of view of the entrepreneurs is little bit different and a bit less positive, especially regarding the general situation.

‘Ecotourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina is equal to zero. Reason for this is that nobody cares about anything when it comes to environment. Awareness about environmental protection is not developed at all, garbage is thrown everywhere and many places are being polluted. We see that the attitude towards nature in Bosnia and Herzegovina is negligent, but we believe that will change. Here we have several „eco stories“ and through communication with schools and student we are trying to affect developing of ecological and environmental awareness. As we like to say: „Here the snow is still white“, if you look in the other parts of the world, especially cities you cannot see white snow. Everyone who comes to visit us, stays delighted and thrilled with what we do here, how everything is clean, in harmony with nature and ecologically arranged.’ (Branković, 2017)
Janković (2017) believes this ‘type of tourism is not getting enough attention and that it is developing spontaneously. The natural potentials in B&H are huge, but it is not enough because it is necessary to involve the society, especially the state institutions, and to provide support and encouragement.’

In the end, crucial thing for development of ecotourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina and way to secure that the ecotourism potential will be fully utilised, is cooperation between all the stakeholders in this sector.

In the interview with the entrepreneurs, both said they didn’t get almost any help or subvention from the local or national authorities and that cooperation doesn’t exist. They only mention they have good cooperation with public tourist organisation, which promotes them on the touristic fairs in the country and abroad. ‘Generally very weak cooperation, this ministry allocates around two million BAM (around 1 million of Euros) each year to help lower levels of government and individuals in the field of environment and tourism, and this is the only cooperation that is being carried out since 2011. In addition, in the mandate period from 2006 to 2010, the allocation for tourism and environment assistance was at the level of 7 million BAM’, said Redžić (2017).

According to Ristić (2017), ‘collaboration is definitely present, but there is certainly room for improvement. A certain kind of cooperation is also an obligation of the institutions, i.e. when drafting the legislation documents. In this sense, communication is already in place and is happening to mutual satisfaction. Meetings and negotiations with all stakeholders guarantee that all arguments will have the opportunity to be presented, heard and discussed, and that the best solutions will be adopted. The area where improvement of cooperation between public and private organisations has to be done is in the planning of activities and development. The backbone should be to meet the needs of the private sector and enable its growth, together with securing the sustainability.’

3.1.4 RQ2 and RQ3: Ecotourism standards in Bosnia and Herzegovina

As we have seen Bosnia and Herzegovina has a strong base for development of ecotourism, but there is still a long way to the unlocking of its full potential. When researching to answer RQ2 and RQ3 in order to find out how far Bosnia and Herzegovina is from European standards in ecotourism and how much has to be done to for recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a Europe’s and world’s ecotouristic destination, a number of barriers and incentives in ecotourism sector came up to the surface. In the following text these barriers will be elaborated and it will be shown why it was difficult to evaluate ecotourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina according to European standards.

The political situation in B&H is very complex because everything is divided between two entities and as it affects all industry sectors, tourism is no exception either. So, to be able to understand the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the standards in ecotourism it is crucial to know legal framework for tourism in B&H.

On the state level there is Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, which has Tourism Department and Department for Natural Resources, Energy and Environmental Protection. This Ministry coordinates entity ministries and provides guidelines for tourism. On the entity level there are Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism and Ministry of
Trade and Tourism Republic of Srpska. These ministries are creating and implementing laws on the entity level. Since there is no Ministry for Tourism on the state level, laws for tourism are developed by **entity ministries** and they include:

- Tourism Law of FBH
- Law on tourism associations and promotion of tourism in FBH
- Tourism Law RS

Other laws which are considered important for ecotourism are, both in FBH and RS:

- The Law on Environmental Protection
- The Law on Organic Production
- The Law on Hospitality

As there is **no any standardisation in ecotourism** sector and there is **no any accredited institution that can provide certification to ecotourism businesses**, these laws are the only instruments which can guide and measure ecotourism performance in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

When talking to different stakeholders about existing laws, they mostly have common attitudes: that these laws can be helpful in fulfilment of the standards, because they are based on them, but the problem is in the implementation.

As Brčkalija (2017) said, **more and more laws are being concentrated on the environment, organic production and ecological questions and some of the standards connected to ecotourism are part of these laws but it is only declaratively and this is very important limitation factor for developing of ecotourism. Since there is no industry in B&H, government and the laws are mostly concentrated on tourism, but implementation of these laws is very questionable. In the implementation of eco laws everyone in the country should be included, but strategic documents are still not adopted. As B&H is candidate for joining EU and signatory of the action plan which includes tourism, these strategic documents have to include directives and regulative of EU and that this should be put as a priority on the regional level as well, as it is clear that tourists are environmentally aware. All the levels of government have to unite to accomplish this.**

As entrepreneur, Janković (2017) believes, **that B&H could easily adapt to European and worlds standards if the existing laws would be truly implemented.** He also said that the government has to take responsibility for the implementation of laws and for establishment of the controlling system.

From the Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism in charge admit that they don’t have any system to assess and control ecotourism performance because of lack of expertise and technical knowledge on the subject among the highest functionary who lead this Ministry (Redžić, 2017).

On the other side, Ministry of Trade and Tourism Republic of Srpska claims that **existing laws on tourism and hospitality**, beside other things, are also **covering questions considering ecotourism performance**, but that the standardisation should be provided in some next phases of the development, as the **standardisation framework definitely has to be at disposal of ecotourism suppliers.** This statement is rooted in their belief that **ecotourism needs to be based on authenticity, not necessarily on standards.** As they believe, **no tourist will come to B&H because of a certain standard, but precisely because of the**
authenticity and exotic surroundings of the undiscovered European jewel. Further, imposing standards at the very beginning of the development of this particular area or supply segment is an additional burden on service providers and instead of encouraging them, in reality it discourages them from providing ecotourism services. This certainly does not mean that no rules or standards should exist, but for now standards as defined, for example in ECOLNET system, are not in use and we are far away from fulfilment (Ristić 2017).

Lack of laws’ implementation and control has provoked several problems in the development of ecotourism. Also, the lack of regulative which is only concentrated on the ecotourism and similar kinds of tourism made almost impossible, for the more than willing entrepreneurs, to create proper ecotourism supply. This problem led to another one, which is that some of the ecotourism businesses are not being registered and it is not possible to measure and evident all the tourist arrivals.

As Brčkalija (2017) mentioned, one of the problems is illegal building of objects. It is very difficult to control and measure visits, because some of the accommodation providers are not registered, even some of those who are registered don’t report all the arrivals, and private accommodation is not included in statistical research. This is the reason why statistic data are not representative, and in the case of ecotourism, statistic data are not classified so it is difficult to know how many visitors are visiting in this sector, from the overall arrivals.

From the NGO Alterural, which works closely with the small entrepreneurs in rural areas stated that the lack of legal regulative and its implementation on the field caused that people don’t know which are the minimum standards they have to fulfil, and the fact that legal acts are not adjusted to the ecotourism business, for example: accommodation in ecotourism has the same requirements as the hotels in the city centre, or traditional and eco restaurants are equal, in law, to modern and luxurious restaurants, is causing entrepreneurs to refrain from registration. As they say this does not make any sense and if ecotourism business would have to fulfil those kind of requirements, that wouldn’t be authentic ecotourism offer. However, some of their partners choose to register as regular restaurant for example, even if they offer only traditional and authentic cuisine because that is the only way to work legally (Bošnjak 2017).

In spite of the mentioned problems, connected to the laws structure, implementation and fulfilment of the standards it is even more important to say about positive things interviewed stakeholders stressed. The organisations which closely work with the ecotourism businesses, both public and NGO, are optimistic that ecotourism offer in Bosnia and Herzegovina has a real potential and strong base to achieve European ecotourism standards and become one of most authentic green destinations.

According to Brčkalija (2017), regarding the standards, we are heading to a period where they have to become normative and in the beginning of this process it would be could if standards could be established on the regional level. This would be easier because of so many cross-border projects that are have been done effectively (such as Via Dinarica). It is positive that there have been many projects for raising of environmental awareness and many more are planned to be done.

She underlines, that it would not be good for B&H to experience “boom” of arrivals which it cannot withstand and because of that we have to develop system for controlled usage which will help in measuring how much visitor each destination could handle and in taking care of
our natural heritage in a sustainable way. Since, our natural beauties are quite easily accessible, we have to take care they don’t become easily destroyed (Brčkalija, 2017).

In Alterural is believed, there is definitely potential for Bosnia and Herzegovina to achieve European standards in ecotourism, but there is really a lot work to be done. Really different cases are present here, when it comes to standards. For example, there are some high investments, which fulfil high standards, sophisticated and “not fitting the rule”. On the other side, there are others who don’t have knowledge or funds. It is certain that all of them can reach the standards, if there are more funding possibilities and programs, but it is a long road, similar to Romania and Bulgaria. Those countries understood what they have to do and are still in the process (Devisme, 2017).

Except the positive attitude from the organisations, there are entrepreneurs, who, despite all the difficulties, are very committed to their businesses, willing to go ahead, and strongly believe that turning to the nature, together with ecotourism and responsible travel, is a driver for the future existence of all of us. From the conversation with them it was visible, that they are trying to fulfill standards and to make their offer more and more sustainable every day as much as their funds allow, no matter if they are going to be recognised or certified.

As Branković said: ‘We are familiar with European standards, because we lived abroad and travelled a lot. We know what is required to have an ecotourism business, in Europe. When we started our business, we based it on those standards, because of our beliefs and relationship with nature. We are still investing and our offer is not still fully developed. We have plans to make it wider and we are trying to fulfill as many of the standards and requirements as our investment funds allow. We’re not trying to make our offer just look eco and to make it profitable, we want to do everything properly and to make it sustainable. Even if it goes slower, we believe: “it not always the quantity, but quality“. ’ (Branković 2017)

Janković’s response also shows that he is open to learn and apply standards in his offer to improve it. ‘Certainly, we are receiving new information and knowledge by accepting world’s and European standards and following trends in ecotourism. So we can combine our experience with the standards in order to answer to the demand and to the needs of our targeted groups’ (Janković 2017).

Summarizing all of the above mentioned, in order to answer to RQ1 and RQ2, we can say that Bosnia and Herzegovina has potential to achieve European standards, thanks to the presence of environmentally aware entrepreneurs who are doing the best they can with the possibilities they have and who started their business in ecotourism because it has been their “way of living”, not only with the purpose to profit from it but to “spread the word” about coexistence with nature among others who surround them.

Even though, laws, used in the regulation of ecotourism practices, are based on the European standards, their implementation is more than questionable, which is represented by non-existence of specific tools for evaluation of ecotourism performance. Together with the lack of strategy from the government’s side and lack of competence and knowledge among the authorities, this remains biggest limitation factor in achievement of ecotourism standards.

One is certain, Bosnia and Herzegovina has all the preconditions to become widely recognised green destination, but it’s a long way to go and the stakeholders on all the levels...
have to activate to create controlling and evaluating system, which will make possible to verify already green businesses and to improve those which are still developing.

In the end, we can try to evaluate ecotourism performance in Bosnia and Herzegovina by comparing it to previously mentioned The European Ecotourism Labelling Standard four groups of criteria:

A. **Demonstrate effective sustainable management**: As this group of criteria requires long-term sustainability management plan which considers environmental, socio-cultural, quality, health, and safety issues in compliance with all relevant national or local regulations and legislation, it is obvious that all decisions maker in ecotourism sector of Bosnia and Herzegovina have a lot work to do to respond to the indicators in this group. Authorities have to create long-term development strategy and to provide proper regulations and legislation. And from suppliers’ side, they have to create their offer and adjust their business in compliance with the regulations, in order to ensure sustainable development and management. Another very important indicator in this group is training of employees and this is where Bosnia and Herzegovina has to improve a lot, since very little has been done for raising awareness and education, so far.

B. **Maximise social and economic benefits to the local community and minimise negative impacts**: We can say that in this group of indicators Bosnia and Herzegovina has achieved more than in the previous, since employment of local people, improvement of the quality of life and the opportunity for local entrepreneurs to sell products that are based on the area’s nature, history and culture has been ensured through almost all ecotourism businesses in B&H. As all entrepreneurs started their businesses in the areas they know best, or they’ve been living or were born in, they are usually very much attached to those places, it’s their history and culture, so they give their best to activate and engage the local community.

C. **Maximise benefits to cultural heritage and minimise negative impacts**: Fulfilment of the indicators of this group is closely related to the previous group and from the same reasons. If based near any cultural heritage, entrepreneurs are always promoting them and local culture. Sometimes idea of ecotourism businesses was generated from personal interests of the entrepreneur in some cultural or historic traditions (architecture, crafts, food,…).

D. **Maximise benefits to the environment and minimise negative impacts**: While being mostly successful in B and C group, B&H should definitely improve a lot in this group. This is again area where all the stakeholders have to work together to secure responsible use of natural resources, to increase efficiency in the consumption of energy and water, to improve management of waste and control of the interaction between tourists and wildlife. Again, trainings and education are needed for all the stakeholders, in order to raise environmental awareness and knowledge about these issues.

After presenting the situation regarding the standards in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the next part we will see if eco-tourists require certification and what marketing techniques are currently in use in the ecotourism sector.
3.2 Marketing Ecotourism in B&H

3.2.1 RQ4: Tourist demand for certificates

The aim of this question was to understand if tourists are somehow aware of eco standards and demand them, in a sense that they choose places that have some certificates about their eco-offer. Also, more widely, we tried to understand what tourists ultimately want and search for, whether it is linked or not to some eco standards.

From the point of view of the entrepreneurs, we can definitely say that tourists chose their offer mostly because of the ecological and environmental implications, and also because this offer is perceived as socially responsible, with strong ties and benefits for the local community. As Janković (2017) said, when he was asked if he thinks that his visitors choose his place because of its eco and socially responsible offer, ‘that happens in any case, because of this peculiarity (i.e. eco-offer) and mostly due to this, our visitors choose this destination’.

Another confirmation comes from the numbers given by Branković (2017), which show the interests towards his offer: ‘We started working not so long ago but we are very satisfied with number of visitors and their reactions. In last two year and half we had around 15 000 visitors. Mostly tourists from our region are coming (Ex-Yugoslavian countries), but we had also visitors from other parts of Europe (Poland, Russia, Germany…). As it is required by the law, we have to have a book of impressions and our was fulfilled in period of 6 months, with only one negative comment (this comment was about food, because guest wanted something from international cuisine which we do not serve, since we serve only dishes from traditional cuisine)’. We can see that the only negative comment was about an aspect which is not part of an eco and socially responsible offer, i.e. the food.

This is another very important aspect which makes the difference and represents an absolute added value for the tourists, and a fundamental criterion considered when choosing a destination. Both the entrepreneurs confirmed that most of their food is locally produced, mostly by farmers with a small-scale production, following traditional production methods in full respect of the environment. The same is for the drinks, from water (usually from local wells and sources) to the juices and alcoholic drinks. As Branković (2017) said, ‘all the groceries used in our kitchen are bought from the villagers, which produce them in traditional way. Also, we make different types of old traditional breads, which are made from grains authentic for this region, including wheat spelt which has known to be cultivated 5000 BC.’, which shows the concrete will to keep the old traditions alive, and to revitalise some products which have recently disappeared.

A similar answer was given by the public institutions, which form their point of view raise a little issue when it comes to certifications: some tourists explicitly ask for them, but unfortunately at the moment it is not possible to fulfil this requirement; at the same time, the product offered is absolutely organic, eco, and socially responsible as we have previously pointed out, but as long as the certifications are not a fact, this concepts remain in a ‘potential’ state, and this needs particular care. As confirmed by Brčkalija (2017), ‘some tourists ask for certification (Americans) and we have to be careful when we are offering our domestic food.
since we don’t have any accredited institution which can certify this food as organic. Until the standard and certification everything is just a potential, even if we have already finished product.’

Another important point given by the institutions, shows the standards issue through a different perspective, i.e. from the tourist point of view. This means that not only the touristic offer should fulfil these standards, but the demand as well should follow some specific rules, aimed at the maximum respect and minimum harm to the local natural and social environment. As Brčkalija (2017) clearly pointed out, ‘fortunately, the number of tourists is still not on a level which can put in danger our nature and biodiversity system, but the need for development of a controlling system and education initiatives about the behaviour in nature and controlled usage of the sites.’

The NGO point of view is slightly different, as according to their experience, at least in this moment, the standards and any related certification do not represent the main issue, because the tourists take more in consideration other criteria when selecting a destination, such as the natural and environmental offer and the accessibility. On the other hand, tourists from the western countries might be interested in all of these aspects, therefore a higher attention to the standards issue must be paid. As Devisme (2017) stated, ‘it is not always about the standards, sometimes for tourist is just important where the offer is located, if the access is ok, and if there is natural beauty or site to visit around. In case of our members, tourists didn’t ask about standards and they would usually go without any certification, if the place was visible and promoted enough. The hope is that, there are a lot of tourists and there is not enough offer, so market demand will change the situation. Tourists from western countries are especially interested.’

The study, confirming the previous assumption, made an interesting differentiation, splitting the tourists in two groups: coming from ex-Yugoslavian countries and from other parts of Europe. This is particularly relevant when we talk about the standards, as each group of tourists has a different set of expectations when traveling. The visitors coming from the ex-Yugoslavian countries have lower standards in their minds, because, coming from neighbouring countries, they have a higher knowledge and better understanding of the current situation in B&H, therefore they tend somehow to adapt their expectations. Nevertheless, the whole eco-touristic offer in the country should be conceived according to these standards. As clearly explained in the study (2009), ‘they (i.e. tourists from ex-Yugoslavian countries) might not ask for as high standards as foreigners would, because it is a new supply for them in BiH. This is something project creators have to be conscious: they should not think with nowadays Bosnian standards but with better and eco-friendlier ones, in order to be interesting for a broader clientele and to prepare the future evolution of the local people’s criteria. Still as we estimated concerning Bosnians, we can say that tourists from these countries do certainly not have as high criteria as other Europeans concerning standards. Indeed they “know” the context in the area and then do not expect as much as if they would travel to another part of Europe. But they would for sure appreciate a wider choice and a better organised, more professional and standardized offer.’ (Alterural Study of Rural Tourism in B&H 2009)
Another very important aspect related to the standards and the demand for these, from the tourists’ point of view, especially keeping in mind that currently in B&H it is not possible to provide such certifications, is the relevance and the importance of being eco, and adopting an extensive eco-friendly approach.

From the entrepreneur’s point of view, this importance is given by the feedback of the visitors. As Branković (2017) stated, ‘everyone who comes to visit us, stays delighted and thrilled with what we do here, how everything is clean, in harmony with nature and ecologically arranged. As you can see we have containers for sorted waste disposal, which are difficult to find even in our biggest cities. We do it mainly to animate the village and local people and to raise awareness about environmental problems here in the rural area. On the other hand, we are trying to reduce our waste, by using only glass bottles and avoiding PET packaging.’ These visible environmental actions can sometimes ‘fill’ the certificates gap, representing for the tourists, at least for now, an assurance that the destination is eco.

Another important aspect has been highlighted in the Alterural Study of Rural Tourism in B&H (2009), which as well could help in filling the above-mentioned standards’ gap, together with the visible eco-friendly practices. This is represented by the concept of solidarity tourism, especially from the foreigners’ point of view: in this case choosing eco-destinations does not only have an impact on the environment, but is also a way to give concrete and direct help to the local community, where many families still live with traditional farming activities and a low income. Tourism based on solidarity is aimed at ‘leading the tourist to a form of concrete solidarity with the local host populations. It can have various aspects, such as supporting a development project, envisaged in the long run since it is a guarantee of achievement and durability of the solidarity actions’ (Alterural Study of Rural Tourism in B&H 2009: 10). This means that for the tourists it is important to know in which way their trip will not damage, and on the contrary, will benefit to the local environment and people (directly and indirectly thanks to funds). From the ecotourist’s point of view, ‘it is important to know how their trip will support the sustainable local development, in the respect of both nature and humans and a help to the local economy’ (Alterural Study of Rural Tourism in B&H 2009: 38).

3.2.2 RQ5: Marketing techniques in practice

This question is aimed at investigating and describing the main marketing tools and activities, as well as the strategies, adopted by the actors involved (entrepreneurs, public institutions, NGO) in the promotion of ecotourism.

Regarding the public institutions, the question was more focused on the strategies and plans adopted to promote in a medium and long term perspective the eco-touristic offer. We can say that at the moment, in B&H the institutions do not have any specific plan aimed at the development of ecotourism through ad-hoc initiatives and funding.

The replies from the Ministries of the two entities were slightly different but on both cases it is clear that ecotourism is not yet considered separately. As Redžić (2017) said, when asked if there is any plan or strategy for the development of ecotourism in the FB&H: ‘unfortunately
there is not’. As for the RS, the reply was ‘there is not any strategic document in the sector of tourism within the RS which specifically and exclusively deals with the promotion and development of ecotourism, being this included in the Strategy for the Development of Tourism in the RS, planned for the period 2011-2020, and in the Plan for Promotion to be implemented by the Tourist Organisation of the RS (actually still in the drafting phase), which has competency over the promotion of tourism’ (Ristić 2017).

The message is quite clear: although the potential in B&H regarding ecotourism is recognised by the institutions, still there is not action taken in these regards.

From the entrepreneurial point of view, the question was directly related to the marketing techniques and tools adopted to promote the offer.

The first and most important tool is the ‘word of mouth’, which is based on the satisfaction of the visitors and their willingness to promote the destination among their friends and acquaintances. According to the entrepreneurs interviewed, this is the primary tool which supports the promotion of their offer, and ultimately brings more new visitors. As Branković (2017) said, ‘our most effective marketing technique is word of mouth… We are based on direct and personal recommendations, thus using natural resources’. This is confirmed also by Janković (2017), who said that the promotion starts by ‘firstly directly acting towards our visitors, and then continues as they are satisfied, so that they will promote us among their friends’.

Another important opportunity for promotion is offered by the web. Both the entrepreneurs understood the potential of the web and the related benefits if used correctly. Therefore, they have a website which is constantly updated and available in English language; then they are present on the social media, with profile pages used to share their offer, pictures, events, etc. Also, they use some printed materials like brochures and fliers. Sometimes they are also present in the local media, and use these spaces to promote their activity. Very fruitful is the cooperation with some other online resources, such as Booking.com and AIRBNB, and other similar local search engines (as ‘Ludi Popust’, a local website which offers, among the others, touristic destinations at discounted prices). As Janković (2017) confirmed ‘we use also other promotional activities, such as internet, social media, television, fliers… We have a good cooperation with the local portal Ludi Popust, one of the few local partners which brings us guests. We also cooperate with Booking.com and AIRBNB, which send us visitors from Western Europe and other countries from all over the world’.

There is also space for some cooperation with local institutions, i.e. the Tourist Organisation of RS, and with some foreign tour operators which promote these destinations abroad. Unfortunately, the private local agencies and tourist operators do not cooperate at all with these local entrepreneurs, and do not seem to be interested in including them in their offer. The reason for this is that they are mostly focused on the traditional and commercial touristic offer, or on sending Bosnian tourists abroad rather than attracting foreign tourists to B&H.

This was confirmed during the interviews: Janković (2017) stated that most of the local ‘touristic organisations and agencies are primarily focused on sending local tourists abroad’.

This situation is confirmed by Branković (2017), who says the following: ‘other types of promotion we use are through our website, Facebook and through intermediation of Touristic Organisation of Banja Luka and tour-operators abroad (Poland, Russia). Unfortunately,
domestic travel agencies don’t want to include us in their offer and they are mostly concentrated on commercial type of tourism (shopping tours, sun&beach, …).’

The last promotional tool adopted by these entrepreneurs is represented by the events organised in their premises. These events can be very different, and have different scopes: fun, gastronomy, cultural leisure, education (i.e. environmental awareness). These events attract many visitors, and being successful, they give a great impression on these visitors who will alter become some ambassadors and in different ways promote these touristic offers. Janković (2017) considers this tool as very important: ‘an exceptional opportunity for promotion is represented by the social events and activities we organise in our premises’. A stronger focus on education is visible in Branković (2017): ‘another thing we do and maybe can be considered as a part of marketing is cooperation with schools and organisation of different workshops for raising environmental awareness’.

Last, if we consider the support given by the public institutions in this matter, it seems to be very poor: ‘public institutions do not provide us any support or service’ (Janković, 2017).

Regarding marketing and promotion, the NGO often represent the only organisation supporting the local entrepreneurs. One of the first actions implemented by Alterural was to unify and put together the offer in one single place, easy to access. That is why a website was created, which now promotes the offer of around 150 businesses. In many cases, these businesses are too small or do not have sufficient funds to implement their own marketing plans or promotional activities, therefore Alterural acts as their only ‘voice’. As Devisme and Trogrančić (2017) mentioned ‘Now, there are 150 on the website: some of them offering accommodations (those who stable earnings), some of them are more vulnerable and on the lower level – people who are providing food and have restaurants in the country side, and the less advantaged – people who are selling just some products on the site, sometimes from their own farming activities and sometimes just from the collection (such as medicinally plants) … We unify all of them on our website, because for us they are all the same, no matter big or small. We are trying to organise them according to regions of the country.’

Whether provided by Alterural or directly implemented by the entrepreneurs, we can mention the following marketing and promotional tools: website, profiles and pages on the social media, printed materials such as informative brochures, maps, participation to national and international fairs about tourism (where of course all the previously mentioned materials are distributed): ‘We are mostly doing promotion for our partners. Just some of them can afford to do it alone, only those which are bigger, and they have printed materials and their own websites… Some of them have website and Facebook pages, but generally we are doing 80% of the promotion. We print the advertising materials; represent them on the fairs, because these types of promotion are quite expensive for them. The most important are the maps, because that is the way for tourists to see that destination exists’ (Trogrančić 2017).

Another simple but crucial action taken by Alterural was the signalisation: ‘One thing that has a great impact connected with marketing is signalisation. Simple signalisation of the offer made a huge difference for some of our members’ (Devisme 2017).
3.2.3 RQ6: Decision makers and green marketing

We have seen that in general, especially in the private sector, marketing and promotion play and important role and are actively implemented, whether directly by the entrepreneurs or with support from the NGO sector. What we need to understand at this stage is the awareness about the green marketing in terms of strategies and tools, the knowledge that the different actors involved in ecotourism have, and if such techniques are used or not and the consequent level of interested towards them.

In general, we could say that the **concept of green marketing is known to at least a certain extent**, especially in **theoretical terms**, i.e. most of the interviewees stated that they have heard about it and know what it is about. At the same time, there is **no knowledge about the specific tools and benefits of green marketing, especially related to ecotourism**.

The **public institutions are generally familiar with the term**, but as mentioned they **lack specific knowledge**, either because as institutions they **do not deal directly with marketing strategies or because they do not have the funds for educational activities in this matter**.

When asked if they are familiar with the term ‘green marketing’, different answers were given. Redžić (2017) made it quite clear: ‘no, because due to lack of funds public servants (from this Ministry) have not had the chance, for years, to attend any conference, seminar or educational programs’. In the other entity, the situation seems to be a bit better: ‘in general we are (familiar with the term green marketing), but not with all the tools and specific details of the term, but we need to consider that here at the Ministry we do not deal directly with marketing’ (Ristić 2017).

A bit more articulated was the reply from the Tourist Association of the FBH, as they mentioned the level of knowledge of the agencies in the touristic sector, and pointing out one of the **main problems when it comes to green marketing: the missing strategies from the public institutions, which should give at least some general guidelines in this matter**. The **positive fact** is that there is a **general attempt to adopt green marketing techniques and include green managements suggestions and tools in the eco-touristic offer**, which means that the awareness is growing and is perceived at all levels. As Brčkalija (2017) confirmed ‘public agencies in touristic sector are familiar with the concept of green marketing management, but lack of clear strategy from the authorities is limiting factor, as the strategy should provide guidelines in which ways public agencies should act (for segmentation, positioning, etc.). People who work in ecotourism are trying to implement green marketing management principles, but they do it because of their love for environment and nature’. Brčkalija (2017) also noted that in the last couple of years there has been an improvement, corresponding to the perception of the importance of ecotourism for the country, therefore some agencies have been starting to consider green marketing and ‘doing more and more in promotion of eco, ethno, outdoor and different types of similar tourism offer in B&H which shows that they have recognised opportunity in the ecotourism and how much this type of tourism is becoming important’. We consider this a preliminary step towards the full recognition and adoption of green marketing as a primary approach to be adopted in ecotourism.
The NGO’s point of view reflects the perception of its members. The first **problem** is related to some **cultural issues**: many entrepreneurs do not understand the importance of marketing and promotion, and of green marketing especially, and sometimes are very **sceptical**. The main obstacle is that some entrepreneurs do not understand, or cannot see, the benefits of a good marketing plan with ad-hoc initiatives and specific promotional activities. This is mainly caused by the fact that many of these entrepreneurs **do not have a touristic background**, therefore they usually **have an excellent eco-product**, but they **do not see why they should promote it**. The general approach can be summarised in the sentence ‘who wants to come, will come’ (Bošnjak 2017). The main problem is that ‘some of our member say: “our production is organic and domestic, and who wants to come, will come”’, which shows that sometimes they are not aware how powerful standards and certification can be for their marketing. Most of them are not tourism educated, do they don’t know always know what they have to do and what is expected from them. They are not registered and don’t know what is classification’ (Bošnjak 2017).

But the **things are slowly changing** and more and more **entrepreneurs are becoming aware of the importance of marketing and promotion**. The positive aspect in this problem is that the solution is given by the example: by showing these sceptical entrepreneurs that some marketing activities had good results in a neighbouring area (in terms for example of municipality), or that the guests they host chose their destination thanks to promotion, then they change their minds and ask to get involved and informed. In other words, ‘many of them doubt in importance of marketing and promotion. They are quite sceptical and usually say: “Who wants, will come.” But when their guests say them that they saw offer on our website or somewhere else, they get convinced… Sometimes it has happened that they say: “don’t tell me about the promotion, tell me what concrete help you can give me” or “what we have from thing that we are on your website” … But even this is changing slowly.’ (Bošnjak 2017)

An interesting point is that, regarding the awareness on the importance of green marketing, we can split the entrepreneurs in two groups:

- People who lived abroad and they understand that (green) marketing has an impact;
- People who are really from the countryside and didn’t have so much contact with the marketing. (Devisme 2017)

From the entrepreneurs’ side, we can say that green marketing is a known concept, and it is considered very interesting, and at the same time they admit not to have enough knowledge about its practices and tools. As Janković (2017) replied when asked if aware of the concept of green marketing ‘yes, but not sufficiently’. When asked if he practiced some green marketing techniques, he showed that he actually already followed some general rules in green management: ‘we are still working on a smaller scale, based on the current eco-offer, which derives from the existing natural resources, with a focus on organic food, energy conservation and from renewable sources’ (Janković 2017). This is a very positive answer in our opinion as it shows a real interest in all the practices associated with the ‘green’ concept. As mentioned, the green marketing is a known concept, but what is more important, at this stage where it is not implemented yet, is that awareness of its importance: ‘we are familiar with the term green marketing and we believe that we follow some of its principles through creation of our offer, but definitely we don’t have green marketing management. We are
convinced that this type of marketing would be very useful for us and as we will be developing our business we would like to learn more about green marketing and try to incorporate green marketing management in our business strategy’ (Branković 2017). In this case, a further step will be taken, which shows that this entrepreneur understood the importance of green marketing: ‘when we finish with all the investments we plan to hire a marketing manager who will take care about our marketing and prepare marketing strategies and plans’ (Branković 2017).

3.3 Green Marketing in the service of Ecotourism - What’s next?

3.3.1 RQ7: Green marketing benefits

The aim here is to understand what all the actors think about green marketing and if and to what extent they consider it beneficiary for the development of ecotourism in B&H. Also, we investigated how much these actors would be interested in a potential implementation of green marketing strategies and techniques.

Although we have seen that the knowledge of green marketing is still superficial, and does not include any direct and specific experience with its approaches, the public institutions still consider it as an important area to be developed. When asked if the green marketing techniques could represent a useful and effective tool to fulfil the eco-standards and develop ecotourism, both the ministries gave an affirmative but still vague answer. From the FBH, Redžić (2017) said ‘absolutely, every good practice is welcome’; while from RS, Ristić (2017) confirmed that ‘absolutely yes, green marketing is the only real way to promote ecotourism’.

A similar question was asked to the entrepreneurs, who gave their opinion about the role that green marketing could play in fulfilling the eco-standards and the development of the eco-touristic offer. Also in this case, we had positive reactions. Green marketing is seen as an important step towards a better promotion of the eco-business and a more efficient use of the existing resources and efforts. In particular, green marketing would be crucial because ‘we are convinced that our eco-offer should be much more and better promoted, and at the same time find ways to reach our target groups. This would be of the greatest importance’ (Janković 2017). Again, although not used, green marketing techniques and their potential is taken in consideration and represents a very interesting development by the entrepreneurs. On one side, they admit they are not yet adopting any of these techniques, but on the other they are highly interested and open to any possibility. When asked why such techniques are not used and if he would be willing to include them in their activity, Janković (2017) replied that ‘we are interested. They are (at the moment) used to a lesser extent due to underdeveloped (regarding this matter) capacity and staff, and inertia of the public institutions.’

The NGO perspective in this matter adds an interesting point regarding the implementation of green marketing techniques. Their importance is out of question, as well as the fact that they
should be utilised tout-court, but Alterural highlighted and important factor, which is represented by an active approach by the entrepreneurs, who in some cases seem to spend too much time waiting for the public institutions to act (which is, as we have seen in the previous pages, justifiable for some issues), while they should take action and at least try to take some initiative in the fields where they can act independently. This is particularly true when it comes to the green marketing techniques, which can be designed and implemented with limited resources (we have listed some of them in the paragraph ‘Green Marketing Tools for Ecotourism’). In this matter, we agree with Alterural when they say that entrepreneurs have to stop waiting for public institutions and use other initiatives which are present. They have to start to believe in: “small is beautiful” and progressive investment: to start with small accommodation and work on quality rather than bigger investments. Many of them believe the only question is lack of access to the funds, which is not always the case.’ (Devisme 2017)

The last consideration that comes from the analysis of the sources is about an issue which could be seen as a precondition for the development of green marketing strategies and the adoption of any technique: the importance of education in this field, which has been mentioned by all the sources.

The Ministry of Trade and Tourism of RS has clearly stated that ‘the education and training for the local entrepreneurs on this field (i.e. green marketing) would be more than needed’ (Ristić 2017). Furthermore, the study has pointed out that ‘for developing a new tourist destination, a local structure of expertise is needed. If it is at the national level, there must be a national structure corresponding to the field concerned’ (Alterural Study of Rural Tourism in B&H 2009: 46). At the moment, this local structure of expertise as well as the national structure are still missing.

3.3.2 RQ8: Green marketing techniques

We have seen that all the actors interviewed agree upon the importance of green marketing as the main resource to be used for further development of the eco-touristic offer, but the knowledge on the issue is still superficial and does not permit any concrete implementation of any green marketing strategy or the adoption of any of its techniques.

Through this question, we tried to understand how concretely green marketing can support ecotourism, and what are the suggestions from all the actors involved.

In order to give a concrete answer to this question, we need to firstly understand which are the main challenges and issues for the development of ecotourism in B&H, and after identifying them we will see how green marketing can help in solving some of these issues.

When asked which are the main challenges and issues for further development of ecotourism, the institutions from the two entities gave different replies, with focus on different issues. It seems that in the FBH the main problem is related to the highest positions in the Ministry: to be more specific, it seems that in the last years individuals without the necessary background and knowledge on the matter, and with consequently no interest, were
appointed as Ministers or in any other high position. What is mostly necessary is to have a Minister who finally understands the importance of tourism (and especially ecotourism) and considers it as a key factor for the development of the country, and takes the necessary actions to support the entrepreneurs, who are currently ‘left alone’ in their work. The hope is that after the elections which will be held in 2018 an appropriate person will be appointed. To say it in the words of Redžić (2017), the main problem is represented by ‘politics, which for many years has appointed as Minister some unqualified and not interested individuals, and as long as this situation does not change, tourism initiatives in B&H will just develop spontaneously and on an individual basis (i.e. without any strategic planning), and the only ones who are giving their best are our entrepreneurs, who are literally ‘fighting’ for every guest… First of all, it is important that the elections in 2018 will bring to this Ministry a wise and open person who is an expert (in tourism), able to understand the needs of this sector and considers tourism (and ecotourism) a powerful aspect for the development of this country’.

In the other entity, the Republic of Srpska, the issues seem to be less political and more widespread, being more related to the offer than to the operate of the institutions. The weaknesses or main issues related to the development of ecotourism can be listed as follows:

✓ Inappropriate behaviour towards the environment.
✓ Insufficient marketing.
✓ Inadequate touristic offer.

These are very general, but give a clear message: in almost each aspect of the ecotourism as a sector, there is an issue or a point of weakness. As Ristić (2017) stated, ‘the main weaknesses can be found in the wrong behaviour with the natural environment, the offer which is not complete and properly designed, a lack of marketing approach, inadequate distribution channels and so on.’

The entrepreneurs’ point of view, when asked the same question, is clearly quite different, and more focused on the political and institutional side. When asked if they had any suggestions for further development of ecotourism and fulfilment of standards, they stated that the biggest part of the problem lies in the public institutions. The lack of understanding of the issues related to ecotourism, led to a weak legal framework, a missing strategy and a failure to create accredited institutions with the primary scope of assessing and evaluating green businesses (which is a precondition for any discussion about the standards).

Janković (2017) put an accent on the ‘necessity for a comprehensive action from the public institutions, especially the Ministry of Trade and Tourism, which should draft and implement an official strategy for the development of tourism and get it to the touristic organisations (i.e. private businesses, entrepreneurs) on the field’. On the other hand, Branković (2017) thinks that the ‘biggest problem for the development of ecotourism or any kind of eco business is that there is no clear strategy and there is no understanding from the side of the authorities. There is lack of legal regulative and accredited institutions for controlling and evaluation of green business.’

A similar answer was given by the NGO sector: according to Alterural’s representatives the main problem is the lack of support from the public institutions. First of all, they mentioned a
concrete support through funds and financial instruments, which seems to very poor: ‘We had just some basic, small support from Federal ministry, in the beginning when we had project in Fojnica with Caritas. We just got small reimbursement of cost from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, when we have started study visits in Serbia and Croatia. Those were actually means, which Ministry regularly pays after study visit is finished and we have paid all the costs. When we paid all the cost and send them all the bills, after three years we received refund’ (Devisme 2017).

What is required, is a specific action which will allow the NGOs and other organisations to implement a crucial activity, which has been mentioned by the entrepreneurs as well and will be further discussed in the next pages, the lobbying. What the institutions are expected to do is to ‘to adapt the laws which will provide orientation for us to go further in the research, to have precise data and then to decide interests and show what is the economic impact and what are problems and then to go for lobbying, which is one of our weaknesses as association; we need to have precise and concrete elements to defend the case of this family’ (Devisme 2017).

What should be concretely done to improve and develop ecotourism in B&H? And how can green marketing play a role in this process?

From the public point of view, the opinion seems to be quite clear, and can be summarised in the following key points:

- Full package offer based on nature.
- Visual identity as a country, i.e. eco-touristic destination.
- Education of hosts and entrepreneurs.

These represent the three main steps of any green marketing strategy that needs to be implemented: they are a precondition for the development of ecotourism in B&H, because they recognise ecotourism as a complex sector, in which actions need to be taken at all levels. **The first one** is related to the offer, and focuses on providing the tourists what they want and search for when they select their destinations. **The second one** is more linked to the actions **to be taken by the public institutions at national level**, which should establish a clear strategy and some common goals in order to build a specific image of the country starting from its very identity, promoting B&H as a destination for ecotourism. **The third** is in line with some of the recommendations we saw in the previous pages, and acknowledges the **importance of education and training for the entrepreneurs** who want to develop a relevant offer in ecotourism; these entrepreneurs need to be fully aware of all the environmental implications of their businesses, especially because nowadays the ecotourists are very informed and quite demanding, and expect the eco-offer to meet their requirements. This is particularly true for tourists coming from abroad and especially from Northern Europe. These concepts have been explained very well by Brčkalija (2017), who seems to have it quite clear: ‘B&H is small country and it has to offer full package for the tourist in order to interest them, especially putting focus on its natural beauties and as the best destination for adventure tourism in the region. It has to establish its visual identity as the country with rich and long cultural heritage and history nestled in untouched nature, which is authentic. Tourists are not interested so much anymore in commercial tourism and mainstream destinations. Above all,
strategy should put focus on education of hosts and entrepreneurs because tourists are environmentally aware and know how to act in the nature, so they expect the same behaviour and knowledge from their hosts. Use existing flight connections with Scandinavia to target this market, especially because tourists from these countries are very much environmentally aware.’

From the Ministry of RS, the suggestions are general but quite clear and the areas of intervention are the following:

- Cooperation between the public and the private sector
- Education
- Standards
- Green Marketing

In order to have ‘significant results and to turn this slow and spontaneous development into planned, it is necessary to improve the cooperation with the (eco-touristic) suppliers, organise education initiatives on a regular basis, subsidise and support the introduction of standards and practice green marketing’ (Ristić 2017).

Very similar concepts have been expressed by the representatives of the Tourist Organisation of RS, who have given some fields in which it is necessary to act in order to improve the ecotouristic offer (these suggestions are given in regards to the entity RS, but we consider they are anyway valid and relevant for the whole B&H):

- Infrastructures
- Eco standards
- Promotion
- Specific legal framework and regulations
- Education

In other words, first of all it is necessary to improve the ‘touristic infrastructure, as a precondition for the development (of ecotourism), and enhance the touristic offer in this specific area in line with the existing world standards… crucial is an affective promotion which is up to date and follows the world trends in ecotourism… establishing appropriate legislation related to the fields of ecotourism and rural tourism, which could considerably facilitate the development of these types of tourism… Since one of the main barriers to the actual development of ecotourism in RS is the insufficient education provided to the local population about the benefits of this type of tourism… in the next period we will work on the development of ecotourism and through different educational initiatives we will try to explain to the population the advantages of working in ecotourism and rural tourism, as it is getting more and more popular according to the actual world trends’ (Duričić 2017).

The entrepreneurs have a clear idea of what could be done and what could support them in their work, although the suggestions they gave are very general and cover many different issues. These have been very well summarised in the answer given by Janković (2017) when asked what to do to improve the eco-offer and related services: ‘promote the potential through the participation in tourism fairs, directly in the market and via direct contacts, lobbying, getting more (development) funds… In B&H it is necessary to link all the suppliers, improve their capacities and skills, education of the entrepreneurs and all the eco-workers, and to
have an impact on the public institutions regarding the introduction and respect of the standards’.

Similar ideas and opinions are given for the NGO’s point of view, who agree with all the above-mentioned suggestions, but they focus a bit more on the offer’s side, trying to see the whole topic through the eyes of the entrepreneurs and how to support them in becoming fully capable to provide a satisfactory (for ecotourists) eco-offer.

The starting point would be research and data collection, because they represent the base for any marketing strategy in ecotourism. Even the most advanced entrepreneurs, who have been able to develop an offer which meets the requirements of the ecotourists, still have an old style of management, and they are led by intuition or experience. This approach is fine for the beginning, but in the longer term it cannot allow sustainability and further business development, as it needs to be based on data and concrete information (e.g. personal records, touristic trends, statistical publications, researches, etc.). This could also be beneficiary for the entrepreneurs who are not yet that advanced and have smaller businesses, representing a good base for drafting a strategy. According to Alterural: ‘those who work well really have the business approach, they know flow of their tourists, but they have old style management, followed by the intuition, without any data. Business models and strategic approach would help these people to visualise their vision in another way and “put it on paper” and it would also serve for those who do not have much intuition.’ (Devisme 2017)

Then, through education and training, the entrepreneurs could become familiar with the green marketing strategies and techniques, and also could get new ideas for future cooperation: ‘theoretical approach doesn’t help much, but the workshops have proven to be effective (for example before some of our workshops some of them didn’t know how much they are connected and that they work on the different sides of the same mountain, but now they are collaborating closely)’ (Bošnjak 2017). An interesting tool, very specific for this sector, is represented by the study visits: it is proved how much beneficiary it can be for some entrepreneurs to see how other colleagues from different countries developed their offer. The inspiration coming from these visits is very often turned into action, bringing very good results: ‘also, what is very inspirational for all of them, are the examples which show the evolution of similar businesses. Best thing is the exchange of the experiences between them and they get really inspired when they see what others have been doing and they copy each other a lot, especially in the rural areas. If they go to France, or even Slovenia, it always seems like another reality for them and that they don’t believe they can reach it. When they visit some of the cases closer to them, it’s much more effective’ (Devisme 2017).

Once again, the crucial role of education and training is here highlighted, and the three main areas in which they need to operate are the following:

1. Awareness
2. Promotion
3. Standards

‘In the end, first is awareness of the offer and then promotion and standards’ (Devisme 2017)
3.3.3 Suggestions for action

In the study (2009), we can find a very good summarisation of all the issues mentioned in the previous pages, because it considers tourism as a whole, focusing on the sustainability of the offer, which is one of the crucial issues in ecotourism. There are many elements to be considered, and each one of them needs to be given the proper attention, as they are all interdependent and many of them represent preconditions for the following. Although in this model the marketing strategy is one of the elements, we think that the model itself should be considered as a complex and detailed marketing strategy as it implies considering all the elements in designing a sustainable ecotourism product.

These are the six elements which need to be considered and described in detail (Alterural Study of Rural Tourism in B&H 2009: 44, expanded and adapted by the author):

- **Original offer**: it includes the natural attractions related to the environment (such as rivers, lakes, landscapes, wildlife, mountains, etc.), as well as the cultural attractions both in their material form (buildings, bridges, monuments, etc.) and immaterial (traditions, habits, stories, etc.).

- **Derived offer**: these are necessary because they enable tourists to enjoy the original offer, making it concretely available. This might include the so called holiday facilities, related to accommodation, food, shops, events, entertainment, transport; and the mediating facilities, which support tourists in selecting their destinations and enjoying them at the best (tourist information offices, tour operators, internet services, environmental services).

- **Market research**: this is crucial because it implies the definition of the potential customers, and the description of the exact requirements and expectation they might have. Doing so, the proper market segments will be found. This is important because it will allow the entrepreneurs to prepare and design an ad-hoc offer, which represents the meeting point between the offer (previous two points) and the customer.

- **Marketing strategy**: in this case, we would better define it as a promotional strategy, as it is aimed at informing with the most effective tools and tailored initiatives the potential customers about the offer and the destination as a whole. Basically, this part has the task to make people want to choose this destination and this offer.

- **Service delivery**: this is not strictly related to the concept of green marketing itself, but it needs to be part of the strategy, because it includes elements which are crucial for the tourists once at destination. We can here mention the provision of facilities, services and information and the way the maintenance will be done. It is also related to the infrastructure which needs to be adequate and the supporting services in general. Above all, the key point to keep in mind is the customer satisfaction: once again, ecotourists have specific expectations which need to be met.

- **Pricing policy**: once all the previous steps are taken and all the elements described in detail, the last action is to define a price for the customers. This might not be so easy because there are two variables to consider: setting of a competitive price and ensuring sufficient profitability to repay the investment (i.e. sustainability). The final price will be given by the mediation of these two elements.
This can be considered as suggestion to design and create an effective and based on reality business and green marketing strategy, as it includes all the key elements considered crucial by the actors involved in ecotourism.

In order to draft a successful strategy, which leads to an effective development in the ecotourism offer, we consider useful to use some recommendations given by the European Commission in a study published in 2003. Ten key success factors have been identified, which need to be considered when dealing with ecotourism:

1. **Significance**: the importance of the main attraction.
2. **Distinctiveness**: uniqueness in the area, especially compared to other similar offers; basically, here we need to identify the unique selling proposition.
3. **Clustering**: this means following the “In union there is strength” idea, according to which several businesses working together, by clustering their offers, whether they are similar or complementary.
4. **Branding and networking**: branding a destination and its products or creating a known network label are essential for promoting a destination and persuading tourists to choose it.
5. **Access**: weather and distance to the destination play an important role in the decision-making process of tourists, and usually they would rather go where it is easier to go and to find (e.g. the previously mentioned signalisation).
6. **Seasonality**: when we talk about ecotourism this might become an opportunity. Although we know that tourist peaks are winter and summer and the rest of the year is very low, ecotourism has an offer which can attract people all the yearlong.
7. **Partnership**: related to support and motivation, it is a crucial issue in the ecotourism sector.
8. **Strategic planning**: this involves the development of an overall tourism strategy which has to involve all the relevant stakeholders. This is essential for sustainability.
9. **Accessibility**: this means ‘presenting the natural and cultural heritage of the area in an understandable and enjoyable way so that the tourists will be able to learn from them’ (European Commission 2003:36). This is important because as we have seen previously ecotourists require and search for information about the destinations and what they discover to understand and enjoy it.
10. **Sustainability**: in this case, it is about the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage. (European Commission 2003)

As we can see, these two lists represent suggestions and ways in which a green marketing approach can help in developing an ecotourism offer, but they contain some elements which are related to the overall situation of ecotourism as sector (such as strategic planning or the derived offer as it is provided either by different suppliers or public institutions). These elements are not in control of the entrepreneurs or the NGOs, who are the real subjects who will implement the green marketing strategies, and need to be taken care by the relevant institutions at national and entity level. Regarding this, the only action that can be taken by the entrepreneurs or, better, by the NGO sector (as clearly stated above by Alterural), is to lobby to bring their interests and points of view to the attention of the institutions.
We are therefore going to close this part with some more concrete suggestions which could be adopted by the private suppliers and the NGOs as well, in terms of techniques offered by green marketing, which might be very useful in improving the promotion of the existing destinations and eco-offer. We consider this very important because through this research we have seen that some entrepreneurs are actually promoting their businesses, they are doing their best and also getting good results, but at the same time they all acknowledge that much more could be done, and expressed a genuine interest in learning more, showing they are very open minded and a real proactive attitude, which is fundamental when dealing with such an evolving sector as ecotourism.

In the first part of this work we have mentioned an interesting publication, Guerrilla Marketing Goes Green, and we have presented this approach, which we consider particularly important as it will enable the entrepreneurs ‘to take advantage of some of the very best low-cost, high-impact marketing tools’ (Levinson, Horowitz 2010:137). We think they best fit with the characteristics and requirements of ecotourism, and can be adopted by the entrepreneurs in B&H, especially because they do not require huge investments, but they still need to be properly designed and implemented (here the many times mentioned education could play a crucial role):

- **Media Publicity.** This is very important because it is for free and gives a real and huge endorsement (as it is not paid advertising). It would be important to have a media relations plan, although it does not need to be too complex as we are talking about small businesses. A good start would be get the contacts of the local media, and understand who are the journalists who are more interested in the topic and most often write about it. This should not be limited to local media, but could be extended to a national and international level. In the previous pages, we have seen that more and more media are writing about B&H as tourist destination, with a special focus on the eco-offer. A comprehensive (online at first) press coverage analysis (i.e. press cuttings) on the topic is a good starting point to get a first database of media, journalists or influencers who might be interested. At the beginning, we think that the NGOs could play a very important role.

- **Coverage in do-it-yourself media.** Achieving coverage on the mainstream media might not be so easy, at least at the beginning. Therefore, it could be useful to set up a blog or e-zine or print newsletter, becoming a kind of private editor. A good trick to attract more users, would be to create an online space which does not have any commercial scopes, but deals mainly with the themes directly related to the eco-business, such as nature (e.g. attractions as trails, rivers, hills, mountains, lakes, etc. and information on how to get there and what to do), history (e.g. what happened in the place where the business is located), traditions (old habits and ways of living, crafts locally produced, etc.), food (e.g. giving recipes and tutorials on how to prepare some traditional dishes), events (e.g. creating a calendar of the events that might draw the attention of ecotourists), etc. This space would become a sort of aggregator where people could find information about the destination and many related topics, both at local and wider level. If a single entrepreneur does not have the resources to set up such an activity, then partnership is the key: cooperation with other suppliers from the
area and sharing the costs would be a smart choice (e.g. engaging some professionals who could bring their expertise).

- **Twenty-first-century toolkit.** This is related to the first tool, as it is necessary to get some media coverage. It represents the evolution of the traditional press release, which still works but needs to be updated: a) Incorporate social media and/or multimedia features to make it easy to share (i.e. videos, tutorials, social media profiles, etc.); b) Figure out what represents real news for the media, by bringing some innovation; c) Target the right audience, by implementing properly the suggestions given in the first point; d) When possible, be personal: this should not be too hard because we are talking about small businesses where authenticity is a key.

- **Speaking.** This means attending events of different kind, where the entrepreneur or some representatives of the NGO might have the chance to talk about their issues and cause. In order to get to this, it is important to follow the events happening in the local community, both organised by public institutions or private actors. This is free publicity, with a great multiplying effect thanks to the word of mouth. If the first step is to receive an invitation as a speaker to an event, the second is preparation: understanding the event, the audience, the organising subject, are all crucial steps in drafting the speech and selecting the approach.

- **Internet discussion groups and social networking sites.** This has become a must, and as we have seen most of the entrepreneurs are already using this tool. What is important here is the understanding of the importance of the social media, and managing a profile in a professional way, considering it a working tool. The most important aspect is that these media draw a group of like-minded people together to talk about something they all have in common, who are therefore interested in the topic and most probably ready to receive more and more information.

- **User-friendly websites with newsletters.** This tool is widely used too, because the presence on the web is nowadays unavoidable. As general suggestions, we might say that the site should be quick to load, easy to navigate, and genuinely useful to the visitors and any journalists, investors, and other constituencies that might visit. If the information provided is helpful and trustworthy, visitors will use the website regularly. Another crucial aspect is to have a way to capture e-mail addresses and include as many ways as possible to contact you: e-mail, phone, Twitter, social networking profiles, fax, and postal, so that anyone who is interested can easily get in touch.

- **Apparel and premiums.** This tool is about producing some visual merchandising. This will have some costs, as it involves buying and personalising some products: one of the most common is the t-shirts, which could have the name of the business, or a picture. If the t-shirt has a good quality and it is aesthetically pleasant, people will wear it becoming brand ambassadors (please keep in mind that only happy customers or people who have a positive opinion of the business should wear them). The same is applicable for any other kind of merchandising. These products might be sold for a price or given as a prize during specific events.

- **Highly targeted advertising and direct mail.** These might be expensive, or at least more expensive than the previous tools, but if the resources allow them, we think they
should at least be taken in consideration. At the beginning, and especially considering
the specificity of the eco-offer, some online advertising campaigns could be planned.
We suggest starting with online media because the investment required is lower, and
most of the potential customers (i.e. the ecotourists) usually find the information they
need online. Also, online planning allows to maximise the impact of the message
thanks to the high segmentation it allows, which means that most of the people who
will receive the message are potential customers. In this tool, we would like to include
also the printed materials, as they might still play an important role in the promotion
of an offer: fliers and brochures should be distributed in different places, such as the
business premises (some people might take them as a souvenir or token of the visit, or
as a reminder to share with friends once back home if satisfied with the experience),
the tourist information offices, tour operators and all the places where the potential
customers might hang out.

✓ **Guerrilla gifting and sampling.** It is known that giving gifts can be very good for
business. In this case, some little objects could be produced and given for free:
depending on the budget, some examples are pens, lighters, glasses, cups. Since we
are talking about ecotourism, a good idea would be to have some local producers
making these objects, with some strong and visible environmental and ethical
connotations (e.g. wooden pens made from a local forest, notepads with recycled
paper, etc.).
CONCLUSIONS

Summary of the findings

This research has shown that B&H has a big potential in terms of natural resources, cultural heritage, long traditions, warm hospitality, gastronomy in a frame of authenticity which is hard to find anywhere else in Europe.
A huge part of the country is rural, a characteristic that has contributed in keeping the traditions and a way of living which follows the pace of nature. Groceries, dairy products and food in general are produced locally and are home-made, with a minimum environmental impact.
Therefore, the eco-offer is not a matter of choice, but a natural consequence of the community way of life: the first businesses in ecotourism were initiated as an act of love of the entrepreneurs towards their land and its natural beauties.

We can then agree that the value of the ecotouristic offer in B&H is out of question, but unfortunately the official acknowledgement, i.e. the labelling through eco-standards certifications, is still a big and unresolved issue. There is not any official regulatory institution or agency which could certify these “suppliers” as eco or green tourism and hence following these standards depends on each of the entrepreneurs (usually depending on their beliefs).

From the tourists’ point of view this is not yet a critical issue, because the ‘eco’ value of the offer is very visible and clear, but the number of visitors who ask for certifications is growing, and we can easily say that in the medium and long term period following eco-standards and being certified will be almost mandatory, especially if we consider that the ecotourist is, and will be even more, a very demanding consumer.

Most of the people who started some business in ecotourism have just done that because it had been their “way of living since ever”. They have always been surrounded by untouched nature, organic food… But they do not see the importance to promote themselves as green or socially responsible, because they already are. Also, at the beginning, almost all of these people were uneducated about any kind of management or marketing and even today all the techniques they use are really basic.
Through our research, we have seen that according to the marketing knowledge we can split the businesses into two main groups:

✓ Entrepreneurs who have lived or travelled abroad, having the chance to ‘get in touch’ with marketing, and understand its role and importance.
✓ Entrepreneurs who have lived all of their lives in rural areas, in harmony with nature, and have an offer which is eco and green (because they like it and it represents their way of living), but still do not see the importance of communicating it properly and are not fully aware of the expectations of their visitors.
In general, we can say that all these entrepreneurs do have an eco and socially responsible offer because they are based in an untouched natural environment which they take care of,
they clean the water in surrounding (i.e. you can find small rivers from which you can drink water), they work for the benefits of local people (i.e. in their restaurants they serve only organic food produced in that area), etc. But they do not have green marketing. On the contrary, they have just some basic marketing, and some of them none of the marketing activities.

The research showed that although the general degree of knowledge about green marketing and its approaches is quite low, all the stakeholders agree on the fact that it is crucial in the development of ecotourism. Green marketing strategies and tools can provide an effective support in education and training, in raising the environmental awareness and in extending the benefits derived from the development of ecotourism to the local community and the whole country as well.

Green marketing represents therefore the most appropriate approach in ecotourism, because it can provide profit for the entrepreneurs, together with a cultural and social success by keeping traditions alive, all with maximum respect and minimum harm for the natural environment.

**Contribution of the thesis**

At the moment, there are no studies which deal with the two topics of green marketing and ecotourism investigating the relations between the two, and how one can be beneficial from the other, with a focus on the current situation in B&H. Hence this thesis represents the first attempt to give a general picture of the state of the art.

Another important aspect of the research is that it identified the main issues of the sector as a whole, in a holistic perspective, as all the relevant stakeholders had the chance to give their opinion and their voice was listened. According to the information and date gathered, we gave suggestions and recommendations, focusing on the main areas of intervention and identifying the most critical cruxes.

This research can be useful for all the stakeholders, as it pointed out that the general knowledge and awareness of marketing and green marketing are still far from an optimal level.

The entrepreneurs can use this study as a base to incorporate green marketing in their management practice, as it contains suggestions for example on how to plan promotional initiatives and campaigns. It will also help them understanding that marketing activities, so far supported by their intuition and experience, need to be professionally planned in order to create a more attractive offer, that follows the most recent trends and evolutions in ecotourism and at the same time anticipates the growing needs and demands of the ecotourists.

**Limitations and recommendations**

There are some limitations to this research. For example, the number of interviews is limited to seven: the reasons why we could not conduct more is related to the time and financial
resources needed to have more interviewees: as previously mentioned, the supplier and entrepreneurs usually live in small villages, often in the mountains, which require quite enough time to be reached. Being this a qualitative research, there was no need for a high number of interviews but rather a selected sample, able to give a truthful picture of the current situation.

Language could represent another issue: all the interviews (except one) were conducted in the local language, in order to ease the task for the interviewees and to allow them to express their opinions and thoughts in their own words. Sometimes the translation of some concepts has been a challenge, being hard to find the exact words used by the interviewees. However, we did our best to convey the original message in the most adherent possible way.

Since two interviews, more specifically the ones with the representatives of the ministries of the two entities, were sent via email, there could be some issues related to the honesty of the answers, as we were not present while they were given, and therefore we could not consider all the elements of the interviews conducted in presence (e.g. the environment, the nonverbal communications, etc.). On the other hand, being the interviewees representatives of the public sector, they gave the official point of view of the institutions, making their replies valuable for the study anyway.

The quantitative side is missing in this research (but as mentioned it was not its primary scope). Although at the moment it is impossible to find quantitative data about ecotourism in B&H, such a research would be extremely important in a marketing perspective: knowing the number of ecotourists, their countries of origin, their touristic habits for example, would allow a very precise segmentation, which is the base for any successful and effective marketing strategy. We hope that in the future such a research will be conducted on a regular basis as we consider it extremely beneficial for the all sector.

Another aspect is the time in which the research was conducted: from the suppliers point of view, the interviews were done in a period of low season, which was positive as the entrepreneurs had enough time to spend in replying, but on the other hand it would have been interesting to conduct an observation of their way of working during the high season, which would have allowed to gather some information from the visitors as well.

**Heading to the future**

During the last ten years, there has been a slow but continuous improvement and a few steps forward were made: the general awareness in ecotourism, its potential and its importance has been constantly increasing, and the international situation and trends in tourism and more specifically in ecotourism, represent a big opportunity for B&H, which, as seen, has great assets.
These trends need to be followed and taken in deep consideration, and B&H can take a big advantage from them: to achieve this, both the public and the private sector need to focus on a few areas of intervention, turning the actual issues in future opportunities.

First of all, institutions need to adopt new regulations and implement a new legal framework, which reflect a real and comprehensive national strategy on tourism and ecotourism, and at the same time secure their implementation in practice, on the field, through an enhanced cooperation with the private sector.

The private sector needs to understand and accept the fact that partnership is the key to be heard from the institutions, and to learn how to communicate effectively their green commitment, and be ready to keep updated and follow the fast-changing trends in ecotourism, in order to create an eco-offer which to the visitors’ taste and demands. They need to manage their businesses proactively to address environmental issues and the consumers’ sensibilities.

What can help in achieving all of this? Green marketing.

As Grant wrote, ‘marketing is about simple – ‘of course!’ – solutions to complex problems. The context we have been exploring is complex. We needed to understand this to avoid greenwashing, and stuff that does more harm than good. But as we move onto marketing solutions, things get so much simpler; what is required is a series of creative breakthrough ideas, nothing more’ (Grant, 2007: 441).
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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Overview of interview respondents and organisations
Appendix II: Interviews questions
Appendix III: Example of interview transcript
Appendix I

Overview of interview respondents and organisations

Borislav Janković (Founder and owner), Zelenkovac Ecological Movement

Zelenkovac Ecological Movement was established in 1997 as a NGO, following the dream of Borislav Jankovic (Boro) to create a small art gallery and painting studio in the middle of the forest. Today Zelenkovac is a small Ecological Area providing its visitors with bungalows for accommodation, delicious domestic food and a bar to suit everyone’s pleasure. Zelenkovac is situated 70km South-West from Banja Luka, 15km from Mrkonjic Grad, at the foot of Lisina hills, along a river, in a fresh and green environment, far from civilization, in the quite forest. There is an art gallery, “Why Didn’t Boro Leave?!”, which charms its visitors with the philosophical paintings of Boro and his friends, a picturesque environment to soothe the soul and a friendly staff to provide you with everything you’d need to have a comfortable stay. There’s an annual Jazz Festival organized here in summer with visitors from all over the world, spreading the word about this mystical place. At the Zelenkovac, it is normal to listen to jazz saxophonist from New Orleans, to meet famous artists from distant Russia, to see young Chinese, French or Korean girls helping locals in the field works, because of international volunteer camp, jazz festival, art workshops and numerous other events which have been organised for years in this eco oasis. When visiting, be sure to browse the photo album, drink the water from the spring, walk marked trails, rest in the shade of century-old spruce, light a fire in the fireplace, certainly socialize with local people you meet there and try their homemade food.

Borislav Janković, as he likes to say himself, is an artist, ecologist, outlaw, with his feet on the ground and his head in the clouds. Since 1985, he’s been working by his own plan and remains and survives thanks to the sincerity and strong ties with each wood, stone, stream, plant and root of his homeland, and believes he can be separated from it only by the higher force which has brought him there. For more than 30 years from the nature leftovers, Borislav Janković, has been building ecological palaces on the creeks, for ecologists, artists and well-intentioned travellers. The smell of pine needles is plunging into the blood of anyone who sleepover in the wooden houses which were designed by Boro. The whole pleiad of artists and admirers of nature went through Zelenkovac, making unbreakable bond and Zelenkovac open to every new joy and every new visitor.

(Source: www.zelenkovac.org and interview with Mr. Janković)

Nedeljko Branković (Founder and owner), Ethno Village – Museum Ljubačke Doline

Ethno Village – Museum Ljubačke doline sits on 2 hectares of land in Ljubačev village, at about 17 kilometres from Banja Luka. Ljubačke doline (valleys) got their name after the valleys surrounding the Ljubačev village. Ljubačke doline are a natural phenomenon, unique in all of Europe. They are natural dents in the ground, several hundred meters deep and wide. These valleys spread over the entire Ljubačko polje (field) and, as such, cannot be found anywhere else in Europe. They are even mentioned in some Western European travel
guidebooks as a remarkable natural phenomenon and genuine tourist attraction. The Ethno village consists of houses, barns, a pantry, vajats (houses for sleeping), a corn storage facility, a stable, a shepherd’s cottage, a tool shed and an agricultural machinery garage, an apiary, a distillery, etc. In total, around thirty different buildings, all of them are authentic and all of the furniture and household items in them are authentic and come from that period of time. On the other side of the Ethno Village, you can find reconstructed blacksmith, carpenter and cooper shops among others, as well as a general store. All shops are furnished with authentic tools and machines from 19th and early 20th century. The central object in the Ethno village is the market, also used as a space for exhibitions. In the centre of the market, you can find a tavern, but also an antique shop, a tailor, a weaver, a barber, a pharmacist/herbalist, etc. In the Tavern of the Ethno village – Museum Ljubačke doline you can find traditional cuisine from this region: homemade buckwheat pie, traditional pie from brown flour, muffins with sour cream, pones with cottage cheese, cicvara (traditional cheese, sour cream and milk dish), dumplings. Come and have a real rural breakfast with bacon, homemade cheese and sour cream, unpeeled tomatoes or potatoes with sour cream… For lunch, you can order lamb on skewer or under the sač (a large metal shallow bell in which meat and potatoes are cooked under the ashes and burning coal), beans with bacon, wedding cabbage… And in the end, you can sweeten things up a little with the Ljubački Cake. Also, you can try homemade spirits: plum brandy, quince brandy, pear brandy, cherry brandy…

**Nedeljko Branković** came to the idea for this Ethno Village because of his love for old ways of living, antiques, culture and tradition. Ethno village Ljubačke doline is designed and set as an open-air museum with the intention of showing the life of a community that used to inhabit this area, its traditional architecture, material culture, and furniture from the late 19th century and early 20th century. The Ethno village is intended to host exhibitions, art colonies, and historical re-enactments; to collect, preserve and present material and non-material cultural heritage from this and other regions. The difference between this and many other similar ethno villages is that the owner Nedeljko Branković aims to transform the Ethno Village into a fully operational arts and crafts community centre.

*(Source: etno-muzej.com)*

**Alterural NGO:**

**Sarah Devisme (Project Coordinator)**

**Danijela Bošnjak (Project Assistant)**

**Boris Trogrančić (Communications Officer)**

Alterural is nonprofit organization with aim to develop, promote and professionalize rural tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Alterural accompanies changes in perspective according to following three commitments:

1. Contribute to a better life by helping to maintain a strong social link uniting rural families living mainly from agriculture and introducing them to tourism as complementary medium of income.
2. Assist to build an alternative future for the countryside in B&H.
3. Promote different perspective of Bosnian villages and their inhabitants
Association Alterural is open to cooperate with all individuals and organizations already involved in rural tourism, and specifically the ones who are striving to work in the rural and/or ethno/eco tourism, but lacking necessary professional support and promotion. On their website it is possible to find a complete offer of local products and services, from the beauty of nature, gastronomy... all the way to the cultural heritage of B&H rural areas. Alterural aims to present that B&H has a bulk of undiscovered beauties which provides an enormous potential and richness both in products and services that progressively can expand the touristic season on all four seasons. If one wishes to escape into the nature to take a pause from busy workdays, Alterural, non-profit organization dedicated to the development, promotion and professionalization of rural tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina will offer a great number of accommodations and homemade quality products.

(Source: alterural.ba)

Dragana Ristić, Ministry of Trade and Tourism of RS

The Ministry of Trade and tourism has two sectors, the sector of trade, and tourism and hospitality sector. The Tourism and Hospitality Sector in the Ministry of Trade and Tourism performs administrative affairs related to: proposing policies and strategies of development of tourism and hospitality; monitoring and proposing systemic measures and measures of current economic policy for the achievement of established task planning and other documents; proposing laws and other regulations governing the field of tourism and hospitality and monitoring their implementation; organizing research for the purpose of conducting tourism policy; proposing guidelines for the planning and programming of tourism development and cooperation in these matters with the appropriate republic bodies and organizations; monitoring the effects of the economic and systemic measures and measures of current economic policy on economic conditions and economic position of the catering and tourism intermediation and proposing measures to improve the situation and developments in this area; monitoring, routing and propose measures for the realization of investments in tourism, trends and phenomena in the tourism market, the competitiveness of the tourist offer and to propose measures to increase domestic and foreign tourist traffic and foreign exchange earnings from tourism; proposing and taking measures for the development and promotion of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the field of tourism; providing the necessary data and statistical documentation of importance for tourism and hospitality.

The Tourism and Hospitality Sector is divided into three departments: Department of Tourism and Hospitality, Department of investments and promotion of the tourism industry and The Department of Legal Affairs and Administrative Supervision.

Dragana Ristić is working as Assistant of the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality from December 2016. She has been employed by the Ministry of Trade and Tourism since 2010, working on different positions such as: an internal controller in the Department for Joint Affairs and Head of the Department of Tourism and Hospitality.

(Source: Interview with Ms. Ristić and www.vladars.net)

Sanda Redžić, Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism of FB&H
Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism performs administrative, professional and other tasks within the competence of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina that relate to: environmental protection of air, water and soil; strategies and policies for environmental protection; quality standards for air, water and soil; environmental monitoring and control of air, water and soil; strategies and policies for the development of tourism and hospitality; monitoring of tourist flows on domestic and foreign markets; directing long-term development of tourism within the economic system and other tasks. The internal organization of the Ministry has established Regulations on job classification (which can be found on the website). Budget of the Ministry in 2010 amounted to 20 million BAM, unfortunately today is barely 5 million.

Sanda Redžić has been working as Special Advisor for Tourism with the 21 of experience in tourism sector. Previously she worked as Director of the Tourist Association of FB&H, as well as the Member of the House of Representatives of FB&H and Chairman of the Tourism Committee of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

(Source: Interview with Ms. Redžić and www.fmoit.gov.ba)

Dijana Duričić, Tourist Organisation RS

Tourist Organisation of the Republic of Srpska performs: coordination of the work of tourist organizations of municipalities and cities; monitoring, analysing and executing plans and programs of tourist organizations of municipalities and cities; undertaking measures and activities relating to the promotion of tourism interest for the Republic of Srpska; taking action to improve the quality, standardization and classification of tourism products; tourist information and promotional activities of the Republic of Srpska in the country and abroad; monitoring of developments in the domestic and foreign markets of interest to the information and promotional activities of the Republic of Srpska and undertaking measures and activities on the development and promotion of tourism undeveloped parts of the Republic of Srpska.

Dijana Duričić works as Special Advisor/Project Manager in Department of Tourism Development, where she plans and develops project documentation, develops tourism development projects and analyses their implementation, follows the domestic and international tenders, projects and their implementation, take measures for the inclusion of the Republic of Srpska in multinational and regional projects and programs for the development of tourism and performs other tasks by the head of the sector.

(Source: Interview with Ms. Duričić and turizamrs.org)

Lejla Brčkalija, Tourism Association of FB&H

Tourism Association of FB&H was established to create and promote the identity and reputation tourism of the Federation. It performs planning and implementation of the joint strategy and implementation of promotional activities in the Federation and abroad, in the interest of all stakeholders in tourism, and for raising the overall quality of tourism offer. Tourism Association of FB&H performs the following tasks: designing programs and promotion plans of the tourism product taking into account the particularities of each tourist area, according to a tourism development strategy and marketing strategy tourism product of
the Federation; organises, conducts and supervises all activities of promotion of tourist product of the Federation; analyses and evaluates efficiency of promotional actions, and takes appropriate measures and actions in accordance with the achieved results and findings; collects and settles all types tourist information and makes them available to the public; coordinating the work of tourist organizations of cantons, municipalities and cities and other tourism subjects which operate directly and indirectly for the improvement of touristic offer.

Tourism Association of FB&H was created as promotional organisation, which has been working quite effectively until 2015, but now, it has problems with funding. Until 2015, and during some months of 2016, Tourism Association of FB&H participated in more than 20 touristic fairs, presenting the whole B&H and under its roof other touristic organisations participated as well (such as Tourism Association of Canton Sarajevo).

**Lejla Brčkalija** works as Special Advisor for Promotional Activities, both for Tourism Association of FB&H and Tourism Association of Canton Sarajevo.

(Source: Interview with Ms. Brčkalija and Law on Tourism Associations and Promotion of Tourism in FB&H)
Appendix II

Interview questions

Entrepreneurs – Ecotourism businesses

Introduction
1. Role in the organisation (what are your responsibilities, how long, area of competence, previous experience, etc.)
2. Information about the organisation and its visitors (i.e. perceived needs and wants, orientation).
3. How do you assess cooperation between public and private tourism sector? Is the private touristic sector supported by government in any way? If yes, to which extent?

Ecotourism
4. What is in your opinion the potential of ecotourism in B&H?
5. What is the actual situation of ecotourism in B&H, regarding number of tourists, earnings…?
6. Are you aware of international or European standards in ecotourism? Do you follow any of them when creating your offer?
7. What is in your opinion the actual situation in B&H? More specifically, how far is it B&H from achieving these standards?
8. Do you think that your visitors choose your organisation because of your eco and socially responsible touristic offer?
9. Do your visitors ask for any kind of certification that your offer is in line with standards in ecotourism?

Marketing/Green Marketing
10. How do you promote your offer?
11. Do you adopt any marketing strategy and techniques?
12. Are you familiar with the concept of green marketing?
13. If yes, are green marketing techniques currently used and do you consider them as an effective support in achieving the already mentioned standards and improvement of your offer?
14. If not, in your opinion, what is the reason? Are there some barriers that stop you to implement them?
15. What would motivate you to implement the green marketing techniques?

Challenges and Suggestions
16. In your opinion, what are the main challenges and issues for further development of ecotourism in BiH (i.e. fulfilling the standards, improving offer and services, etc.)?

Public Touristic Organisations and Alterural NGO

Introduction
1. Role in the organisation (what are your responsibilities, how long, area of competence, previous experience, etc.)
2. Details about the organisation: foundation, vision and mission, goals, actual members (employees, partner organisations, etc.).
3. How do you assess cooperation between public and private tourism sector?

Ecotourism
4. What is in your opinion the potential of ecotourism in B&H?
5. What is the actual situation of ecotourism in B&H, regarding number of tourists, earnings...?
6. Keeping in mind the existence of specific standards, how far is B&H from European and world’s standards?
7. Do you use any specific tool to assess and evaluate your members according to these standards?
8. Based on your experience, is there enough awareness about the standards among your members and do they try to fulfil these standards when creating their offer?

Marketing/Green Marketing
9. What does your organisation do to support/promote ecotourism in B&H?
10. How do your members promote their businesses?
11. Are there any specific marketing techniques being adopted, both, by you as an organisation and your members?
12. Are you and your members familiar with the concept of green marketing?
13. If yes, are green marketing techniques currently used and do you consider them as an effective support in achieving the already mentioned standards and improvement of your offer?
14. If not yet, what is the reason for that and would your members be willing to start using them?
15. What would motivate you to implement the green marketing techniques?

Challenges and Suggestions
16. In your opinion, what are the main challenges and issues for further development of ecotourism in B&H and is there a way to overcome them? (i.e. fulfilling the standards, improving offer and services, etc.)?

Ministries

Introduction
1. Role in the organisation (what are your responsibilities, how long, area of competence, previous experience, etc.)
2. Information about internal organisation, departments, vision, mission, goals, budget, etc.
3. How do you assess cooperation between public and private tourism sector? Is the private touristic sector supported by government in any way? If yes, to which extent?

Ecotourism
4. What is in your opinion the potential of ecotourism in B&H and would you consider it as important part of the national touristic offer (in terms of income, number of tourists, local development,...)?
5. Keeping in mind the existence of specific standards in ecotourism, how far is B&H from European and world’s standards?

6. Do you have any system to evaluate the eco-touristic offer in regards to these standards?

**Marketing/Green Marketing**

7. Is there any specific plan or strategy to support and promote ecotourism? Does it include above mentioned standards?

8. Are you familiar with the concept of green marketing?

9. Do you believe that green marketing could be an effective support in promotion and recognition of ecotourism and would you consider the option of organising specific trainings to educate the local entrepreneurs in ecotourism about the adoption of green marketing techniques?

**Challenges and Suggestions**

10. In your opinion, what are the main challenges and issues for further development of ecotourism in BiH (i.e. fulfilling the standards, improving offer and services, etc.)?
Appendix III

Examples of interview transcript

Dragana Ristić, Ministry of Trade and Tourism of RS

1. Assistant of the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality from December 2016.

2. The Tourism and Hospitality Sector in the Ministry of Trade and Tourism performs administrative affairs related to: proposing policies and strategies of development of tourism and hospitality; monitoring and proposing systemic measures and measures of current economic policy for the achievement of established task planning and other documents; proposing laws and other regulations governing the field of tourism and hospitality and monitoring their implementation; organizing research for the purpose of conducting tourism policy; proposing guidelines for the planning and programming of tourism development and cooperation in these matters with the appropriate republic bodies and organizations; monitoring the effects of the economic and systemic measures and measures of current economic policy on economic conditions and economic position of the catering and tourism intermediation and proposing measures to improve the situation and developments in this area; monitoring, routing and propose measures for the realization of investments in tourism, trends and phenomena in the tourism market, the competitiveness of the tourist offer and to propose measures to increase domestic and foreign tourist traffic and foreign exchange earnings from tourism; proposing and taking measures for the development and promotion of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the field of tourism; providing the necessary data and statistical documentation of importance for tourism and hospitality.

3. Collaboration is definitely present, but there is certainly room for improvement. A certain kind of cooperation is also an obligation of the institutions, i.e. when drafting the legislation documents. In this sense, communication is already in place and is happening to mutual satisfaction. Meetings and negotiations with all stakeholders guarantee that all arguments will have the opportunity to be presented, heard and discussed, and that the best solutions will be adopted. The area where improvement of cooperation between public and private organisations has to be done is in the planning of activities and development. The backbone should be to meet the needs of the private sector and enable its growth, together with securing the sustainability.

4. Ecotourism is perhaps the most significant tourism development potential in the Republic of Srpska, which occupies an increasingly important place in the overall touristic offer of RS, more and more every day. The Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Srpska for the period 2011-2020 recognised that and distinguishes the following destinations as the key for tourism development: Tjentište, Kozara, Zelengora, Knežev, Janj, Ribnik, Maglić, Bardača and Borik. The main advantages in ecotourism development in Republic of Srpska are in an environmentally diverse and preserved area, an increase in interest in eco-tourism, an increase in demand for healthy food.
5. Ecotourism needs to be based on authenticity, not necessarily on standards. No tourist will come to B&H because of a certain standard, but precisely because of the authenticity and exotic surroundings of the undiscovered European jewel. Further, imposing standards at the very beginning of the development of this particular area or supply segment is an additional burden on service providers and instead of encouraging them, in reality it discourages them from providing ecotourism services. This certainly does not mean that no rules or standards should exist, but for now standards as defined, for example in ECOLNET system, are not in use and we are far away from fulfilment.

6. Existing laws on tourism and hospitality, beside other things, are also covering questions considering ecotourism performance, but the standardisation should be provided in some next phases of the development.

7. There is no any strategic document in the sector of tourism within the RS which specifically and exclusively deals with the promotion and development of ecotourism, being this included in the Strategy for the Development of Tourism in the RS, planned for the period 2011-2020, and in the Plan for Promotion to be implemented by the Tourist Organisation of the RS (actually still in the drafting phase), which has competency over the promotion of tourism.

8. In general we are familiar with the term green marketing, but not with all the tools and specific details of the term, but we need to consider that here at the Ministry we do not deal directly with marketing.

9. Absolutely yes, green marketing is the only real way to promote ecotourism and training and education of local entrepreneurs in this area would be more than desirable.

10. The main weaknesses can be found in the wrong behaviour with the natural environment, the offer which is not complete and properly designed a lack of marketing approach, inadequate distribution channels and so on. In order to have significant results and to turn this slow and spontaneous development into planned, it is necessary to improve the cooperation with the eco-touristic suppliers, organise education initiatives on a regular basis, subsidise and support the introduction of standards and practice green marketing.

Borislav Janković, Zelenkovac Ecological Movement

1. Ecological Movement was established in 1997 as a NGO, following the dream of Borislav Jankovic to create a small art gallery and painting studio in the middle of the forest. Today Zelenkovac is a small Ecological Area providing its visitors with bungalows for accommodation, delicious domestic food and a bar to suit everyone’s pleasure. Zelenkovac is situated 70km South-West from Banja Luka, 15km from Mrkonjic Grad, at the foot of Lisina hills, along a river, in a fresh and green environment, far from civilization, in a tranquil forest. An art gallery, “Zašto Nije Otišao Boro”!? (“Why Didn’t Boro Leave”!?), charms its
visitors with the philosophical paintings of Boro and his friends, a picturesque environment to soothe the soul and a friendly staff to provide you with everything you’d need to have a comfortable stay. There’s an annual Jazz Festival organized here in summer with visitors from all over the world, spreading the word about this mystical place.

2. I’m an artist, ecologist, outlaw, with my feet on the ground and head in the clouds. Since 1985, I’ve been working by my own plan and I remain and survive thanks to the sincerity and strong ties with each wood, stone, stream, plant and root of his homeland. I believe I can be separated from it only by the higher force which has brought me there. For more than 30 years from the nature leftovers, I’ve been building ecological palaces on the creeks, for ecologists, artists and well-intentioned travellers. The smell of pine needles is plunging into the blood of anyone who sleeps over in the buildings which were designed by me. The whole pleiad of artists and admirers of nature went through Zelenkovac, making unbreakable bond and Zelenkovac open to every new joy and every new visitor.

3. We didn’t get almost any help or subvention from the local or national authorities and cooperation almost doesn’t exist. On the other side, we have good cooperation with public tourist organisation, which promotes us on the touristic fairs in the country and abroad. Unfortunately, local private touristic organisations and agencies are primarily focused on sending local tourists abroad. We have a good cooperation with the local portal Ludi Popust, one of the few local partners which brings us guests. We also cooperate with Booking.com and AIRBNB, which send us visitors from Western Europe and other countries from all over the world.

4. The natural potentials in B&H are huge, but it is not enough because it is necessary to involve the society, especially the state institutions, which would provide support and encouragement.

5. I believe this type of tourism is not getting enough attention and it is developing spontaneously.

6. Certainly, we are receiving new information and knowledge by accepting world’s and European standards and following trends in ecotourism. So we can combine our experience with the standards in order to answer to the demand and to the needs of our targeted groups.

7. B&H could easily adapt to European and worlds standards if the existing laws would be truly implemented. Of course, the government has to take responsibility for the implementation of laws and for establishment of the controlling system.

8. That happens in any case, because of this peculiarity (i.e. eco-offer) and mostly due to this, our visitors choose this destination.

9. So far, we didn’t have such requests.
10. Firstly, directly acting towards our visitors and then promotion continues as they are satisfied, so that they will promote us among their friends. We also have other promotional activities and tools, such as internet, social media, television, fliers... Another, exceptional opportunity for promotion is represented by the social events and activities we organise in our premises.

11. We are based on direct and personal recommendations using natural resources to attract the visitors.

12. Yes, but not sufficiently.

13. We are still working on a smaller scale, based on the current eco-offer, which derives from the existing natural resources, with a focus on organic food, energy conservation and from renewable sources.

14. We are definitely interested and willing to include green marketing techniques more in our business. At the moment, they are used to a lesser extent due to underdeveloped (regarding this matter) capacity and staff, and inertia of the public institutions.

15. It would be important step towards a better promotion of the eco-business and a more efficient use of the existing resources and efforts. In particular, green marketing would be crucial because we are convinced that our eco-offer should be much more and better promoted, and at the same time we want to find ways to reach our target groups. This would be of the greatest importance.

16. We have to promote the potential through the participation in tourism fairs, directly in the market and via direct contacts, lobbying, getting more (development) funds... In B&H it is necessary to link all the suppliers, improve their capacities and skills, education of the entrepreneurs and all the eco-workers, and to have an impact on the public institutions regarding the introduction and respect of the standards. There is also necessity for a comprehensive action from the public institutions, especially the Ministry of Trade and Tourism, which should draft and implement an official strategy for the development of tourism and get it to the touristic organisations (i.e. private businesses, entrepreneurs) on the field.