

# Market Research in Starting Up Agricultural Business: Case Study of Kosovo Dairy Industry

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*Abstract: The main purpose of starting up each business is to establish a long-term profitable business. One of the key factors that maintain the sustainability of business success is to have an updated depth and specific market research about the certain industry. The market research aims to collect important information about the market trend and demand, market size, its potential competitors as well as its major buyers. Thus, it is fundamental to analyse the market to identify and understand the current and future opportunities and difficulties within the business field. In general, market research joins together with other factors such as budget, location, professional acquaintances determines the potential level of sales and business success. Most of the dairy businesses in Kosovo are small-sized and have a limited budget and this reflects the level of market research, how research has been done and by who has been done on the opening stage of the businesses. The study will assist in evaluating the degree of market research from the value chain actors in the dairy industry and the effect of market research in the development of the industry. The data used in this study were obtained through interviews with the main actors of the value chain in the dairy industry, in seven regions throughout Kosovo. Research findings have shown that market research is not in satisfactory level and not given sufficient importance especially by small companies in the lower part of the value chain in the milk industry of Kosovo. Therefore, more consideration should be given to market research by all value chain actors, in order to have a successful and sustainable business.*

*Keywords: Market research, value chain, the dairy industry, opening a business*

## 1 Introduction

Kosovo dairy industry has a special transition history. During the early 90s, dairy businesses have been almost socially owned with the exception of family farms which produced and processed products have used for personal needs and their surplus have sold in the green market. During the initial stages of conflict, the industry has faced a lack of proper strategy development, dissolve of cooperatives and reductions of functional participants and linkages in dairy value chain in the country.

The initial stages of development businesses in this industry were visible in the first decade of this century, during this time a large number of new businesses opened which were based on family traditions, with its own budgets and not having any market research.

When the new business was created, it was seen as a promise of a new source of income. Though the record of doing business has changed, this changes reasserted and of so-called “World Global Market” build on bases of international standard like the European market.

After joining the global market, the signing of several agreements such as the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) and Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) was shown economic recovery. However, because of relatively short experience of businesses in the dairy industry, accompanied by low favourable loans, poor qualitative approach towards business and fierce competition from imported products in the blooming stage of these businesses, many enterprises are having difficulties in selling their products. In addition, as stated by the previous studies, because of lack of market research, many enterprises face liquidity and termination issues on their businesses. According to KSA (Kosovo Statistic Agency) data on new and terminated enterprises to quarters 2006-2016, the number of businesses terminated in 2015 was 2025, with an increase of 82% to the year 2014.

In order to understand the contemporary role of market research in business, this study will attempt to assess its role in what has been called ‘Market research’ at opening stages of businesses. Market research is essential to the market process, strengthen the action to take and to help to clarify what should be focused on (Forsyth, & Patrick. 2009). Market research is a broad term and it is clearly associated with the number of activities such as gathering information that improves marketing effectiveness, support the business for long-term running and reduce business risk and the barriers. In general, the main actors of the dairy industry in the value chain, especially to milk producers (71.4%), family tradition plays a major role on making the decision on opening a new business or running existing family business. Whereas, other actors of the supply chain where companies are bigger in size (60%) decision on the opening of new business is based on the result of market research which obtained mainly by the owners of company or manager that are not specialised in this field. Therefore, to increase the business success in the dairy industry, it is necessary that all the data are used to make a decision on opening a business have to be reliable and obtained by professional market research companies.

The research findings, besides being an attempt to understand the actual state of implementation of market research in dairy industry, will be inputs that can be utilized for practical purposes by the founders of the businesses, to help to create a

sustainable business and reduce the business risk. Through this analyses, the paper will argue that lack of market research before and in process of opening of new businesses has a big impact on closing down many businesses in Kosovo.

## **2 Market research and its effect on business development**

Creating and opening a new business is exciting process however it is fundamental to set your company in the right direction based on the valuable information obtained through market research is an essential step.

“It is said the information is Power” (Silbiger, 2005, p.364). As Silbiger highlighted that the reliable and effective research is to know that from who and how to gather the information. The more effective research work has been done, the more profitable and successful business you gain. Also, was said that” Companies need healthy information, in order to produce superior value and satisfaction for customers, the company requires information for competitors, resellers and other market forces” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2013, p.137). Market research and its importance were defined and discussed by many authors one the field. Market Research can be defined as: “The systematic problem analyses, model-building and fact-finding for the purpose of the improved decision-making and control in marketing goods and services” (Forsyth, 2009, p.54).

Market research helps the owners and managers to understand the whole and the best market, the suitable market strategy as well as to identify the opportunities and threats in the field. Thus, it is important that in order to avoid the failures any business organisations should focus on the market research. To evaluate market “Additional, local, regional and national research may be needed to accumulate all necessary information.” (Maitland, 1998).

Market research identifies and investigates the potential customers and marketing opportunities, the right products and services, the market segment as well as the changes in the market that will affect in the future. Market research is composed of two types of special research, primary and secondary that are essential to meet company objectives. The secondary survey consists of data that are produced previously by others this research helps to create a database, which can be used to perform the analysis of the situation. It helps to identify the company's competitors, to carry out a strategy for comparison and also define the segments the company should aim in view of factors such as demographics, population (Matthews, & Ross, 2010).

Primary research serves to provide information through monitoring of sales levels and measuring the effectiveness of existing business practices such as quality of service and communication tools used by the company. Market research consists range of different types of research that can be developed to help in various ways. Ways of conducting market research may be different: receiving data in conversations with people who have knowledge in the district where you live, interviewing potential consumers to the analysis of data larger market. To get business in right direction according to Taylor (2017), valuable market research data can be collected in for ways: Your own research for market research, conducting online survey or focus group section, buying expert market research data from the firms that specialise in market research in your field and, hiring a research company to interview selected companies in select location.

As Kosovo is a small and developing country, most of the businesses are local and family oriented. The owners and managers usually based on the own knowledge and skills to set and run the business, whereas, market research strategy development of the business in Kosovo finds very little room. Significant major problems in the dairy industry are direct marketing of dairy products to the green market and imported cheap dairy products.

Baumann, & Jetishi (2015), in their studies of Direct Marketing of Dairy Products in Kosovo's Green Markets stated that farmers without prior licensed dairy processing sell about 30 million kg of milk per year to green markets (farmers' markets) or near them on the street. Thus, uncontrolled, directly marketed products create unfair competition with products sold on regular local markets. In addition, according to Kosovo Dairy Processors Association (KDPA) and Kosovo Association of Milk Producers (KAMP), the biggest challenges are the subsidised cheap imports of dairy products as a result of insufficient state support for strengthening and developing the sector. The dairy-food is highly risky business to deal with, for this reason before an entrepreneur launches a new venture, it is essential that a business owner must gather market information. The owner then can be more confident in the decisions he makes based on solid data rather than guesswork, he can state with confidence that the marketplace truly needs what products business plans to offer (Hill, Brian. (n.d.)). Also, Zuzaku (2015) in his study of the significance of market research to businesses stated that market research encourages business development and employment opportunities, 56% of respondents in his study stated that if the demand for market research increases, they will increase the number of workers.

In recent years, as result of market demand and its competitiveness, the most Kosovo companies are becoming aware of that the success of the business can only be achieved through specific market research in providing research regarding the customers, competitors and the market potential for their products or services. The number of companies which their main activity has been the market and opinion research according to data of Kosovo Business Registry Agency (KBRA) is 132, but according to the data obtained from studies shows that 68% of those registered companies that the main activity is market research, have never carried

out any market research. (Zuzaku, & Buja, 2014). According to data obtained by these study, the structure of market research companies in Kosovo are as follows: individual business 32%, Limited Liability Company 52%, whereas froing Companies who are doing market research in Kosovo is 13% (Zuzaku, & Buja, 2014). Development of the businesses through the companies for market research).

### **3 Objectives and limitations**

#### **3.1 Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to analyse and to identify the implementation of the market research before opening the new business among participants in Kosovo dairy industry.

Other objectives are to analyse the key role of market research in the growth of these enterprises in the dairy industry in Kosovo and to find out the issues that may require more attention on the future stages of opening business in order to reduce the risks involved in making the business decisions.

#### **3.2 Limitations**

Study limitations are related to two aspects: sample of businesses have chosen for this research is concentrated on the medium and large companies that can provide more reliable information. Also, during the interviews some of the respondents were not familiar with the market research, thus some of the interview questions about market research considered premature for some businesses in the dairy industry.

### **4 Hypothesis and research questions**

#### **4.1. Research question**

The research questions of this study are:

1. What is the level of implementation of market research in the stage of opening business?
2. In what, are owners based when making a decision to open the new business in the dairy industry?

3. How important is the market research among participants in the dairy industry?
4. What information gathered during market research?
5. How reliable were research results when the business owners have taken into account in open the business?
6. What is the level of market research development in Kosovo?

## **4.2 Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of the paper are:

H1. Opening new or running the businesses in the dairy industry in Kosovo are based on more family tradition than on information obtained from market research.

H2. Due to lack of budget, the market research was done by the owners of the companies and the credibility of the results is low.

## **5 Methodology used**

This research combines secondary research based on a series of theoretical studies in market research in the dairy industry with primary research which was conducted through in-depth interviews with enterprise managers and owners of four actors of the supply chain in the dairy industry in seven regions of Kosovo. During the interviews, the researcher have gathered information about the steps in starting up business and the implementation of market research on the stages of starting up business in this sector.

The survey was conducted in 61 business participants on dairy industry (Farmers, milk collectors, processors and retailers). The sample of interviewed respondents in dairy industry consists of farmers 14, collection points 14, milk processors 16 and traders 17. As regards to the position on the company of the interviewed respondents are: Landlord 34.4%, Manager 63.9%, and staff 1.6%. Selection of businesses and respondent for interview was based on providing reliable information about opinions and judgments of market research in the opening stages of their business but also after the opening of business, the level of research, research model, using the results of research in the opening of the business and business benefits from the use of research results.

## **6 The current business situation in milk industry**

According to the population census in 2011 Kosovo has 1,739,825 inhabitants, and most of the population about 62% live in rural areas while 38% live in urban areas (Kosovo Statistic Agency, 2014). When it comes to labour force according to the data of agricultural census 2014, workforce in agriculture in 2014 was 362 700, from them business owner and family members constitute 79.83%, which only 1.08 % are regularly employed on agricultural households and agricultural legal entities, non-family members which mostly are seasonal workers are 18.76% (KSA, 2014).

The dairy industry is an important sector in Kosovo and it plays a great role in the economic and financial situation of the country as well as one of the most profitable sector in agriculture. The main actors in the dairy industry in Kosovo are: Farmers, Collection point, Processors and Retailers. Livestock (Farming) represents the most intensive branch of agricultural production and very important for producers and consumers.

According to a KSA the number of active enterprises in Kosovo in 2008 was 41 124, while in 2014 was 31924, expressed as a percentage the number of active companies has decreased 22.4 %, the number of overall agricultural holdings was 130 775 of these only 339 are legal entities while others are agricultural individual businesses whereas agricultural economy that deals with livestock were 91 227. (70% of total Agricultural Economies), which comprise a total of 281 747 livestock size units (LSU) (KSA- agricultural census 2014).

From Table 1 can be seen that about 22% of agricultural holdings have 1 to 1.5 LSU which has the biggest percentage in agricultural holdings.

Based on the data by milk production association the number of milk collection points operate in Kosovo is 53, including the most of the regions of Kosovo. From them registered as a business in Ministry of industry and trade until now are 30 milk collection points or 58% of the total number of collection points are functional.

Whereas in 2015, according to the Food and Veterinary Agency (FVA) were 41 milk processing plants. Ten of them are the industrial processors with capacity over 1 million / litter in a year while others are commercial processors with the capacity of less than 1 mil / l in a year.

Based on the production volume per day Table 2 shows that processing factories with high production are 4 in total but most processors belong to the category of the lower production volume.

|                         | Number of agricultural holdings | Livestock size unit (LSU) | % of agricultural holdings (LSU) |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| LSU- >0 to 0,5          | 14367                           | 3371                      | 15.75                            |
| LSU-0,5 to less than 1  | 5684                            | 4137                      | 6.23                             |
| LSU-1 to less than 1,5  | 20331                           | 24751                     | 22.29                            |
| LSU- 1,5 to less than 2 | 11581                           | 19821                     | 12.69                            |
| LSU-2 to less than 3    | 15347                           | 37158                     | 16.82                            |
| LSU-3 to less than 5    | 12139                           | 45774                     | 13.31                            |
| LSU-5 to less than 10   | 7487                            | 51056                     | 8.21                             |
| LSU-10 to less than 15  | 2005                            | 24160                     | 2.20                             |
| LSU- 15 to less than 20 | 929                             | 15881                     | 1.02                             |
| LSU-20 to less than 30  | 725                             | 17250                     | 0.79                             |
| LSU-30 to less than 50  | 415                             | 15341                     | 0.45                             |
| LSU- 50 and more        | 217                             | 23046                     | 0.24                             |
| <b>Total in Kosovo</b>  | <b>91227</b>                    | <b>281747</b>             | <b>100</b>                       |

Source: Kosovo Statistic Agency (Agricultural holdings by livestock size units (LSU), regions and municipalities 2014)

| Volume production | No. of processors | Percentage |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------|
| High              | 4                 | 9.75       |
| Medium            | 11                | 26.8       |
| Low               | 26                | 63.4       |

Food and Veterinary Agency (FVA)-2015 (elaborated by author IB)

In terms of new businesses, Kosovo statistic agency data presented in table below shows that the total number of new businesses registered since 2014 is increased only 2.68%, while looking by sections, great growth in the registration of new businesses is observed in agriculture 27.53%, production 16.08% while number of new businesses in trade sector has been unchanged.

| Year  | 2012  | 2013  | 2014  | 2015  |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Total   | 9 576 | 9 420 | 9 404 | 9 833 |
| Agriculture, forestry and fishing                                 | 741   | 753   | 674   | 945   |
| Production  | 902   | 872   | 978   | 1 047 |
| Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles | 2 918 | 2 734 | 2 814 | 2 903 |

Source: Kosovo Statistic Agency, The number of new and re-registered enterprises by quarters and sections of economic activities 2012-2016



Whereas the number of companies that are closed down per year is presented in the table below.

| <b>Table 4</b>  |       |       |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>New and terminated enterprises according to quarters 2006-2016</b>                           |       |       |       |       |
| Year  | 2012  | 2013  | 2014  | 2015  |
| New enterprises   | 9 576 | 9 420 | 9 404 | 9 833 |
| Terminated enterprises  | 1081  | 1508  | 1671  | 2205  |
| Source: Kosovo Statistic Agency, New and terminated enterprises according to quarters 2006-2016 |       |       |       |       |

According to data in the statistical structure of businesses obtained by ASK, the number of active business from 2008 - 2014 decreased by 22.4%. The data presented above shows that the total number of all registered new businesses not changed much since 2012 to 2015 (2.68%), while the termination of businesses in general in Kosovo had increased to 49%.

The above figures and the lack of study of market research, especially in the agriculture sector, motivated me to do the study on the implementation of market research by supply chain actors in Kosovo dairy industry on opening stage as a factor in sustainability and the success of the business

## **7 Research Results**

In the research result are presented a series of data relating to the implementation of market research by the actors in the value chain in the dairy industry and identified the importance of market research in the establishment, expansion, durability and success in the business.

Using the technique of interview through open and a semi-open questionnaire has increased the opportunity of analysis in market research in businesses, particularly in the small and medium agricultural businesses which people have lower education level.

| <b>Table 5</b><br><b>Sectors of dairy industry</b> |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| Actors in Dairy Industry                           | Number companies interviewed |
| Farmers  | 14                           |
| Collection point                                   | 14                           |
| Milk processors                                    | 16                           |
| Retailers  | 17                           |
| Source: author                                     |                              |

Research results obtained from selected actors in the supply chain of the dairy industry as seen in Table 5, by addressing the market research quality as multidimensional are considered some factors such as: level of implementation, the used methodology, budgets and timing of implementation, and implementation in practice of the research results, that are related to measuring the perception of the founders (Manager) for market research whether meets their predictability.

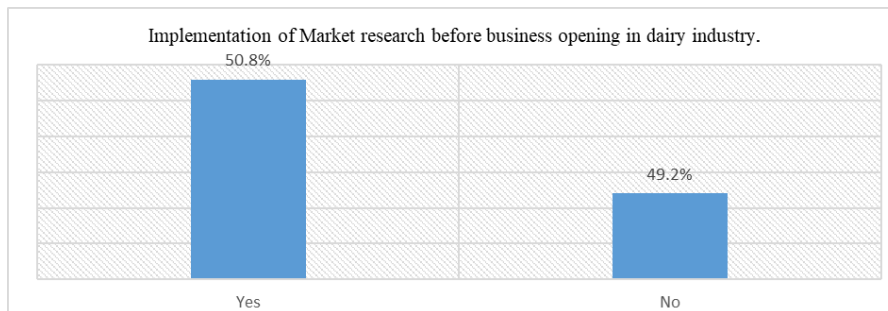


Figure 1. Author

Figure 1 shows the level of research to all actors in the supply chain in the dairy industry, as figure shows that implementation of market research before opening the business in this industry was 50.8%, while 49.2% have not done any market research in the initial stages. As shown in Figure 2, during the research found that there are big differences in market research among the business and actors of the supply chain. This difference is stated as the result of changes in the size of the company, professionalism, budget and perception of market research in business success. From Figure 2 can be seen that the highest level of market research in the initial stages of opening business it is done by milk collectors and processors whereas to milk producers market research is very low 21.4%.

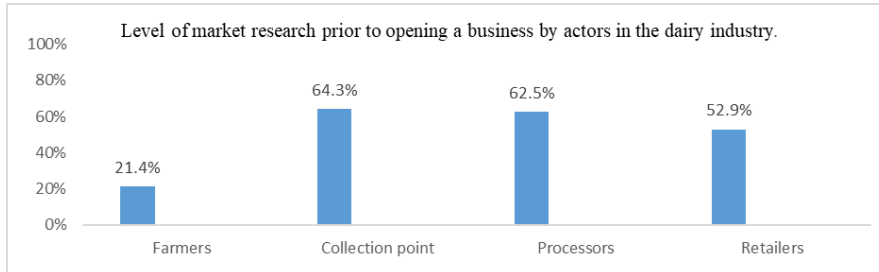


Figure 2. Author

Since the decision in opening the dairy business depends on many factors such as appropriate level of knowledge gained by experience and education, the available budget, the data collection and business traditions, aim of the research was to get responses to the question of which are based on the opening of businesses, results are shown below in figure 3, referring to data obtained from this research to four different actors in the industry is noted that family tradition in business is the main factor in opening the business in general, but it is mostly expressed to the milk producers about 71.4%.

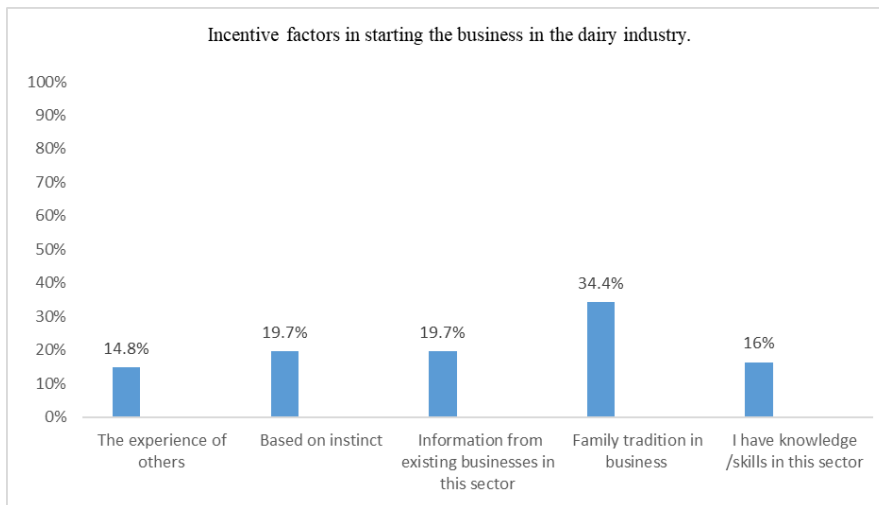


Figure 3. Author

The credibility of the research results are important factors in making the decision to open businesses in the early stages as well as for the sustainability and success of the business in the future, and therefore the selection of technologies, methods and adequate persons for conducting research is essential. Regarding who has conducted market research among the companies interviewed, the data from our research presented in figure 4 shows that around 61.3% of the respondents state

that they have conducted their own research while 29% have engaged a research company and 6.5% have engaged one person.

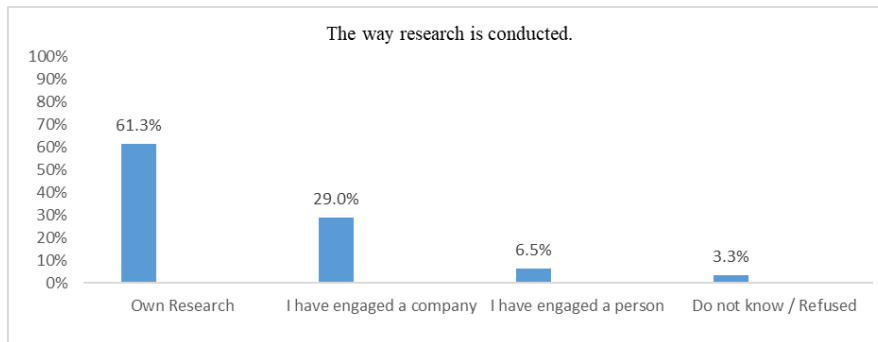


Figure 4. Author

Considering the importance of research and the implementation of these results in practice, about 87.1% of respondents who have researched the market have been declared to have taken into account the research results and decided to open a business based on results, while 12.9% did not take into account the results of the research

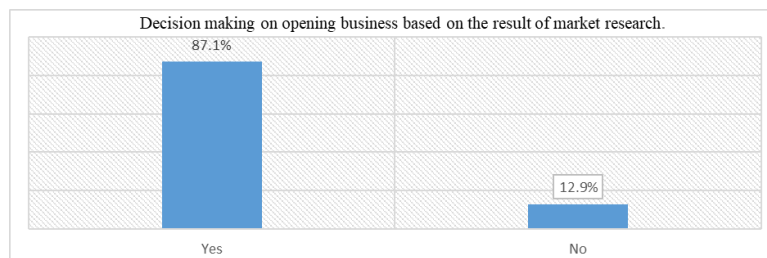


Figure 5. Author

The opinion on the impact of the results of research into the success of the business, the evaluation of market research in general by business and the performance of their businesses are presented in Figure 6, Figure 7 and Figure 8.

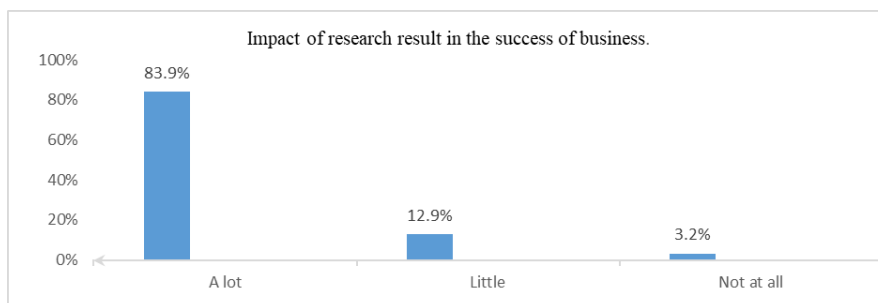


Figure 6. Author

The results presented in Figure 6 show that about 83.9% of respondents think market research has had a lot of impact on business success, 12.9% little, while 3.2% think it has not affected at all. The low level of market research in the initial opening phases is also consistent with the assessment of the importance of market research presented in figure 7, shows (47.5%). Thought very important while 47.5% little whereas 3.3% thought that was not at all important.

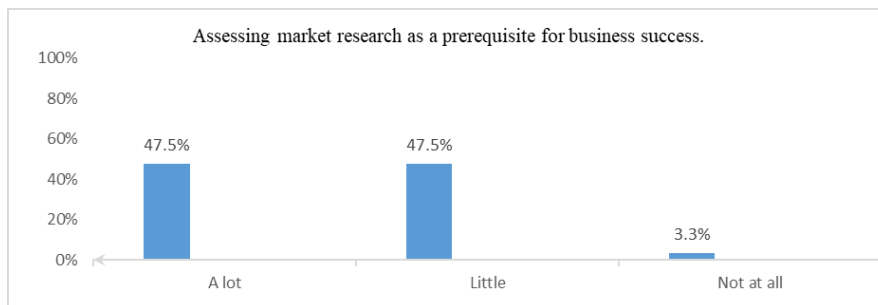


Figure 7. Author

In terms of the level of satisfaction on business performance, Figure 8 shows that about 67.2% are satisfied with their business performance while 32.8% are not satisfied with the business performance. However, although the degree of dissatisfaction is high in the question whether any market research has been conducted after the opening of business, in order to affect the performance of the business, about 63.3% stated that they have not done any market research, while only 36.6% had conducted research. Implementation of research after the business launches was similar to the research market prior to the opening of the business, where the realization of the research was performed at about 90.9% by business themselves. The main information gathered during market research by business was information about the number of competitors, the prices and the demands of consumers. The number of researches made prior to the opening of the business was 1 while after the opening of the business the average was 3.

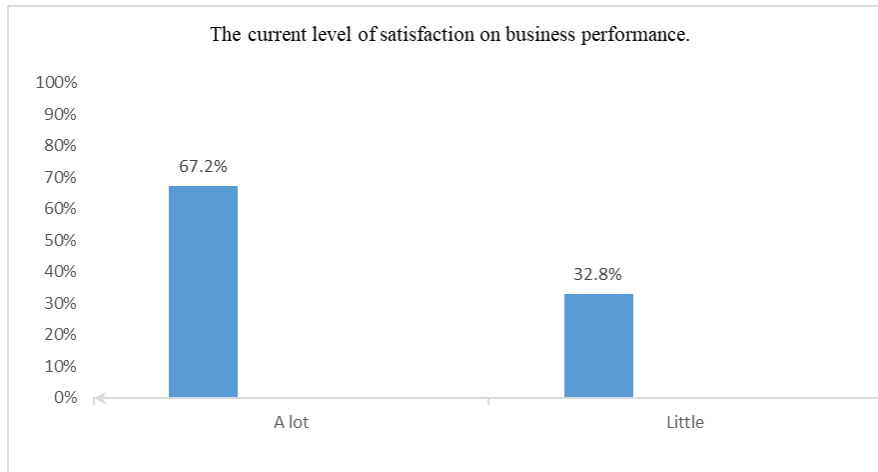


Figure 8. Author

### Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to explore the nature and the level of market research by the businesses of the supply chain in the dairy industry in Kosovo. The study has brought knowledge of market research at the start-up stage. Also, it has identified a range of factors that affecting the market research process at initial business opening up, such as budget shortages, the low education level, not enough data as well as difficulties in to access for the certain information.

- a) In terms of the decision of opening the dairy businesses in Kosovo according to the research finding is based more on family tradition (71.4%, to producers ) and very little attention is paid on the market research, especially in the lower part of the value chain. This data fully verifies the first hypothesis of this study which states that opening a new business in the dairy industry is based more on family tradition than on information obtained from the market research.
- b) Also it can be seen that the small-sized companies are lack of budget, have low education level in market research. As a result, the level of market research among actors in the supply chain of the dairy industry is not satisfactory.
- c) Taking into account the importance of this study, in the findings of the research, dominate aspects related to business weaknesses and potential threats to the liquidation of businesses. However, it should be noted that the findings of the research also brought positive examples of business research into the dairy market, for example, use of results research in

decision making in starting a business. Research findings show that over 80% of businesses that were doing market research have taken the decision to open a business based on the market research results.

e) In addition, more than 80% of the businesses have stated that the research results had a huge and positive impact on successful business development. The results derived from the study reject the second hypothesis that is related to the use of research results since only 13% did not use the research results in taking the survey to open the business.

### **Recommendation**

a) Since the most of the market research is conducted by the owners of the companies and less through the experts and professional firms for market research, it is recommended that the companies carry out the research through professional market research companies.

b) We also recommend that companies do more market research, as the results obtained by market research is important in the successful development and sustainability of the company.

c) Moreover, results from research indicate that companies have started a business based on the results of the research have been successful in the later stages of development, so we recommend that other companies follow this example.

d) Government Institutions should provide necessary and easy access to the data about sales and demand of the products, markets and competitors for the enterprises and give support on starting the business.

e) Therefore, in order to help this sector and to prevent or reduce the number of businesses termination, it is very important that to continue the strong support with subsidies and other forms of support, to enable companies after opening the business to continue with marketing and market research, to increase the economy of scale. The impact of these supports is tangible and measurable, and as a result, will reduce the risk of termination and increase the competitiveness and sustainability of the dairy business.

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