

# **CULTURAL EVENTS AS PART OF CULTURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT. CASE STUDY: SOMBOR AND APATIN (SERBIA)**

Ivana Blešić, Tatjana Pivac, Jasmina Đorđević, Igor Stamenković, Sava Janićević



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Sombor stew festival, Vojvodina Province, Serbia.

## **Cultural events as part of cultural tourism development. Case study: Sombor and Apatin (Serbia)**

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**ABSTRACT:** Festivals and special events play a significant role in communities' lives because they provide important activities and spending outlets for both locals and visitors, and enhance the tourist image of local communities and their social cohesion. Backgrounds and contents of events are various, but the most attractive ones are those devoted to gastronomy or those that cherish tradition, customs, folklore and handicrafts. The municipalities of Sombor and Apatin are multiethnic regions with authentic folklore and food out of which numerous events of economic and entertainment content emerged. The authors of this study recognized the most significant ten. The research is aimed at determining the attitudes of the local population with regard to the organization, realization and economic importance of cultural events.

**KEY WORDS:** festival, local population, attitudes, Sombor, Apatin, culture, tourism, regional development

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### **ADDRESSES:**

#### **Ivana Blešić, Ph. D.**

Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management

Faculty of Sciences

University of Novi Sad

Trg Dositeja Obradovića 3, 21 000 Novi Sad, Serbia

E-mail: [ivana.blesic@gmail.com](mailto:ivana.blesic@gmail.com)

#### **Tatjana Pivac, Ph. D.**

Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management

Faculty of Sciences

University of Novi Sad

Trg Dositeja Obradovića 3, 21 000 Novi Sad, Serbia

Dositeja Obradovića 3, 21 000 Novi Sad, Serbia,

E-mail: [tatjana\\_pivac@yahoo.com](mailto:tatjana_pivac@yahoo.com)

#### **Jasmina Đorđević, Ph. D.**

Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management

Faculty of Sciences

University of Novi Sad

Trg Dositeja Obradovića 3, 21 000 Novi Sad, Serbia

E-mail: [jasminadjordjevic@live.com](mailto:jasminadjordjevic@live.com)

#### **Igor Stamenković, Ms. Sc.**

Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management

Faculty of Sciences

University of Novi Sad

Trg Dositeja Obradovića 3, 21 000 Novi Sad, Serbia

E-mail: [igorrrogi@yahoo.com](mailto:igorrrogi@yahoo.com)

#### **Sava Janićević, Ph. D.**

Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management

Faculty of Sciences

University of Novi Sad

Trg Dositeja Obradovića 3, 21 000 Novi Sad, Serbia

# 1 Introduction

In current economic climate, festivals play an important role for cities and whole regions. Festivals are considered to contribute significantly to cultural and economic development and as such have major impact on the development of cultural tourism to the host communities. The festival organizers are now using the historical and cultural themes to develop annual events to attract visitors and create cultural image in host cities by holding festivals in the community settings. The desire for festivals and events is not specifically designed to address the needs of any particular group. The hosting of events is often developed because of tourism and economic opportunities additional to social and cultural benefits. Festivals are being used by the organizers to express the relationship between identity and place and play a very important role in raising civic consciousness. Festivals are an important expression of human activity and contribute significantly to the social and cultural life of their host communities (Raj and Vignali 2010).

Events have the potential to generate a vast amount of tourism when they cater to visitors from other destinations plus the potential for grants, or sponsorships (Getz 1997), either by direct or indirect intent. The events in turn are seen as an important tool for attracting visitors and building the tourist image within different communities.

The main subject of this paper is the examination of how a form of tourism – event tourism- can affect rural development. How much does one rural event affect host communities? Can a small-scale event which takes place in a rural environment play significant role to the socio-economic development of the region?

This paper reports on research related to festivals' contribution to the development of cultural tourism. Festivals attract tourists to local community events in order to promote enriching exchanges between tourists and residents.

This study will focus on the residents of the municipalities of Sombor and Apatin and measure their perception of festivals. The reason for studying perception of residents and not other stakeholders (such as, for example, businesses, politicians, pressure groups) in this study is rooted in the fact that residents are considered to play vital role in overall tourism development in the area and, in particular, in acceptance or rejection of an event based on their perceptions and attitudes towards it.



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Figure 1: National costume of Bačka



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Figure 2: Sombor stew festival, Vojvodina Province, Serbia.

## 2 Literature review

The statement that tourism can lead to regional development has been well-documented by various researchers. Tourism has a multidimensional affection on the host destination. The direct and indirect benefits of tourism combine to create an extensive list of opportunities. In

both developed and developing countries, tourism is a mean of raising the economic activity of regions (Mangion and McNabb 2005; Skoultsous and Tsartas 2009; Pivac et al. 2011). Furthermore, it is widely perceived as a potential economic base, providing elements that may improve quality of life and has various social and environmental impacts (Andereck et al. 2005; Todorović and Bjeljac 2009). Tourism is an economic sector able to offer a significant contribution to the economic growth of a region and to the labour market and produces jobs directly and indirectly through the supply of goods and the necessary services for tourist activities. Moreover, tourism produces social benefits to the region (i.e. development of small and medium enterprises, creation of new job, improvement of infrastructure etc.). On cultural side, tourism is considered an element of community enrichment, thanks to the meeting of different cultures (Pivac et al. 2011; Blešić et al. 2013).

According to Lee et al. (2004) on a global scale festivals and events with a strong cultural component are substantially increasing in numbers. In addition to enhancing local pride in culture, these events also expose indigenous minorities and an increasing number of international visitors to new peoples and their customs as well as, other purposes including contributing to the local economy, and providing recreation opportunities (Long and Perdue 1990). Getz (1991) recognizes festivals and events as a new wave of alternative tourism which contributes to sustainable development and improves the relationship between host and guest.

Local festivals are increasingly being used as instruments for promoting tourism and boosting the regional economy (Felsenstein and Fleischer 2003). Getz (1993) and Formica and Uysal (1998) showed that the economic gains from festivals can be substantial because festivals provide interesting activities and spending venues for both local people and tourists.

### 3 Methodology

Research of the local population attitudes was conducted on the territory of the municipalities of Sombor and Apatin that belong to the administrative district of the western Bačka. The entire region covers the area of 2,420 km<sup>2</sup>, out of which 1,178 km<sup>2</sup> belong to the municipality of Sombor and 333 km<sup>2</sup> to the municipality of Apatin. The municipality of Sombor comprises of 16 settlements and the municipality of Apatin of 5 settlements (Internet 1; Internet 2). Although the area is characterized by depopulation and the aging of the population (Stojanović et al. 2014), this is a multiethnic area.

What makes this whole region a multiethnic one is the fact that there are 24 nationalities inhabiting it. The most numerous are: Serbs, Hungarians, Yugoslavs, Croats, Montenegrins, Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Poles, Germans, Albanians, Turkish, Czechs, and Slovaks. Melting point of different cultures, religions, nationalities and rural festivities are the base of anthropogenic rural tourism attractions in Vojvodina Province (Dragičević et al. 2013).

10 different events from the territories of the municipalities of Sombor and Apatin were included in the research: Sombor stew festival, Ravangrad wine fest, Street of old crafts, Horse carriage festival, Bodrog fest, Miholjdan meetings, Bunjevci festival of wheat harvesting (Sombor), Apatin fishermen's night, Gypsy night, and Grape harvesting festival in Sonta (Apatin). All these events represent the culture, tradition, folklore and gastronomy of the nations that inhabit this region.

The questionnaire used in this research was based on the Delamere scale (Delamere et al. 2001), which was modified and shortened for the purposes of a more efficient interviewing. The questionnaire used in this research consists of two parts (Internet 3). The first part of the questionnaire includes demographic questions while the second part of the questionnaire consists of 21 questions aimed at measuring attitudes local population has toward events on the territory of the municipalities of Sombor and Apatin. Attributes were measured on a five-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The interviewing was conducted in the municipalities of Sombor and Apatin between April and June 2012. There were seven interviewers. In total, 300 questionnaires were distributed and 212 (71%) usable questionnaires were obtained.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Characteristics of respondents

The sample included 105 (49.5%) males and 107 (50.5%) females among the respondents. The main age group was under 21 years of age and represented 30.7% of the total group of respondents. The next biggest group was the group between 31 and 40 years of age, thus making 23.1% of the whole sample. Most of the respondents (59%) had completed secondary education. Regarding their occupation, the majority of respondents are either employed (63.2%) or students (33.5%). 54% of respondents come from the municipality of Sombor, out of which 54% come from the city of Sombor and other 46% from villages that belong to the municipality of Sombor (Bezdan, Backi Monostor, Stapar, Telecka, Kljajicevo). The other 46% of the respondents come from the municipality of Apatin, out of which 60% come from the town of Apatin and other 40% from surrounding villages (Sonta, Prigrevica, Kupusina, Svilojevo). The majority of respondents are of Serbian nationality (67.9%), followed by those of Croatian nationality (17.9%). Respondents of other nationalities make 14.2% of the sample.

### 4.2 Factor analysis

The attribute importance data were factor analyzed using the principal component method and varimax rotation procedure in order to extract the sub-dimensions of those attributes. In this study, all factors with eigenvalue greater than 1 and with factor loadings more than 0.5 were retained.

The results of the factor analysis, which suggested a five-factor solution, included 21 attributes and explained 65.43% of the variance. The Kaiser – Meyer – Olkin (KMO) overall measure of sampling adequacy was 0.74 which was middling (Kaiser 1974) and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ( $p = 0.000$ ). Values of Cronbach alpha coefficient for the first four factors are in the domain of high reliability while

Table 1: Respondents' demographic data (n=212).

Variables	Sample size	Percentage	Variables	Sample size	Percentage
<b>Age</b>			<b>Place of residence</b>		
≤ 20	65	30.7	Apatin	58	27.4
21–30	16	7.5	Sonta	13	6.1
31–40	49	23.1	Prigrevica	11	5.2
41–50	43	20.3	Kupusina	4	1.9
51–60	33	15.6	Svilojevo	11	5.2
61 ≥	6	2.8	Sombor	62	29.2
<b>Gender</b>			Bezdan	14	6.6
Male	105	49.5	Backi Monostor	19	9.0
Female	107	50.5	Stapar	6	2.8
<b>Education</b>			Telecka	13	6.1
primary education	5	2.4	Kijajicevo	1	0.5
secondary education	125	59.0	<b>Nationality</b>		
higher education	6	2.8	Serbian	144	67.9
Master's degree	74	34.9	Croatian	38	17.9
Doctor's degree	2	0.9	Hungarian	7	3.3
<b>Occupation</b>			Romanian	6	2.8
student	71	33.5	Roma	11	5.2
employed	134	63.2	Montenegrin	1	0.5
retired	1	0.5	Slovak	1	0.5
unemployed	6	2.8	Gorani people	4	1.9

Table 2: Results of factor analysis.

Extracted factors	Items	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained	Cronbach's $\alpha$
F1	Event should be held on a suitable location with secured parking space.	0.763	5.644	17.003	0.892
	Event should be held without negative ecological influence.	0.805			
	Safety of visitors during the event is on high level.	0.872			
	Prices of product and services are affordable (food, beverages, souvenirs).	0.845			
	Quality of products and services is exceptional (food, beverages, souvenirs).	0.823			
F2	Events make the number of tourists grow.	0.711	3.205	13.657	0.808
	Events enable local community to make extra incomes.	0.850			
	Events have a positive economic influence.	0.830			
	Events help improve the quality of life in the area.	0.611			
F3	Event should be organized by local authority (place of the organization of an event).	0.583	1.896	13.189	0.773
	Event should be organized by professional societies.	0.659			
	Event enables exchange of ideas among ethnic groups in the community.	0.711			
	Events contribute to the feeling of belonging.	0.726			
	Events have a great influence on the improvement of human relationships in local community.	0.630			
	Events positively influence cooperation between people.	0.537			
F4	Events should be entertaining.	0.9	1.675	12.430	0.885
	Performance of famous musicians/singers is necessary.	0.822			
	Event should also have accompanying programs (education, competitions, and workshops).	0.797			
F5	Event should be promoted among different structures of potential visitors.	0.693	1.342	9.151	0.682
	Event should be promoted in neighboring countries.	0.789			
	Brochures promoting the exhibitors should be handed at the event.	0.728			

the fifth factor of Cronbach alpha coefficient is in the domain of acceptable reliability (Lehman et al 2005). This demonstrates that the scales of the formal questionnaire have considerable reliability (Nunnally 1978). Table 2 shows the results of the factor analysis.

The first factor was labeled »Services«. This factor explained 17.003% of the total variance with a reliability coefficient of 0.892. The second factor was »Economic importance« explaining 13.657% of the total variance with a reliability coefficient of 0.808. The third factor was labeled »Socialization« and explained 13.189% of the variance with a reliability coefficient of 0.773. The fourth factor, labeled »Entertainment« accounted for 12.430% of the variance with a reliability coefficient of 0.885. The fifth, »Promotion« explained 9.151 % of the total variance, indicating a reliability coefficient of 0.682.

Table 3: Mean ratings of factors and items.

Selected factors and items	Mean	Std. Dev.
<b>F1 – Services</b>	<b>4.0170</b>	<b>0.87584</b>
Event should be held on a suitable location with secured parking space.	4.1038	0.98259
Event should be held without negative ecological influence.	4.2264	0.97147
Safety of visitors during the event is on a high level.	4.0000	1.08850
Prices of product and services are affordable (food, beverages, souvenirs).	3.7877	1.15494
Quality of products and services is exceptional (food, beverages, souvenirs).	3.9670	1.03211
<b>F2 – Economic importance</b>	<b>4.5483</b>	<b>0.55049</b>
Events make the number of tourists grow.	4.5943	0.67842
Events enable local community to make extra incomes.	4.5330	0.68418
Events have a positive economic influence.	4.6745	0.62546
Events help improve the quality of life in the area.	4.3915	0.76816
<b>F3 – Socialization</b>	<b>4.3546</b>	<b>0.55947</b>
Events enable making business connections.	4.3066	0.89514
Events are places where people relax and reveal everyday stress.	4.0236	0.90518
Events enable exchange of ideas among ethnic groups in the community.	4.3302	0.94615
Events contribute to the feeling of belonging.	4.3302	0.77547
Events have a great influence on the improvement of human relationships in local community.	4.6462	0.63271
Events positively influence cooperation between people.	4.4906	0.69861
<b>F4 – Entertainment</b>	<b>4.1824</b>	<b>0.85201</b>
Events should be entertaining.	4.3396	0.98218
Performance of famous musicians/singers is necessary.	3.9245	0.95091
Event should also have accompanying programs (education, competitions, and workshops).	4.2830	0.90029
<b>F5 – Promotion</b>	<b>4.2028</b>	<b>0.65250</b>
Event should be promoted among different structures of potential visitors.	4.0755	0.86203
Event should be promoted in neighboring countries.	4.3019	0.83943
Brochures promoting the exhibitors should be handed at the event.	4.2311	0.80188

From the results shown in Table 3 we can conclude that the respondents consider the economic factor as the most important one, i.e. possibility to make extra incomes and increase the living standard in the community. It is followed by the third factor »Socialization« which reflects the importance of events for the improvement of human relationships and connections between people. The least important to the respondents are those questions connected to the factor »Services«, followed by questions referring to the factors of »Entertainment« and »Promotion«. Less favoured rural areas in Serbia rely on traditional economic activities as the main source of income and jobs. At the same time they possess unique cultural values which are not recognised as a development factor and consequently not properly managed. The main objective therefore should be to improve the management of cultural values in rural areas in order to contribute to economic and social development of less favoured rural areas.

## 5 Discussion

The rural areas in the municipalities of Sombor and Apatin (19 villages) have been neglected over the decades, especially in the context of sustainable tourism development (refers to any form of tourism). Moreover, development of rural tourism in multiethnic regions of Sombor and Apatin has been so far carried out

by individuals (local enthusiasts) who lack adequate training. Being aware of severe negative impacts of living in the past twenty years, respondents consider economic factors as very important. They believe that good organization of one event makes number of tourists grow, enables extra incomes for local community, has a positive economic influence in general and improves the quality of life in the micro area. This consequently shall cause an increase in multiplier effects, such are: higher average wages per person, greater employment opportunities, better purchasing power, greater revenues etc.

The second most important factor for them is socialization. Inhabitants of this region are people who like to socialize, cooperate and collaborate among themselves and with others outside their municipalities. They easily express empathy towards other people and they are highly aware of the importance of environmental protection. Their opinion is that events enable making business connections and are places where people can relax and reveal everyday stress. Moreover, events enable exchange of ideas among ethnic groups in the community and contribute to the feeling of belonging. Also, events have a great influence on the improvement of human relationships in local communities and positively influence cooperation between people.

The least important factors for them are entertainment and promotion. According to the terms of reference of the international project SY\_CULTour: Synergy of culture and tourism: utilisation of cultural potentials in less favoured rural regions, some of the goals that should be met by the end of the project are (Project documentation SY\_CULTour, 2011–2014):

- better promotion of cultural heritage / tourist cultural route
- better employment opportunities for local people in the sector of tourism and on local farms
- preservation of tradition, traditional crafts and handicrafts
- preservation and presentation of un(der)used cultural value

## 6 Conclusion

The measurement of resident attitudes toward the social impacts of community festivals is of critical importance for both communities and for festival organizers. As community leaders and festival organizers become more conscious of the needs and priorities of the community, they can better respond to community con-



Figure 3: Bodrog fest – doll in Šokci national costume.

cerns and work together to maintain an appropriate balance between the social benefits and social costs that resulting from community festivals (Delamere et al. 2001). The findings of the study contribute to deeper understanding of resident attitudes toward the social impacts of community festivals and can be utilized by the organizers to increase the social benefits generated by the festival and reduce its negative social impacts. This study makes a significant contribution in the generation of items, testing of items, and the understanding of residents' attitudes toward social and economic impacts of community festivals. Residents and organizers both have a stake in maximizing social benefits and minimizing social costs that accrue from the festival. Economic impacts need to be taken into more serious consideration by the community and by festival organizers if the legacies of hosting the festival are to be viewed more positively by a greater portion of the residents of the community (Hall and Hodges 1996). This, in turn, will help permit festivals to be considered as based on their total contribution to the quality of life in Sombor and Apatin municipalities.

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