

Event tourism development study

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1. INTRODUCTION

Within the programme of cross-border cooperation called Interreg - IPA CBC Croatia - Serbia 2014 – 2020, the Provincial Secretariat for Regional Development, Interregional Cooperation and Local Self-Government acts as the project partner from Serbia, and in this capacity it implements some activities of the project entitled “Central Danube Tour”. The project leader is the Regional Development Agency of Slavonia and Baranja, and the project partners are the Osijek-Baranja County, The Town of Ilok, the Danube Competence Center and the Provincial Secretariat for Regional Development, Interregional Cooperation and Local Self-Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The aim of the project is supporting the development of tourism in trans-border regions by improving the quality and diversity of the tourist offer through creation and promotion of a common trans-boundary tourist destination of the Central Danube basin as well as the creation of new trans-boundary thematic routes, networking, enhancement of the participants’ knowledge and capacities, and the valorization of the tourist potential of the trans-boundary region. The project was initiated on July 15th 2017 and has been intended to last for 20 months. The project has been carried out in the Osijek-Baranja County and the Vukovar-Srijem County as well as the areas of the South Bačka District, the North Bačka District, the West Bačka District and the Srem District.

1.1. Starting premises

It has been the responsibility of Educons University to carry out a study of tourist events in the area of the Vojvodina Danube basin and the trans-boundary destinations of the Central Danube basin (hereinafter: the Study) within the “Central Danube Tour” project. The aim of the Study is to research potentials for organizing manifestations in the region outlined in the project. The study anticipates an inventory of the existing manifestations in the Vojvodina Danube basin, an expert evaluation of their significance, i.e. its tourism benefits, proposing potential niches for new, inventive manifestations, as well as several key manifestations for the region of Central Danube. The analysis and estimates of the existing manifestations’ success should be based on the following factors:

- Authenticity of the manifestation (traditional, original, recognizable, reputation-boosting)
- Content
- Number of exhibitors or performers
- Number of visitors and revenues
- Media interest and communication
- Accessibility of the location

1.1.1. Positioning and image of events and manifestations

The benefit of manifestations is in connecting individuals in a different setting. They present an opportunity for the population of a region to get together and socialize all year round. Due to their diversity and dynamics, they have grown in popularity as tourist attractions for over a million international visitors a year. In addition, organized events typically feature in people's memory as unique experiences of each visitor¹.

From a visitor's point of view, manifestations may extend the tourist season; they may extend the peak season or start a new tourist season in a community. Many current festivals have come into existence with a view to fostering tourism and improving the positioning and promotion of particular destinations. Even those which had an alternative original objective, eventually gained value in the tourism sector. Festivals strengthen the appeal of a destination and bring more visitors with special interests for local produces events, cultural heritage or tradition, celebrated by a particular festival. Owing to tourism, some previously neglected festival are being recovered. It is said that festivals are windows into the world of a community. It is the site of gathering of many people – tourists and local population. The local population, as hosts, may contribute significantly to the sustainable development with organizing festivals that solidify its social cohesion and cultural profile (foster interaction and connectivity among people), improve the local image and self-confidence and initiate partnerships between the public and the private sector. On the other hand, members of the local community may accept certain aspects of modern life thanks to interactive communication with the visitors. Visitors from other countries bring into the recipient area cultural changes and participate in the exchange of cultural advantages with the local population. By analyzing this form of tourism, it is revealed that with careful planning, organization, management and marketing of events, a manifestation may be improved, resulting in higher economic value and higher ratings of the destination on the tourist market. It is a consequence of the affinities of modern tourists who seek to get to know new destinations though culture, fun and experiences.²

The drive for economic growth of a state, region or a destination is a common cause for organizing new manifestation that will have an immediate effect on economic growth and infrastructure, and which may aid in the redevelopment of neglected city areas or villages, while by attracting tourists they also influence the improvement of the service sector, bringing revenues to the local economy. Apart from economic reasons, other motives include the advancement of culture, as manifestations are deemed valuable for the strategies of cultural revival and cultural presentation. Such an example from the area of urban development is "European Cultural Capitals" within which the Romanian

¹ Read more in: *Diferenciranje kulturnih manifestacija u cilju razvoja kulturnog turizma u Vojvodini*, Fakultet za sport i turizam, Novi Sad, 2014.

² Jovanović B.: *Tematski turizam*, Univerzitet Singidunum, Beograd, 2013.

town of Sibiu saw economic flourishing. Also, in South Korea, several cities known for industry have within a short time span been converted into “cities of culture”. This is where the important function of manifestations is reflected in the promotion of the thus far little known cities/destinations, as tourist and festival centres.

The significance of manifestations may be seen through the prism of advancing cultural, economic and social potential of a region. The cultural value is manifested in guarding and promoting traditions and cultural heritage, the social value in the promotion of socialization as well as in attracting national and international visitors. The economic value is manifested in enhancing revenues and the creation of new possibilities for the valorization of overall potentials. Ultimately, manifestations are a means for positioning and promotion of destinations, regions and states, i.e. of their natural assets and their material and cultural heritage.³

Manifestations are thus potential pivots of numerous advantages for a community, economic, political and socio-cultural. They may contribute to marketing of the destination aimed at building a positive place image; they may attract public interest, and investors and sponsors, which, in the long run, improve the economic standards of the region that hosts the event. Manifestations may also political consciousness of participants, social cohesion, ameliorate social stratification and aid in achieving unity in crisis situations by strengthening the sense of identity. They also partake in the image building and a recognizable identity of a locality, they restore traditions in some cases, while influence the acceptance of new ideas, lifestyles and attitudes in others, therefore opening up social and cultural perspectives of all community members.⁴

1.2. Analysis of the tourist destination *Central Danube Route – Vojvodina Region* according to the product “events”

In contemporary society, events have a distinctive social function, bearing in mind the social, cultural, economic and other needs of the public. The effect of events is best reflected in the long-term benefits, derived from their successful staging. From the perspective of modern events industry (especially mega and so-called hallmark events), the immense impact on the environment may be perceived. This impact is seen in the development of infrastructure, employment, higher GDP, social interaction, and cultural and tourist affirmation.

³ Jovanović B.: *Tematski turizam*, Univerzitet Singidunum, Beograd, 2013.

⁴ Further reading: *Diferenciranje kulturnih manifestacija u cilju razvoja kulturnog turizma u Vojvodini*, Fakultet za sport i turizam, Novi Sad, 2014.

Concerts, exhibits, carnivals, festivals, sports events, film events, theatre productions, etc, today give us an answer to the requirements of the public to spending quality leisure time. These events instigate social interaction and are rarely instrumental in creating political reality (meetings, congresses, conventions, etc.) and creating prerequisites for animating the society in reaching general social objectives. They often serve as a motive for embarking on a tourist trip and staying at the entertainment, music, sports or commercial events' destination for the time of its duration.

Attractive events enhance the overall attractiveness of the destination. The organization of events gives a comparative advantage to certain destinations, especially given the tendency of modern tourism that goes beyond the mere provision of services of accommodation and food. The organization of events is a good answer to characteristic seasonal fluctuations of the tourist demand. Seminars, congresses, festivals, carnivals, symposiums, contests, etc. all present an effective method of keeping the tourist demand on a satisfactory level even out of season.

In Vojvodina, more than 1.000 manifestations are held, varying in topic and relevance. Most manifestations are food-related, but may be classed as events of local relevance. On the territory covered by the project, the once that stand out are "Danube Pots" (held in Apatin, Sombor, Bačka Palanke, Novi Sad, Sremski Karlovci), "Kulen Fest" (Bački Petrovac), "Bean Soup Festival" (Tavankut, Temerin), "Cabbage fest" (Futog-Novı Sad), "Watermelon Fest" (Silbaš-Bačka Palanka, Rivica-Irig), and others. Manifestation "Tastes of Vojvodina" is newer in origin. It is held in September in Novi Sad, already in its first year, it has achieved a regional status. The concept is to present gastronomy specialities from around Vojvodina with an emphasis on traditional cuisine. Given the number of entries and visitors and other parameters, it may be said that already in its first year, the manifestation has acquired a regional status.

The programme of the manifestation is largely related to wine products. The main wine-related manifestations in the Central Danube Tour (hereafter: CDT) are "Interfest" in Novi Sad, "Grape Harvesting Festival" (Sremski Karlovci), "Vineyard Keepers' Day" (Irig), "Wine Festival" (Sombor), "Grape Harvesting Days" (Palić-Subotica), "Palić Wine Festivities" (Palić-Subotica), and others. Most manifestations of this type still have a local or a regional character. From manifestations that are primarily cultural, i.e. dedicated to tradition, the oldest one is "Dižajnica" held each August to mark the end of the harvesting season.

The highest-ranking festival in Serbia is the music festival “Exit” which takes place on the Petrovaradin Fortress in Novi Sad, Vojvodina. Exit was awarded the titles “2nd best European festival” in the Netherlands in 2014, voted the best European festival by voters from the UK in 2007, proclaimed one of the best European festivals at the European festival awards in 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2014, among other accolades. Since 2014, Exit fest is extended to Montenegro, and since 2017, also to Croatia, and it is visited by over 3 million people annually.

2. General Overview of the Tourist Manifestations Offer

2.1. An inventory of existing manifestations

According to surveys by the National Tourism Organization of Serbia, manifestations top the charts as prime motives for visits from abroad. This is the reason behind their prominent position in the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, as well as for it being a comparative advantage of the national tourist industry.

Manifestations are at once a part of indigenous tradition and an attraction for international tourists. A large number of manifestations are held in Serbia yearly. According to the events calendar and the registry of the Tourist Organization of Serbia, 2.500 manifestations take place each year. Informally, this number is exceeded. Relative to the population number, our country is one of the world leaders in the number of manifestations organized. Majority of the manifestations are tradition-based and their particularity is mirrored in their diversity and regional distribution. Hence, various manifestations are held in Serbia all year round. They form a part of the lives of successive generations and an expression of local authenticity, hospitality and a sense of community. In the more passive parts of the country, manifestations are rare opportunities for people of the area to gather, get to know each other, have fun, socialize and do business.⁵

Organized events are one of the main factors for attracting international tourists to Serbia (after business, as number one reason). Annual manifestations in Serbia attract hundreds of thousands of international tourists, with a rising tendency, which results in significant revenues from tourism. Additionally, the preparation of diverse offer for tourists should enable the tourists to visit other parts of the country beyond the target manifestation. However, although manifestations present the main tourist resource in Serbia, they are not utilized to their full capacity, neither there are enough organizational and promotional activities related to them. Despite this, the potential, together with the achieved results of manifestations, are significant. The root of this is in the

⁵ Jovanović B.: *Tematski turizam*, Univerzitet Singidunum, Beograd, 2013.

manifestations themselves – Universiad, along with the traditional annual festival Guča, Exit and the Belgrade Beer Fest. Serbia's proximity to EU countries makes possible short weekend trips. Manifestations in Serbia are gaining in popularity and they attract an increasing number of tourists, promoting a much more positive image of the country than it had in the previous period.⁶

It is important to give credit to food and drinks festival which are recognizable, popular manifestations across the country. Also, gastro festivals attract many visitors (grill fests, sausage fests, bacon fests, prosciutto fests, etc.). Given that food (food and agricultural industry) is the resource of Serbia that is very important, and that gastronomy is one of the primary motives of tourist satisfaction, these manifestations should be paid particular attention.

Within the project Differentiation of Cultural Manifestations with the Aim of Fostering Tourism in Vojvodina⁷, 203 cultural manifestations have been mapped, whereas 160 of them have an underdeveloped tourist potential.

This study shows that among art-related manifestations, the most numerous are music events (50), followed by events in the area of visual arts and architecture (20), literary manifestations (9), film, photography and video manifestations (7). On the other hand, among the cultural manifestations in the broader sense, the most numerous are those in the area of gastronomy and oenology (38), ethnic creativity events and ethnic customs (34), and mixed type events, often including cultural programme (30).

Cultural manifestations in Vojvodina are in this study classified based on their size. Out of the mapped manifestations, the majority are small-scale manifestations (129), medium scale come next (41), whereas large-scale manifestations are the fewest (33), bearing in mind the funds invested in organization, the revenue, the visitor count, and the proportion of national to international tourists. It was concluded that out of the 129 small. Scale manifestations, almost three thirds (82) fall into the category of cultural manifestations in the anthropological sense. Also, just over the remaining third (47) are cultural manifestations in the narrow, artistic sense. Additionally, only 8 of them (6.2%) attract a particular group of tourists, while 121 (93.8%) are characterized by an underdeveloped tourist potential. These results point to a clear trend in Vojvodina that with the rise in the number of manifestations, cultural manifestations in the narrow sense take the lead and that it is them that harness significant tourist interest. This also indicates that, although the development of tourism potentials of all cultural manifestations may yield contributions to their sustainability and advancement, an

⁶ Jovanović B.: *Tematski turizam*, Univerzitet Singidunum, Beograd, 2013.

⁷ Faculty for Sports and Tourism, Novi Sad, 2014.

urgent task is to develop the potential of small-size manifestations in Vojvodina and their shaping into tourist products.

Cultural manifestation mapped in Vojvodina in this study take place in 73 different locations, most in Novi Sad (44, but 49 in the greater Novi Sad urban area, equal to 24.1% of all events), followed by Subotica (7, with 16 in the Subotica greater area, or 7.9%), in Pančevo (7, but 10 including surrounding locations, or 4.9%). Then follow Zrenjanin (6), Sombor (5), and Vršac (6). What may be observed is that the greater Novi Sad area holds more manifestations than the other five combined. The tendency of centralization for cultural manifestations with a tourist potential is even more obvious if we look at the distribution of events according to counties. No fewer than 47% of mapped manifestations are held in the South Bačka County (the centre of which is Novi Sad). The South Banat County is also somewhat prominent (with a centre in Pančevo), whereas other counties host a disproportionately lower number of events. The South Banat County hosts more than half of small-scale cultural events (51.1%), as well as 44% of mid-size manifestations and almost two thirds of great artistic manifestations (63.6%). Small art and culture manifestations in the narrow sense are also represented in the South Banat County, 17% (with Pančevo as the centre), in the Middle Banat County (Zrenjanin is the centre). A somewhat higher number of mid-size events takes place in the South Banat County (16%), and in the Western Banat County (with Sombor as the centre – 12%), while large-scale art and culture manifestations are also held in the Northern Bačka County (Subotica is the centre), namely, 13.6%.

One of the classifying criteria of manifestations is into local, regional, national and international. Among the mapped events in Vojvodina, the largest number belongs to the local category (113), but a significant number of them (41) are relevant for entire Vojvodina, or are national events, while 25 belong to the international manifestations category.

The majority is organized by local authorities. Most of these organizers come from the civil sector (culture and arts societies, professional associations of artists, non-government organizations) as well as cultural, educational and similar institutions of the local authorities. A much smaller number of manifestations is organized by local tourist organizations or business companies, either national or international. This is a clear indicator in the organization of these events that they are primarily aimed at the local public and are largely non-commercial.⁸

⁸ Diferenciranje kulturnih manifestacija u cilju razvoja kulturnog turizma u Vojvodini, Fakultet za sport i turizam, Novi Sad, 2014.

2.1.1. Organization and management of manifestations

Apart from the economic and promotional role, manifestations play an important role in the wider society, as much for the local citizenship as for the visitors. With the promotion of local culture and authenticity of a region, the socialization becomes the primary function of such events. It is important that the organizer has these parameters in mind in managing manifestations, as without them, the events lose their character and uniqueness, hence also their objective and value. Over-commercialization is one of the dangers for the functioning of manifestations. There should be a balance between different functions of organized events, with an awareness that the tourists' motivation lies in new and authentic experiences.

Organization of manifestations is a complex process that entails adequate resources, both material and technical, as well as the right venue and time. Event management requires professionals with experience in this multi-layered task, preferably multidisciplinary professional teams that work toward the implementation of important projects.

The standards of organizing manifestations in developed countries are at a high level, and their citizens, who are well-travelled, are accustomed to high standards of organization. Serbia's largest manifestations are being improved each year to approximate higher quality standard. However, standards need to be established which would define a whole array of parameters included in event planning which would result in a positive visitor feedback concerning the programme and the accompanying elements of a manifestation. This primarily concerns an improvement of infrastructure (roads, accommodation capacities, venues, sound and lighting, etc.)⁹.

Apart from infrastructure, safety is another important issue (personal safety, as well as the safety of property), and mobile the state of mobile sanitary services is the third. Adequate sanitary units are necessary given that manifestations gather large numbers of people. Adequacy does not only concern hygiene standards, but also health safety, especially in times of epidemics.

It is important that the organizers of manifestations, beside the needs of visitors, take heed of the needs of the local community. It is essential that the events are embraced by the local public as a basis for their continuation and success, positive communication and socialization being one of the pillars of any manifestation.

A good organizational model is of highest importance for managing and organizing manifestations. Current global practice points to a conclusion that there is a need for a special team of professionals for conducting research, promotion and organization of

⁹ Jovanović B.: *Tematski turizam*, Univerzitet Singidunum, Beograd, 2013.

manifestations, as well as for coordinating activities with the relevant institutions and the private sector. Connecting the private and the public sector is a widely accepted model and it is an efficient instrument for rejuvenation of the tourist industry.

Event management is in its early stages in Serbia. Two world-renown festivals (Exit and Guča) are results of individual efforts, which have, with the help of sponsors and marketing, managed to in a short time span acquire the status of events of national importance and the support of the state. In order for a larger number of events to acquire this status, domestic tourist representatives have before them the task of raising the standards of manifestations and promoting manifestations through planned and defined marketing strategies. National manifestation offer is characterized by great variety and there are significant potentials for their development, primarily for athletic events, but also those revolving around food and drink, and ethnic festivals that pose an opportunity for promoting the cultural specificities of different regions.¹⁰ When it comes to small-scale events and cultural manifestations in the anthropological sense, the tourists (especially from overseas) expect to get involved in them, to learn the local customs, such as learning to cook local dishes or participate in ethnic dances. This is a potential method for advancing these manifestations.

It is also important to emphasize the networking of manifestations. Organizers of nearly three quarters of manifestations in Vojvodina approach this task independently, whereas only 3% of them are networked. Based on available data is estimated that at least one fifth of them have a clear potential and need for networking. Networking, surely, is not self-sufficient, but would serve the purpose of bringing benefits to the organizers, such as cutting costs, joining resources, joint marketing activities, and lastly, more tourists.

Especially in the case of smaller cultural manifestations (grape harvests, sausage fests, bacon fests, bean fests, pita fests, etc.), it is irrational for them to be held completely separately, in terms of dates and locations, so that a potential visitor interested for more than one event may not be able to visit them, and may even be discouraged from embarking on a trip for a single-themed day event. It is probable that the austerity policy on the state, provincial and local level will force the organizers to start to form alliances, whereby it is desirable that their potentials are, in cooperation with tourist organizations and agencies, utilized as soon as possible.¹¹

¹⁰ Diferenciranje kulturnih manifestacija u cilju razvoja kulturnog turizma u Vojvodini, Fakultet za sport i turizam, Novi Sad, 2014

¹¹ Diferenciranje kulturnih manifestacija u cilju razvoja kulturnog turizma u Vojvodini, Fakultet za sport i turizam, Novi Sad, 2014

Since one of the strategic goals of the Tourism Development Programme of AP Vojvodina is to improve and internationalize existing events (modelled on of Exit Festival), as well as to set in motion several new international events, their planning should be approached professionally. The events should be devised according to regional appeal and potential and special attention should be paid to those events with the highest chances of attracting out-of-province visitors, thus generating longer stays.¹²

Events-related open questions:¹³

- The impact of the festival on the local community (smaller events tend to engage local population, but also produce less income).
- Question of authenticity and commodification of local cultures (the possibility of trivializing a culture).
- Festival ownership and management (public or private sector).
- Continued financing (sponsorship), especially with smaller and local festivals.
- Purpose, i.e. the audience (local or tourist, which are not always compatible).
- The danger of ethnic minority festivals being overtaken by individuals outside these groups with no understanding for their needs.
- Problems with sustainability of tourism at a given location (due to crowds, traffic congestion, noise, waste, etc.).

3. Analysis and Success Estimates for Existing Events/Manifestations

3.1. Establishing analysis criteria

According to the size and relevance (market share, quality, impact on the destination's image, support of the local community, economic advantage, sustainability, etc.)¹⁴:

- "Mega event" is a manifestation which attracts high numbers of tourists, half to one million, such as the Olympics, and world or European championships in football, basketball, and the like.
- "Hallmark event" is a significant event held annually or periodically, with the purpose of building a positive image of a destination, its tourist appeal and economic success. The name impels that the event has become the staple or hallmark of the destination (such are Venice carnival or Rio de Janeiro Carnival)
- "Local event" is a manifestation which is smaller in size, shorter in duration, and is held more often, focusing on the lifestyle of the local community (local arts and crafts).

¹² Program razvoja turizma Autonomne Pokrajine Vojvodine za period od 2018. do 2022. godine

¹³ Jovanović B.: *Tematski turizam*, Univerzitet Singidunum, Beograd, 2013.

¹⁴ Further reading: Rabotić B. (2013): *Selektivni oblici turizma*, Visoka turistička škola strukovnih studija, Beograd

Getz (2008) gives a typology of the main categories of planned events based on their format, i.e. purpose and programme. Some are public manifestations, such as local community festivals, which are intended to foster local pride and community cohesion. Other purposes might be competitions, festivities and celebrations, trade and socialization, and they often require special venues, such as congress or sports halls. It should be noted that political and private events in most cases do not belong in the category of manifestation-based tourism.

The main event is the primary programme which is the cause of the manifestation, based on which we may differentiate between cultural (arts and culture and artistic), sports, religious, industrial, entertainment-based and professional and scientific manifestations.

Events may therefore take different shapes, and in most cases fall into one of these types:

- carnivals (Venice, Rio de Janeiro)
- art festivals (theatre, folklore, film, ballet)
- music festivals (opera, pop-rock, traditional music)
- food and drinks festivals (“Oktoberfest” in Munich“, wine festivals)
- religious festivities and processions
- circuses, travelling or permanent
- sports events(competitions, tournaments, regattas)
- cultural festivals
- political and state festivals
- business and economy festivals (meetings, conferences, business fairs)
- educational and scientific (seminars counselling, congresses)

One of the criteria is the number of years a manifestation is being held, while those considered traditional have a track record of at least five consecutive organizations, with a specific date and location.

The criterion of ranking takes into account the geographical origin, number of visitors, relevance, funds, manifestation’s impact, (inter)national character of the participants and the content of the programme. According to this, manifestations may be classed as local, regional, national and international.

One other defining criterion is the location of manifestations, it indicates the event’s connection to anthrop-geographical and natural resources and it shows the distance of the location from the nearby tourist attractions. On the other hand, the time and duration of the event are important because of the connection between event planning and the

tourists' typical days off work. The criterion of the number of visitors and participants shows the scale of the event and the extent to which its programme is communicated.

On the other hand, the number of accompanying manifestations indicates the variety and appeal of the programme that puts the manifestation on the tourist map. In order to establish the goal of an event, one of the criteria that appears is the type of the organizer, which may be the local council, non-government or professional organizations, cultural or sports institutions, companies, etc.¹⁵

3.2. Key deficiencies of manifestations' programmes and steps toward improvement

Key problems and setbacks which the organizers of manifestations face in Vojvodina have been analyzed as part of the project Differentiation of Cultural Manifestations with the Aim of Fostering Tourism in Vojvodina (Faculty for Sports and Tourism, Novi Sad, 2014). The issues are classed in three main groups. The first group comprises strategic problems, i.e. those to do with (non)existence of a strategic approach and cultural tourism policy in Serbia. The second group comprises problems emanating from the lack of the tourist dimension in planning and implementing events. i.e. the lack of activities that tailor the event according to the demands of the tourist market. The third group consist of problems of competency and professional qualifications of the organizers and managers of the event, long-term planning and forming partnerships, as well as creating networks with other relevant subjects in the field.

Strategy-related problems are¹⁶:

- Lack of strategy or implementation of strategies for the development of culture and;
- Lack of categorization and certification of manifestations;
- Lack of long-term financing of manifestations;
- Lack of a decision-making policy concerning project proposals (often under the influence of ruling parties and in the auspices of incompetent committees);
- Lack of partnerships between the public and the private sectors in organizing cultural manifestations;

¹⁵ Diferenciranje kulturnih manifestacija u cilju razvoja kulturnog turizma u Vojvodini, Fakultet za sport i turizam, Novi Sad, 2014

¹⁶ Diferenciranje kulturnih manifestacija u cilju razvoja kulturnog turizma u Vojvodini, Fakultet za sport i turizam, Novi Sad, 2014

- Lack of a comprehensive and up-to-date calendar of events for the year ahead;
- Frequent changes in the events calendar and overlap of dates and times;
- Lack of information about the cultural manifestations among the public, national and international likewise.

Organizers of certain manifestations are, due to these issues forced to alter the date, duration or content of the programme, venue or some other key component of the production. This often results in unforeseen changes to the events calendar and produces further problems related to number of visitors and the organization of their trip. It is the lack of a detailed calendar that poses particular obstacles for the strategy of cultural tourism development. Modern tourists plan their holiday months ahead, and the lack of set event dates aggravates the job of tourist agencies and organizations. It is also not rare that two events with the same or similar topic overlap in dates, competing against each other and dividing the number of visitors, instead of making strategic alliances with the aim of joint promotion and activities. A step ahead would be in networking between the private and public companies and the civil society based on common territory. Another great problem is the lack or unavailability of information about a large number of cultural events. The lack of basic information, such as time, place, organizer, entrance fee, the programme, etc. is observed in many local manifestations, while a certain number of large-scale events also suffer from this flaw, especially when it comes to promotion outside the country.¹⁷

In the study *Differentiation of Cultural Manifestations with the Aim of Fostering Tourism in Vojvodina* it has been pointed out that a negligible number of events offers transportation for visitors, themes tours of the wider area of the destination, organized stays or educational programmes related to the topic and tradition of the event itself, or to the culture of local population. There is also a chronic lack of cooperation between event's organizers and tourist agencies. The primary reason for this seems to be the lack of a fixed events calendar for planned manifestations, which makes it more difficult for tourist agencies to devise programmes with t focus on some of the manifestations. Also, one of the key element lacking partakes to poor communication and no initiative on either side. An important precondition for communication channels to work is meeting between the relevant parties to boost the underdeveloped cooperation, with awareness that this is a missed opportunity for both the agencies and the event's organizers.

¹⁷ Diferenciranje kulturnih manifestacija u cilju razvoja kulturnog turizma u Vojvodini, Fakultet za sport i turizam, Novi Sad, 2014

To these issues, one should add poor infrastructure and transportation links, especially with rural destinations, which is a limiting factor for both national and international visitors. This problem could be turned into an advantage by the local stakeholders working in tourism, services and transportation, by filling the gap and providing their package tours, which may include transportation from other towns, visiting the manifestation, food and perhaps accommodation in rural households

Similarly, a lack has been noted in the proactive approach from other stakeholders, such as accommodation rentals and lodgers for tourists, owners of restaurants, entrepreneurs, transporters, cultural institutions, etc. Their services might become a part of the offer on the tourist market that would make the manifestation central, but not the only motive for the visit. They exhibit passivity with regard to the promotion of events and creation of specific products. For example, it is disheartening that the primary stakeholders such as hotels do not utilize their marketing channels for the promotion of nearby events, failing to see in them a chance to improve their business.¹⁸

In the study *Differentiation of Cultural Manifestations with the Aim of Fostering Tourism in Vojvodina* it has additionally been noted that there is also an issue of the lack of knowledge and skills on the part of the event organizers in Vojvodina in the field of event management and tourist product design. There is also the question of missing links among similar cultural manifestations, the lack of *catering* and *merchandising* programmes and high costs of local produces, as well as inappropriate souvenirs during the event. Under merchandizing we mean any activity which might contribute to the selling of products. The term here applies to the wealth of offer and different methods of product promotion that stimulate the interest of customers, such as free samples, product demonstrations, discounts, special offers, etc.). When it comes to manifestations, merchandizing relates to the variety of souvenirs (t-shirts, hats, key rings, cups, glasses, photographs, postcards, CDs, DVDs, etc.) with the topic of the manifestation or their participants (performers, DJs, actors, etc.).¹⁹

The absence of cooperation between events and tourist sites which might jointly provide an authentic tourist offer is another issue. When visiting a manifestation, the tourists are often uninformed about other attraction in and around the destination of their trip, and hidden gems nearby. The organizers' and local stakeholders' disinterest means that the tourists are often left to their own devices to search for sites of interest, with no information on attractions, amenities and catering facilities. The hospitality industry and commerce present a potential significant source of income for the local community and event organizers, so this segment of the offer deserves more attention. This is especially pertinent for the gastronomy festivals which create an opportunity for

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Diferenciranje kulturnih manifestacija u cilju razvoja kulturnog turizma u Vojvodini, Fakultet za sport i turizam, Novi Sad, 2014

additional profit for local farmers and food traders. However, the road often taken by traders is raising the prices of these produces drastically during the manifestation. This in most cases has a negative effect and it discourages the locals and the tourists from buying, and sometimes from visiting the event itself. The locals are in the position to purchase these produces all year round at more affordable prices, directly from the producers, so the market for them during the manifestation becomes limited to foreign tourists or first-time visitors. If the prices of local craft and gourmet products were lower, this might yield higher visitor and customer numbers. It has been noted that a possible solution to this problem might be standardization of prices with regard to the quality, during the duration of the manifestation.²⁰

4. Proposition of Leading Events/Manifestations for the Given Region (maximum ten events, taking into account the same analysis undertaken in the Croatian parts of the project area)

Given the above-mentioned criteria, as well as the achieved or potential ranking of manifestations, a proposed list of major manifestation is as follows:

➤ “Danube Day”

This manifestation started on June 29, 2004 marking the ten-year anniversary of the signing of the international Danube River Protection Convention. The aim of the manifestation is to raise the public awareness about the value of the river through exhibitions, water sports and round-table discussions. The participants in this project should get involved actively in creating programmes and promotion campaigns in order to make the most of this international event and to include it in their offer.

1. “*Danube Art Festival*”

The manifestation “*Danube Art Festival*” is held second year in a row on several location in the Croatian Danube basin (Erdut, Ilok, Vukovar, Batina), during the last two weekends of June. The events may be extended to the Vojvodina Danube basin (Batina Draž – Bezdan; Ilok – Bačka Palanka). The events schedule should be coordinated with other similar events, and with the potential demand.

2. “*The Tastes of Vojvodina*”

This manifestation creates a chance for promoting typical products of the Danube Basin, as well as for organizing separate manifestations, such as “Gusti di Frontiera” (Gorizia). The manifestation of this type is the best way to feature produces from the Middle Danube regions.

²⁰ Differentiation of Cultural Manifestations with the Aim of Fostering Tourism in Vojvodina, Faculty of Sports and Tourism, 2014.

3. *“Interfest”*

Manifestation focussed on wine, potentially interesting for the promotion of wines from the Danube Basin region. Optionally, it is a valuable event for this region as an opportunity to promote tourist attractions. It may also serve as a basis for creating new events, such as “All wines of the Danube Basin”, “Roads of Welschriesling”, and the like.

4. *“Exit Festival”*

When it comes to this prestigious festival, it should be considered in terms of the possibilities for promoting the destination at hand. Here one may devise activities in order to improve the visibility of the Central Danube region and include its diverse agents, through organizing tours of the area (such as integrated promo packages),

5. *“The Golden Fish Pot of the Danube Basin”*

Activities that may be undertaken when it comes to enhancing the effects of this manifestation should be focused on integrating fishing manifestations into one central event, situating it on a well-chosen and frequented location for the tourists, according to the Operative marketing plan. The events proposition of the project should in its final stage be synchronized with the Study on manifestations of the Croatian Danube basin, so that it results in the final ten key events of the “Central Danube Tour“.

5. Proposition of Marketing Activities and Instruments for the Valorization, Positioning and Promotion of Identified Manifestations of the Cross-Border Destination of the Central Danube Region

As was pointed out in the Marketing strategy for tourism in Vojvodina, there are few areas not only in Europe, but also globally, which are characterized by a wealth of differences. Here lies the potential advantage for the development of tourism in Vojvodina. The differences of Vojvodina are reflected not only in the demographic and socio-cultural, but also in the geographic sense. Some of these are the Pannonia plane with its peculiar farm estates and lakes and rivers, the most important of which is the Danube, and the green slopes of Fruška gora, which apart from its natural resources has a string of monasteries and monuments to history, culture and religion.

It is beyond doubt that Vojvodina has what to offer to tourists. It has the potential of both natural and human resources to make the province one of the best tourist destinations in the region. However, these resources must be packaged and promoted adequately into a tourist product. This should be the task of marketing strategists. Marketing adds the final value, and in order for the marketing campaign to be successful, i.e. to maximize its efficiency, it should be grounded in a solid tourist offer, quality tourist resources and services. The goal is not only to attract tourists, but also to keep them, by continued innovation of the offer, as well as to expand the tourist base by positive reviews and word-of-mouth. This also partakes to the manifestation-based marketing. It is thus crucial these events are adequately presented to the local and international guests.

As was stated earlier, planning, managing and setting up an event entails the familiarity with considerable managerial and marketing skills that cover an entire spectre of businesses and relations needed for realizing the goals of an event. Good realization of an event entails a clear vision (date, place, venue, marketing strategy, budgeting, etc.), efficient management of stakeholders (the media, visitors, sponsors, influential social structures), an adequate analysis of internal and external factors (SWOT и PEST analysis), an awareness about the significance of the promotional instruments (economic propaganda, publicity, direct sales, personal sales, etc.) and other significant activities that are a precondition for successful realization of events.

Marketing of events primarily means the desire to construct a positive image of an event or the destination that hosts it. By organizing events in the modern society, the living quality of the audiences may be improved in the wider sense, as these events attract the attention of sponsors and set in motion an array of profitable outcomes. The image of the place is built by both large-scale and small, specialized events, given the media attention they receive. Image building is achieved through promotional activities, using the instruments of the propaganda mix: economic propaganda, publicity, public relations and direct marketing.

It is essential that the events organizers adapt their marketing tools to new trends. For this reason, there is a need for continued professional strategic and operative marketing plan. The marketing plan sets the marketing system from the strategic level (strategies of priority products and services, strategies of market segments, strategies of international markets, strategies of promotion and distribution, strategies of public relations, branding strategies, electronic marketing strategies, etc.) and the marketing plan of the operative level (activities related to the infrastructure, professionalization of products and services, communication with target markets and target segments, distribution and sales, support and cooperation with the tourist sector of Vojvodina, Serbia and the surrounding regions, such as the remaining Danube Basin regions.

Moreover, a part of the marketing activities is the creation of a unique brand and label of the manifestations, but also of the region-cluster as a whole, where the manifestations are held. The point is in a systematic, pre-planned and guided process that will clearly present the complex, rich and diverse natural resources history, heritage and produces of this part of Vojvodina. In this context, understanding the reputation of Vojvodina that already exists is vital. It has to do with the creation of a desirable image of Vojvodina as a tourist destination and steering its reputation toward a competitive identity. In this process, one may rely on already existing affirmative identities related to Vojvodina, such as the status of Novi Sad as the European Capital of Culture and Youth Capital, Exit Festival, and the “Bačko Podunavlje” UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.²¹

It is also necessary to decide which media channels are most effective, and to implement audit systems for controlling and evaluating results. The factors in deciding on media channels should be the features of the target market and the market segment of the consumers, as well as how they consume the media. Apart from the classic print media (catalogues, brochures, prospects, billboard, etc.), well-designed web pages are extremely important for the presentation of updated information. Web page is probably the first contact of the potential guest with the manifestation and its location, hence a chance to motivate and inform them. The focus of the source of information changes: The new Y and Z generations (born in the 1990s and the milenials) conduct most of their communication online.²²

The content of a quality web page must be timely, relevant and informative. The site should be interactive, the layout should be visually clear and user-friendly, as well as available as a smart phone application. It should also be available on several international languages and it should serve as a central starting point for obtaining information for tourists that branches out into links with other relevant web sites of service providers and related tourist attractions. The links to the events' web presentations should be made available on the official web sites of the Vojvodina tourist organization and local tourist agencies.

Visibility and active involvement on social networks is also extremely important. Apart from the popular Facebook page (each event should have its own Facebook profile, but there should also be a collective profile of events held at a single location or tourist destination), potential visitors should be inspired by quality image and video material on other frequented social networks, primarily on Instagram and Youtube.

²¹ Further reading: Program razvoja turizma Autonomne Pokrajine Vojvodine za period od 2018. do 2022. godine

²² Estimates are that by 2025 milenials will make up 50% of the total tourist numbers globally. Besides them, the focus should also be on the retired generation with the time and disposable income needed for tourist travel. The rising numbers in the middle classes also mean these individuals will make up 4.9 billion people worldwide by 2030.

Social networks are significant channels of communication as well as platforms for creating content and engagement on the part of the users. They provide fast and personalized communication and implementation of specific marketing campaigns. Communication through social networks must be continuous, inspirational, and relevant and should engage the guests by encouraging them to interact and share event-related content.

Both web pages and social network pages may feature themed brochures, events calendars, data bases on accommodation capacities (available hotels, family accommodation, camps), updated news about the destination, weather forecast, service information, transport links information (airports, bus and train links, roads). There may also be an on-line survey for the visitors or potential visitors, which would provide insight into what they liked or disliked, what performers they would like to see in the future, provide praise, criticism, or proposals.

Internet and social networks have introduced vast changes in the process of purchasing, and this also goes for tourism. The control over the product image used to be in the hands of the companies themselves, whereas nowadays it is the customers who are in control. Customers today tend to buy those products and services that have already been positively rated and consumed by other customers, and this decision may be made not only based on reviews but also photographs and video content.

Experts state that online reputation is the primary non-material asset in tourism which may yield considerable material advantage if it is fostered, or bring about great damage if neglected. Reputation has always been very important in tourism, and the recommendations of tourists are considered the best form of promotion. Guest books in hotels and restaurants used to contain a wealth of feedback, and this was their purpose. These guest books have now been transferred to the internet, to the social networks, forums and specialized sites, and they are made available to a much wider audience than in the past.

Tourist search for information and experiences of prior guests before they visit and event and based on others' reviews decide beforehand on the accommodation and services. To be positively reviewed has always been important. Internet is where most of the debates about tourist offers take place, and those who do not recognize and implement this in their business suffer losses. It is vital to use customer feedback to improve one's services and to respond adequately to online comments.²³

²³ Stojković M. (2013): Onlajn reputacija u turizmu, Tourism Management and Consulting, Beograd

In the past, there was a rule that one unsatisfied customer might communicate their negative experience to five other people. The social networks have increased this number by hundreds or thousands, which revolutionizes the way tourists make decisions. They tend to disregard the advice of tourist agency staff, turning instead to the internet for the experiences of other travellers. As much as 75% of tourists today before buying an arrangement or booking a hotel reads several reviews and looks through others' photographs. These developments have led to a new and vital business function in tourism: *Online Reputation Management (ORM)*.

Online Reputation Management is a sustained process of monitoring, reporting and reacting to the customer feedback on the internet, i.e. their comments and opinions on the offer, service or staff. This process entails active participation on social networks and specialized sites, and building trust with future, past and current clients.²⁴

When it comes to customer ratings, Trip Advisor is by far the largest and most influential service globally. It started in February 2000 and has since then revolutionized the way tourists choose destinations, accommodation and events to visit, giving them a chance to access information from other tourists. Tourists are thus less reliant on the information provided by hotels and tour operators, which may be misleading in their positive representations, and instead may get more realistic information and advice from the other tourists. Other popular communities of this type are Travel Post, Yahoo! Travel, and business directories such as Yelp и Goole Places. Facebook and Twitter should not be disregarded in this context either, as well as sites for sharing multimedia contents such as YouTube and Flickr, and location service providers, such as Swarm. There is also an increase in the number of traveller blogs, and those who seek out experiences on other people's Facebook or Twitter profiles.

In the era of social networks the consumers require transparency from the businesses. They want to know all features of the product they are purchasing and the quality of the service before they make the decision to buy. Tourists increasingly ask questions on social networking sites and expect swift answers. It is necessary to follow this and to provide answers and information, equally in cases of criticism and praise. Customer ratings provide the service providers with invaluable input which they should harness to improve their quality.

A survey conducted by the agency Nielsen in 2011 which included more than 25.000 participants from over 50 countries found that people trust the most the advice by people whom they know (92%), while the second most credible source of information are online reviews and experiences of other customers (70%). These are followed by newspapers, magazines and web sites.

²⁴ Stojković M. (2013): Onlajn reputacija u turizmu, Tourism Management and Consulting, Beograd

To improve the online reputation, the following goals should be achieved:²⁵

- Improve ratings on web sites for reviews and bookings
- Improve the quality of tourist ratings and reviews
- Enhance the number of reviews
- Minimize the number of negative reviews
- Enhance the follower base on social networks
- Enhance interaction with social networks followers
- Strengthen customer loyalty and increase the number of returning guests
- Encourage customers to spread positive word-of-mouth opinions online

As a business sector, tourist industry has swiftly embraced social networks, especially Facebook and Twitter, and since recently, Instagram. However, it should be reiterated how important these are in introducing the customers with the tourist offers. The value of social networks is in enabling interaction, building long-term links and building customer loyalty, as well as creating ambassadors of their services from satisfied customers.

With over a billion users worldwide, Facebook is by far the largest social network in the world. A tourist offer may be posted on Facebook, and modified by descriptions, contact details, images, videos and applications. Facebook may be utilized to create a pool of followers and find a market segment. It can be used to share promotional, useful and entertaining content relevant for the target group. The page may also be monetized by putting in *Book now* button for reservations or ticket purchase.

A micro-blogging platform that holds the second place is Twitter. Here, the offer may be presented by creating an account and sharing further information. Twitter is a valuable resource for its efficient use of hashtag and key word search as a way to get information and gain new followers. Tourists increasingly use Twitter for sharing their travel experiences, often in real time. Also, it should be noted that Twitter users expect quick answers to their queries at any time of the day.

YouTube may be utilized by creating a channel for posting video content and building a network of followers. The users may like, comment and share this content on their social network profiles. This sort of content is now widely used by travellers to research destinations and services before placing a booking. Tourists' personal videos are trusted for their insight into the features of the offer and the details of the service. Hence, the comment section below the video clips is very important and should be closely monitored. Apart from the fact the tourists may search videos on YouTube,

²⁵ Stojković M. (2013): Onlajn reputacija u turizmu, Tourism Management and Consulting, Beograd

these videos are also highly ranked in Google search results, so this doubles the chances of the tourists reaching this content.

Instagram is a social network based on photographs taken with mobile phones. It is gaining in popularity, currently holding the third position according to the number of users. A tourist offer may be presented on Instagram by creating a profile and posting images and short footage. Instagram is convenient for posting amateur photography, which people tend to believe more than professional or photoshopped images. Instagram must be used with hashtags to increase visibility.

In addition, within e-marketing activities, an electronic newsletter might also serve the purpose, especially if it provides multilingual news and information. Newsletter should be circulated monthly to national and international reporters, PR agencies, tour operators, tourist agencies, hotels, airlines, consulates and officials of the republic of Serbia abroad, as well as to business partners and other subscribers interested in impending events, manifestations and tourism.

With the purpose of promoting manifestations, the local population may also contribute by starting a blog, to be written and edited by them, and dedicated to various topics related to local events in a fun and creative way. Blogs may contain all the necessary information for tourists, with an additional ingredient of creativity and inspiration to make the visit. This content may also be shared through social networks and in this way enhance visibility and the market range.

Ultimately, intensification of traditional methods of promotion is of great value: PR activities, improvement of sales methods (on fairs, exhibitions and study trips), advertising on the national and international level. Creative promotional activities should also be undertaken, such as targeted presentations, workshops and road show presentations. Additionally, there are study trips for foreign reporters, individuals or in groups. An active approach to editing articles, active participation in specialized media, and active development of relationships with VIP guests from the world of culture, sports and entertainment industry. All these elements influence the tourists' choice of destination and improve the demand for and popularity of a destination. On the other hand, there should also be an active involvement and communication with the local population in order for them to embrace tourism as a prospective branch of industry form which they can profit. These communities may be involved in discussions how to design and create distinct logos and slogans for events held at the location of their abode.

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