

ATTITUDES OF LOCAL POPULATION IN SREMSKA MITROVICA TOWARDS SIRMIUM CULTURAL TOURISM AND HERITAGE

Milena Sekulić^{1*}, Milica Solarević¹, Andrea Šojić¹,
Srđan Timotijević¹, Anđelija Ivkov-Džigurski¹

Abstract

Cultural tourism presents the movement of people caused by the cultural attractions outside their usual place of residence, with the intention to collect new information and experience in order to satisfy their cultural needs. As such, the cultural tourism is one of the selective types of tourism, and is directed to meeting the specific needs related to tourist culture. Sremska Mitrovica was built on the former site of Sirmium, one of the four capitals of the Roman Empire. This paper will be based on tourist movements of local people which are focused on the cultural sites and objects and historical heritage of their hometown. We assume that a small percentage of the local population visited sites and objects of cultural and historical heritage and cultural institutions in Sremska Mitrovica. The aim of the paper is to encourage local residents to visit museum, gallery, theater, more frequently, as well as other sites and objects of cultural and historical heritage in Sremska Mitrovica. The survey was conducted through an electronic survey. The research methodology is based on the descriptive and statistical processing and data analysis using SPSS 20 software.

Keywords: Cultural tourism, Sremska Mitrovica, Sirmium, local people

Introduction

The World Tourism Organization has defined cultural tourism as trips originating primarily from cultural motives, which usually include educational tours, art, cultural tours, trips to festivals, visits to historical sites and monuments, folklore and religious trips (WTO, 2005; Božić, 2016).

Sirmium was a developed, urban-designed city centre. It was surrounded by walls and contained forums, temples, administration buildings, granaries, thermal baths, theatres, an amphitheater, paved streets, water supply, sewage, palaces, villas, imperial spas, and necrop-

¹ Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management, Faculty of Sciences, University of Novi Sad, Trg Dositeja Obradovića 3, 21000 Novi Sad, Serbia

* Corresponding author: milena.sekulic@dgt.uns.ac.rs

olises around the walls. Sirmium had a weapons factory (Prica et al. 1969). Today, most of the buildings of the former capital of the Roman Empire lie beneath the streets and buildings in Sremska Mitrovica.

Heritage has been deemed as an important tourism resource for tourism development all over the world. Heritage tourism is one kind of prevalent special interest tourism and usually related to the domains of cultural and urban tourism. Like other types of tourism, the success of heritage and cultural tourism relies upon not only uniqueness, attractive heritage resources, sustainability and a successful tourism policy, but also on residents' support for tourism development (Ching-Fu and Pei-Chun, 2010).

The rich cultural and historical heritage represents one of the most important tourist attractions of today's tourism in the city. Sremska Mitrovica is a kind of open-air museum. The central squares with the surrounding streets represent the period of the Military Border, the period of the 18th and 19th centuries. Visitors to a relatively small area, walking through the city centre, at the same time can enjoy representative buildings from the Austro-Hungarian period and discovered archaeological excavations of the Roman metropolis of Sirmium. In the Visitor Center "Imperial Palace" it is possible to see the remains of a monumental ancient palace, and space is often the host of various events. The visit to the Museum of Srem completes the knowledge related to the era of the ancient Sirmium and the history of the city in general. Within the permanent exhibition of the Museum, visitors are presented with valuable objects and monuments unique to our country (Pjevac, 2014). Sremska Mitrovica, the character of the present city, bears the stamp of the architectural heritage of different emperors. Some visible or tangible link between the ancient and modern city can only be found today in the remains of the walls of Sirmium, presented either under the "open sky" or in archeological crypts (Jeremić, 2016), while the most recognizable image is spread during many festival nights on the Žitni trg in combination with the preserved buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries.

Theoretical background and contemporary significance of cultural heritage in Sremska Mitrovica

For the success of cultural tourism and its sustainability, it is important to understand heritage residents' attitudes towards tourism impacts and support for tourism development in their community, and to investigate the factors affecting their support (Ching-Fu and Pei-Chun, 2010).

Residents play a vital role in developing sustainable tourism, as they are the cultural agents and the social group in which tourism is delivered (Gonzales et al., 2017). Residents have gained importance in the tourism equation, as their perceptions indicate tourism's outlook regarding sustainability. Their goodwill is considered crucial to the success and sustainability of any tourism development (Bimonte and Punzo, 2016; Gonzales et al., 2017).

The remains of a monumental structure, which in the 4th century AD represented the seat of Roman emperors who stayed longer or shorter in Sirmium, are located in the heart of today's Sremska Mitrovica. They were first discovered in 1957, preparing the ground for the construction of residential building. The works were temporarily and then permanently suspended when the remains of the heating system, drainage ducts and floor mosaics were found. Further archaeological excavations in the 1960s revealed the remains of a space with a marble wall fountain, wall murals and mosaic floors. Also, a Roman circus for two-wheeled racing was

discovered near the palace, as well as parts of the auditorium (cavea) with a racetrack (arena) and a barrier wall in the middle (spina) (Werner, 2009).

The Serbian Home was built in 1895, the building is built in classic style, with very harmonious proportions. The premises of the Reading Room were moved to this building. Until the World War I, the Reading Room was the most important Serbian cultural institution in the city. In the fire of 1914, the building was partially burned. After World War I, the building of the Serbian Home was restored. Today, this building occupies the “Gligorije Vozarović” City Library and the “Dobrica Milutinović” Theater in Ćira Milekić Square.

The Historical archive “Srem” is located on Vuk Karadžić Street, in a building that was built in the second half of the 18th century for accommodation of the “Main Guard” of the 9th Petrovaradin Border Regiment. The Historical archive “Srem” moved into this building in 1965. After several restorations, the building was given today’s look, which basically does not deviate from the architectural concept of the time in which it was built. The building was proclaimed a cultural property in 1966 (Historical archive “Srem”).

One of the most characteristic buildings fits at the corner of St. Sava Street and Vuk Karadžić Street. First it was a lieutenant colonel’s apartment, later it had different purposes, and after the professional restoration in 1965 it belongs to Museum. The building is one-storey, rectangular in plan, with strict lines, simple facade without decoration. The internal layout was modified, but the object as a whole remained authentic (Prica et al., 1969). In November 1946, the City Museum was rebuilt. Two years later, the first permanent museum exhibition was opened in St. Stephen’s Square, in the house of the Bajić family, a civic house from the late 18th and early 19th century, which is a typical representative of civic architecture. The front of the facade is very simple with five rectangular windows on the ground floor and seven upstairs. The Center for Archeological Research and Documentation of Sirmium was later located there, as well as the permanent display of exhibits until the 14th century (Lemajić, 2008).

On the west side of the supposed forum (Roman Square), a large trapezoidal structure, defined as a public town market or “Žitni trg” (grain square), is fully revealed. Most of the buildings on the square date from the 4th century AD, although parts of the individual walls discovered date from the 1st and 2nd centuries. The site is intersected by a wide Roman street with preserved sewage, pedestrian passage-ways with porticus, preserved only in the bases of columns bearing arches (Milošević and Prica, 2001). The project for the conservation, reconstruction and presentation of the archaeological site was initiated by the Institute for the Protection of Monuments. Official work began in mid-October 2017 and was completed in late June 2018.

Methodology

The survey was conducted in the period from June to August, 2019, through an online survey on a sample of 144 respondents. The questionnaire consists of 21 closed, open and mixed-type of questions. The aim of the research is to determine the attitudes of the local population regarding the interest in cultural tourism and the rich historical heritage of Sremska Mitrovica. Survey analysis is done using SPSS 20 software.

Results and Discussion

The important aim of this research is to encourage the locals to become more involved in the cultural life of the city in which they live, and also to encourage all those employees at the sites and objects of cultural and historical heritage and cultural institutions in Sremska Mitrovica to work more to preserve and protect the cultural properties that this city possess.

Including the total number of respondents, the largest part is made up of the female population with 63.2%. If we look at the age division among the respondents, over half are members of the group 21-40 age, and just behind them with twice less participation in the survey are respondents up to 20 years. The majority of respondents have completed university education (45.1%) and high school education (38.9%), and the ratio of socio-economic status is divided by percentage, so that half of the respondents are employed (52.8%), while behind them with a smaller proportion are university students (19.4%) and high school students (18.1%).

Crucially important for the awareness and any further development progress in the field of tourism is the 100% agrees of respondents that “their” city has a rich cultural and historical heritage. As it is stated by Stamenković et al., 2013, the role of the local population is very important for the process of building a tourist brand, although the city is already recognizable and stands on the foundations of the old Sirmium. Every further progress and expansion of the role, require an awareness that the respondents confirm. In this way, they act as local brand ambassadors, while on the other hand, residents can also be treated as external actors (such as domestic tourists, consumers).

Respondents mostly (84.7%) answered positively that they visit sites and objects of cultural and historical heritage and cultural institutions, but the intensity of these visits is different. Those are mostly visiting up to several times a year (43.1%), once a year (20.1%), but the total share of 29.8% should not be ignored since it consists of visitors with relatively regular visits from once per month or once a week to several times weekly.

There are different motives for visiting cultural institutions among the respondents. Education and information (24.3%) and socializing with friends and family (22.2%) are almost equally important as the main motives and initiators of visits, while 19.4% of the respondents are interested in culture and heritage.

In addition to the motives which are the main triggers within the visitors themselves, promotion and information of various events are very important so that the local population, as well as all interested person, can be informed about similar events and activities. The largest number of respondents receives the main information on cultural events by social media (48.61%). Other channels of information, such as personal visits, watching TV, through mutual contacts and by going to the official sites of individual institutions, include a smaller share of

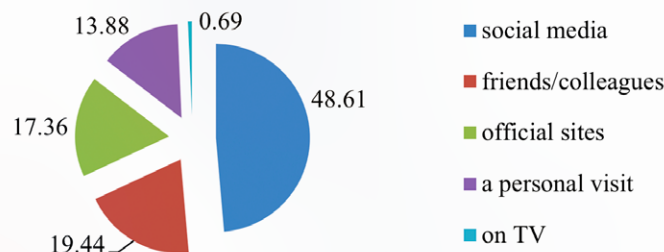


Figure 1. The most important sources of information for cultural events

Source: Authors research, SPSS

respondents. Such data is not surprising, given that the respondents are mostly members of the younger age category, as well as the world trend that social networks have including their global importance. Perhaps it represents the main starting point for further development in the promotion of greater visits among cultural institutions. It would involve greater engagement of cultural institutions, tourist agencies, tourism organizations, local governments, City Youth Office and different societies all in the spreading of advertising, information and organization of various events, activities, workshops of cultural importance. Certainly, other social groups and members of the older generations should not be ignored, providing culture to everyone and making it accessible to all age categories.

Having knowledge of local history according to the results obtained among the respondents is highly appreciated. Respondents generally knew to name at least one Roman emperor who was born in Sirmium, 72.9% of the respondents answered correctly this question. Some less knowledge was shown about the emperor who brought the vine to the slopes of Fruška Gora. Only 60.4% answered correctly between offered answers that it was the Prob. The growing importance of the spreading of grapevines in these areas is indicated by the increasing presence in vineyard plantations, as well as the recently started construction of the Wine Temple and the Probus vineyards in the municipality of Sremska Mitrovica within the hills of Fruška Gora (www.tosmomi.rs).

Table 1. *Frequency of visits to cultural institutions*

Cultural institution	Frequency of visit	Std. Deviation
Museum of Srem	a few times in a few years	1.024
Gallery "Lazar Vozarević"	a few times in a few years	1.084
Library "Gligorije Vozarović"	once a year	1.229
Theater "Dobrica Milutinović"	once a year	1.065
Archeological site "Carska palata" (Imperial palace)	once a year	1.101
Memorial cemetery park	once a month	1.267
Archeological site "Žitni trg" (Grain square)	once a week	.861
Historical archive of Srem	Never (no visit)	.887

Source: Authors research, SPSS

In the case of direct visits and intensity of visits to cultural institutions, we can conclude that the respondents visit the archaeological site Žitni trg with 54.2% once a week, while in the second place they visit Memorial Cemetery Park (32.6%) once a month and 37.1% once a week. Such data is not surprising since both complexes are open-air sites. Various events, concerts, ceremonial gatherings take place throughout the Žitni trg area, and it is arranged as an amphitheatre for seating and attracts a large number of locals during daily walks and breaks. The answers that the respondents agreed the most were precisely related to the visit to Žitni trg (.861) and the Archive of Srem (.887), with the most visits once a week and no visits. The Archive of Srem is an institution mostly visited by professionals and is not intended for exhibitions or cultural shows of any type and does not attract tourists and visitors, so this is not surprising.

Talking about availability and concerning the adaptation of content and events to different social groups (old, young, children, foreigners, people with disabilities), Žitni trg was the best rated, and right behind the Imperial Palace. These are the objects that attract the most visitors and whose contents are the most accessible to all ages. Both sites are of recent date or have been reconstructed, so their availability is the easiest. In addition to the Archive of Srem,

which due to its specificity and lower attractiveness, is more experts and professionals oriented, the same rating was given to the Museum of Srem (mean 2.88). Organizers of museum exhibitions should pay more attention to the content in order to attract as large and diverse a part of the audience as possible to ensure their continued interest in their visits.

Table 2. Correlation between frequency of visits to cultural institutions

		Museum of Srem	Gallery "Lazar Vozarević"	Archeological site "Imperial palace"	Memorial cemetery park
Museum of Srem	Pearson Correlation	1	.595**	.530**	.050
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.550
	N	144	144	144	144

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Authors research, SPSS

As it is shown in Table 2, the highest and the most noticeable correlation is among visitors to the Museum of Srem, Gallery and Imperial Palace. However, the insignificant correlation is directed towards visits to the Memorial cemetery park, which shows us that visitors to this complex still belong to different groups. Considering the importance of this complex and its surface, this site could provide a large number of contents to its locals in cooperation with local authorities and organizations. Certainly it is necessary to "listen" the local population more, which is recognized by this questionnaire as very accessible, but that more attention should be paid to the tidiness of the complex, to be cleaner, with more benches and with special emphasis that it is without manifestations. The results of the survey show that the locals are more interested in outdoor activities and festivities, so some cultural content could be directed to this complex as well. This is certainly in favour of the crowds in the city central park during the manifestation of the Wine Park, Sirmium Imperial City and festivals in Žitni trg.

If we look at the responses of respondents who did not visit institutions of cultural importance and their reasons, we might find the motivation that would improve visits. Most respondents complain about not enough free time. However, responses based on boring and insufficiently interesting content are frequent, without the need to visit two or more times, including not flexible working time of institutions towards the visitors.

The practical suggestions of the respondents certainly play a very important role, because they are the ones who make up this city and participate in the preservation of the local heritage and culture. The biggest objection on the part of the respondents was directed at promotion. Greater public awareness is needed, especially through social networks, "cultural" info boards, billboards and advertisements. An interesting proposal is the creation of a portal linking all institutions of cultural importance with the common calendar of cultural events. Respondents see great importance in many manifestations of different types and with better and more contemporary contents that would attract visitors, old and new. According to the respondents, one of the key reasons is the local government and insufficient financial resources for culture. A small number of respondents focused their attention on children and school children, although education and the spread of cultural awareness among children is very important. Very interesting is the observation of a small number of respondents who pay attention to the lack of hotels in the city. In recent years, Sremska Mitrovica has been left without the largest hotel accommodation, and such a reflection has directly affected the number of tourists who come in large groups (today's capacity: hotel "Srem" 25 beds; hotel "Wood" 13 beds) (www.hotelwood.rs; www.tosmomi.rs).

The current state of tourism shows that intensive work is being done to develop the supply, conservation and restoration of cultural objects and, in general, to protect sites that are significant for tourism, but still not sufficiently. The tradition and multiculturalism of this region is exactly what can set it apart from other competitors in the tourist market, and it is necessary to work intensively on their nurturing and preservation. Thanks to the connection with the Danube (along the Sava river), tourists are allowed to arrive by river in the framework of cruise trips and to get acquainted with the City. As part of the Cultural Route “The Road of the Roman Emperors” and “The Danube Wine Road” it is developing as a quality tourist destination, and the number of tourists on its territory is increasing. Thanks to its rich history and attractive promotion, it has also become part of the routes Fruška Gora Wine Road and Serbian Wine Roads (Gnjatović, 2018).

Conclusion

The importance of this research is reflected in the obtained information on the attitudes of local population in Sremska Mitrovica. With this work and the survey, an attempt was made, to encourage people to start thinking about the culture of their own city, and going to the cultural sites and objects and historical heritage of their hometown. At the beginning of research, it was assumed that a small number of locals visiting cultural sites and institutions to a greater extent, the survey results show that they still visit cultural institutions, but not often, most of them visit cultural institutions a couple of times a year.

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