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## CULTURAL EVENTS OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF ZAJEČAR IN THE LIGHT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

**Miodrag Velojić**

Independent researcher, Zaječar, Serbia, miodragvelojic@yahoo.com

**Maja Simonović**

majasimonovic10@yahoo.com

**Abstract:** The Municipality of Zaječar has quality cultural and tourist potentials that only with proper and quality valorization can enable sustainable development of tourism that will have a long-term effect. Cultural tourism in this municipality represents a real chance for its long-term development. In this paper, the manifestation values will be analyzed, which in combination with cultural monuments, archeological sites, sacral objects and other values, using the storytelling method, can fit into one complex tourist product. By creating such a product, it would influence the improvement of the destination's image and form an umbrella brand that would include all cultural values, which would make the municipality of Zaječar recognizable.

**Keywords:** culture, events, manifestations, Zaječar, sustainable development

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural goods are creations of material and spiritual culture that have the properties to satisfy the cultural needs of people. The term cultural tourism refers to all movements of people whose motive is to satisfy some cultural need (visits to cultural sights, festivals, etc.). Cultural events are in most cases used as a means to stimulate cultural tourism and have become an important tool in tourism management, especially in stimulating tourism in the off-season. By organizing the event, the qualities and specifics of the tourist destination stand out. The target market is cultural tourists (Velojić et al., 2020).

Cultural events have a great influence on the creation of the destination's image and bring numerous benefits to the local community, primarily economic. They can have a positive impact (attracting tourists, improving the destination's image, supporting the local community, raising awareness of environmental protection and transformation, improving traffic and communication infrastructure) and negative impact (nature pollution, noise, traffic jams). By adopting a strategy of sustainable development in the organization of events, through concern for the environment, negative impacts can be greatly reduced or even eliminated and thus contribute to the reputation (image) of environmentally conscious destinations. The benefits can be different, and they are mostly seen through economic effects (Grčan et al., 2013).

### 2. METHODOLOGY

The methods used in the preparation of this work include: statistical, analytical, synthetic, comparative and descriptive methods, as well as "deskresearch" research in which foreign and domestic literature was searched. The paper also presents a SWOT analysis.

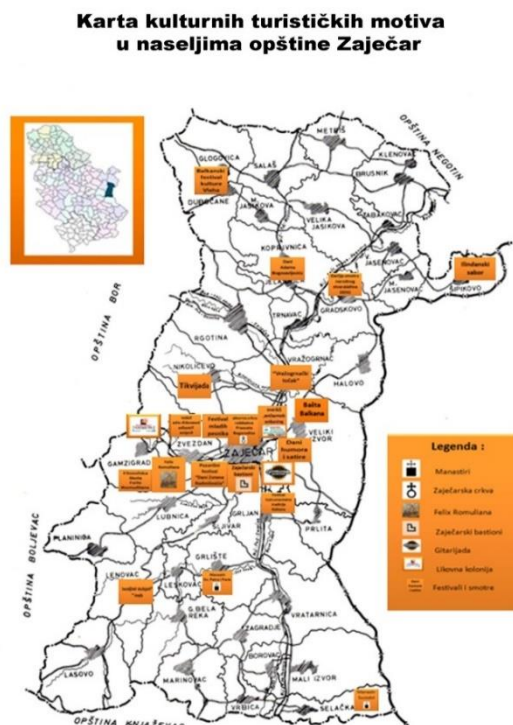
Empirical data and analysis

In the municipality of Zaječar, there are a large number of cultural events that are organized, especially in the summer period of the year. They are organized both in the city and in rural areas, where they gather a large number of visitors. In the nineties of the 20th century, Zaječar was the city with the largest number of cultural and artistic manifestations in Serbia, so one could freely say: "There is no smaller place - no greater number of manifestations". However, during and after the pandemic, many manifestations died down or completely shut down. In the following text of the paper, the manifest cultural values of the municipality of Zaječar will be analyzed, on the basis of which a quality tourist offer can be developed (Velojić et al., 2020).

„*Gitarijada*“ - The oldest rock event in Europe. It has been held for more than 50 years in the town of Zaječar. The organizer of the music festival is the city of Zaječar. The maintenance period is in the summer period, usually around August, every year. The festival program consists of a demo band competition and revue performances by established domestic and European rock groups. During the past decades, Gitarijada has affirmed many local bands, who at the very beginning of their musical careers, as winners or festival participants, recorded their first releases and received satisfactory media support. Additional facilities include the YU rock camp and a colony of sculptors and painters. The accompanying program consists of: Moto rally, International Salon of rock photography, exhibitions, film screenings, promotions of literary publications, panels, workshops. Gitarijada is considered the brand of Zaječar and is the main carrier of the development of the tourism industry.

The goal of the event is to encourage and affirm the musical creativity of young people committed to Rock'n'Roll, which since its inception, as a planetary phenomenon, has become a universal means of communication among young people and an integral segment of contemporary urban culture (Simonović, 2021).

*Map 1. Map of cultural tourist motifs in the settlements of the municipality of Zaječar*



*The map was made by M. Velojić, 2020*

**OUTHIDE**- It is held in the Zaječar park forest of Kraljevica, near the monument erected to the fallen fighters of NOR, in the summer period of the year. It represents a creative and innovative cultural multimedia platform. The event was created on April 30, 2016. OUTHIDE (HIDEOUT) — a shelter, represents the refuge of youth from all the problems that happen in Zaječar. The goal of the event is to make the city an attractive tourist destination by investing exclusively in the construction of attractions and art installations in the city (Simonović, 2021).

**„Dani Zorana Radmilovića“** - The traditional theater festival in honor of the great Serbian actor Zoran Radmilović is held in the "Zoran Radmilović" theater. The organizers are the Zoran Radmilović Foundation and the "Zoran Radmilović" theater from Zaječar. The festival gathers the best theater productions from the country and abroad, it has a competitive nature, and the award named after Zoran is considered one of the most prestigious in the world of acting. The acting festival has been held since 1993, and the main prize is "Zoran's mustache". The aim of the event is to preserve the memory of the most famous actor from this city (Velojić et al., 2020).

**International Art Colony "Gamzigrad"** - It was founded in 1994. It belongs to the cultural manifestations of special importance for the town of Zaječar and is held every year in Gamzigradska banja, not far from the late antique site of Felix Romuliana. It is open to artists of various aesthetic orientations (academic painters, sculptors, ceramicists, art photographers, writers). The colony stopped working in 2020. The goal of the colony was to present the artistic creations of artists from this region and abroad (Velojić et al., 2020).

**„Potekla voda studena“** - It is held in the Veliki Izvor settlement, in the summer period of the year. The organizer of the show is the National Theater of Timočka Krajina - Center for Culture "Zoran Radmilović" in cooperation with the Veliki Izvor local community, while the patron is the city of Zaječar. The goal of the event is to encourage research, nurturing, improvement and promotion of original folk creativity and folk art, domestic handicrafts and old crafts in the area of the city of Zaječar (<https://www.visiteastserbia.rs/manifestacije>).

**„Sabor instrumentalnih solista na narodnim izvornim instrumentima“** - is a cultural manifestation of a republican character. It has been organized since 1978, in the village of Grljan near Zaječar. It represents a festival of authentic musical folklore of Serbia, which gathers the best players of traditional wind instruments. The organizers of the festival are the National Theater of Timočka Krajina - Center for Culture "Zoran Radmilović" Zaječar and the Municipal Community of Grljan. The festival was started in 1978 under the name "Sabor flutes" on the initiative of members of the cultural and artistic society and the Grljan community. On September 21, the organizers gathered for the first time 14 amateurs from the municipalities of Zaječar, Bor and Negotin, who demonstrated their skills in playing the flute, duduk and ocarina. Beginning in 2010, conditions were created for the improvement of this manifestation, and the Sabor of flute players, and then the Republican Sabor of instrumental soloists on original wind instruments, evolved into the "Festival of instrumental traditions of the Balkans", with the desire to encourage intercultural dialogue between Serbia and the countries of the region and to additionally affirm the musical, local and regional values of this area. The selection enabled the even presence of all instruments that are presented through music - from chordophone and aerophone, to membranophonic and idiophonic instruments as part of an ensemble or as a soloist. The goal of the event is to preserve tradition and pass on customs to younger generations (Simonović, 2021).

**„Balkanski festival tradicionalne kulture Vlaha“** – The event is held in the Dubočane settlement, in the summer period of the year. The organizer of the event is the National Theater of Timočka Krajina - Center for Culture "Zoran Radmilović" and the local community of Dubočana, while the patron is the City of Zaječar. The event is followed by a parade of participants in colorful folk costumes, as well as a circuit played by all cultural and artistic societies. The goal of the event is the promotion, research, protection, preservation and presentation of intangible cultural heritage (<https://www.timocka.rs/vesti/otvoren-9-balkanski-festival-tradicionalne-kulture-vlaha-u-dubocanu/>)

**„Dani Gamzigradske banje“** - Held in the summer period of the year in Gamzigrad Spa. The organizers of the event are the National Theater of Timočka Krajina - Center for Culture "Zoran Radmilović", the Gamzigradska Banja Local Community, the Sports Association and the Tourist Organization of the City of Zaječar, and the sponsor is the City of Zaječar. The event is accompanied by a varied program: performances, poetry readings, performances by folklore ensembles, a competition in the preparation of fish soup and an exhibition of traditional dishes, as well as sports activities: a mini-soccer tournament and a fishing competition (<https://zamedia.rs/tag/dani-gamzigradske-banje/>).

**„Hajduk Veljkovi dani“** - They are held in the second half of July, in the Lenovac settlement (Hajduk Veljko's birthplace) and last two days. The organizer of the festival is the Center for Culture and Tourism "Cekit" from Zaječar in cooperation with the Local Community of Lenovac. The goal of the event is to preserve the memory of the legendary Serbian hero - Hajduk Veljko Petrović, to encourage, nurture and maintain the original culture, to preserve the sports tradition (folk all-around) and to attract as many tourists as possible to the village of Lenovac, at the foot of the Tupižnica mountain (<https://www.visiteastserbia.rs/manifestacije>)

**Sabor narodnog besedništva “Dani Adama Bogosavljevića”** - It is organized in the Koprivnica settlement, in the summer period of the year. The organizer of the festival is the National Theater of Timočka Krajina - Center for Culture "Zoran Radmilović" and the local community of Koprivnica, and the sponsor is the City of Zaječar. The goal of the event is to preserve the tradition in the sphere of amateur folk art and the memory of the folk tribune Adam Bogosavljević, a native of this place (<https://www.visiteastserbia.rs/manifestacije>).

**Festival of original children's folk art "DENS"**- An international exhibition that takes place in the Gradskovo settlement in the summer period of the year. The organizer is the National Theater of Timočka Krajina - Center for Culture "Zoran Radmilović", in cooperation with the Municipal Community of Gradskovo, and the patron is the City of Zaječar. About 400 children from 13 cultural and artistic societies from the area of Zaječar, Bor, Negotin, Knjaževac, Boljevac and Sokobanja are participating in this event. It has no competitive character, and the goal is to preserve children's folk creativity through song and dance (Simonović, 2021).

**„Vražogrnački točak“** – The main motif of this event is the wheel. It is held in the gate of the Vražogrnac church, where folklore groups from Serbia and abroad present their customs through song and dance. It takes place at the beginning of August. The first day belongs to guests from abroad, while on the second day folklore ensembles from Timočka Krajina and other parts of Serbia perform. The event is accompanied by various programs: the "Vražogrnački točak" art colony, an exhibition of ritual breads and homemade crafts, as well as a competition in traditional cooking (Velojić et al., 2020).

**Festival of young poets** - It takes place on the last week of May in Zaječar. The organizer is the National Theater of Timočka Krajina - Center for Culture "Zoran Radmilović", and the sponsors are the City of Zaječar and the Ministry of Culture and Information. The event was created on the basis of the multimedia manifestation of artistic creativity of young people, called "Mladi May". It has a competitive character, and the right to participate in the contest is for

young poets under the age of 30 who write in the Serbian language. The aim of the event is to encourage the poetic creation of the younger population (<https://www.danas.rs/kultura/simo-esic-otvorio-36-festival-mladih-pesnika-u-zajecaru/>).

„*Ilindanski sabor*“ - is held every year at the beginning of August in the village of Šipikovo. The organizers are the National Theater of Timočka Krajina - Center for Culture "Zoran Radmilović", the local community of Šipikovo, and the patron is the City of Zaječar. Folk art performers in the field of oral, vocal, instrumental and playing traditions of the Wallachian and Serbian population from this, as well as from the area of northwestern Bulgaria, are presented at the Parliament as part of stage performances. The goal of the event is to preserve folk creativity through song and dance (<https://zajecaronline.com/tag/ilindanski-sabor/>).

„*Sabor kosovskih srba Timočke Krajine*“ - is organized in the village of Zvezdan. Organizers of the event are the National Theater of Timočka Krajina - Center for Culture "Zoran Radmilović", the Tourism Organization of the City of Zaječar and the Local Community of Zvezdan, and the patron is the City of Zaječar. It lasts for one day, during which there is a competition in the preparation of beans, a competition of producers of brandy and wine, as well as exhibitions of domestic crafts, old crafts and traditional cuisine, while in the evening part of the program cultural and artistic societies from all over Serbia perform (Velojić et al., 2020).

„*Dani humora i satire*“ - They are organized in the month of April and last for two days. The organizers are the Sergije Lajković Aphoristic Club and the National Theater of Timočka Krajina - Center for Culture "Zoran Radmilović" Zaječar. The event is based on the Festival of Film Comedy (FIKOM) organized for many years by the Photo Cinema Club "Timok" from Zaječar and Evenings of Aphorists organized by the News Institution "Timok" at the Book Fairs in Zaječar. The goal is to promote aphorisms and satire (<https://istmedia.rs/dani-humora-satire-u-zajecaru/>).

*The International School of Philosophy "Felix Romuliana"* - It is organized at the Felix Romuliana Archaeological Site near the Gamzigrad settlement. The organizers are the National Theater of Timočka Krajina - Center for Culture "Zoran Radmilović" and the Center for Applied Philosophy and Social Research, Belgrade. The school's program includes philosophical workshops, panels, debates, performances, presentations on archeology and the history of Felix Romuliana and the Roman Empire (Velojić et al., 2020).

„*Tikvijada*“ - It is organized at the beginning of October, in the Nikolicevo settlement, and lasts for one day. The organizers of the event are the National Theater of Timočka Krajina - Center for Culture "Zoran Radmilović" and the local community of Nikoličevo, while the patron is the City of Zaječar. The main motif of the event is the pumpkin and its products. The program is accompanied by exhibitions, promotions and the presentation of local gastronomic products made from pumpkin (<http://www.zajecar.info/2286-8-tikvijada-u-nikolicevu>).

#### 4. RESULTS

All the analyzed manifestations of the municipality of Zaječar have a great cultural significance, above all for the local population, and at the same time represent a great potential on which the sustainable development of cultural tourism can be largely based.

From the analysis of the total number of tourists in the period from 2015-2020, it can be seen that the number of tourists increases from year to year. There are more domestic than foreign tourists. By valorizing tourist potentials and unifying them into one complete offer, it is possible to directly influence the increase in the number of foreign tourists through adequate communication with marketing tools. Emphasis should be placed on tourists from Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, due to the proximity of the borders.

*Table 1. Tourist traffic in Zaječar for the period from 2015-2020. years*

Year	Total tourists	Total nights	Domestic tourists	Overnights of domestic tourists	Overnight stays by domestic tourists	Foreign tourists	Overnight stays of foreign tourists	Overnight stays by foreign tourists
2015.	17.211	56.648	12.116	48.775	4,0	5.045	7.873	1,6
2016.	13.438	41.703	8.389	33.960	4,0	5.049	7.743	1,5
2017.	15.292	47.758	9.502	34.885	3,7	5.790	12.873	2,2
2018.	18.797	50.742	12.723	38.869	3,1	6.074	11.873	2,0
2019.	20.780	64.114	13.972	38.792	2,8	6.808	25.322	3,7

*Source:* Municipalities and regions in the Republic of Serbia, 2014-2020.

Also, a SWOT analysis was carried out, on the basis of which it can be concluded that this area has great opportunities for the development of cultural tourism, but proper promotion and valorization is needed in order to achieve a favorable economic effect and improve the life of the local population.

*Table 2. SWOT analysis*

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Satisfactory number of accommodation capacities</li> <li>- Manifestations throughout the year</li> <li>-Various cultural assets (material and immaterial)</li> <li>- Good geo-strategic position</li> <li>- The existence of different cultural institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There are no clearly defined target markets for tourism products</li> <li>- The existing tourist products are not sufficiently varied and comprehensive to enable a longer stay at the destination</li> <li>- Insufficient promotional activities</li> <li>- Absence of support for the private sector in tourism</li> <li>-Lack of education of employees in tourism</li> <li>- Insufficiently elaborated tourist offer</li> <li>- Undervalued tourist potentials</li> </ul>
THREATS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unfavorable economic and political environment</li> <li>-Insufficient financial resources</li> <li>- The negative impact of the global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on the entire tourism economy and tourism demand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Growing international demand for tourism based on cultural heritage</li> <li>- Growing international demand for unexploited, lesser-known tourist destinations</li> <li>- Greater orientation of domestic tourists to travel in the country in the post-crisis period, as a chance to mitigate the consequences of the crisis</li> <li>- Possibilities of developing cross-border projects in the area of tourism infrastructure as well as projects aimed at the development of tourist products, promotion and branding</li> </ul>

*Source:* Author's Deskresearch

## 5. CONCLUSION

Cultural events are one of the most important and interesting phenomena of cultural tourism. They unite different actors in the tourist destination, encourage cooperation, attract the attention of the media and influence the creation of a positive image of the destination through the creation of content. They also contribute to the development of the destination itself through the inclusion of various potentials in the tourist offer, strengthening the identity of the local population, nurturing the customs, traditions and history of the area. The municipality of Zaječar has a great potential for creating a tourist offer that would include cultural monuments, manifestations and other cultural contents that would be strategically networked and put into the function of storytelling, which would shape the image and enable the sustainable development of tourism in this area.

That is why it is important to put cultural events into the function of tourism, they should not be seen as an opportunity for one-time entertainment and income, but to enable sustainable development and the realization of long-term effects (Pivac et al., 2022).

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