

UDC 33

## **Tourism potential valorisation of the old town centre in Sombor based on the Hilary Du Cros model**

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**Abstract.** Cultural heritage and tourism are interconnected. As the development of tourism contributes to economic development, it is first necessary to perform an adequate valorisation of cultural heritage, in order to create a suitable tourism product. Old town centres as such, are the objects of different activities aimed at its development and adaptation to new trends. In this paper, focus is on the old town centre in Sombor, with an aim to determine its status in the competitive market of cultural tourism, whether it could be an independent motive that could attract potential tourists, as well as to determine the necessary actions needed to improve quality and competitiveness in order bring them to a higher level. With this in mind, this paper deals with the tourism valorisation of the old town centre based on the model of H. Du Cros.

**Keywords:** Sombor; old town centre; tourism valorisation; H. Du Cros.

### **Introduction**

What is cultural tourism? Cultural tourism is a broad term, identified by the marketing experts as a rapidly expanding market without detailed evaluation of its actual content. It is a problematic concept, because it consists of two equally broad terms: “culture” and “tourism”, both of which are hard to define. For the purposes of this paper, we will use the definition set by the European Association for Tourism and Education. According to this definition, cultural tourism is “the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs” [1].

There are two kinds of key elements of a destination which help develop cultural tourism and its tourism potential. The first element is robusticity or cultural integrity of the destination, and the second are commercial factors which are connected to the transformation of the destination into a cultural tourism destination. In order to avoid a negative impact on one of the mentioned key elements, in planning as well as development of cultural heritage destinations as tourist attractions, a successful integration of cultural heritage management and tourism development is necessary to define cultural objects with highest potential for quality tourism and attractiveness [2].

### **Literary review**

Throughout the years, different models for valorisation of tourism potential of a destination, management of heritage assets and possibility for the development of tourism have been developed [3, 4, 5, 6, 7]. Valorisation of a tourist destination is a process of evaluation, verification and ratification of specific characteristics of the destination. If a destination receives positive marks during the process of valorisation, there is a good chance that it will become a destination with high tourist attendance [8, 9, 10]. Evaluation of the cultural significance of the destination should include two key steps: investigation of market appeal and robusticity, with an aim of increasing tourist attendance. In this process it is determined whether a heritage asset has the specific characteristics that would attract tourists, and this on the other hand has to be in correlation with robusticity, which determines the level of possible tourist attendance that will not have a negative impact on the asset [11, 12]. Many destination marketing experts, acknowledging the numerous

positive aspects of the development of tourism, believed that the local assets of cultural significance possessed all the necessary attributes to become a primary tourism attraction. However, as a result of such belief, many communities have made significant investments in those heritage assets, to strictly negative consequences [2]. Therefore tourism valorisation of heritage assets, and the estimation of their value is necessary when planning sustainable development of culture tourism of a destination. Tourism valorisation provides a perspective of the capabilities of cultural monuments which are to be incorporated into the development of tourism. Moreover, it points to the existing correlation between economic effects and conservation management. The application of tourism valorisation provides a means to develop a destination as a cultural destination without the loss of resources or some other negative impact on the heritage asset [13, 10]. Hilary Du Cros has introduced into the process of tourism valorisation of the heritage assets, cultural and tourism sub-indicators and a scale point grading system for these sub-indicators. Taking into account that Hilary Du Cros valorises tourism sector, heritage assets management sector, as well as the degree of robusticity of the heritage asset, we can say that the model has a holistic approach [9, 10].

### **The old town centre in Sombor and the need for preservation of the cultural heritage**

*“Sombor – the green oasis of hack-berry trees, residing on the crossroads, a destination of rich cultural heritage, a region of healthy food and clean water, a centre of sports and recreation, a place of rural and eco-tourism, a town of broad possibilities and decent lives of content people” [14].*

The district of Sombor is located on the far north-west of Republic of Serbia. The town of Sombor is its centre as well as the centre of West-Bačka county. The district itself shares borders with neighbouring countries: Republic of Croatia to the west and Hungary to the north. Sombor, as a town residing on an exceptional geo-strategic position, mostly due to its border proximity as well as great hydrological potential, the river Danube, has an undeniable potential for development of several different types of tourism. In Sombor, tourism is still not profiled. There is significant development of hunting tourism as well as rural tourism in the neighbouring villages that belong to the Sombor municipality [14]. As a town, Sombor has the necessary qualities that would allow for, besides the already developing tourism types, development of cultural tourism, manifestation tourism and nautical tourism. The most significant type of tourism, that Sombor should develop and that could become a foundation for the development of other types of tourism is cultural tourism. Taking into account the significance of cultural tourism, the subject of this paper is tourism valorisation of the old town centre of Sombor, and the analysis of the most significant heritage assets that the town centre consists of and which can contribute to the goal of establishing its position on the map of culture tourism.

A question is raised: why is the preservation and improvement of cultural heritage important? First of all it is important because of the social and national values. Cultural heritage is “public property”, a standing testimony of the history and rise of a nation or even the human kind, a history of a town or a territory and it is passed on from generation to generation. Valorising the heritage leads to better mutual understanding inside the community itself. The end result of the valorisation is social harmony, which involves respect and acknowledgement of different cultural identities, and is one of the key factors of the sustainable development of tourism. The second reason for preservation and improvement of cultural heritage is an income source. The development of tourism entails a chance for local and national economic development. Sources of income that would have economic effects are diverse: ticket sales for museums and galleries, walking tours, sales of the old crafts goods, photographs and postcards. The third reason for preservation of cultural heritage is new employment opportunities. The local community would be employed in the fields of conservation, management, hotels, research activities (marketing experts, researchers, administrators). Valorisation of cultural heritage represents a factor that will create a positive image and attract not only potential tourists, but also big investors that can further contribute to an even greater economical development of the territory, implementing new activities in the field of industry and development [15].

Tourism valorisation is one of the most significant subjects in theoretical tourism. The word valorisation means value determination, evaluation. Valorisation is a professionally-methodological procedure, performed by experts before the tourism orientated use of a heritage

asset. This implies that tourism valorisation represents determining or estimating the value of tourism attractiveness of all phenomena, objects and spaces that besides other characteristics have a characteristic that they are attractive and therefore interesting for tourists, and through them tourists can satisfy their need for tourism [16]. Many heritage assets have the potential to become a tourism product in cultural tourism, because they represent a unique testament of local history, lifestyle and social structure, they promote ethnic traditions of the destination and provide opportunities for various kinds of experiences. The decision to incorporate specific heritage assets into a tourism product is often based on insufficient knowledge about the components that have an impact on the popularity of a tourism attraction and an incomplete estimation of the potential that a local tourism attraction has to become a primary tourism attraction [9]. The significance of tourism valorisation can best be seen through the fact that it is acknowledged not only in theoretical discussions of modern tourism, but also in the choice of locations for tourism facilities, their dimensions and functionality. It is also important for planning a socially adapted tourism on different levels, including buildings, general purpose plans, environment protection and improvement events, tourism propaganda, rich and diverse tourism offer, and a number of other questions that are related to economic and non-economic functions of tourism [17].

Further in the paper, we will describe the most significant heritage assets of the old town centre in Sombor, which will be valorised using the H. Du Cros model:

**The town museum** was founded on the tradition of the “Bač-Bodrog” history association. The association possessed archaeological, numismatic, archive and bibliographic collections. Today one of the most impressive collections of old coins and numismatic literature can be found in town museum, donated by the renown numismatist doctor Imre Fraj. The museum also possesses archaeological, ethnographic and bibliographic collections, which are relevant to the local history [18]. The building now housing the **Town Library “Karlo Bjelički”** was built in 1877. with architecture in neo-renaissance style, to be used by the first Sombor Savings Department [19]. It is the oldest cultural-educational institution in Sombor, and it is among the oldest institution of this type in the country [20]. Karlo Bjelički, head book-keeper of the Sombor Savings Department, made the foundations for the library. The library contains over 300.000 books, with a rarity collection that counts 309 books. The town library became the official main library of the West-Bačka county in 1994 [19]. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the manor was built by doctor Stevan Kronić, and it is an example of classic beauty of eclectic style of architecture. When the family fell into a financial crisis they had to sell the manor to doctor Đorđe Antunić, a pharmacist. After the Second World War, the manor became state property. Today, it is known as “**Kronić Palace**” and it houses the court of trade [18]. “**Grašalković Palace**”, built in the baroque style at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, served as an immigration center and quarantine for German immigrants. Until 1863. it served as a telegraph station, a tax office between the two world wars, and a police station after World War Two [18]. “**Holy Trinity Square**” got its name from the Trinity monument. The Trinity monument was erected in centre of the town square at around half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a tribute to the end of the plague epidemic. After the Second World War, the monument was removed from the town square and today the locals call it “the bald square” [19]. “**Pasha's Tower**” is the only remnant of the “Coborsentmihalj fort” from the time before the Ottoman invasion, as well as the only remnant of the one and a half century long rule of the Ottoman occupation of Sombor. It is the oldest structure in Sombor and it originates from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> or the begging of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Before, there were cannons resting by the fort and today you can still find guard niches between the floors, typical for the Ottoman buildings of the time. Today this 20 meter high tower is a part of the History Archive of Sombor [18]. The first attempt to build the **Town hall** in Sombor was at the beginning of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century at the place of today's Krušperov residence.



Figure. The town hall in old city centre of Sombor [21]

The project supervisor Anton Bauer picked a new lot for the future town hall on market square called “Cop Island”. It was built in 1809, the town hall went through many renovations that changed its initial look – the exterior was renewed, in a more decorative, eclectic style, the back side was expanded, and a fountain was built in the front yard. Finally, the town hall had 200 different rooms, chambers and halls. In the grand hall an oil painting “The Battle of Senta” by Ferenc Ajzenhut, painted on a single-piece canvas with size of 7 by 4 meters, was placed on the wall [18]. Also, a drawing “Bird's-eye view of Sombor” by the renowned architect Branislav Jovin, can be found. This work represents a synthesis of urbanism, engineering and art. This masterpiece contains 15.000 objects in Sombor, minutely drawn using bird's-eye view photographs and geodetic maps as guidance. Today the town hall acts as headquarters of Sombor municipality as well as many other government institutions [19]. “**Plebanija**” or the former Franciscan convent, which stands beside the Holy Trinity church, housed the local government before the town hall was built. On the back wall of the building is one of the local attractions: a sundial with an inscription “One of these is your last” [19]. “**Preparandija**” or the school for teachers is the legacy of the patriarch of the Serbian orthodox church and metropolitan of Karlovci, Georgije Branković. It was built with the intention of training new teachers, which was the initiative of a pedagogue Avram Mrazović [18].

### **Objectives and methodology of research**

In planning a sustainable development of cultural tourism at a destination, it is very important to valorise heritage assets, estimate their value from the viewpoint of tourism, because it provides the perspective whether these assets can be incorporated in the development of tourism. In the process of valorisation of heritage assets of a destination, all the destination's assets should be included whether “tangible” or “untangible” [9].

The objective of this research project is the determination of tourism attractiveness of the old town centre in Sombor, based on the valorisation of a number of separate heritage assets, as well as determining which of the heritage assets can be a stand-alone tourism attraction, what is the market appeal of cultural heritage of Sombor and what measures should be taken to raise competitiveness to a higher level.

### Tourism valorisation based on the model Hilary Du Cros

In order to adequately initiate the development of tourism of the Sombor town centre, it is necessary to perform an adequate tourism valorisation, which in its own right can be a starting point in making plans for the tourism development. Hilary Du Cros [22] introduced into the process of valorisation a number of tourism sub-indicators and a corresponding grading system. The model is very complex and complete, because it grades not only tourism, but also the sector of heritage asset management. She also introduced sub-indicators for grading the robusticity of a heritage asset [9]. For the purposes of this research project, we will perform valorisation of market appeal of heritage assets of the old town centre, and factors relating to the design of the tourism product. In the sector of heritage assets management, valorisation of cultural significance and robusticity is performed. Every sub-indicator is assessed individually, with grades ranging from 0 to 5. For some sub-indicators highest grade can be lower than 5. The final score of a sector is calculated by adding results for individual grades. After the analysis, a market appeal/robusticity matrix is constructed, with 9 cells, marked by  $M(i, j)$  ( $i, j = 1, 2, 3$ ) and for every heritage asset it is determined to which cell it belongs, depending on the grade it has received [9].

#### Research results

Sub-indicators in the Hilary Du Cros model:

**Tourism sector** – in this category sub-indicators are graded in the range of 0 to 5. After grading, individual grades are added together, and finally depending on the score are put into one of the groups: poor appeal 0-20, moderate appeal 21-40 and high appeal 41-60.

Market appeal of the old town centre in Sombor constitutes of the following sub-indicators, with the grade range of 0 to 5:

- *Ambient* of the old town centre was recently renovated. “Kralja Petra I” street was tiled, the park was renovated, candelabras were installed and a fountain was built. After the plane trees were cut down, the exterior of the buildings was revitalised, and came into the main view. Present grade is 3.
  - The old town centre in Sombor is *well known out of the local area*, widely known for its architecture and urbanisation, so the grade is 4.
  - Old town centre does not represent *an important national symbol* so the grade is 0.
  - *An “interesting” tale can be told* about the old town centre, primarily about the cultural monuments, specific paintings and the lives of their authors. So the grade is 4.
  - The old town centre *possesses certain characteristics that distinctly differentiate it from the rest of the heritage assets*, because there are not any similar heritage assets anywhere else in the town. Present grade is 4.
  - Old town centre is *attractive for special purposes*, because it possesses the potential, but is underused, so the grade is 3.
  - Old town centre does not possess a high degree of *complementarity with other tourism assets on destination or the region*, so the grade is 3, because it possesses a certain potential to be complementary to hunting tourism, rural tourism, nautical tourism and manifestation tourism.
  - *Tourism activity in the region* is present to some extent. Effort should be invested in increasing the activity of the Tourism Organisation of Sombor, promotion and presentation of the cultural offer of the town, the cooperation of Tourism Organisation of Sombor, culture-orientated organisations, citizens and any interested parties should be raised to a higher level. So present grade is 2.
  - *Destination is associated with culture* but not in the extent that would bring it to the highest level, which we could associate with the last sub-indicator and say that the two sub-indicators are correlated. Grade is 3.

Factors relevant to the design of the tourism product:

- *Access to the heritage asset* is very favourable so the grade is 4 (grade range is from 0 to 5).
- *Transport to the old town centre in Sombor* is good, considering both from the surrounding villages and in the town itself. However, it is necessary to reintroduce the public transportation inside the town. So, the grade is 2 (grade range is from 0 to 3).

▪ *In the immediate vicinity of the old town centre* there are cultural attractions such as the monastery of “Saint Arhiđakon Stefan”, the church of “Saint Jovan Preteče”, galleries. The distance to the cultural monuments can be covered on foot, so the grade is 3 (grade range is from 0 to 3).

▪ *Service availability* of the old town centre is adequate. Parking, tourism signalisation which includes all significant monuments in the town, numerous places for refreshment and accessibility of tourism information in the tourism info center grant the grade of 4.

Total score of the tourism sector is 39. This result indicates that the market appeal of the old town centre is of moderate appeal (poor appeal 0-20, moderate appeal 21-40 and high appeal 41-60).

**Heritage asset management sector** – consists of two indicators: cultural significance and robusticity.

#### Cultural significance

▪ *Aesthetic value of the old town centre in Sombor* is high so the grade is 2 (grade range is from 0 to 2).

▪ The old town centre has *high historical value*, because it possesses heritage assets dating back to the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century. So, the grade is 2 (grade range is from 0 to 2).

▪ *Educational value* of the old town centre is high, because of its rich history. Grade is 2 (grade range is from 0 to 2).

▪ *Social value* of the old town centre is high, so the grade is 2 (grade range is from 0 to 2)

▪ *Scientific research value* of the old town centre is low, so the grade is 1 (grade range is from 0 to 2).

▪ The old town centre in Sombor does not possess *the rarity of a heritage asset on a destination and in the region* so the grade is 1 (grade range is from 0 to 3).

▪ The old town centre is *representative*, but insufficient on its own to attract visitors in greater numbers, so the grade is 2 (grade range is from 0 to 4).

#### Robusticity

▪ The old town centre in Sombor *is not fragile* so it can host a large number of visitors. So the grade is 4 (grade range is from 0 to 4).

▪ The old town centre recently went through one phase of renovation, but there is still need for renovation of some other parts, so the *renovation state* is good and the grade is 2 (grade range is from 0 to 4)

▪ The old town centre is a part of the South-east Europe Transnational Cooperation Project, where Sombor, Apatin and neighbouring villages are the focus of heritage asset management, through tours, rural tourism and promotions of heritage assets not yet acknowledged as significant factors of development for these regions. First activities of this project started last year (2012.), through cooperation of the authorised personnel of the project (among which are Faculty of Sciences, Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel management in Novi Sad, as well as Vojvodina chamber of commerce) with local interested parties (tourism organisations, craftsmen, local investors). The goal of the program is education through workshops, with an aim to raise awareness about the existence and significance of heritage assets in this region, and strengthening of the tourism politics. Taking into consideration the *heritage asset management project* and the effort that interested parties put into it, and the success potential, the grade is 5 (grade range is from 0 to 5).

▪ *Potential for continual investments and consulting of key stakeholders* is possible to connect to the previously mentioned project, but investments should be taken with reserve, with studious market research done beforehand, in order to gain perspective of investment, so the grade is 2 (grade range is from 0 to 5).

▪ When considering the question of *the possibility of negative impact of a large number of visitors on the physical condition of the heritage asset, or the lifestyle and tradition of the local community* the grade is 3, because despite the development of tourism to the present day the old town centre does not show any signs of deterioration, although it is of course necessary to determine the tourist capacity of the destination, to avoid any long term damage to asset (grade range is from 0 to 5).

▪ *Possibility that modification, as an integral part of the product development, has a negative impact on the physical condition of the heritage asset, or the lifestyle and tradition of the local community* is present, if the modification is in the direction of modern architecture, because it would not fit in the local ambient and architecture of the old town centre, which originates from

18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. One of the examples is the construction of a shopping mall “Roda” in the strict center of the town, in “Pariska” street, which is a disgrace in the sense of architecture present in that part of the town. This is for now a sole backwards move, but should act as a reminder of how things should not be done. Therefore the grade is 1 (grade range is from 0 to 5).

Total score of cultural significance/robusticity or the management sector is 29, which corresponds to moderate value (sensitivity/low cultural value 0 to 20; moderate value 21 to 40; high value 41 to 60).

Based on the analysis, the matrix of market appeal/robusticity with 9 cells, marked by M(i,j) (i,j = 1,2,3), is constructed and each valorised asset is associated with one cell, depending on its total scores.

Cells are defined as follows:

M (1,1) – high cultural significance/robusticity and low market appeal;

M (1,2) – high cultural significance/robusticity and moderate market appeal;

M (1,3) – high cultural significance/robusticity and high market appeal;

M (2,1) – moderate cultural significance/robusticity and low market appeal;

M (2,2) – moderate cultural significance/robusticity and moderate market appeal;

M (2,3) – moderate cultural significance/robusticity and high market appeal;

M (3,1) – low cultural significance/robusticity and low market appeal;

M (3,2) – low cultural significance/robusticity and moderate market appeal;

M (3,3) – low cultural significance/robusticity and high market appeal.

Table: Matrix of market appeal and robusticity [22]

Robusticity	41-60	M (1,1)	M (1,2)	M (1,3)
	21-40	M (2,1)	M (2,2)	M (2,3)
	0-20	M (3,1)	M (3,2)	M (3,3)
		0-20	21-40	41-60
	Market appeal			

Heritage assets with moderate robusticity and moderate market appeal, M(2,2) cell, like the old town centre in Sombor, should be adequately promoted and a part of the sustainable development project, that will at the same time provide an image to the heritage asset and protect it from a possible negative consequences from a large number of visits. With this in mind, the tourism carrying capacity of the heritage asset, and monitor all kinds of activities with the goal of broadening the tourism offer. The Tourism Organisation of Sombor, with its expert staff, should have a huge role in this, by promoting and organising as many events as possible that will attract tourists, as well as work on attracting big investors.

The old town centre in Sombor is placed in the M (2,2) cell in the market appeal and robusticity matrix and has moderate cultural significance/robusticity and moderate market appeal. However, Sombor is an important center of north Bačka county, a widely known oasis of urban verdure, known for its famous Sombor cheese, renowned painters, famous carriages, songs of Zvonko Bogdan, smiling people and relaxed lifestyle.

### **Recommended measures for improvement of development of the cultural tourism**

Based on the cultural attractiveness evaluation of previously mentioned assets, the most relevant measures of action will be described, in order to further the development of cultural tourism in Sombor.

Recommended measures:

Realisation of an adequate management plan, with a clear line of development action, specified parties that would participate and clearly specified goals, methods and means of reaching those goals;

Activities of the Tourism Organisation of Sombor:

1. Employ experts in the field of tourism management, marketing and economy experts;

2. Create an interesting and affordable tourism offer, that would incorporate the best that Sombor can offer, as well as additional activities that would include the surrounding rural areas;
  3. Perform a tourism market segmentation with the need to determine the target group for the tourism product;
  4. Create a marketing plan, which will define who, when and how should be performing marketing activities;
  5. Continuously perform tourism valorisation and improve the heritage assets;
  6. Participate on both of national and international tourism fairs.
- I. Motivation of the local population to participate in the development of tourism through:
    - Seminars;
    - Education;
    - Presentation;
    - Workshop.
  - II. Employment of the local population / encouragement of practice of the old crafts;
  - III. Creation of a distinguishable brand.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the estimation and final scores a conclusion of Sombor tourism offer sub-indicators can be drawn. Based on the research, the old town centre in Sombor has a moderate market appeal and moderate robusticity, so it needs further promotion and improvement to become recognisable on the national level. It is necessary for the tourism valorisation to be taken seriously by the experts currently working in the tourism sector, performed adequately and on that basis, to further improve the elements of the tourism offer, making it attractive to visitors and in accordance with the “value for money” principle.

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### **Улучшение потенциала туризма старого центра города Сомбор на основе модели Хилари дю Кросс**

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**Анотација.** Културно наслеђе и туризам взаимосвязаны. Развитие туризма способствует экономическому развитию, поэтому, для создания подходящего турпродукта, необходимо, в первую очередь, произвести эффективное улучшение культурного наследия. Старые центры городов, фактически, являются объектами различных видов деятельности, направленной на их развитие и адаптацию к новым веяниям. Цель исследования данной работы – старый центр города Сомбор, направленное на определение его статуса на конкурентном рынке культурного туризма, существует ли определенный мотив, который мог бы привлечь потенциальных туристов, а также на определение необходимых действий, необходимых для улучшения качества и конкурентоспособности, чтобы поднять их на более высокий уровень. С расчетом на это, в данной статье изучается улучшение туризма старого центра города, основываясь на модели Х. дю Кросс.

**Ключевые слова:** Сомбора; исторический центр; туристическая валоризации; Хилари дю Кро.