

Attitudes of Local Population on the Importance of Events Nourishing Culture and Tradition of Croats in Vojvodina

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Abstract

AP Vojvodina is a highly multi-ethnic community, with 29 nations and national or ethnic groups living on its territory. Croats make only 2.43% of the population of Vojvodina, but with their rich culture and tradition, they represent a significant potential for the development of Vojvodina's cultural tourism. The richness of customs is best represented through numerous events that take place in areas with the majority of Croatian population. The paper presents the results of a survey conducted to determine how informed the population of Vojvodina is about the maintenance and significance of events of Croats in Vojvodina. A sample of 158 respondents was obtained. Descriptive statistical analysis, t-test of independent samples and analysis of variance ANOVA were used to analyse the obtained data.

Keywords: Croats of Vojvodina, events, attitudes, local population, Vojvodina

Introduction

Vojvodina is defined as an autonomous province of citizens living in it, within the Republic of Serbia. AP Vojvodina covers 24.4% of the territory of the Republic of Serbia or 21.588 km². According to the last census from 2011, AP Vojvodina has a population 1.931.809, which makes 21.6% of the total population of the Republic of Serbia. The diversity of Vojvodina is contributed by 29 ethnic groups, the most numerous being Serbs, Hungarians, Romanians, Bunjevci, Slovaks, Croats and Ruthenians. Serbs are the majority population (66.8%), followed by Hungarians (13%), Slovaks (2.6%), Croats (2.4%), Romani (2.2%), Romanians (1.3%), Montenegrins (1.2%), Yugoslavs (0.6%), and Macedonians (0.5%), as well other minor ethnic groups that include: Ukrainians, Muslims, Germans, Albanians, Slovenes, Bulgarians and others (<http://popis2011.stat.rs/>; <http://www.srbija.gov.rs/pages/article.php?id=45629>).

It can be observed from the above mentioned that one of the main features of Vojvodina is multiculturalism, that is, a high degree of joint residence of different ethnic groups in the same

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area. It is difficult to imagine the existence of Vojvodina, its autonomy without the existence of multiple ethnicities, languages, religions, different cultural patterns (Affirmation of Multiculturalism and Tolerance in Vojvodina, 2008).

In addition to the majority nation, in Vojvodina there are many ethnic groups that are highly differentiated in terms of demographic development, socio-economic, historical and cultural-civilization characteristics, national emancipation and political organization.

The multiculturalism in Vojvodina can be proven by a range of compelling data. Classes in public primary schools in Vojvodina are taught in 6 languages (Serbian, Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian, Croatian and Ruthenian), and in secondary schools in 5 languages (Serbian, Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian and Ruthenian). Public information in media is broadcasted in eight languages (Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian, Croatian, Romani, Ukrainian and Ruthenian). The official use of languages of ethnic groups is present in 39 of 45 municipalities in Vojvodina. The non-governmental sector was also developed; members of national and ethnic groups in Vojvodina formed hundreds of active associations and organizations for the cultivation of customs, folklore, development of national culture and language, development of education, etc. (Affirmation of Multiculturalism and Tolerance in Vojvodina, 2008).

Respect for groups and indigenous culture is vital to the general well-being of those communities and the people belonging to them. Ethnicity is a notable and significant element of cultural communication. Cultural programmes are also a powerful way to engage with other groups and counter harmful stereotypes. And in those countries where groups and indigenous peoples are able to practice their cultures freely, the benefits not only for their own communities but society as a whole can be seen easily (Grant, 2016). Where different cultures are recognized and respected, life is richer for all.

Croats as an Ethnic Group in Vojvodina

According to the 2011 census report, there were 47.033 Croats living in Vojvodina, representing 2.4% of the population in province. Croatian is one of the six official languages of Vojvodina. Croats live in Backa, in the municipalities of Subotica, Sombor, Novi Sad (Petrovaradin), Sonta, Apatin, Monostor, and in towns of Ruma, Sremska Mitrovica, and settlements Hrtkovići and Nikinci in Srem. Smaller numbers of Croats live in Banat, Opovo and Starcevo. Croats came to these areas in a dozen migratory waves, in different historical periods and for different reasons from the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia (<http://www.zkvh.org.rs/index.php/vijesti/vijesti-iz-zajednice/5777-hkd-vladimir-nazor-iz-stanistica>). The oldest Croatian community in Vojvodina are the Croats in Srem, who have been living there since the settlement of Slavic tribes in the Danube region. More intensive migrations started 230 years ago to strengthen the border with the Turkish Empire, about 4000 Croats came, mainly from central Slavonia. They began to be mentioned from the second half of the 17th century, during the Habsburgs, at a time when the Ottoman Empire lost Buda and then other territories in central Europe. In Backa live Croats who immigrated at the behest of the authorities during the colonization of Vojvodina, as well as Croats who came to Vojvodina by internal migration during Austro-Hungary and, later, Yugoslavia. During the colonization from 1945 to 1948 about 4000 Croats from Dalmatia, from the area of Metković, Sinje, Vrlika, Drnis, Benkovac, Split, Šibenik, Trogir and Zadar immigrated to Vojvodina. Also, people from other parts of Croatia migrated, mainly from Gorski Kotar and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Dalmatian Croats were mostly settled in Stanisić and Ridjica, to a smaller extent in Sivac, Gudurica and in bigger towns in Vojvodina.

na (<http://www.cink.rs/index.php/h/73-hrvati-u-vojvodini>; Popović, Arđelan, 2019; Kovačević et al., 2010). “Although there are no official numbers, according to the estimates of the human right NGOs approximately 30,000 ethnic Croats left Vojvodina during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia” (Ristić, 2012). When we talk about teaching in Croatian language in secondary schools, since 2002 about 400 students attend classes in Croatian language in five primary and two secondary schools in Subotica every year, and since 2017 also in one primary school in Backi Monostor. There are about fifty Croatian cultural associations in Vojvodina, and more than half of them have been created in the last twenty years. They represent the most visible and massive segment of the Croatian cultural scene. Over the years, the cultural space of Croats in Vojvodina recorded a large production of events, about four hundred, and cultural practices show a high representation of folklore-traditional content in the association’s programs (Čelikovic, 2019). Associations differ in their institutional development and in richness of the content they produce, but they still work together to preserve mostly folklore content from cultural heritage. This especially applies on rural cultural and artistic societies, which exist in almost every settlement where a significant number of Croats live (Tavankut, Djurdjin, Mala Bosna, Stari Zednik, Bajmok, Svetozar Miletic, Sonta, Backi Monostor, Backi Breg, Bac, Plavna, Vajska, Slankamen, Golubinci, Petrovaradin, Stanisic). In the city centres it is a little more pluralistic (Ruma, Sremska Mitrovica, Sombor, Subotica) – there are contents that are not related to folklore or traditional culture, which is especially true of cultural associations in Subotica, which in the field of their work have publishing books, magazines, organizing literary evenings and even scientific meetings (Žigmanov, 2011).

One of the most important cultural institutions is Matica hrvatska, founded in 1998 with headquarters in Subotica. Matica hrvatska gathers members of the Croatian community in order to preserve their tradition and cultural identity in the territory of Vojvodina (<http://www.cink.rs/index.php/h/73-hrvati-u-vojvodini>). The Croatian ethnic group in Vojvodina conducts cultural activities through the Institute of Culture of Croats in Vojvodina, which was established in 2009.

The National Community of Croats in Vojvodina holds a large number of events, which significantly contributes to the preservation of the intangible cultural heritage of Croats living in Vojvodina. Events of Croats in Vojvodina can be divided according to content into traditional, literary, artistic, musical, religious, cultural and other events. In Table 1 there is an overview of the events. The support of the local community is of great importance for the success of the events, as they contribute to bonding within community, as well as to mutual bonding of communities, and are important opportunities for the society, family, and individuals to express their identities, way of life, social relationships and feelings of belonging (Besermenji, Pivac, 2019).

Table 1. *The list of events of Croats in Vojvodina*

Type of events	Name of the event	The venue
Drama events	International review of amateur drama companies	Sombor
	Memorial of amateur drama groups “Antun Aladzic”	Svetozar Miletic
	Amateur theatre festival	Ljutovo
Musical event	Croatian Tamburitza Review	Ljutovo
	Annual concert of HKPD “Djurdjin”	Djurdjin
	Concert of Grand Tamburitza Orchestra HKPD “Gubec”	Ruma
	Evenings and nights of Ilija Zarkovic Zabar	Golubinci
	Bunjevac songs festival	Subotica
	Marian folk singing festival	Backi Monostor

Type of events	Name of the event	The venue
Musical event	Croatian Religious Song Festival HosanaFest	Subotica
	Mika's days	Backi Breg
Literary events	Ikavica-speech of Dalmatian, Lika, Herzegovina, Sokci and Bunjevci Croats	Stanisic
	Preprek's spring	Novi Sad
	Days of A.G. Matos and dr Josip Andric	Plavna
	Literary gathering	Subotica
	Days of Balint Vujkov	Subotica
	Provincial review of the reciters in Croatian language	Subotica
	Lira naive	Every year another place
	Art colony "Stipan Sabic"	Subotica
	Art colony "Panon"	Subotica
	Art colony "Ivan Gundic Ciso"	Stanisic
	Art colony "Kolorit"	Sombor
	International art colony "Sonta"	Sonta
	Art colony "Provala"	Lake Provala
	The first colony of naive straw technique	Tavankut
Traditional events	"Sremci Sremu"- a joint event of Srem associations	Sremska Mitrovica
	"Sokci and heritage"- a joint event of Sokci associations in Backa	Backi Monostor
	"Tyre"	Plavna
	"Masquerade"	Ruma
	Great feast	Subotica
	Feast of memories	Subotica
	Fisherman and bachelor meeting	Backi Monostor
	Sokci evening	Sonta
	Seminar of Bunjevac creativity	Tavankut
	Traditional women's combing and Croatian hairstyles in the region	Bac
	Golubinci masquerade	Golubinci
	Duzijanca (harvest feast)	Subotica
	Children's Folklore Festival "Children are a decoration of the world)	Tavankut
Religious events	Under Your protection	Plavna
	To Srem from the heart	Sid
	Testament day	Backi Monostor
Other events	Anniversary of the colonization of Croats from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to Vojvodina	Stanisic
	Memorial Birthday of Croatian Ban Josip Jelacic	Petrovaradin
	Celebration of Croatian National Day	Zemun
	Hrcko's masquerade	Subotica

Source: <http://www.zkvh.org.rs/index.php/manifestacije/lista-svih-manifestacija>

Methodology and Research Description

The questionnaire used in the survey consists of three parts. The first part includes 6 socio-demographic questions (gender, age, nationality, occupation, amount of monthly income and respondents' education). The second part consists of questions related to the information and attendance of the respondents of the four events of the Croatian ethnic group, selected on the basis of their representation in the media. This section also examined the impact of certain factors on the lack of affirmation of the events of the Croatian ethnic group, which were evaluated by the respondents using a five-point Likert scale (1- completely disagree, 2- disagree, 3- no opinion, 4- agree, 5- totally agree). The third part of the questionnaire focuses on the respondents' attitudes towards the events of the Croatian ethnic group. The questionnaire was taken from a model used to explore attitudes of visitors to cultural events in rural areas of Vojvodina (Pivac et al., 2014). A total of 21 questions were analysed for major components. A five-factor structure was obtained ("socio-economic impacts", "organization", "entertainment", "promotion" and "services") which explains a total of 66.5% of the variance. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test (KMO) of sampling adequacy was 0.817, which exceeds the recommended value of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1974). Barlett's test for sphericity reached statistical significance ($p=0.000$). The reliability analysis confirmed that all factors are reliable, as Cronbach's alpha (α) for each construct is greater than 0.7 (Kaiser, 1974), ranging from 0.700 to 0.802 (Table 5).

The survey was conducted between August the 15th and October the 15th, 2019. The survey was conducted in Novi Sad, Subotica, Sombor and Ruma using a combination of multiple survey methods. 42% of the sample was obtained using the method "face-to face", while 58% of the sample was obtained electronically. The electronic questionnaire in google form was sent to the e-mail addresses of employees of tourist organizations in Vojvodina, travel agencies, cultural institutions as well as students of Faculty of Sciences, Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management. A sample of 158 subjects was obtained. The collected data were entered into the SPSS database and all further analyzes were carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0.

The paper set out two starting hypotheses: H₁ – The population of Vojvodina is not sufficiently familiar with the events of Croatian ethnic group and H₂ – There is a statistically significant difference in the respondents' attitudes about the events in relation to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Research Results

Sample description

Female respondents were represented in the sample by 56.3% and male 43.7%. The majority of respondents (55.7%) belong to the age groups of 41-60 years old. In terms of national structure, Serbs were the most dominant respondents (58.2%), followed by Hungarian respondents (20.3%), Croatian and Slovak nationality. The most respondents are employed (67.1%), and in terms of monthly income, the largest group is those who earn from € 201 to € 400 (48.7%). According to the educational structure, the most numerous were respondents with completed secondary (56.3%) and faculty (21.5%) (Table 2).

Table 2. Results of descriptive statistical analysis

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Male	69	43.7
Female	89	56.3
Age		
21-30	17	10.8
31-40	29	18.4
41-50	45	28.5
51-60	43	27.2
>61	24	15.2
Nacionality		
Serbian	92	58.2
Hungarian	32	20.3
Slovaks	12	7.6
Croats	22	13.9
Occupation		
Student	22	13.9
Employed	106	67.1
Unempolyed	12	7.6
Retired	18	11.4
Monthly income		
below 200 €	22	13.9
201-400 €	77	48.7
401-600 €	43	27.2
601-1000 €	9	5.7
above 1000 €	7	4.4
Education		
Secondary school	89	56.3
College	13	8.2
Faculty	34	21.5
M.Sc. degree	22	13.9

Duzijanca (Harvest feast) in Subotica (Table 3) is the only event familiar to more than half of the respondents in the observed sample. The other three events are unknown for the majority of respondents (from 65.8% to 94.3%).

Table 3. Respondents' awareness of Croatian ethnic group events

Name of the events		Are you familiar with the event?			
		YES		NO	
		frequency	percentage	frequency	percentage
1	Duzijanca (Harvest feast) in Subotica	84	53.2	74	46.8
2	Sokci's evening in Sonta	9	5.7	149	94.3
3	Veliko prelo (Great feast) in Subotica	27	17.1	131	82.9
4	Masquerade in Ruma	54	34.2	104	65.8

The decisive factors for the lack of affirmation of the events of the Croatian ethnic group are the lack of information on the events (3.950) and the lack of leisure time (2.918). Other factors had arithmetic values below 2.5 and were not recognized as limiting factors for the subjects (Table 4).

Table 4. *The influence of certain factors for insufficient affirmation of the Croatian ethnic group events*

Questions	Aritmetic value	Standard deviation
Lack of funding	1.551	0.826
Lack of company	2.177	1.309
Lack of leisure time	2.918	1.441
Lack of will	2.361	1.540
Lack of information on the event	3.950	1.232
Poor organization of the event	1.462	1.115

Based on the results presented in Table 5, it can be concluded that ‘Promotion’ is the most important factor related to the maintenance of events. Respondents gave the greatest importance to the statement that events are of great importance for the promotion of the local milieu. The questions of “entertainment” and “services” are of the least importance for the respondents.

Table 5. *Descriptive statistics (according to factors and questions) and analysis of the questionnaire reliability*

Factors and questions	Arithmetic value	Standard deviation	Cronbach's α coefficient
F1- Socio-economic impacts	4.453	0.398	0.802
The event should be in a convenient location with parking space provided.	4.418	0.697	
The events allow the exchange of ideas among ethnic groups in the community.	4.652	0.478	
The events contribute to a sense of community.	4.646	0.608	
Events increase the number of tourists.	4.551	0.603	
Events have the effect of increasing cooperation between people.	4.494	0.738	
Events allow local population to earn extra income.	4.475	0.605	
Events have a positive cultural impact.	4.519	0.636	
Events help improve the quality of life in the community.	3.867	0.938	
F2- Organization	3.986	0.538	0.701
The event should include accompanying programs (education, competitions, and workshops).	4.538	0.500	
The event should be organized by the local government (venue).	3.905	0.788	
The event should be organized by professional associations.	4.183	0.902	
The event should be organized by a stakeholder group interested in making a profit.	3.316	0.945	
F3- entertainment	3.568	0.539	0.759
The event should be entertaining.	4.298	0.810	
Performance of musicians is necessary.	2.304	0.615	
Events have a rich and meaningful program.	4.101	0.733	

Factors and questions	Arithmetic value	Standard deviation	Cronbach's α coefficient
F4-Promotion	4.478	0.479	0.700
The event should be promoted in neighbouring countries.	4.348	0.789	
Brochures should be distributed at the event to promote exhibitors.	4.430	0.769	
Events are of great importance for the promotion of the local community.	4.658	0.476	
F5- Services	3.795	0.715	0.734
Safety of visitors during the events is high.	4.012	0.896	
The price of products and services are affordable (food, drink, souvenirs).	3.722	0.789	
The quality of products and services is exceptional (food, drink, souvenirs).	3.652	0.881	

The analysis of the general attitude towards (Table 6) indicates that the respondents are aware of the importance of the rich Croatian culture for tourism development ($M=3.9937$; $SD=1.1030$). They are also of the opinion that Croatian culture is insufficiently presented through the media ($M=2.6835$; $SD=0.5540$).

Table 6. General attitude of the respondents towards Croats as ethnic group in Vojvodina

Items	Mean	Std. Dev.
I am interested in learning more about the culture of Croats.	4.5127	0.7292
I consider the culture of Croats in Vojvodina to be a good potential for tourism development.	3.9937	1.1030
I think that the culture of Croats is well represented through the media.	2.6835	0.5540
I think that the culture of Croats is represented in the educational program.	2.7785	0.6447
Croatian culture is well represented in the tourist offer of Vojvodina.	3.0190	0.8992

T-test results by gender of respondents

T-test of independent samples was applied with the aim of comparing arithmetic value of responses between male and female respondents (Table 7). The analysis of the obtained data concludes that there are statistically significant differences in the respondents' answers with respect to gender in two factors: 'socio-economic influences' and 'entertainment' at significance level $p < 0.01$, and in two factors 'promotion of' and 'services' at a significance level of $p < 0.05$. The result of this difference may be the greater interest of women in handicraft products as well as in the preparation and purchase of authentic gastronomic specialities.

Table 7. T-test results by gender

Factor	Arithmetic mean		t-test
	Male (n=69)	Female (n=89)	
F1	4.361	4.524	-2.603*
F2	3.946	4.017	-0.823
F3	3.416	3.685	-3.211*
F4	4.391	4.547	-2.042**
F5	3.652	3.906	-2.246**

* $p < 0,01$; ** $p < 0,05$

Results of analysis of variance ANOVA with respect to age structure of respondents

Using the analysis of variance ANOVA, it was examined whether there was a statistically significant relationship between the dependent variables (separate factors) and the independent variables (socio-demographic characteristics of respondents – age, occupation, education, income and nationality). The results of one-way analysis of one-factor variance indicate that at a significance level of $p < 0.01$, there are statistically significant differences with respect to the age of the subjects (Table 8). The differences are that older respondents give more importance to the attribute “entertainment”. The explanation for the obtained results can be found in the assumption that older respondents are very much in the mood to visit different cultural contents, to participate in entertainment and all additional offers to get out of their daily routine. They have more knowledge about the culture and customs of ethnic groups as well as the importance of manifestations for their preservation, but also their economic importance for the local environment.

Based on the results of the T-test and analysis of variance ANOVA, it is concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in the respondents’ attitudes about events in relation to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (age). H 2 is confirmed only for Entertainment (F3).

Table 8. Analysis of the variance ANOVA with respect to the age structure of the respondents

Factor	Middle value					F	LSD post hoc test
	group 1 (21-30)	group 2 (31-40)	group 3 (41-50)	group 4 (51-60)	group 5 (61+)		
F1	4.3162	4.3879	4.5278	4.4622	4.4688	1.109	-
F2	3.8971	3.8621	3.9611	4.0581	4.1146	1.061	-
F3	3.4368	3.6275	3.7984	3.9028	4.0296	3.634*	1,2<3,4,5
F4	4.4314	4.3908	4.5556	4.5039	4.4306	0.658	-
F5	3.3725	3.3793	3.6889	3.6047	3.9389	2.232	-

* $p < 0,01$

Conclusion

Tourists’ interest in becoming familiar with different cultures is increasingly dominant in contemporary tourist trends. Considering the world tourist trends, tourist workers are becoming aware of the importance of cultural tourism development, in accordance with the very rich cultural offer of ethnic groups living in the territory of AP Vojvodina.

In Vojvodina there is a prevailing sense of the values of multiculturalism and ethnic tolerance as enduring commitments, however, the results of the survey indicate that the population is insufficiently informed about the historical and cultural aspects of the centuries-old common life of nations in the territory of Vojvodina.

The most visited and well-known event of the Croats in Vojvodina, of the four elected, is Duzijanica (the harvest feast), which takes place every year in Subotica. Respondents believe that the decisive factor for the lack of affirmation of events is the lack of information on their maintenance. Based on the results, hypothesis H1 was confirmed – the population of Vojvodi-

na is not sufficiently familiar with the events of the Croatian ethnic group. This confirms that in addition to the Hungarian ethnic group (Pivac, 2017), the population of Vojvodina is no more familiar with the events of another ethnic group – Croats. This hypothesis was confirmed in the analysis of the variance of the ANOVA with respect to the age of the respondents. There was a significant difference in the answers related to the importance of events, so the second hypothesis H2 was partially accepted – there is a statistically significant difference in the respondents' attitudes about events in relation to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

In our society today there is a low level of knowledge about the past and culture of Vojvodina, in general, and ignorance about other national communities is especially present. The reasons for this situation are, first and foremost, the lack or low level of education of the population or the lack of direct experience in this field. Culture is essential to ethnic groups and indigenous communities – it forms part of their essence. Language, songs, traditional crafts and dance are often used as markers of belonging to a group. In many cases, distinct traditions handed down can provide a unique character that allows minority and indigenous communities to create and sell their products, and thereby gain valuable income from their culture.

Introducing youth and adults to folk customs, folk dances and folk music of the people and nationalities should contribute to the preservation of identity, spread culture and make social solidarity stronger, respect the diversity and promote ethnic relations in this region.

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