

Original scientific article

Received: 20.03.2024;

Received in revised form: 08.05.2024;

Accepted: 20.05.2024;

Available online: 14.10.2024.

UDC: 338.48:7/8(497.11)

doi: 10.5937/zrgfub2472135N

TOURIST VALORIZATION OF THE CULTURAL POTENTIAL OF THE HOMOLJE REGION

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Abstract: The valorization of the cultural potential of the Homolje region is a key process for the preservation and promotion of its rich cultural heritage. This involves recognizing, respecting and enhancing the value of various cultural elements such as traditions, customs, architecture, art and language. Research in this area shows how it promotes tourism and economic development while preserving cultural identities by using qualitative-quantitative methods and Hilary du Cross' cultural motif valorization methods. The problem of the study of Homolje lies in recognizing and valuing the cultural motifs of the region for the purposes of tourism development. The objectives of valorizing the cultural potential in tourism are reflected in the preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of Homolje in order to attract tourists, support the local economy and strengthen the identity of the community. The results of the qualitative-quantitative analysis conducted confirm that the cultural motifs of Homolje are characterized as sites of good quality and moderate touristic value. The Hilary du Cros analysis shows a moderate value of the indicators of cultural significance and market attractiveness of the cultural assets. These results indicate favorable conditions for the development of cultural tourism in Homolje, with appropriate monitoring, planning, promotion and protection of the area from possible damage during tourist visits. In addition, the valorization of cultural motifs promotes social cohesion and intercultural understanding. Engaging with the different facets of Homolje's cultural heritage helps individuals realize the importance of intercultural dialog and respect for diversity. Despite important steps, challenges such as limited financial resources and preserving authenticity in tourism remain. Collaboration with local institutions and community involvement are crucial to the success of this process. In essence, enhancing the cultural motifs of Homolje plays a central role in preserving identity, promoting economic growth and improving intercultural understanding.

Keywords: tourism, Homolje, valorization, cultural values, region

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Introduction

The focus of this article is on the enhancement of cultural heritage through sustainable tourism. The concept of sustainable tourism usually encompasses three aspects of sustainability: economic sustainability, i.e. the valuation of natural, social and human capital in accounting processes at the corporate, regional or national level, as well as the internalization of negative externalities; social sustainability, i.e. the creation of conditions for sustainable tourism. i.e. the creation of conditions for the growth of social capital through social cohesion, social justice, respect for cultural identity, honesty, ethics, etc. and environmental sustainability, i.e. the responsible use of natural resources and environmental protection (Afrić-Rakitovac & Urošević, 2017). The importance of valorizing cultural motifs in tourism goes beyond economic benefits and enriches the cultural fabric of the destination and the visitor experience. It promotes sustainable practices, community empowerment and a deeper appreciation for the diverse cultural heritage in destinations (Sivac et al., 2023). The main problem of this thesis is to investigate the lack of tourism infrastructure in the Homolje region and the need to improve the tourism offer in order to attract as many people as possible to visit this region. Possible solutions include building new accommodation capacities, improving the quality of services and content, and making better use of natural and cultural resources. The aim of this work is to define the main problems in the tourism sector in the municipality of Žagubica, i.e. in the area of Homolja, to evaluate the strategies relevant for their solution and to elaborate recommendations for the continuous development of tourism. The main assumption is based on the fact that the implementation of the proposed measures will contribute to an increase in tourist visits, economic benefits for the local community and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, which would enable sustainable development of tourism in this region. The representation of territorial identity means the identification of the social system that includes the people, the traditions, the culture and the landscape, not forgetting the emotional ties and connections between the inhabitants and the territory (Carta, 2002; Bizzari & Micera, 2021).

Today, the concept of landscape is linked to the various areas and aspects of cultural assets. It is, in fact, a kind of basic concept that gives a new value and character to the relationships between nature and history, man and territory (Antić, Tomić, 2017). The regions in the Republic of Serbia have natural, cultural and historical values that define various tourist offers. However, in Homolje, these potentials and types of tourism products are still underutilized, partly due to the differences in existing conditions (nature, cultural and historical heritage) and partly due to the created conditions such as accessibility, infrastructure, service sector, sports and

recreational facilities and tourism organizations. Homolje is still an underdeveloped but resource-rich and beautiful region of Serbia.

Table 1. Budget income per capita, RSD

Year/area	2019	2020	2021	2022
The Republic of Serbia	47.400	45.970	56.521	65.314
Braničevski district	45.290	43.485	49.930	53.658
Municipality of Žagubica	44.602	45.676	50.055	56.968

Source: Municipalities and regions in the Republic of Serbia, 2020, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade., Municipalities and regions in the Republic of Serbia, 2021, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade., Municipalities and regions in the Republic of Serbia, 2022, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade., Municipalities and regions in the Republic of Serbia, 2023, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade

The municipality of Žagubica is one of the most underdeveloped municipalities in the Republic of Serbia. The economic development and the state of the local economy at the current level of development is characterized by inadequate use of development resources, which is reflected in the constant and pronounced economic backwardness of this municipality. The existing resources (mountains, rivers, forests, pastures, etc.) represent the main municipal development potential, which largely coincides with the strategic determinations of the Republic's economic development directions (tourism, agriculture, forestry and wood processing). Therefore, it is necessary to change the policy of regional development towards greater support of underdeveloped areas, especially the most underdeveloped ones that have development opportunities (Spatial Plan of the Municipality of Žagubica, 2010).

Table 1 shows that in the Municipality of Žagubica, household revenues per inhabitant are constantly increasing and are in line with the national and district average. However, the municipality's tax capacity in the period 2018 - 2020 is relatively low and amounts to 24 - 30 %. Most of the revenue is generated by taxes (wages, real estate, motor vehicles, etc.), municipal equalization payments and municipal fees. The Municipality of Žagubica belongs to Group IV, i.e. to the underdeveloped units of local self-government, whose level of development is below 60% of the national average (Municipality of Žagubica Development Plan 2021-2031).

The fact that the situation on the territory of the Municipality of Žagubica has not changed in terms of economic development is also evidenced by the data on the website of the Ministry, i.e. the Cabinet of the Minister for the Development of Underdeveloped Municipalities (<https://rnro.gov.rs/projekti/>). According to the latest data on the website, the Municipality of Žagubica is one of the 44 municipalities that fall into Group IV in terms of development level (development level below 60% of the

republican average). On this basis, the Law on the Budget of the Republic of Serbia for 2024 issued the Regulation on the Establishment of the Support Program for the Improvement of the Development of Extremely Underdeveloped Municipalities (local self-government units of the fourth group) for the year 2024 (<https://pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/uredba/2023/112/1/reg>). This Ordinance entered into force on the eighth day after its publication in the “Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia” of December 15, 2023 (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, number 112/2023-3) and is valid from January 1, 2024. The aim of the program is to implement projects and support measures aimed at increasing capacities in the field of construction, reconstruction and equipping of buildings, procurement of equipment relevant to extremely underdeveloped municipalities and implementation of poverty reduction measures relevant to extremely underdeveloped municipalities. Areas such as the Municipality of Žagubica require financial support from the Republic of Serbia. This mainly concerns the provision of basic requirements and necessary conditions for attracting capital. This includes, above all, the transport infrastructure, which does not even meet the current needs of the local population.



Figure 1. Homolje region
Source: <http://beljanica.nanetu.rs/Homolje>

Tourism valorization is still insufficiently used in current research activities to create development plans, programs and strategies (Risteski, 2020; Sivac et al., 2023).

At the same time, the synergy effects of integrating the cultural and tourism sectors contribute to cultural tourism being a real catalyst for the growth and development of tourism as a whole (Sančanin et al., 2022; Sivac et al., 2023). The combination of cultural and tourism development measures could act as a catalyst and promote the local destination as the most desirable and attractive place to live, work, visit and invest. Investing in cultural heritage can significantly improve the quality of life of residents and their guests, revitalize neglected urban areas and increase the value of real estate (Afrić-Rakitovac & Urošević, 2017).

Materials and methodology

Study area

Homolje is an area in eastern Serbia that territorially coincides with the area of the Municipality of Žagubica. The area of Homolje has the shape of an irregular rectangle in the direction east - southeast - west - northwest, with a length of about 35 km, while the widest point is about 26 km (Živković, 2011; Prentović et al, 2016). The territory is surrounded by mountain ranges on all sides. It is separated from Zvižd by the Homoljske Mountains (940 m) to the north, from Resava by Beljanica Mountain (1339 m) to the south, from the Crna Reka Basin by the Crni Vrh Massif (1043 m) to the east and from the lower plains of Mlava by the Gornjak Mountains (825 m) to the west (Miljković, 1992; Prentović et al, 2016). It is naturally divided into two parts of the basin: the hilly and the mountainous. The main and central part is the Žagubica basin, the lower part of which lies at an average altitude of 300 metres. The second, smaller and lower part is the Krepoljin-krupaj basin with an average altitude of 220 metres. There is a hilly area between these basins (Mekić, Novaković, 2018). The municipality of Žagubica belongs territorially to the southeastern part of Braničevo County. It is 170 km away from Belgrade, while it is 83 km away from Požarevac. It is surrounded by the municipalities of Petrovac, Bor, Majdanpek, Despotovac and Kučevo. Most of the villages in Homolje are located on the banks of the Mlava tributaries. Despite its rugged terrain, Homolje has a relatively dense road network.

The main traffic corridor is the regional road R 105 Pozarevac – Petrovac – Žagubica – Bor. Two other regional roads pass through the territory of Homolje, namely R 104 Žagubica – Majdanpek and R 216 Krepoljin – Despotovac, which are of much lower quality than the above-mentioned R 105 road. All villages in the municipality of Žagubica are connected by the local road network. The main roads in the Homolje area are only 14 km long, while the length of the local road network is

102 km (Prentovic et al, 2016). All regional roads are paved with a modern surface, and in recent years more extensive rehabilitation works have been carried out on state road No. 161 on the section from Žagubica to Salakovac (Municipality of Malo Crniće) and on state road No. 186 on the section from Krepoljin to Despotovac - to Milanovac (Municipality of Žagubica). The remaining sections of state roads are in poor condition, especially state road 164 towards Majdanpek. The local road network connects all settlements in the municipality, but is in an unsatisfactory condition. Some of the local roads do not have a modern surface, while the roads with a modern surface are poorly maintained. Railroad traffic does not pass through the municipality (Žagubica Municipality Development Plan 2021-2031).

Serbia is a country with a great history. Many conquerors ruled over this territory in the past, which was very popular due to its favourable location at the crossroads of East and West. Each of them left behind a small part of their culture, and today Serbia is a country with a large and diverse cultural heritage (Marjanović et al., 2023). Homolje is not only one of the few ecologically diverse destinations in Serbia known for its breathtaking natural beauty, but also has numerous potentials for anthropogenic tourism. It is important to point out that on the list of cultural monuments of the Republic of Serbia, three of the mentioned cultural potentials are located in the Homolje area (Blagovestenje Monastery, Gornjak Monastery and Trška Church). They belong to the category of cultural assets of great importance and are under the protection of the Regional Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in Smederevo.

Among the significant anthropogenic tourism values that are not only important for this region, but also have a broader significance, the following should be emphasised:

- archaeological values,
- Monumental values (Gornjak and Trška churches),
- ethnographic values (the oldest forms of spirituality in Europe),- artistic values (in the context of traditional folk crafts and creativity) (Miljković, & Stojanjelović, 2002).

Cultural heritage is an important source of creativity and innovation, generating new ideas and solutions to problems and creating innovative services – from the digitization of cultural assets to the use of cutting-edge virtual reality technologies – with the aim of interpreting historic environments and buildings and making them accessible to citizens and visitors. Cultural heritage has been proven to offer a good return on investment and generates significant tax revenues for the public sector through spillover effects from heritage-oriented projects, leading to further investment (Urošević, 2017). The cultural and historical heritage plays a decisive role in the touristic valorization of Homolje. It is characterized by its diversity and

uniqueness, which is shaped by a combination of historical events and the special social, geographical and transport significance of the region, both in the past and in the present (Jovičić, Nikolić, 2005). These were the anthropogenic values considered during the valorization process.



Figure 2. Blagoveštenje (Annunciation) Monastery

Source: <http://www.tozagubica.rs/manastiri-i-ckrve/manastir-blagovestenje>

Archeological sites from the Roman period include fortifications with watchtowers and rest areas. These structures were part of the defense system along the critical Roman road “Via Militaris,” which led through the Mlava Gorge. During the reign of Emperor Dušan, the town of Ždrelo was located here, which was ruled by the Lords of Rastistolići. The region was also home to the seat of the metropolitanate, the Blagoveštenje monastery, as well as several smaller churches and hermitages (Jovičić, Nikolić, 2005).

Gradac Fortress has been located on the Roman road since the Middle Ages. The fortress is located on a hill called Đula near Krepoljin.

The medieval Gornjak Monastery stands on one of the terraces above the Mlava River in the Gornjačka Gorge. This monastery, founded by Prince Lazar, was built between 1379 and 1381 and is recognized as a cultural monument of great importance (Jovičić, Nikolić, 2005). According to the local museum in Žagubica, today’s Gornjak Monastery only partially resembles its original structure, as it was built on old foundations. What sets this monastery apart from others is the richness of its interior walls, which are decorated with masterpieces of wood carving and frescoes

from the 17th and 18th centuries, making it one of the few of its kind in Serbia. In addition, a modern guest house on the premises offers overnight accommodation and increases the value of this valuable cultural and historical monument in Homolje.

The Blagoveštenje Monastery is located near the Gornjak Monastery, on the Žagubica - Petrovac road on the Mlava River, one kilometer away and above the right bank of the Mlava. The church of the Blagoveštenje monastery with its outbuildings was built on a flat plateau with a cascading retaining wall. It dates back to the 14th century. The entire complex was archeologically investigated between 1979 and 1981, and conservation and restoration work was carried out at the same time (<http://spomenicikulture.mi.sanu.ac.rs>).

Trška church is the second most important cultural monument in Homolje. It is located in the Žagubička Valley next to the main road. It is considered part of the Raška school and is the oldest church in Homolje. The church was restored in 1985 and is protected as a cultural monument (Jovičić, Nikolić, 2005). The Trška Church Monastery is the youngest monastery in the Braničevo Eparchy and is home to the oldest church in the eparchy (Ljubisavljević, Đokić, 2013).

The Church of the Holy Trinity, built between 1873 and 1875, is located in the heart of the Žagubica settlement. The church is decorated with nineteen icons by the painter Nikola Marković from 1874 and also houses twenty-three figures of saints on the north and south walls, which were painted at the end of the 20th century. The church also houses valuable examples of movable icons, liturgical books, objects of applied art and various pieces of church furniture. Inside the gate, to the east of the altar apse, there is a large gravestone commemorating a street monument from 1826. Due to its central location, the church attracts a large number of worshippers on important holidays and during regular services (<http://muzejzagubica.org>).

The Šupljaja church is located in the village of Ribare and is also a cultural and historical monument of Homolje. It is 1.5 km away from the center of the village and is reached by an excellent macadam road. It is believed that the church was donated by Princess Milica, as evidenced by a legend that says that the princess passed through this area after the battle in Kosovo and realized that her grieving heart was hollow, hence the name of this church. The new Šupljaja Church was built on the remains of an older church that was destroyed during the Ottoman period and has a wooden iconostasis that is considered one of the most beautiful in Homolje. It is a popular excursion destination for the inhabitants of the region and offers the potential for excursion tourism due to its breathtaking natural surroundings.

A fascinating cultural monument is undoubtedly the house of Nenad Stojanović, which is located in the settlement of Milatovac and was built at the beginning of the 20th century. This building is an example of folk architecture and belongs to the

progressive type of Moravian houses built at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century.

The Homolje Local History Museum is located in the heart of Žagubica and is a relatively new institution founded in 2017. Visitors can view a permanent exhibition of sculptures by Svetomir Arsić Basara. In addition, archeological exhibits about the “Early Byzantine period in the Žagubica area” and a historical-ethnological exhibition entitled “Homolje – remains of the past” can be viewed.

Handicrafts, especially in the artistic field, souvenir making, traditional costumes and folklore are integral parts of the cultural heritage of the people of the Homolje region. The people of Homolje have a rich tradition of organizing numerous events, which should be fully developed and enhanced to meet the needs of tourism. Among the most important are the well-organized tourist and cultural events: “Vrela Homolja” (Homolje Springs), “Spasovdanski susreti” (Spasovdan Gatherings) and “Hajka na Homoljskog kurjaka” (Hunting for the Homolje Wolf). These events have become a tradition and have gained importance at the state level and make an important contribution to the tourism development of the municipality of Žagubica (Jovičić & Nikolić, 2005).

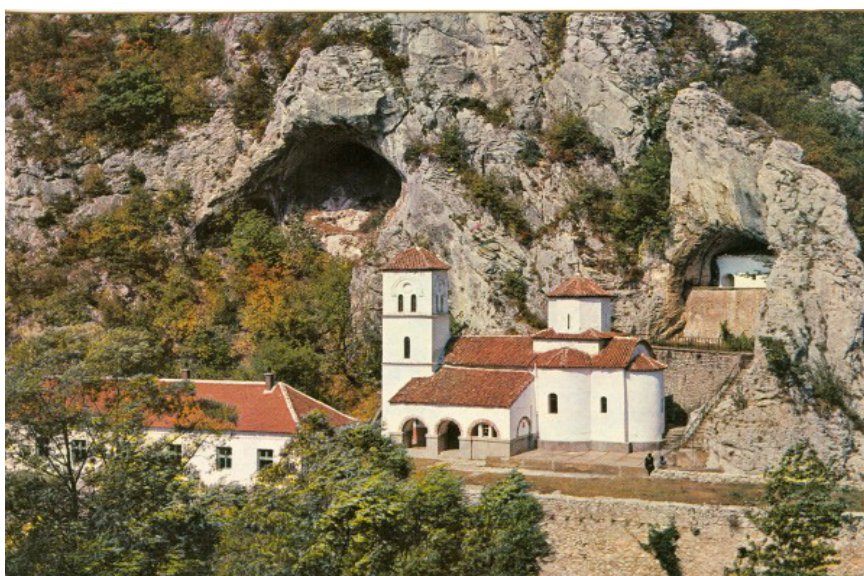


Figure 3. Gornjak Monastery

Source: <http://manastirusrbiji.com/manastir-gornjak>

Table 2. Arrivals and overnight stays of tourists in the municipality of Žagubica in the period from 2018 to 2022

The sequence number	Description	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
1.	Arrivals of domestic tourists	716	1.019	1.471	1760	881
	Arrivals of foreign tourists	148	154	79	81	16
	Total tourist arrivals	864	1.173	1.550	1841	897
2.	Overnights of domestic tourists	2.056	2.508	4.267	6936	2933
	Overnight stays of foreign tourists	446	540	386	532	192
	Total overnight stays of tourists	2.502	3.048	4.653	7468	3125

Source: Development plan of the municipality of Žagubica 2021-2031; Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Municipalities and Regions, Belgrade, 2022; Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Municipalities and regions in the Republic of Serbia, 2023, Belgrade.

A detailed assessment of the data (Table 2) on tourist arrivals and overnight stays of tourists in the municipality of Žagubica, in the Homolje area, during the period from 2018 to 2022 provides an insight into the dynamics of tourist visits to this region. The strongest growth was recorded in 2021, when the number of arrivals and overnight stays increased significantly, doubling compared to the previous year. The sudden increase is due to various influences, in particular the health conditions caused by the spread of coronavirus and people's restricted mobility. The corona disease known as COVID-19, which is present everywhere in Serbia, has increased the number of tourists in local destinations. Already in 2022, the same destinations were forgotten by domestic tourists. In 2022, Homolje also recorded a sharp decline in arrivals and overnight stays of more than 50 % compared to the previous year. This decline is worrying and indicates that further studies and measures are needed. Some of the reasons for this decline could be the global health crisis or changing tourist preferences. In terms of preserving the cultural heritage of Homolje, this drastic decline in tourist visits can be worrying. The cultural heritage of Homolje, which includes a rich history, tradition and architecture, is the most important part of the identity of this region. A decrease in the number of tourist visits can have a positive impact on the preservation and promotion of this heritage. For all these reasons, it is important to take appropriate measures to promote the sustainable development of tourism and the preservation of Homolje's cultural heritage. Additional measures related to the promotion of tourism resources, the improvement of tourism

infrastructure and offer, as well as the development of events and cultural events that would attract visitors and arouse their curiosity for this unique destination.

Methodology

Two methods were used in researching the Homolje area to assess its cultural tourism motives: the quantitative-qualitative approach and the Hilary du Cross tourism valorization method. This method was applied to the archaeological sites, the site of the Gornjak Monastery, the remains of the Blagoveštenje Monastery, the Trška Church, the Church of the Holy Trinity, the Šupljaja Church and other cultural monuments and artistic values in the Homolje region. At present, it has a relatively homogeneous structure that naturally reflects the different historical stages, which are emphasised by specific authentic cultural elements (Vasilita-Craciun, 2023). These sites represent the cultural and historical richness of the area, so this method is crucial for evaluating the tourist attractiveness of these places and serves as a first step in planning the tourist development of Homolje.

Quantitative-qualitative method

Due to its flexibility, this approach is one of the most frequently used methods in research and evaluations (Čomić, Pjevač, 1997). Within the quantitative-qualitative model, six elements require to be examined, namely:

- The geographical location of tourist (accessibility of resources),
- tourist services and facilities (available accommodation facilities, information),
- artistic value,
- Ambience,
- Special nature of the resource,
- Importance of the resource (attractiveness and market recognition).

The respondents were domestic tourists. The concept of a questionnaire was used for the study. The questionnaire was created based on a literature review (Park et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021) and adapted to the specific characteristics of the heritage tourism under study (Pantović et al., 2023). The assessment of the survey provides information on the demographic characteristics and experiences of the respondents in relation to Homolje. Based on the total number of respondents, it can be seen that men form the majority with a share of 82.35%, while the share of women is significantly lower at 17.65%. In terms of education, the majority of respondents have a university degree, namely 58.82%, while 41.18% of respondents

have a secondary school degree. The majority of respondents, namely 64.71%, live in the Homolje area, while 35.29% are only visitors to Homolje. Based on the responses and the ratings of the tourism enhancement indicators, average values were calculated for each indicator, which finally resulted in an overall average rating.

Table 3. The methodology applied in the research

Applied methodology	Description of methodologies
Survey questionnaire	The application of the survey as the basic mechanism for collecting data from the research participants.
Analysis and synthesis	The combination of data from different sources in order to obtain adequate conclusions relevant for research through analysis and synthesis.
Application of statistical data	Use of statistical data obtained from publications of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia
Using available literature	Using available literature, which includes professional literature, scientific research, strategic documents and other appropriate sources, in order to gather information.
Use of the relevant sites	Use of relevant and official websites that are an additional source of information and research support.

The tabular presentation gives a clearer insight into all the important methodological procedures that were applied in the study, including the mechanisms for data accumulation, analytical methods and sources of information that were applied.

Tourist valorization of the cultural potentials of Homolje according to Hilary du Cross

Hilary du Cross' model is a scientifically recognized and comprehensive approach to the valuation of cultural assets in tourism. Its main objective is to explore how cultural assets can be integrated into sustainable tourism development (Lakićević, Srđević, 2011; Milenković, 2018).

The model comprises two main sectors: the tourism sector and the cultural heritage management sector. Within the tourism sector, there are two sub-indicators: the market attractiveness of cultural goods and the factors influencing the design of a tourism product. The sub-indicators are scored on a scale of 0 to 5, with some having a narrower range. The total score for the tourism sector is calculated by adding the scores of all sub-indicators from both groups. The resulting score is then interpreted as follows: 0–20 (low attractiveness), 21–40 (medium attractiveness) and 41–60 (high attractiveness).

The cultural property management sector comprises two sub-indicators: cultural significance and robustness. The overall score for this sector is calculated by adding these two values together. The resulting score is interpreted on a scale of 0–20 (high sensitivity/low cultural value), 21–40 (moderate sensitivity and cultural value) and 41–60 (low sensitivity/high cultural value) (Stanojlović, Ćurčić & Pavlović, 2010; Marković & Petrović, 2012; Milenković, 2018).

Based on the analysis, a market attractiveness/robustness matrix is created, comprising nine cells labeled M (i, j) (i, j=1, 2, 3), as shown in Table 2 (Du Cros, 2000; Milenković, 2018). These cells are defined as follows:

- M (1, 1) high value of the indicators of cultural significance/robustness and low market attractiveness;
- M (1, 2) high value of the indicators of cultural significance/robustness and moderate market attractiveness;
- M (1, 3) high value of the indicators of cultural significance/robustness and high market attractiveness;
- M (2, 1) moderate value of indicators of cultural significance/robustness and low market attractiveness;
- M (2, 2) moderate value of indicators of cultural significance/robustness and moderate market attractiveness;
- M (2, 3) moderate value of indicators of cultural significance/robustness and high market attractiveness;
- M (3, 1) low value of the indicators of cultural significance/robustness and low market attractiveness;
- M (3, 2) low value of the indicators of cultural significance/robustness and moderate market attractiveness;
- M (3, 3) low value of the indicators of cultural significance/robustness and high market attractiveness.

Cultural assets have the greatest potential for the development of a tourism product, especially those classified in cells M (2, 3) and M (1, 3) after valorization. These assets have moderate to high market attractiveness but low robustness. Although they can be used for tourism purposes, it is important to create conditions that prevent damage during tourist visits.

Cultural assets with low market attractiveness, such as those in cell M (3, 1), are unlikely to attract many tourists. However, cultural assets with high or moderate value as an indicator of cultural significance/robustness and moderate tourist appeal should be effectively promoted. In addition, they need to be protected, including the determination of the optimal number of visitors to ensure sustainable development of cultural tourism (Stamenković, 2005; Marković and Petrović, 2012; Milenković, 2018).

Table 4. Market attractiveness and robustness matrix

Robustness	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
Indicator	Market attractiveness			

Source: Hilary du Cros, 2000; Milenković, 2018



Figure 4. Šupljaja Church

Source: <http://muzejzagubica.org>

Results and discussion

When applying the questionnaire, respondents were allowed to rate each parameter separately in grades from 1 to 5. One indicates insufficient quality, grade two indicates the importance of local tourism, grade three represents the sound quality of resources in the region, while five indicates excellent, high quality with international importance.

Table 5. Evaluation of cultural values of Homolje, quantitative-qualitative method

Indicators	Grade
Tourist-geographic position	2.9
Artistic merit	3.1
Tourist value of the environment	2.7
Tourist attractiveness and recognition	2.8
Construction and equipment of the space	2.3
Integration into tourist wealth	3
Overall score	2.8

Source: Author's survey

Based on the applied quantitative-qualitative method of tourism valorization, a conclusion can be drawn about the value of the cultural motifs in Homolje. The overall rating of the touristic value of the sights, including archaeological sites, monasteries and churches, is 2.8, which classifies them as high-quality sites of regional importance and moderate touristic attractiveness.

Tourism sector

Market attractiveness includes the following sub-indicators (grades from 0 to 5).

Market attractiveness of cultural goods:

- **Ambience** – Homolje is a geographical region located in eastern Serbia. It is situated between the surrounding mountain ranges in an arc, namely the Gornjačka Planina (825 m) in the west, the Homoljska Planina (940 m) in the north to the northeast, the Crni vrh massif (1043 m) in the east, while the Beljanica mountain extends to the south (1339 m). These mountain massifs contribute to the specific geographical landscape of Homolje and represent an important part of its natural environment. It also includes the upper course of the Mlava river, as well as two basins: Žagubička and Krepoljinsko-krupajska. This region's cultural assets are situated in an ecologically preserved environment, contributing to an ambience rating of 4.
- **Site known outside the local area** – Homolje is a significant symbol recognized locally and regionally. Its unique cultural events make it a promising destination for cultural tourism, with the potential to gain national significance through effective promotion. The grade for this criterion is 2.
- **National symbol** – While Homolje holds significance locally and regionally, it has yet to establish itself as a destination that attracts tourists from across the country. Despite its potential for development, limited traffic connections and inadequate infrastructure hinder its appeal. The grade for this criterion is 3.
- **Evocative character** – Altering historical contexts, unique social, geographical, and transportation positions have the potential to draw a significant number of tourists to this region. The abundance of legends, myths, intriguing historical facts, and remnants of cultural artefacts that reflect the customs and inhabitants from Roman times through the Middle Ages, the Nemanjić dynasty, the Battle of Kosovo (1389), and subsequent eras are crucial for the cultural and touristic advancement of this area. Grade 4.
- **Clear differentiation** – The Homolja area, with its unique natural and anthropogenic characteristics, stands out from surrounding areas. While the

underdevelopment lowers the rating due to low attendance, it does not diminish the significance of its numerous cultural assets that distinguish it from other regions. Grade 3.

- **Attractions for special needs** – Homolje is an area suitable for various forms of tourism development. Its abundant cultural tourism assets favour the growth of cultural-historical, event-based, and other forms of tourism. Additionally, Homolje's natural beauty increasingly draws tourists interested in hiking, mountain biking, skiing, hunting, and fishing. The grade is 3.
- **Complementarity with other tourist products** – Given that areas with prominent cultural motifs surround Homolje, it can be said that there is a low degree of complementarity with tourist offers in the near and far surroundings (event tourism, religious tourism, transit tourism). Grade 2.
- **Tourist activity in the region** – Tourist activity in the region of Homolje does not boast a high level of tourism development. Despite its central location in Eastern Serbia, inadequate transportation links and contemporary issues related to demographic decline in Homolje and surrounding areas diminish this value. Grade 2.
- **Associated with culture** – Numerous objects of cultural and historical heritage and certain manifestations characteristic of Homolje can confirm that this area is associated with culture. Grade 3.

Table 6. Sub-indicators of market attractiveness

Sub-indicators	Grade
Ambience	4
Site known outside the local area	2
National symbol	3
Evocative character	4
Clear differentiation	3
Special needs appeal	3
Complementarity with other tourist products	2
Tourist activity in the regions	2
Associated with culture	3
Overall score	26

Source: Author's survey

Factors of importance when designing a tourist product are:

- **Access to the destination** (grades from 0 to 4) – The spatial relationship of Homolje to larger urban and industrial centres is more favourable. In the first dispersive zone of a distance of 100 km, there are Bor and Zaječar in

the east, Požarevac and Smederevo in the northwest, Kragujevac, Jagodina, Paraćin, Čuprija, Smederevska Palanka and Velika Plana in the west. The second group of tourist destinations 200 km away are Belgrade, Pančevo, Kruševac, Niš, Pirot, and others. (Mirković, 2003). The existing tourism potentials are insufficiently used. One of the reasons is the worse geographical position of the municipality, considering that the municipality is located outside the most important traffic corridors in the Republic. In addition, the municipality has not developed both traffic and tourist infrastructure. Accommodation facilities generally have a low degree of utilization, but nevertheless the number of tourist arrivals and overnight stays in the municipality of Žagubica in the period from 2018 to 2020 recorded an increase, which is encouraging data (Development plan of the municipality of Žagubica 2021-2031). The biggest jump in the growth of the number of arrivals and overnight stays occurred in 2021, due to the action of various factors. After that, the downward trend in the number continued, which indicates the need for further investments in the development of tourism and raising awareness among future visitors. The grade is 2.

- ***Transport to the destination*** (grades 0 to 3) – Homolje is just 30 kilometres from the Belgrade-Niš freeway, near Svilajnac or Paraćin. The tourist route of Đerdap and Timok is of peripheral importance compared to Homolje. However, if Donji Milanovac-Majdanpek-Žagubica road were modernized, it would establish a faster and more efficient connection between the Đerdap region and the south of Serbia. In the Homolje territory, road traffic is of the greatest importance, as the railway infrastructure is underdeveloped. Grade 2.
- ***Cultural attractions in the immediate vicinity*** (grades from 0 to 3) – In the vicinity of Homolje, there are numerous cultural monuments and notable attractions. The Bor area boasts intriguing caves like Zlotska and Lazareva caves. Nearby Požarevac is home to several state-protected cultural monuments. Additionally, the proximity of the ancient site of Viminacium near Kostolac attracts a certain number of tourists. Grade 2.
- ***Hospitality facilities*** (ratings from 0 to 5) – Accommodation options in Homolje are insufficient to accommodate many tourists, especially during events. The entire region has only one motel, “Vrelo”, in Žagubica, offering 80 beds for accommodation. The restaurant at the motel can seat 400 guests. There are six other restaurants in Homolje, with capacities ranging from 30 to 100 seats. With proper rehabilitation and reconstruction, abandoned agricultural farms in the area, which currently have untapped potential, could be adapted to cater to nature enthusiasts, anglers, and hunters (Prentović et al., 2016). Grade 2.

Table 7. Sub-indicators of importance when designing a tourist product

Sub-indicators	Grade
Access to the destination	2
Transport to the destination	2
Cultural attractions in the immediate vicinity	2
Hospitality facilities	2
Overall score	8

Source: Author's survey

The total score is calculated by summing up the scores within the tourism sector. The score for sub-indicators crucial in designing a tourist product is 8, while the score for market attractiveness is 26. Adding these scores together, we get a total score for the tourism sector of 34, indicating moderate attractiveness.

The sector of cultural property management

Cultural significance can be evaluated using the following sub-indicators, each rated from 0 to 4.

- **Aesthetic value** (from 0 to 2) is high. Homolje boasts beautiful ambient settings and numerous cultural and historical monuments spanning various periods, from antiquity to modern times. These sites are legally protected as cultural assets. The grade for this criterion is 2.
- **Historical value** (from 0 to 2) is also high, as the area of Homolje contains remnants of cultural and historical heritage, including archaeological sites, numerous religious buildings from various periods, and objects that reflect the area's diverse cultures and customs over time. Grade 2.
- **Educational value** (from 0 to 2) – Homolje somewhat lags behind other regions in the Republic of Serbia. While the educational aspect can be seen in organized visits to cultural and historical sites, the fact that young people from this region often relocate to larger cities for education impacts the grade, which is 1.
- **Scientific and research value** (from 0 to 2) – is at a very low level. Homolje has been insufficiently researched from a scientific point of view. Homolje is rich in various resources, natural and cultural, rich in history above all, and has potential for scientific and research activities that have not yet taken root in this area. Grade 1.
- **Social value** (0 to 2) – It is highly developed despite experiencing demographic decline. Locally and regionally, numerous events are held that attract tourists and are increasingly gaining national significance ("Vrela Homolja," "Spasovdanski susreti," and "Hajka na Homoljskog kurjaka"). Grade 2.

- **Representative site** (from 1 to 4) – Several representative localities can be singled out in the area of Homolje. First, Gornjak Monastery, characterized by the gorge of the same name, then Trška Church, which is still interesting for historical studies, and many others. The grade is 3.

Table 8. Sub-indicators of cultural significance

Sub-indicators	Grade
Aesthetic value	2
Historical value	2
Educational value	1
Scientific and research value	1
Social value	2
Representative site	3
Overall score	11

Source: Author's survey

The robustness, i.e., the degree of acceptance of tourists, can be assessed using the following sub-indicators (from 0 to 5):

- **Sensitivity of the cultural property** (grade 0 to 4) – Tourist traffic in the Homolje area is extremely low and has been declining in recent years. However, this situation has not resulted in negative consequences for the cultural and historical sites, as the number of visitors to this area has not reached its maximum capacity. Grade 2.
- **State of reparation** (grades from 0 to 4) – This region's cultural and historical values require repair, restoration, and preservation, as most buildings were renovated in the 1980s (Trška Church, Blagoveštenje Monastery). An exception is the Local Museum of Homolje, which opened in 2017, where the museum display is at an admirable level and does not need revitalization. Grade 3.
- **Existence of a management plan** (grade 0 to 5) – Several projects and plans were adopted to develop tourism within the Development plan of the municipality of Žagubica 2021-2031 (<https://www.zagubica.ls.gov.rs>). The priority plans regarding the development of tourism include the improvement of the tourist offer and tourist potential in the area of the municipality of Žagubica. This includes increasing accommodation capacity, improving the quality of hospitality/tourist services, strengthening the capacity of event tourism, infrastructural arrangement of tourist destinations, and development of tourist

content. Most of these plans and projects have not been implemented, so it is necessary to improve and implement them as soon as possible or create new strategic plans to develop tourism. Grade 2.

- **Regulatory monitoring and maintenance** (grades from 0 to 5) – The cultural monuments in the area of Homolje fall under the jurisdiction of the Regional Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in Smederevo. There have been issues with the inadequate maintenance of cultural assets. Grade 3.
- **Current investment potential** (grades from 0 to 5) – The investment potential in Homolje has not yet been clearly defined. There are opportunities exist for investment in both the public and private sectors. However, there has been a lack of investment in the development of tourism, which could prove to be a profitable venture in Homolje. Grade 2.
- **The possibility of a negative impact of visitors** (grades from 1 to 5) – Homolje, in particular the municipality of Žagubica, was visited by 897 tourists in 2022, with 3.125 overnight stays recorded (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2023). The number of visitors has not yet peaked and remains below a satisfactory level. Consequently, there is no immediate concern regarding a negative impact on cultural assets. The grade is 4.
- **Possibility of modification as part of product development** (grades from 1 to 5) – So far, modifications to the area have not adversely affected the condition of cultural assets. However, unplanned construction to enhance tourism development could impact the physical state of cultural and historical buildings. Failure to implement modifications according to plan and in harmony with natural conditions may damage the whole of Homolje's ambiance. Grade 3.

Table 9. Robustness sub-indicators

Sub-indicators	Grade
Sensitivity	2
State of reparation	3
Management plan	2
Regulatory monitoring and maintenance	3
Current investment potential	2
The possibility of a negative impact of visitors	4
Possibility of modification as part of product development	3
Overall score	19

Source: Author's survey

By adding the overall scores within the management sector, the sub-indicator of cultural importance, which is 11, and the sub-indicator of robustness, which is 19, the total score is obtained, which in this case is 30. Based on the results, it can be seen that it is about the average sensitivity of cultural assets and the average cultural values. A “matrix of market attractiveness/robustness” has been developed based on the obtained results.

Table 10. Matrix of market attractiveness and robustness of cultural motifs of Homolje

Indicator	Market attractiveness			
Robustness	Overall grade	0–20	21–40	41–60
	0–20	M (3, 1)	M (3, 2)	M (3, 3)
	21–40	M (2, 1)	M (2, 2)	M (2, 3)
	41–60	M (1, 1)	M (1, 2)	M (1, 3)

Source: Author's survey

Based on the matrix, it's apparent that the combined assessment of all sub-indicators has placed Homolje's cultural aspects in cell M (2, 2), indicating a moderate level of cultural significance and market appeal of its cultural offerings. These findings suggest that Homolje has favourable conditions for cultural tourism development, provided there is appropriate monitoring, thoughtful planning regulations, and effective promotion and preservation efforts to safeguard the area from potential harm during tourist visits.

Conclusion

The analysis of the moderate values of the indicators of cultural significance and market appeal of cultural assets shows that Homolje has exceptional potential for tourism development. The region is rich in cultural heritage, which is a valuable asset for attracting visitors from all over the world. However, exploiting this potential requires concrete measures to improve the tourism offer and effectively promote the area.

Firstly, better heritage management is needed. This includes the implementation of detailed plans and programs for the restoration, preservation and revitalization of cultural assets. These efforts not only serve to preserve Homolje's cultural heritage, but also help to create an authentic and engaging tourist experience.

Secondly, improving the promotion of tourism in the region is crucial. Previous marketing efforts have been inadequate, resulting in limited awareness of Homolje as a tourist destination. To overcome this challenge, a coordinated approach to promotion is needed that involves all stakeholders, from local authorities and entrepreneurs to civil society organizations and the local population.

Developing a coherent and enticing marketing package that highlights key events, attractions, tours and offers is crucial to attract the attention and interest of potential tourists. It is important to emphasize the lasting benefits of investing in Homolje's tourism growth. In addition to the economic benefits, such as job creation and boosting the local economy, tourism also plays an important role in preserving cultural identity and fostering a sense of community. Sustainable tourism practices promote the preservation of traditions, strengthen local pride and improve the overall quality of life in the region. The development of tourism in Homolje requires a comprehensive strategy that involves all relevant stakeholders and aspects of the tourism sector. Through joint efforts, commitment and strategic planning, we can achieve sustainable cultural development and exploit the rich tourism potential of the region.

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