

MATERIAL BASIS IN THE FUNCTION OF FUTURE TOURIST DEVELOPMENT OF THE PČINJA DISTRICT

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Abstract

The material basis of a tourist destination is one of the most important factors of the tourist offer, which can affect the entire tourist traffic. The paper deals with the area of Pčinja district as an area with exceptional natural and anthropogenic tourist values. However, the Pčinja district is completely marginalized in terms of tourism and out of the mass tourist flows, which is a consequence of the insufficient and outdated material basis. Therefore, the paper analyzes the material basis of the Pčinja district in order to provide a basis for further strategic planning of the tourism development. Pčinja district has great potential for the development of several forms of tourism: sports - recreational, mountain, spa, hunting and fishing, excursions, and transit ones. However, without sufficient accommodation capacities, developed tourist infrastructure and suprastructure, any tourist development is not possible, regardless of the exceptional tourist values. If a new material base were built in the Pčinja district and the already existing tourist development of this area was reconstructed, it would take a positive course in the future.

Key Words: *The Pčinja district, material basis, utilization, future tourist development*

JEL classification: *O13, O14, O18, R58, Z32*

Introduction

The Pčinja district is located in the south of the Republic of Serbia and covers an area of 3,520 km². In the north, the Pčinja district extends to the Grdelica gorge and the mountain slopes of Kukavica and Čemernik, in the south up to the border with the Republic of Northern Macedonia (10 km

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south of Preševo), in the east up to the border with the Republic of Bulgaria, and in the west up to Kosovo Pomoravlje (AP Kosovo and Metohija).

The seat of the Pčinja district is the city of Vranje which consists of the municipality of the same name and the municipality of Vranjska Banja. In addition to them, the Pčinja district also includes the municipalities: Vladičin Han, Surdulica, Bujanovac, Bosilegrad, Trgovište and Preševo. The Pčinja district is in direct contact with the Jablanica district in the north through the municipalities of Leskovac and Crna Trava, and in the west with the Kosovo-Pomoravlje district through the municipalities of Gjilan and Kosovska Kamenica.

The Pčinja district has extraordinary natural and anthropogenic tourist attractions for the development of several forms of tourism. However, ethnic intolerance and heterogeneity of the population especially in the southern municipalities (Presevo and Bujanovac), political and economic instability caused by the proximity to Kosovo, great distance of emitting centers (Belgrade, Novi Sad, Kragujevac), competitive tourist destinations that overshadow the Pčinja district in the tourist market, inadequate privatization of obsolete and excessive accommodation facilities, insufficient number of accommodation facilities that are beyond any modern categorization, insufficient marketing by tourist organizations, small number of tourist agencies, insufficient professional and experienced tourist staff, as well as many other factors influenced the Pčinja district, as a tourist destination to be marginalized and put outside the mass tourist flows. The aim and task of this paper is to present the current state of the material base, tourist infrastructure and substructure in the Pčinja district in order to provide a basis for a further strategic planning of its tourist development.

Natural and anthropogenic tourist attractions in the Pčinja district

In the Pčinja district there are several natural and anthropogenic tourist attractions that have great potential for the development of several forms of tourism: sports - recreational, mountain, spa, hunting and fishing, excursions, excursions and transit tourism.

Natural tourist attractions include: Besna Kobila, Vardenik, Kukavica, Dukat and Miljevska mountains, Vlasinska plateau, Ilinska cave, Vrla river gorge, Kazandol canyon near Vranje, Damjanik waterfall on Besna Kobila, Dragovištica, the Pčinja and Božička rivers, Vlasina Lake and Lake Prvonek, thermo-mineral springs of Vranjska and Bujanovačka spas,

natural geomorphological phenomenon Vražji kamen in the Pčinja valley, temperate climate and diverse endemic flora and fauna. Due to the large number of endemic relict plant and animal species, the following protected areas are located on the territory of the Pčinja District: Landscape of Outstanding Features "Vlasina" (PIO "Vlasina") nature reserves "Kukavica" and "Jarešnik" and the Natural Monument "Jovačka jezera". Besna Kobilica Mountain, Vlasina Lake, Vranjska and Bujanovačka Spa are the tourist centers of the Pčinja District that have the greatest potential for tourism development.

The mountain Besna Kobilica with the highest peak of the same name located 1.922 m above the sea level belongs to the Rhodope mountain system and is the highest mountain in the Pčinja district. The foothills and lower parts of the mountain are influenced by the temperate-continental climate, while the higher parts and peaks of the mountain are influenced by the mountain climate. It spreads on the territory of the three municipalities - Vranje, Bosilegrad and Surdulica.

The Vlasina Lake is an artificial lake located in the central part of the Vlasina plateau. The lake is located at an altitude of 1210,8 m and is the highest lake in Serbia. Along the eastern shore of the Lake Vlasina, there are two floating islands, Dugi Del and Stratorija, created by tearing peat, which is a natural and aesthetic curiosity attractive to many tourists (Pavlović et al., 2022).

Vranjska Banja (Spa) is one of the 8 royal spas in Serbia where members of the Karadjordjević and Obrenović dynasties rested and were treated. Medicinal water of Vranjska Banja comes from lithium, potassium, sulfur and other elements, where after some cooling, the water is used for therapeutic purposes by bathing and inhalation. Special importance for the use of water for therapeutic purposes is the complete absence of hydrogen sulfide. Hot water springs are used to treat the following diseases: sciatica, lumbago, locomotor system, rheumatism, muscle atrophy, consequences after bone fractures, neurological and gynecological disorders. Cold spring water is used to treat diseases of the stomach, intestines, liver, kidneys, diabetes and anemia (Šaćirović & Marić, 2016).

The Bujanovac Spa is the first and only spa in Serbia and Europe that has natural gas of high purity up to 98%, which successfully treats diseases of the respiratory system and cardiovascular diseases. Medicinal waters of the Bujanovac Spa are used for bathing, spraying or after some cooling, drinking

for the treatment of gynecological, rheumatic, cardiovascular diseases, diseases of the digestive organs, neurological diseases, conditions after surgery and dermatological diseases (eczema and psoriasis). In addition to thermo-mineral healing springs, Bujanovac Spa is known for its healing mud (peloid) of the volcanic origin. Peloid is used for therapeutic purposes raw or after a certain "ripening" it is mixed with paraffin where "parafango" is obtained. Rubbing peloids on the body cures psoriasis and eczema. The healing water of the Bujanovac Spa has been bottled since 1976 and is known on the market as the sour water of Heba and Bivoda. (Stanković, 2009).

When it comes to anthropogenic tourist attractions the Pčinja district is abundant in them. It is famed for the Vranje folklore and melody, which have been protected as an intangible cultural heritage of Serbia since 2012. There are also gastronomic specialties (samsa and tarana), archeological sites: Kale and Tri kruške near Bujanovac, Kacipup near Preševo, Davidovac near Vranje, cultural monuments that are protected by law as the intangible cultural assets of the great national importance (Markovo Kale Fortress near Vranje, Turkish hamam and the house of Bora Stanković in Vranje, White Bridge, grandmother Zlata Street, Pašin konak), religious buildings (Prohor Pčinjski Monastery, Monastery of the Presentation of the Most Holy Mother of God in Pala, Church of St. Elijah on the Vlasina Lake, Cross Mosque or the Church of St. Petka in Vranje, etc.). In addition to these anthropogenic attractions, the Pčinja district has a variety of event content, which if properly marketed would be known to the general public and would attract more tourists and visitors from the country and abroad, especially since it is a border area. The tourist organizations of Vranje and Surdulica organize the largest number of events in the Pčinja district, which have a somewhat greater regional significance and tourist attendance. In other municipalities of the Pčinja district, a smaller number of events which have a more local character are held and are not well promoted to the general public.

Numerous cultural, sports and artistic events are held in Vranje, whose content has a strong influence on the formation of the city's image. During the events, Vranje is the seat of the permeation of culture, entertainment, art and tradition. The following events are held in Vranje: St. Sava's Week, Bora's Week, Bora's Theater Days, May, Music Month, Vranje City Song, Trumpet Memorial in Honor of Bakija Bakić, Vranje Days, the International Folklore Festival, Justin's Annunciation, Vranje Mountaineering Marathon, Ethno Fair, Golden Flute of the South of Serbia, Carnation Days, Golden Snail, Jeep Festival, Art Colony and Archiennale.

The Tourist organization of the municipality of Surdulica organizes several cultural, entertainment and sports events. The most important manifestation of the municipality of Surdulica which attracts a large number of visitors is the Vlasina Summer, which was held for the first time on July 7, 1985. Since then, every year on the second weekend in July, a trumpet festival is held on the fields near the Lake Vlasina. The Trumpeters' Assembly within the Vlasina Summer event announces the qualifications of the trumpet orchestras from Surdulica, Vladičin Han, Grdelica, Vlasotince, Leskovac and Bojnik for the great Trumpet Festival in Guča. The Vlasina Summer event is visited every year by about 30.000 visitors showing a *increasing tendency to growth* year in year after. A large number of visitors are members of the Roma nationality which is why the event is also called the Gypsy Summer. In recent years, the Vlasina Summer has been attracting more and more attention from numerous visitors from Bulgaria, Northern Macedonia, Romania and Montenegro, which contributes to the event to gain the international significance. Surdulica hosts the rock festival "Rock Garden" which brings together bands from the country and neighboring countries, children's music festival "Golden Notes of Surdulica", the International Festival of the Amateur Theaters, the Recitation Festival of the Pčinja District and a night tournament in indoor soccer.

As part of the Vlasina Summer event on the Lake Vlasina other events are held which include: Vlasina cauldron, Vlasina hook, Vlasina catfish race, Vlasina jeep race, Golden Hands and Vlasina regatta.

The Municipality of Bosilegrad is the host of an international folklore event called "Bosilegrad Region Sings and Dances", in which over 30 folklore ensembles from Serbia, Bulgaria, Northern Macedonia, Greece and Hungary are participating. Manifestations in other municipalities of the Pčinja district do not have greater regional significance. (Pavlović et al., 2022).

Analysis of the material basis for the tourism development

In the previous text, the richness of the Pčinja district with natural and anthropogenic tourist attractions was emphasized. However, without sufficient accommodation capacities, developed tourist infrastructure and superstructure, any tourist development is not possible, regardless of the exceptional tourist values. The very degree of the development of the tourist infrastructure and substructure shows the quality of the tourist offer and the intensity of the tourist valorization of the tourist destination itself.

According to the Law on Tourism (2019), tourist infrastructure is represented by the facilities for information, recreation, education and entertainment of tourists. According to the same law, the tourist superstructure comprises catering facilities as well as galleries, exhibition, congress and entertainment facilities that are in direct connection with catering facilities and facilities of sports and recreational content, or form a single whole with them (Law on Tourism, 2019).

For tourists, the most important facilities in the destination are accommodation facilities that can be divided into basic and complementary ones. The basic accommodation capacities are presented to hotels, garni and apart hotels, motels, tourist resorts, boarding houses, resorts, mountain lodges, hostels, private accommodation, rural tourist households, spas, climatic places, mountain houses, sleeping cars, etc. (Bratić, 2015).

From the former massive hotels with a large number of beds built more or less planned, today dominate smaller hotels to accommodate smaller groups of tourists. Hotels like this within their accommodation complex offer a rich tourist package of services ranging from a variety of food and beverages, through wellness & spa, to playrooms for children, animators and babysitters.

Basic accommodation capacity in the Pčinja district

One of the basic problems of the tourist (under) development of the Pčinja district stems from the insufficient accommodation capacity for the reception and accommodation of tourists. The structure of the basic accommodation capacity in the Pčinja district shows in Table 1.

Table 1: *Structure of the basic accommodation capacity in the Pčinja district*

Location	Name of the facility	Type of the facility	Category	Total number of beds
Vranje	“Royal putnik“	Hotel	****	90
	“Simpo Pržar“	Hotel	***	44
	“M“	Garni hotel	**	50
	“Adria“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	30
	“Amico“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	21

	“Good Place“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	20
	“Papilon“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	45
	“Ponte Bianco“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	50
	“Trio“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	15
	“Park gate“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	35
	“Kovač“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	40
	“Harmony“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	21
	“Bambi“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	15
	“B&B Rose“	Pansion	-	30
	“Vitez“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	14
	“Tehno Gold“	Pansion	-	14
	“Bed & breakfast park gate“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	12
Village Suvidol, Vranje	“Bojan 017“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	20
Village Ranutovac, Vranje	“Zormaris M“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	33
Village Kriva Feja, Vranje	Mountain lodge “Dragan Spasić“	Mountain lodge	-	80
Bosilegrad	“Dukat“	Hotel	**	34
Bujanovac	“Rozafa“	Hotel	***	12
Vladičin Han	“Fontana“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	17
	“Bazen“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	31
	Guest house rooms tourist	Bed and breakfast facility	-	14
	“Han“	Boarding house	-	33
Village Dzep, Vladičin Han	“Dzep“	Motel	-	22
Village Prekodolce, Vladičin Han	“Ela ela“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	9
Vlasina Rid, Vlasina lake	“MM Narcis“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	120
	“3M“	Bed and breakfast facility	-	30

Village Klenike	Boarding house of the monastery Prohor Pčinjski	Boarding house	-	140
Total				1.141

Source: Adapted from information on Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunication of the Republic of Serbia, 2022

The former hotels on the Vlasina Lake, Surdulica and Vranjska Banja, which provided rest and relaxation to tens of thousands of tourists, are today inadequately privatized and completely closed. The hotels "Vlasina" with an annex capacity of 162 beds and hotel "Jezero" capacity of 40 beds, Resort of the Vlasina hydroelectric power plants owned by the Electric Power Industry of Serbia on the Vlasina Lake, "Serbia" in Surdulica with 110 beds and Hotel Železnicar in Vranjska Banja with 102 beds, are today closed and partially devastated.

Based on the data in Table 1 it can be seen that there are few categorized facilities in the structure of the basic accommodation capacity in the Pčinja District. Out of a total of 5 categorized accommodation facilities, 3 are located in Vranje and each one in Bujanovac and Bosilegrad. The basic accommodation facilities are dominated by accommodation and boarding houses that offer guests food and beverage services and restaurants located within the facility. Of the total basic accommodation capacity of the Pčinja district, more than half are located on the territory of the city of Vranje (59.5% or 679 beds). In the municipality of Vladičin Han is 11.4% of the total basic accommodation capacity or 126 beds. On the other hand, according to Table 1, it can also be seen that in 4 municipalities of the Pčinja district, out of a total of 8, there is not a single registered and categorized accommodation capacity, namely Vranjska Banja, Surdulica, Preševo and Trgovište. In the entire Bosilegrad region, there is only the hotel "Dukat" which with 34 beds participates with only 3% of the total basic accommodation capacity of the Pčinja district. It is also a disappointing fact that in the three very important tourist destinations of the entire district, namely the Vlasina Lake, Vranjska Banja and Besna Kobila, there are no significant accommodation capacities, neither in structure nor in quality. On the Vlasina Lake, apart from the boarding house "MM Narcis" and "3M", there are no other types of the basic accommodation capacity, which together make up 13.5% of the total basic accommodation capacity. The mountain lodge has a capacity of 80 beds, but they are unsatisfactory and of the lower quality. Within the Mountaineering Home there is also a restaurant Planinarska kuća.

Complementary accomodation capacity in the Pčinja district

The complementary accommodation facilities include boarding houses, rural households, houses, rooms, villas and apartments for rent. The complementary accommodation is smaller in relation to the basic accommodation, but it has a lower quality of services and prices and is often referred to as private accommodation (Bratić, 2015).

As with the structure of the basic accommodation capacity, the complementary one has undergone certain changes in the direction of collapsing and closing magnificent buildings by which some destinations in the Pčinja district were recognizable throughout Serbia. An example is Vranjska Banja, which used to host members of the Serbian dynasties, and today there are not many traces from their time. One of the most beautiful buildings in Vranjska Banja was the "Moser" villa built in 1887, which was reconstructed in 2011 and today represents the building of the Municipality. After the First World War, the main gathering place was the "Balkan" villa which had 40 rooms, at that time modernly equipped with electric lighting, bathroom, telephone, gramophone and balcony. For the needs of spa treatment, in 1931, the "Railway Resort" was built, which was extended after the Second World War in 1946 and 1997. Later, the "Railway Resort" was turned into the "Sofka" hotel. There used to be a famous hotel and restaurant "Kosovo", a "Warsaw" villa from 1931 and "Vojvodina" in the spa, but none of the above works today. (Bulatović, 2019). The structure of the complementary accommodation capacity in the Pčinja district shows in Table 2.

Table 2: *Structure of the complementary accommodation capacity in the Pčinja district*

Location	Name of the facility	Type of the facility	Total number of beds
Vranje	“Šreder“	Hostel	12
	“Binta“	Hostel	11
	“Allegro dream“	Apartment	12
	“Lenjinka“	Apartment	5
	“Vranje“	Apartment	6
	“Đorđević“	Apartment	5
	“Tasić“	Villa	15
	“Veselinović“	Apartment	4
	“Sentić“	Villa	18

	“S&G“	Apartment	4
	“Dunja“	Villa	5
	“Odmor i mir“	Apartment	15
	“Lela“	Apartment	4
Vranjska banja	Special hospital for rehabilitation	Special rehabilitation hospital	120
Bujanovačka banja	Institute for prevention, treatment and rehabilitation “Vrelo“	Special rehabilitation hospital	200
Bujanovačka banja	Special hospital “Bujanovačka banja	Special hospital	250
Village Dulan (Čukovac), Vranje	“Mišić“	Restaurant with boarding house	19
Vladičin Han	“Grazia“	Villa	30
Village Prekodolce, Vladičin Han	“My way“	Ethnic house	5
Surdulica	“Park 2016“	Apartment	54
	“Vlasina“	Ethnic house	16
Village Zagužanje, Surdulica	“Markov konak“	Ethnic house	16
Vlasina Rid, Vlasina Lake	“Milina“	Apartment	10
	“Sunčev breg“	Apartment	8
	“Boni“	Villa	28
	“Mimi“	Villa	16
	“Best“	Villa	16
	“Vlasinski vrtovi“	Villa	17
	“Panda“	Villa	8
	“Đokić“	Villa	27
Village Dobrosin, Bujanovac	“Dobri“	Ethnic village	10
Village Golema padina, Trgovište	“Baba Spaska“	Ethnic house	8
Village Prolesje, Trgovište	“Mitke“	Ethnic house	10
Bosilegrad	“Monika“	Restaurant with boarding house	21
Private houses and rooms to let			216
Total			1.221

Source: *Research of authors in the field and cooperation with tourist organizations of the municipalities of Pčinja district*

The capacity of the complementary accommodation is somewhat higher in relation to the capacity of the basic accommodation in the Pčinja District (Table 2). The largest capacity of complementary accommodation in the Pčinja District is in Vranjska and Bujanovacka Banja, represented by spas,

i.e. special hospitals that together participate with 570 beds or 47.5% of the total complementary accommodation. The Vlasina Lake is dominated by villas and apartments located in the settlement of Vlasina Rid, which participate with 130 beds or 10.8% of the total complementary accommodation in the Pčinja district. The share of complementary accommodation capacity of Vranje according to the total is 116 beds or 9.8%, which is a lower capacity considering that Vranje is the largest center of the Pčinja district. In addition to the data listed in Table 2 in the Pčinja District, there are also 216 beds arranged in private houses and rooms for rent, which belong to the group of the complementary accommodation capacities, but are not categorized.

There are some deviations in the territorial distribution of complementary accommodation (compare Table 1 and Table 2). Apart from Presevo, at least one complementary accommodation facility has been registered in all other municipalities. Thus, on the example of the Vlasina Lake, there are more complementary accommodation facilities as compared to the basic one, but it is represented by a smaller number of accommodation units per facility. A devastating fact is that in Vranjska and Bujanovacka Banja, as the only health centers with balneotherapy, there is no other accommodation except for Special Hospitals and Health Dispensaries. The Institute for Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation "Vrelo" in Bujanovacka Banja has been working since 1986. with professional health staff and modern equipment for diagnosis and treatment of various diseases. However, the biggest deviation in accommodation capacities occurs in the municipality of Trgovište, where no basic accommodation facilities have been registered, and the ethno village "Baba Spaska" and the ethno house "Mitke" can be found as complementary accommodation as the only facilities of this kind in the Pčinja district.

The ethno village "Baba Spaska" is located 2 km from the municipality of Trgovište in the Pčinja valley, in the neighborhood of the village of Golema Padina. "Baba Spaska" ethno village was categorized with three stars in July 2021 and is the first categorized ethno village in the Pčinja district. It has 8 beds and 150 seats in the restaurant. At 500 m from the ethno village along the forest trail, there is the Jastrebov dol waterfall, about 15 m high. Near the ethno village is the monastery "Transfiguration of the Most Holy Mother of God" and the Devil's Stone.

Ethno house "Mitke" is located in the village of Prolesje, in the neighborhood of Deda Bogdanovci in the municipality of Trgoviste at 1.326 m above the

sea level. The ethno house is 24 km away from Trgovište. The road is asphalted to the place Radovnica and the rest is a macadam road along the valley of the river Tripusnica. The state border with the Republic of Northern Macedonia is only 2 km away from the ethno house. In August 2021, the ethno house "Mitke" received a two-star categorization and has been open to guests ever since. Ethno house "Mitke" on 100 km² has 10 beds in 4 rooms, one bathroom, kitchen and a dining room.

The restaurant "Mišić" with an inn located in the village of Dulan, 7 km away from Vranje, deserves special attention. Within the complex "Mišić" there is a small zoo of 8 ha in which 250 different species of animals live. About 80% of the zoo's habitat is made up of the exotic birds. Flamingos, red iris, ostrich, zebra, tiger, llama and other animals whose natural habitat is Africa can be seen in the "Mišić" zoo. There is a riding school within the zoo.

Due to an insufficient accommodation capacity in Bosilegrad, during the festival "Bosilegrad area sings and dances", the participants were accommodated in the dormitory of the high school students in Bosilegrad with a total capacity of 62 beds and in the boarding school "Georgi Dimitrov" in Donja Ljubata, capacity of 90 beds. This boarding school is also used to accommodate mountaineers during international ascents to Crnook Mountain on the border between Bulgaria, Northern Macedonia and Serbia.

Other tourist infra and suprastructure of the Pčinja district

The Pčinja district has an exceptional traffic-geographical position considering that it is one of the most important European highways Corridor 10 along the Moravian-Vardar valley, the railway and the E-75 highway. The E-75 highway, as a first-class state road, is part of the trans-European Corridor 10, which connects the countries of the Western and Central Europe with the Gulf of Thessaloniki and the Eastern Mediterranean on the Belgrade-Niš-Skopje-Thessaloniki route. The 155 km long modern section of the Nis-Preševo highway coincides with the old highway and railway that follow the South Morava valley. On the section of this road Caričina Dolina-Vladičin Han, the highest bridge in Serbia was built, the bridge "Vrla" 62 m high and 644 m long, which is located at 551 m above the sea level. The "Manajle" tunnel, 1808 m long, was built on the same section, which is the longest road tunnel in Serbia (Pavlović, 2019).

In addition to the main road that follows the valley of the South Morava in the north-south direction, several regional roads of good quality can be

distinguished on the territory of the Pčinja district (Public enterprise Roads of Serbia):

- To the east, the regional road M 1.13 leads from Vladičin Han-Surdulica to Vlasina Okruglica (Lake Vlasina) in the length of 30 km. At Vlasina Okruglica, the road forks to the northeast and leads to Strezimirovac in the length of 23 km (border with the Republic of Bulgaria) and to the southeast, which is a regional road R 122 that leads to Bosilegrad and Ribarce in the length of 51 km across the Lisinsko Lake (also the border with the Republic of Bulgaria).
- From Vranje to the east, the road leads to Donji Stajevac and Trgovište in the length of 46.5 km.
- From Bujanovac in the southeast the road leads to the monastery Prohor Pčinjski in the length of 29 km (border crossing with the Republic of Northern Macedonia),
- From Bujanovac to the west, the road leads to Gjilane where the Pčinja district is connected with Kosovo Pomoravlje.

Vranje, as the center of the Pčinja district, gravitates towards one domestic and two international airports. The domestic airport of Constantine the Great in Niš is 116 km away from Vranje, but the closest is the International Airport in Skopje, which is 98 km away. It is 169 km from Sofia International Airport.

On the Vlasina Lake, 3 km from the location of Promaja and the road leading to Bosilegrad, there is the only ski trail in this area called "Pejine vodenice". The ski slope was founded in 2012 and is 450 meters long. The ski lift consists of a rope circling and pulling the skiers to the top of the ski station, and the skiers themselves improvise the rope grip. This type of arrangement of the ski resort on Vlasina and the entire mountain area of the Pčinja district is not even close to the real possibilities. (Skijanjanje.rs, 2015).

On mount Čemernik has a total length of ski trails, about 13 km, with a displacement of up to 200 m, and a slope of up to 11°. The terrains on Vardenik are similar, with a slightly higher slope of the trail up to 13°. According to the conditions for skiing, the capacity of up to 2.250 skiers is estimated at Čemernik, and up to 1.450 at Vardenik (Marić et al., 2015).

Organizational factors in the Pčinja district operate through tourist *organizations and travel agencies*.

Tourist organizations as centers of tourist marketing under whose auspices numerous events are realized, as independent centers exist in the city of Vranje and the municipalities of Surdulica, Bujanovac and Trgovište. Since Vranjska Banja is part of the city of Vranje, it houses the tourist info center as a branch office of the tourist organization of the city of Vranje. The municipalities of Vladičin Han, Bosilegrad and Preševo do not have their own independent tourist organizations. The municipality of Vladičin Han conducts activities in the field of tourism within the municipal administration called the Institution for cultural activities, tourism and librarianship, while in the municipality of Bosilegrad, organizations related to tourism take place within the Center for Culture.

The structure of tourist agencies in the Pčinja district has changed a lot since the beginning of the Covid pandemic, which affected the reduction and, in certain time intervals, the complete abolition of tourist travel. For this reason, some travel agencies today work with a minimum amount of work, and some are closed. Today, there are several travel agencies in Vranje that deal with subagentura, one travel agency as a travel organizer with an OTP license from 2020 with its own fleet and two branches of major Belgrade travel organizers. In addition to Vranje, in Vladičin Han, Bujanovac and Surdulica, there is one travel agency that deals with subagentura. There are no travel agencies in the municipalities of Bosilegrad, Trgovište and Preševo.

Planned accommodation facilities within the Landscape of Outstanding Features "Vlasina"

Considering that the demand for a multi-day stay around Lake Vlasina is growing every year, it is necessary to build new accommodation capacities of 4+* quality within the area of the Landscape of Outstanding Features "Vlasina" which will satisfy modern tourist needs. The area of Landscape of Outstanding Features "Vlasina" has been built spontaneously for a long time and without any planned development. Table 3 shows the planned accommodation facilities within the boundaries of the Landscape of Outstanding Features "Vlasina".

Table 3: *Planned accommodation facilities within the boundaries of the Landscape of Outstanding Features "Vlasina"*

Type of the facility	Planned number of beds
Vlasina Rid	
Hotels	2400
Annex	100
Resorts	0
Kamps	0
Hunting lodges	50
Private holiday facilities	500
Total Vlasina Rid	3050
Vlasina Okruglica	
Hotels	700
Motels	0
Resorts	0
Annex	0
Total Vlasina Okruglica	700
Vlasina Stojkoviće	
Hotels	50
Annex	0
Private holiday facilities	250
Total Vlasina Stojkoviće	300
Total accommodation tourist facilities Landscape of Outstanding Features "Vlasina"	4050

Source: *Horvath HTL, 2007*

Modern tourists want relaxation and quality vacation, looking for isolation and a sense of home atmosphere. Therefore, in 2007 Horvath HTL Corporate (Hotel, Tourism & Leisure Consulting) developed a Master Plan with a business plan for the development of Lake Vlasina tourism. The client of this Master Plan is the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development of the Republic of Serbia, and the construction of tourist facilities with a capacity of 4050 beds is planned, within the Landscape of Outstanding Features "Vlasina".

According to the data in Table 3, it can be seen that most tourist facilities will be built in the Vlasina Rid zone, because it is the most accessible from the regional directions, namely Surdulice and Crne Trave. Zone Vlasina Okruglica, as the entrance area from the direction of Surdulica is the first contact with guests, so it should offer the most luxurious accommodation and open views of Lake Vlasina. Vlasina Stojkoviće will offer facilities

to guests who want complete peace and a sense of isolation because it has primary natural values.

Conclusion

The material base represented by the tourist infrastructure and the suprastructure of the Pčinja district is one of the basic factors and indicators of the tourist (un) development of this area. Despite the exceptional traffic position with a well-developed network of highways and regional roads, the Pčinja district can not boast of a material base that would be characterized by either quality or quantity. This is the first and basic indicator that shows that the Pčinja district is less valorized in terms of tourism as compared to competing tourist destinations in the central and western Serbia.

When viewed as a whole, the municipalities located along the main road of the Corridor 10 (Vladičin Han, Surdulica and Vranje) have a significant number of accommodation facilities, which is very important for the development of transit tourism. Tourists passing through on the way to Greece have a place to stop and rest. However, there is no registered accommodation capacity in Preševo, which is also on the transit route. The reason for that is the tourist's lack of interest in staying in this municipality due to its ethnic instability. On the other hand, tourists in transit are happy to stay in the Konak, which is part of the monastery Prohor Pčinjski for two reasons, vacation with a tour of the religious building which is itself a tourist attraction, but also because the monastery is 3 km from the border crossing with Northern Macedonia. Tourists often use the Prohor Pčinjski crossing as an alternative to avoid large crowds at the Preševo-Tabanovci crossing, especially in the summer season.

The Besna Kobila Mountain, Vlasina Lake and Vranjska Banja are the tourist centers of the Pčinja District that have the greatest potential for the development of the mountain, sports-recreational and health tourism. Due to its terrain exposure and the duration of the snow cover, the Besna Kobila mountain has an exceptional potential for the development of winter and sports-recreational tourism. However, the undeveloped tourist infrastructure and superstructure on Besna Kobila, such as ski lifts and cable cars, unarranged ski slopes and insufficient accommodation capacity, have conditioned it to remain in the shadow of the already developed mountain centers such as Kopaonik, Zlatibor, Stara planina, Tara and Divčibare because they offer visitors a variety of tourist facilities. The Besna Kobila mountain is recognized as a mountain tourist destination of

a considerable potential, but in practice its arrangement has not been taken more seriously. The devastating fact is that the Pčinja district as a mountainous area of the Rhodope complex, does not have a single seriously built ski center modeled on the example of the Kopaonik or Zlatibor, but only an improvised 450-meter-long trail on the Vlasina Lake. The exceptional potential for the development of mountain and winter sports and recreational tourism must not be left untapped and neglected. Therefore it is necessary to build modern cable cars, ski and ski trails on the Besna Kobila, the mountains around the Vlasina Lake, Dukat and Crnook (mountains of the Bosilegrad region) that would allow a pass of dozens of skiers at the same time, ski lifts and cannons for artificial snow.

The Lake Vlasina, as one of the most important tourist destinations in the Pčinja district, but also in the whole of the southern Serbia, was left without basic categorized accommodation capacity. However, the facilities that remained working are on average tourist standard. Insufficient accommodation capacity with food and beverage services, untidy bathing capacity of the Vlasina Lake, absence of larger recreational facilities act as a deterrent to visitors, so they visit this destination with shorter stays. Longer tourist stays at this destination would be possible if more accommodation capacity was built, as well as beach offices, trim and bicycle paths, and a tourist info center was opened to promote the wider area, etc. It would be good to open mini bus lines that would run during the day, connecting the municipalities along the Corridor 10 and the Lake Vlasina.

Vranjska and Bujanovačka Banja (Spas), as important centers of health and spa tourism, apart from special hospitals and some rooms in private houses, have no other form of accommodation capacity. With the construction of modern wellness and spa hotel centers in Vranjska and Bujanovačka Banja, the content of the tourist offer of the Pčinja district would gain in importance and make it a competitive tourist destination.

However, one of the crucial problems of the tourist underdevelopment of the Pčinja district lies in the absence of the organizational factors. Out of the eight municipalities of the Pčinja district, three do not have their own independent tourist organizations as centers of marketing and promotion of this area. The absence of marketing deprives the general public of the acquaintance with the Pčinja district, which results in unvaluedness and unused tourist attractions. For the future development of this area, it is necessary for each municipality to have its own tourism sector or tourist organization that would cooperate with each other and promote the Pčinja

district as a whole. As a border district, it is important to establish a cross-border cooperation with the tourism organizations in Bulgaria and Northern Macedonia, which would in turn increase the interregional tourism trends and the influx of foreign tourists.

Also, for the future tourist development of the Pčinja district more professional tourist staff is needed, but also the encouragement and education of the local population to engage in tourism, which would create a larger, better and higher quality material base.

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