

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE CITY OF ŠABAC AS TOURIST DESTINATION

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### Abstract

*Sustainable development represents a future based on long-term goals that respect economic, social, environmental and cultural values. The aim of this paper is to present the basic characteristics of tourism in the destination of the town of Šabac and to show the current connection with sustainable development and goals for the future. The main research question is: Does the city of Šabac as a tourist destination meet the conditions of sustainability in tourism? The research was conducted with the idea of analyzing how respondents see the city of Šabac in terms of sustainability (survey of 14 questions, answered by 200 respondents). We conclude that, although sustainable tourism is at the beginning of its activity, the city of Šabac is a complete tourist destination, based on the Tourism Development Program of the City of Šabac 2020-2025 through a modern concept of development that strives for ecological, social and economic sustainability.*

*Key Words: sustainable development, City of Šabac, tourist destination.  
JEL classification: Q01, Q56, Z32.*

### Introduction

Given that faster economic and sustainable development is expected, as well as the development of tourism in recent years, characteristic mass tourism movements (Damnjanović, 2021; Ignjatović et al., 2022) and the development of technology have enabled easier access to information

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(Filipović & Ignjatović, 2021). This resulted in a faster way to reserve various contents at the destination, and thus a faster decision-making process (Živković & Brdar, 2018). Today, tourists are much more experienced, more informed, looking for more content, activities, and a better price-quality ratio (Gheorghe et al., 2014). The aim of this paper is to present the basic characteristics of tourism and the destination of the city of Šabac, as well as to show the current connection with sustainable development and what is necessary to work on this plan in the future. The main task of this work is to answer the main research question: Does the city of Šabac as a tourist destination meet the conditions of sustainability in tourism? In addition to the main research question of the work, we highlight the following as auxiliary research question: Research question 1: Does the town of Šabac represent a complete tourist destination? Research question 2: What are the basic characteristics of the tourist destination of Šabac? Research question 3: Is the concept of sustainable development of tourism known in this destination, is it applied, and are there specific development plans and strategies?

In this paper, the authors collected data and literature related to sustainable development, sustainable tourism, as well as the concept of the Šabac tourist destination. The paper is based on the analysis of the importance of the tourist destination, the importance of sustainable tourism sector and the importance of Šabac as a tourist destination. The results of the research are presented based on a survey of 14 questions, which were answered by 200 respondents, where a significant insight into the position of Šabac as a tourist destination and the possibilities of further progress and development was achieved.

### **Development of the city of Šabac as a tourist destination**

One of the definitions of sustainable development is the aspiration that all the resources used to meet our own needs should be used to the extent and in a way that will leave the possibility that the generations that come after can do the same (Ignjatović & Đorđević, 2023). The tourist destination is further explained using the concept of a tourist place, i.e., a place for vacation, i.e. resort (Paulino et al., 2021). It implies a place that attracts many tourists, where tourism with its special characteristics plays an important role in economic functioning (Manhas et al., 2016). This includes cities that have significant tourist facilities, regions with tourist centers, as well as closed facilities with various recreational and social

facilities in one location. Such a variety of tourist places caused the need to define the term tourist destination (Popesku & Gajić, 2020).

As the economic, cultural, and administrative center of the Mačvan district, Šabac is one of the largest and most famous cities in Serbia. To look at all the elements of a tourist destination, in addition to emphasizing its attractiveness, availability, human resources, image, it is very important to look at accommodation facilities, manifestations and cultural routes. To evaluate the destination in the best way, analyze its advantages and disadvantages, it is important how many and what kind of accommodation facilities it has, as well as what are the wishes and needs of the tourists who come (Stojićević et al., 2022). The conditions for staying at a destination are first accommodation facilities, then restaurants, cafés, shops, parks, swimming pools, promenades and everything that can be interpreted as the needs of tourists, in the specific area where they stay. Given that Šabac is an important city center (City administration of Šabac, 2021) it has all the necessary facilities, both for the local population and for tourists who come. However, in the past, the city of Šabac had problems with an insufficient number of accommodation facilities. In recent years, the situation has changed significantly, primarily with the renovation of the Sloboda Hotel (which was not in operation for more than a decade). At the time of transitional reforms (Tošković & Filipović, 2017; Filipović et al., 2015; Filipović & Ignjatović, 2023), the Sloboda Hotel was successfully privatized in 2003 and is now part of the first Serbian hotel chain, A hotels. This led Šabac to open several smaller city hotels, as well as other types of accommodation. In addition, the attractiveness of the Šabac tourist destination is made up of natural resources (the Sava river, Mount Cer), cultural and historical resources (Šabac Fortress, National Museum, Cathedral Church, Pedestrian Zone), manifestations (Čivijada, Carnival, Šabac Fair, Lipolista Rose Festival, Swimming Marathon, ŠLF, Horse Races) (Tourist Organization of the city of Šabac, 2024).

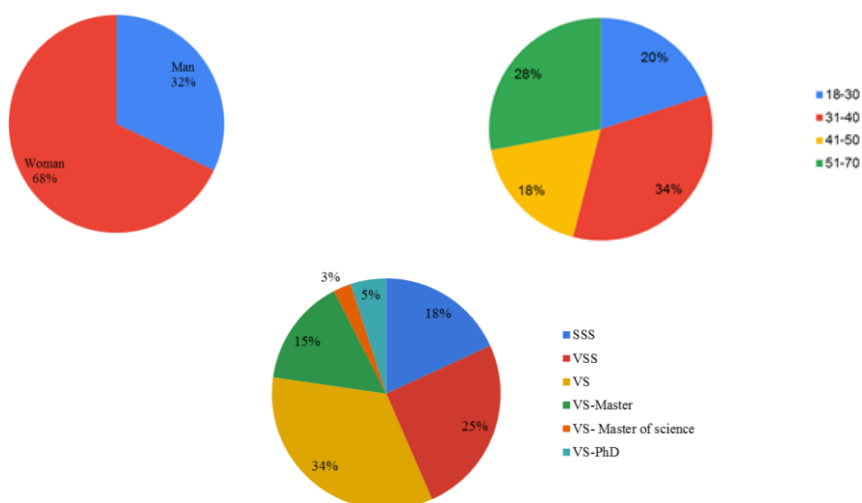
According to the Tourism Development Program of the city of Šabac (2020-2025), a strategic vision of the city of Šabac has been formulated as a potentially significant tourist destination in Serbia. The starting point in the creation of the Tourism Development Program is the observation of the destination through the prism of sustainable development, whereby the contemporary conception equally considers ecological, socio-cultural, economic, and institutional concepts (Tourist Organization of the city of Šabac, 2020).

## Results

For the purposes of this chapter, a survey was conducted - Šabac as a tourist destination, potentials for the tourism development in the city and its surroundings. The aim of the survey was to show the opinions and attitudes of respondents about Šabac as a tourist destination and its potential. The survey was intended for respondents aged 18 to 70, regardless of the level of education, field of work, place of residence. The survey was conducted through a Google questionnaire and was distributed through email addresses and social media. Since the survey was distributed to many people, from any part of Serbia, exactly 200 respondents responded. The survey was conducted in September 2023.

The first part of the Survey related to socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, education, place of residence). Figure 1 shows that it is concluded that the survey was mostly answered by women - 68%, while the men's answers make 32%. In Figure 2, we show that the age structure is diverse (persons aged 31-40 years old prevail), while Figure 3 shows that the highest percentage of respondents has a higher education.

Figures 1, 2 and 3: *Gender, age and education of respondents in the survey (200 responses)*

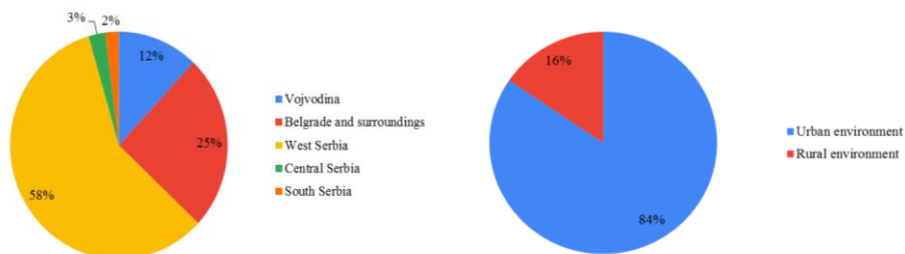


Source: *Authors' research.*

The last two charts in this segment refer to the place of residence, more precisely the area in the Republic of Serbia. Figure 4 shows that the most

respondents are from Western Serbia (Šabac location), followed by the area of Belgrade and its surroundings, Vojvodina, while the very small percentage are Eastern and Southern Serbia. Figure 5 shows that 84.5% of respondents live in an urban environment, while the remaining 16% live in a rural environment.

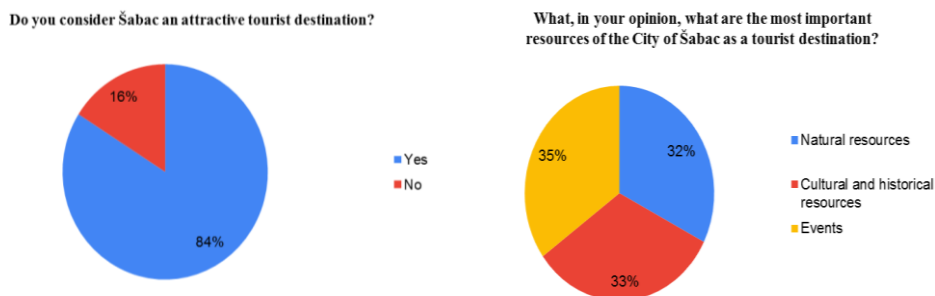
Figures 4 and 5: *Region and place of living of respondents in the survey, in the Republic of Serbia (200 responses)*



Source: *Authors' research.*

The second part of the Survey referred to Šabac as a tourist destination, attractiveness, resources, potential for development, investments, impact on the local community and finally sustainable development of the destination.

Figure 6 and 7: *The attractiveness and the most important resources of Šabac as a destination (200 responses in the survey)*

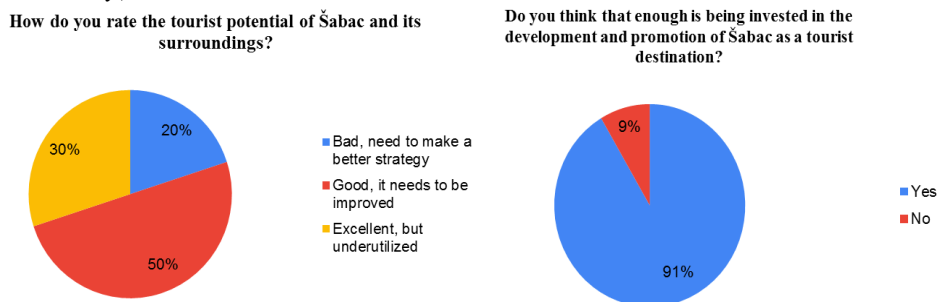


Source: *Authors' research.*

Figure 6 shows that 84% of the respondents believe that Šabac is an attractive tourist destination, while 16% believe the opposite. Figure 7 gave respondents the opportunity to decide between the three most important resources of Šabac as a tourist destination. Most respondents agreed that tourist attractions (Natural resources – the Sava River, Mount

Cer, etc.), cultural and historical resources (Šabac Fortress, National Museum, Cathedral Church, Pedestrian Zone, etc.) and Events (Čivijada, Šabac fair, Lipolist Rose Festival, Swimming marathon, Horse races, etc.) are equally important for the development of tourism in Šabac (Figure 7).

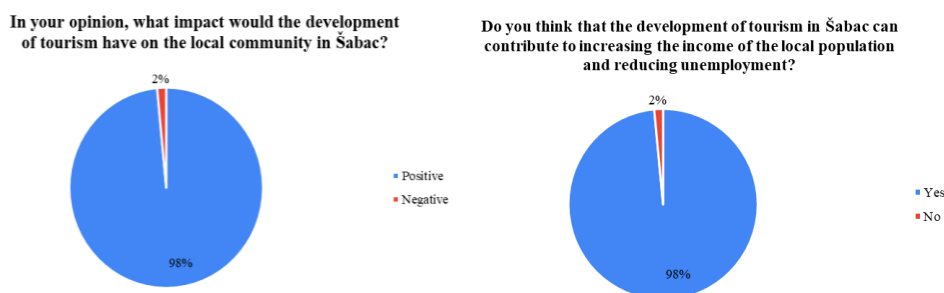
Figure 8 and 9: *Assessment of tourist potential and investment in the development and promotion of Šabac as a destination (200 responses in the survey)*



Source: *Authors' research.*

Figure 8 shows that the tourism potential of the town of Šabac is mostly marked as good, but it needs to be improved (50%), while a certain number of respondents thinks that it is excellent (30%), and a certain number thinks that it is bad and that a new strategy should be implemented (20%). Respondents believe that insufficient investment is being made in the promotion of Šabac as a tourist destination (Figure 9).

Figure 10 and 11: *The development of tourism and the impact on the local community, increasing the income of the local population and reducing unemployment in Šabac? (200 responses in the survey)*

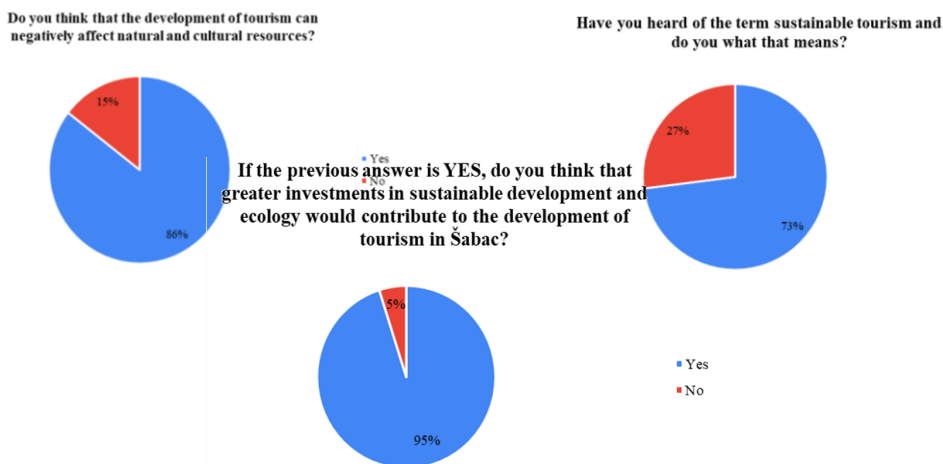


Source: *Authors' research.*

Figure 10 shows that the tourism development in Šabac would have a positive impact on the local community, which is supported by 98% of the respondents. Also, the same percentage of respondents (98%) believe that the tourism development in Šabac can contribute to increasing the income of the local community and reducing unemployment (Figure 11).

Figure 12 indicates that many respondents (85%) believe that the tourism development cannot negatively affect natural and cultural resources in Šabac. Sustainable development does not have its full application and role in our lives, the aim is to investigate whether people are familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism, to begin with (Figure 12). So, 73% of respondents answered positively to the question of whether they are familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism (Figure 13). Out of 156 respondents (who are familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism), 95% of them believe that greater investment in sustainable development and ecology would contribute to the tourism development in Šabac (Figure 14).

Figure 12, 13 and 14: *Development of tourism, natural and cultural resources and sustainable tourism (200 responses in the survey)*



Source: *Authors' research.*

According to the survey, most of the population of this area considers Šabac as a potentially interesting tourist destination and that greater investment is needed. Also, many respondents believe that investments in tourism and the development of tourist destinations would have positive economic effects, such as increasing the income of the local population and reducing unemployment, which would directly affect the quality of

life. The survey found that residents are familiar with the term sustainable tourism, which represents a good start in the possibilities of developing the sustainability of a tourist destination, where cooperation with the local population is one of the drivers.

### **Conclusion**

Analyzing the mentioned facts, characteristics and data about the city of Šabac, it can be concluded that the city of Šabac can be viewed as a complete tourist destination, with its specific attractions, good accessibility and conditions for staying (Research question 1). Also, the results of the survey show that respondents marked all three offered characteristics (natural resources, cultural-historical resources and events) of the Šabac tourist destination as the most important, which means that Šabac has great development potential (Research question 2). Given that there are still no new, concrete strategies and plans for sustainable tourism in Šabac, the current direction of sustainable tourism is based exclusively on the Tourism Development Program of the city of Šabac 2020-2025 where the modern concept of tourism development strives for ecological, social and economic sustainability (Research question 3). The recommendation is to start surveying the local population and involving them in various projects, to know the problems and objections from the first moment.

The answer to the main research question of this paper is that sustainable development in tourism is at the beginning of its activity, that it is still in the theoretical phase and concrete activities and plans are still on paper, which means that there have not yet been any actions and activities towards sustainable tourism by any participant in the tourism industry.

Future research should include a larger number of respondents and a more specific review of the basic characteristics of sustainability, clearly and precisely stating the necessary characteristics of ecological, social and economic sustainability, with the intention of reaching a conclusion on how all this could be applied in the destination of Šabac. More significant preparation, the invitation of experts from this field and more significant cooperation with the local population that shows understanding and interest in the sustainable development of tourism is necessary.

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