

CULTURAL TOURISM AND CULTURAL ROUTES. AS ACASE STUDY: THE CITY OF TRIKALA

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Abstract

The object of this study is cultural tourism and cultural routes with case study the city of Trikala.

The dissertation accentuates that cultural tourism is one of the most rapid and vigorously expanding markets in a highly competitive international environment. Cultural tourism is a special form of tourism that pursues the promotion of the local characteristics of a region. In this context the cultural routes are management tools widely used for the development of cultural resources and further promotion of cultural tourism.

This study aims to emphasize and promote the cultural heritage of the city of Trikala in the light of cultural routes and to explore the attitudes of residents of Trikala region towards cultural tourism and its contribution to local development.

For the needs of the thesis I performed fieldwork questionnaires to a random sample of 250 residents, which lead to specific conclusions. Therefore I propose a certain proposal for a cultural journey, which is reflected on a map to highlight the most important cultural assets of the city of Trikala.

Key Words: *Cultural tourism, cultural routes, Trikala city*

Introduction

It's a fact that culture is recognized as a significant advantage of each city because of the economic and social benefits it brings , but also because of its endurance in the current juncture. Especially for Greece , culture survives in a domestic environment of significant and prolonged recession , political and economic uncertainty and credit shortage, but also in an international environment of stagnation, deflation and strong competition (Karachaliou, 2007) (Kafouros, 2015) (Lazaretou , 2014).

The concept of culture is difficult to convey, as it consists of a broad set of tangible and intangible resources. These resources include historical resources, ethnic tangible and intangible characteristics, physical site characteristics and characteristics of the surrounding environment, visible human activities, natural factors and intangibles assets (Kafouros, 2015).

Cultural heritage of a place is one of the oldest and most important pillars of sustainable development of tourism. It was and continues to be one of the most basic component of the

tourism industry. Culture and tourism are inseparable and mutually beneficial for each other (OECD, 2009). Indeed, MacCannell (1976) and Cohen (1979) argue that culture is a process of finding, from the perspective of tourists, the original meaning of the tourist experience. The fact is that all places of the world would give the impression that they are the same without their culture (Boniface, 1995). This pursuit for cultural difference, diversity and escape from home impels us to travel (Moira & Parthenis, 2011).

Cultural tourism is regarded as the oldest form of tourism, starting from the Roman travelers and then with religious pilgrimages established in the Middle Ages (Pashalidis & Champouli-Ioannidou, 2002). However, growth in the last years is due to the effects of mass tourism and the continuous changes of the tourism industry trends. A continuous increasing number of cities and entire regions are based on their cultural tourism and to the promotion of their cultural heritage in order to develop even further tourism (Richards, 1996).

Greece has a rich cultural heritage literally throughout its territory. Specifically, Trikala is a city with significant cultural resources and with a strong will for creation, which triggers a challenge to establish a new competitive advantage in the financial sector, despite the difficulties, such as lack of state funding. It is worth noting that today the city of Trikala follows the social and cultural changes, but foremost the technological developments that have occurred in the recent decades in the sectors of information and communication, reinforcing at the same time the demand from tourists for cultural assets and new forms of entertainment.

Cultural tourism and its contribution to local development

Searching the international literature, we find that, despite the widespread acceptance of the term “cultural tourism”, experts haven’t come up with a precise and widely accepted definition (Richards 1996, Gali-Espelt, 2012). And this is due to the many and varied dimensions, material and immaterial (Doom & Parthenis, 2011). Cultural tourism is interested in objects of art, language, architecture, gastronomy, technology of distant past , clothing and recreational activities and delight (Asplet & Cooper, 2000).

According to an approach of the World Tourism Organization, cultural tourism concern to the people traveling with incentive eminently cultural. This kind of travel includes educational tours , visits to archaeological sites and museums , monuments , architectural works , art galleries , festivals and other artistic events , theater , cinema , study of the natural environment , religious events and pilgrimages (ECTARC, 1989). Cultural tourism deals with visiting tourist attractions, historical monuments, and the elements that compose the vibrant cultural production (Pavlogeorgatos and Konstantoglou, 2004• de Blavia, 1998). Approaching cultural tourism from a holistic point of view, emphasis is first and foremost given to heritage (Keitumetse, 2009) (Huibin et al, 2012) (Hughes and Allen, 2005).

Cultural tourism is recognized as a special category since the late 70s, when researchers and the competent regulators of tourism discovered that many people were traveling with a view to understanding the culture and cultural heritage of their destination (Tighe, 1986). From the 80s onwards special importance was given in cultural tourism, which led to the increase of cultural travel literature (Balcar & Pearce, 1996). Currently, cultural tourism represents enormous economic sizes and interests, which increase rapidly. Consequently , they not only must not be

ignored but , on the contrary , their support and expansion should be a high priority objective for any economy and , even more, for an economy such as the Greek (Kafouros , 2015).

Cultural tourism can provide multiple benefits for any economy. Firstly, it is necessary to mention the influx of funds from abroad. Then, the general view of a region or of an entire country internationally, investments in projects and infrastructure services in the cultural sector, the development of crafts and folk art industry, memorabilia and all related products such kind of tourism, promotion of local products are many among the benefits of cultural tourism. Also, the development of local production, diversification of the product of tourism and the lengthening of the touristic season contribute to local development (Vayionia , 2005) (Holloway and Robinson, 1995) (Kafouros, 2015).

Other benefits that have been recorded are the strengthening of social cohesion, which enhances the dynamic of the community – centered upon the existing vision of the culture for the specific region and overcoming cultural boundaries (Moomas, 2004• Craik, 1995). In order to create economic, social and cultural benefits to the community, residents should positively support and actively participate in the care and protection of their cultural heritage (Besculides et al., 2002).

As Karachaliou (2007) underlines, "culture, tourism and local development are concepts directly related. The dimensions of the development of cultural heritage and exploitation of the Contemporary cultural activity are directly linked to urban invigoration and tourism development"(Karachaliou, 2007: i). However, the nature and sensitivity of some of the local resources note that for the viability of the local element as a whole certain actions are needed which are inextricable with tourism management, administrative support, establishment of environmental management regulators, reinforcement of implementing organizations etc. (Coccosis & Tsartas, 2001) (Briassoulis, 2002).

Cultural routes accenting the cultural landscape

One of the main management tools of development of cultural tourism and development of the region's tourism are the cultural routes. Specifically certain, tours are structured around a central thematic core (Consola: 2012). Pinpoint a specific course (visit) to sites of natural and cultural heritage, within a defined framework, thematic or historical or conceptual. Cultural routes constitute applied practice promotion and interpretation of cultural heritage and the city's memories, integrated on thematic based upon their cultural characteristics (Karavassili & Mikelakis, 2011) (Consola, 2012).

During the designation of cultural routes, special attention should be given to thematic, poetic and rhetoric of the "narrative description" of the route. The choice of the theme of a cultural route demands the formation of a multidisciplinary team (historians, archaeologists, etc.) and at the same time an approach which studies in depth the history and archeology of a place, the historical whereabouts of civilization, the character of the place and the location¹ the selected "sites". The poetic behind cultural route concerns the aesthetic and conceptual elements of which is combined and the rhetoric refers to verbal means that capture the meaning (titles, knowledge,

¹ The siting of areas must be based on management and touristic planning criteria.

brochures, signs) and on the applied pedagogical methods during the process (participation, observation, exploration) (Karavassili & Mikelakis, 2011) (Patargias et al, 2004).

The interpretation of cultural heritage through a guided cultural route should be guided by knowledge of the targeted market, the tourism planning and systematic evaluation (Karavassili & Mikelakis, 2011). In this context, the individual character of the cultural route should take into serious consideration both human recipient (traveler) and host (native).

Regarding the basic typology of cultural visitor, Stebbins (1996) distinguishes the tourist in the one with special interest and to the other being the general cultural tourist. The tourist with special interest, considers cultural tourism as a serious occupation of his leisure, visiting a certain region, city or country seeking to understand its cultural heritage. The general cultural tourist has as a hobby visiting different places and for that cultural tourism is a casual and careless occupation.

Charting a framework of cultural routes in a specific area, during developmental process is obliged to take into consideration the local community and make the native people and its productive practices to get involved. In fact, apart from the visitors, it is addressed to the local residents and managers of tourism resources, especially in places where mass tourism has led to partial destruction of important historical cities and monuments (Kotios, 1998). Therefore, a well-designed development plan of a region through tourism, may contribute to the development of initiatives by local regulators for the maintenance of the local culture, enhancing the protection of cultural and natural resources and to support local sustainable development (Karavassili & Mikelakis, 2011).

In light of the above, the Cultural Routes can be divided into thematic cultural routes that include a specific thematic element and in historical cultural routes including monuments and cultural elements of a given period or season and in mixed cultural routes, which include cultural elements of the overall cultural identity of a place. Also, beyond the above mentioned distinction, cultural routes, can be distinguished in accordance with their width and can be divided into urban cultural routes, concerning monuments and cultural elements of a city-urban area, local cultural routes, which are concentrated in a limited geographical area and in hyper-regional cultural routes which apply to wider geographical area, especially when it concerns routes with precise and exact thematic core (Papageorgiou & Gkantouna, 2012).

It is quite notable the fact that international organizations, for example the Council of Europe and UNESCO have taken the initiative to design and promote transnational cultural itineraries. In particular, and the Council of Europe created the program of the European Cultural Routes (Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe) with a view to promoting the common European cultural heritage and to encourage cooperation among States through cross-border cultural exchange and dissemination of ideas (Moulin & Boniface, 2001) (Moira & Parthenis, 2011).

Therefore, integration of the cultural route in the tourism planning and the continuous evaluation ensures the quality characteristics, such as the studied temporal and spatial location distribution and the protection of the natural and human environment with respect to the given capability, the tourism capacity, the sustainable development and the protection and promotion of cultural heritage of each area (Karavassili & Mikelakis, 2011).

Case study: The city of Trikala

The city of Trikala is located in the center of Greece, the Regional Unity of Trikala, in the Thessaly Region and its extent reaches 3,367 square kilometers. (Thread, 1987). According to the Greek Statistical Service (NSS) in the 2011 census, the resident population of the city amounts to 80 900 inhabitants, while the Regional Unity of Trikala to 129.700 inhabitants. The territory of the wider region is mostly mountainous (71.8% of the area of the Regional Unity), but the city is located in the lowland. In the Regional Unity of Trikala the climate is continental.

Trikala city, is built on the river Litheos, is a timeless town that has continuous life from prehistoric times to the present. The city of Trikala, is known since ancient times as Triki and is called Trikala from the Byzantine period until today. The strategic location of the city and its agricultural and small industrial wealth was the reason to establish from the ancient times urban life. Ancient monuments, Byzantine castles, churches, mosques and newer mansions are evidence of its economic prosperity that revile the architectural heritage and the industrial history of a modern city full of life (Zafiris, 2010).

Tourist sites / Historical and architectural monuments of the city

The large monumental works of the past and of the present are a reference point for a city's culture on which citizens can build and redefine the image of their place (Karachaliou, 2007). In this context, Trikala is a city with great history, monuments and rich cultural activity. Further down follows a synoptic overview of the most important cultural resources of the city of Trikala forming at the same time strong poles of tourist traffic.

The Byzantine fortress, which dominates the city, dating from the 6th century AD. It is built on the ruins of the ancient acropolis of the ancient Triki (Ziakas, 1978) and was renovated in the 6th century by the Byzantine emperor Justinian (Papazisis, 1996). It was the strongest fortress of western Thessaly who controlled the passage to Pindos and Epirus (Zafiris, 2010). Is divided into three successive, almost equal baylies (tiers) with terraces (Manzana, 2014). On the east side of the second tier stands the elaborate and imposing clock Tower.

The Varousi district is the old preserved district of Trikala, which stretches on the east side of the fortress. It was the prestigious district of the city which maintains the traditional architectural style of the old city with narrow streets, late Byzantine churches with wonderful religious paintings, inscriptions and temples and many houses and mansions held from 1800 until today, quite conserved and restored (Ziakas, 1978• Kleidonopoulos, 2003). Under the houses are located the Trikke Asklepion and the ancient theater of the city (thread, 1987).

Asklepion of ancient Triki, the “most ancient and distinguished” according to geographer of the 1st century. BC Strabo came to light in the early 20th century. Many ancient authors mention that the God of Medicine, Asclepius, came from the ancient Triki and that there was the oldest and most important Asklepieion (sanatorium) of antiquity (Papastergiou, 1998). Such historical evidence confirms architectural findings from the archaeological site of the ancient Asklepios, buildings of various uses, complex public baths and mosaics.

The Dorothea School was built in 1875 by Dorotheos Scholarios, prominent cleric and national benefactor. Today houses the Municipality Philharmonic. Part of the Dorothea School is also the Municipal Gallery Trikala hosting paintings of Gioldasi, Katafygioti, Alexiou and other local painters.

The Hill of Prophet Elias is located in the north of the city of Trikala, within walking distance from downtown. On the hill are located the chapel, the Zoo of the city which among other animals hosts tigers, chinchillas and iguanas, emu, ostriches, horses, deer and several species of birds. It is a remarkable green area overlooking the city.

The river Litheos, a tributary of Pinios river flows through the city of Trikala diagonally from NW to SE edge. In the previous years, Litheos river ensured the water supply of the city (Moutsopoulos, 1987). According to the ancient geographer Strabo, the god of medicine Asclepius was born on its banks. The banks of Litheos connect eleven bridges, from which half of them are for use by the pedestrians and bicycles. The oldest and the most famous bridge, is the main bridge, made of cast iron in France in 1886.

The Kurshum Mosque Osman Shah Mosque (mausoleum of Osman Shah) is a reference point for the city of Trikala. Located in the city center, is an architectural masterpiece of the 16th century, which was built by one of the greatest architects of his time, of Greek origin Sinan Pasha. Was named Kursum Mosque, because the large dome is covered by lead (Manzana, 2006) (Thread, 1987). It is considered the largest and most masterly surviving mosque in the Greek territory (Zafiris, 2010).

The building S.M.Y. (Barracks) is an architectural and historic neoclassical monument. Build on Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, 1910². In Barracks successively housed the 5th SP, the first SS, the 86th S.P. Since 1975 houses the Permanent Non Commissioned Officers School of Infantry (Nimas, 1987).

The courthouse is a stone building which was established during Turkish rule and housed the Turkish headquarters. From 1915 till today houses the city's courts.

Museums

The Archaeological Collection Triki was collected in 1902 from Panagiotis Kastriotis and on both halls are exhibited findings of the Regional Unity of Trikala from the Neolithic Age to the late Byzantine years. It is situated behind the Cathedral of St. Nicholas (Nimas, 1987).

The Municipal Folklore Museum was founded in 1991 and operates on the street Garibaldi 6. In its premises are exposed everyday objects, folk art, costumes and tools of traditional professions dating from the late 18th century until the mid-20th. The collection includes photographs and documents of the same period, while the museum organizes events and revivals of traditional customs of Trikala in cooperation with the Association of Friends of the Folklore Museum.

The Kliafa Company of History and Culture Center is located in the historic ice factory and lemon soda factory Theodore Kliafa, founded in 1926. It is a multi-purpose cultural center - museum with a variety of exhibits, which maintains the mechanical equipment of the plant, which is closely connected with the life of the city in the 20th century.

The Municipal Sports History Museum was founded in 1998 based on collected material of Vasilis Peligkou, on archive files given by Spyros Bonoti and donations made from anonymous

² In this period, Trikala was a borderland and was preparing for the Balcan wars (Nymas, 1987).

athletes. It is housed in two-storey neoclassical building on Kapodistriou Street and the presentation of the exhibits is divided into three rooms, where the sports history of Trikala is presented from 1896 until today. It has also a Trophies Hall of local sports and a reading room with a library and multimedia.

The Museum Dimitri and Lego Katsikogianni founded in 1994 and is housed in the former refrigerators of AGREX Company in the location of Agia Moni. The museum exhibits paintings and 114 sculptures and 1,236 drawings.

The Holy Museum of the Metropolis is located and operates in the Metropolitan Hall in the city and has the following halls: a Church Museum, with religious items, icons and ecclesiastical clothes, a Folk Museum with folklore and everyday items from previous years and a library with 19,000 titles accessible to the public.

The Center of Greek Music Composers Trikala is housed in the building of the Cultural Foundation and serves as a Music History Museum. It is remarkably noted that in Trikala come to birth unique composers, songwriters and performers. In the Centre of Greek music are exhibited personal belongings , manuscripts , musical scores, books , records , cassettes , video tapes , printed materials , gold discs and everything related to the life and work of the music creators of Trikala.

The Matsopoulos Mill is located to the southwest of the city. In 1884 there was established the first pasta factory and later one of the first milling industry of Greece. It is worth mentioning that it is the first mill built in Greece and the biggest in the Balkans. It is one of the most important traditional Industrial Heritage monuments in Greece. The industrial complex of the Matsopoulos mill was donated to the municipality of Trikala in 1977 and today, after its maintenance functions as an industrial monument and municipal cultural center with halls for cultural events. The Matsopoulos Park, in the same area with near one hundred acres, is a great green area and beauty of the city (Zafiris, 2010).

The network of routes

The complexity of the cultural routes demonstrates the charm and the difficulty of such an action. At this point I will try applying key concepts and themes presented above in the city of Trikala. The network of routes which I shall present connects a wide range of cultural resources with different functions in the tourism sector.

Starting from the city of Trikala and especially of the hill of Prophet Elias and fortress, the network of cultural routes leads to the Museum of Dimitri and Lego Katsikogianni. The cultural routes given in the city of Trikala interprets both the rich ancient and modern monumental heritage and the natural and cultural landscape. The route to follow belongs to the mixed cultural routes. The fact that this itinerary can be completed in a day is quite noteworthy and can be executed by foot or even by using a bicycle. The total distance is about three kilometers.

The view from the hill of Prophet Elias and fortress is impressive, overlooking the valley and Pindos is breathtaking. To the northwest, the city is dominated by the Byzantine fortress known as the Castle of Trikala (Mantzana, 2014). A quite awesome Castle due to its imposing volume, built in a strategic position, Within the fortress, now stands the imposing clock tower of Trikala and the outdoor municipal theater. In the first of the three tiers of the fortress in full operation we can find the municipal pavilion with a luxurious restaurant and cafe.

Going down the stairs of the fortress, the way leads us to the Varousi district. The area of the Old Manavika³ is where the old city of Trikala was established. The major characteristic of the Varousi district is the distinct and particular architecture of the houses and numerous churches. Under the Varousi area is situated the Asklipio and the ancient theater of the city.

The archaeological excavations that gradually made in the area to the nearby adjacent private land from 1902 to 1992 had a rescue character and unearthed three buildings from the early Roman times and one of the Byzantine period. The archaeological site of Asklepios is open to visitors by prior arrangement with the archaeological office and the visitor can see certain parts of the bath and a Byzantine church dating between the 12th and 13th century. AD.

In Varousi we have the possibility to visit the oldest churches of the city, such as the Virgin Faneromeni (1853) , Saint Stephen (1896), Agia Marina (1766) , Saints Anargyri , Agia Paraskevi, Agia Visit (1543), Agios Dimitrios (1580), St. John Eleimonas (14th century) , St. John the Baptist and the Prophet Elias (1896). It is a fact that the mansions and churches of the Varousi area are a living testimony of the economic and cultural boom of the 18th and 19th century, a natural consequence of the big growth of trade and industry (Nymas, 1987).

Then we have the chance to visit the Archaeological School of Trikki. The school is located behind the cathedral of Saint Nicholas and the Dorothea School. Furtherdown, strolling the General Sarafi street, we are lead to the main square Polytechniou with trees, lake and fountains. Special site of the square is the fountain inside the lake made by the well-known sculptor Nicholas and depicts a young boy. The area of the square is surrounded with numerous statues such as thr statues of Karaiskaki of General Sarafi of armatolos Stournaras and Papatymiou Vlahava. The heart of the city of Trikala beats in this square from many decades till today.

The beautiful pedestrian bridge Trikala, built in 1886 by French engineers, leads us to the most known shopping street Asclepius. The Asclepius Street is the “main artery” of the city, since it is full of shops and restaurants (Katsoyannou, 2006). Our next stops are three local museums, the folklore city museum plays an important role in the cultural life, the Center of Greek Music Composers and the Trikala Municipal Historical Museum of Sports.

The itinerary leads us next to the Kursum mosque, a monument protected by UNESCO. This imposing building with perfect acoustics is open to visit and at the same time serves as a venue for special events. Then we continue our tour visiting the company Kliafa History and Culture Center, which functions from 2003 as a cultural center. Tourists can visit all hall of the center, and get to know its history, which is strictly linked with the history of the city.

Next stop is to the Matsopoulos mill, at the southern entrance of the city. Matsopoulos mill is one of the most important monuments of industrial heritage in Greece (Katsoyannou, 1988). During the Christmas period, in recent years, a theme park titled “Mill of the Elves” in the space of Matsopoulos mill was created and functions , and has become a magnet for hundreds of thousands of visitors from all over Greece , making the city of Trikala, at Christmas period the

³ At the Manavika area exists an extraordinary mural over 150 s.m., which is an art made from a group of internationally well-known and acknowledged painters, which depicts scenes from everyday life of the neighborhood.

most popular tourist destination in the country. The cultural routes are completed by visiting the museum and Dimitri Lego Katsikogianni.



Map 1. Cultural routes in the city of Trikala (1. Hill of Prophet Elias, 2. Byzantine Castle, 3. Varousi, 4. Manavika, 5. Asklipio of ancient Triki, 6. Archaeological Collection of Triki, 7. Dorothea School, 8. Central square, 9. Litheos river and Main Bridge, 10. Sidewalk Asclepius, 11. Municipal Folklore Museum & Center of Folk Music, 12. Municipal History – Sports Museum, 13. Osman Shah Mosque, 14. Kliafa History and Culture Center, 15. Matsopoulos Mill, 16. Museum Dimitri and Lego Katsikogianni).

Fieldwork

Methodology of the study

This study was aimed to investigate the attitude of the local residents of Trikala toward culture, cultural routes and their contribution to local development. For this purpose, a questionnaire was drawn in accordance with previous empirical studies.

There were distributed 250 questionnaires to residents in the Regional Unity of the Trikala region, of which the 220 were fully completed and those were acknowledged for the study. The survey was conducted in January 2015. The sample was exclusively residents of Trikala.

The questionnaire of the random survey consists of two subsections. The first section includes information on cultural tourism, cultural routes and their contribution to local development, and the second demographic data of the respondent.

The profile of the sample

The sample is comprised by approximately 48 % of women and 52% of men and the

average age of the sample is about 42 years. Regarding the marital status, the 52 % are married. Regarding the educational level of the sample, the largest percentage were higher education graduates (48 %) . The vast majority of respondents (72 %) were employed, while 32% of the sample said that they had an annual household income of € 10,000-20,000 .

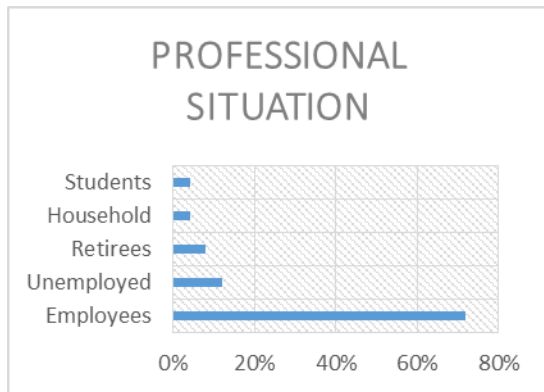


Chart 1. Professional status



Chart 2: Income

The majority of respondents resided in Trikala (92 %), while a small percentage (8 %) in the surrounding area.

Regarding the views of respondents about the greatest in historic importance monuments and culture in the city, the 40 % consider the Asklipio Triki , the 60% of the Varousi quarter , the 30 % in Osman Shah Mosque (Kursum mosque) , the 24% the mill of Matsopoulos , the 20 % the bridges of the Litheos river , while 84% of respondents consider that the castle is the most important monument of the city. Also, the 62% of the respondents are very familiar with the history of Trikala.



Chart 3. Greatest monument of the city

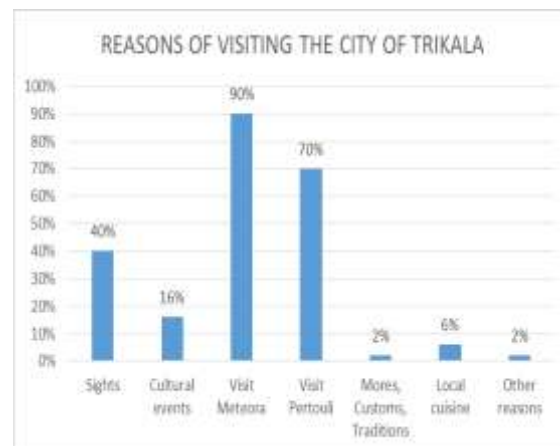


Chart 4. Reasons of visiting the city of Trikala

Regarding the visiting motives of the city of Trikala , the 40 % think the sites , the 16% the cultural events of the city , the 80 % of the respondents wanted to visit the Meteora and the 70 % visit the ski center of Pertouli , while for a very small rate are the manners , customs, traditions and gastronomy of the Trikala city.

The majority of the sample (34 %) believes that the city of Trikala has the largest tourist turnout during Christmas, while the 24% believe that the city of Trikala has the largest attendance of tourists in the winter.

Obstacles to the development of cultural tourism

The main obstacles to the development of cultural tourism in the city according the 34 % of respondents are due to lack of funding, capital and funds, while the 24% blames lack of education for it , and a 66 % of them consider as the main obstacle the lack of interest from local authorities while only the 8% blames the residents of lack of interest, also the 50% recognized as an obstacle the lack or the poor publicity and advertising.

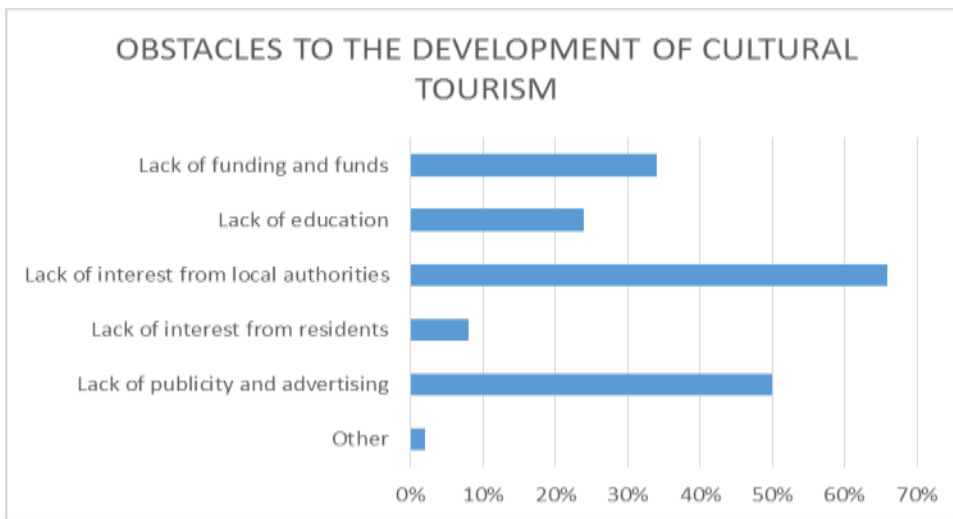


Chart 5. Obstacles to the development of cultural tourism

Effects of cultural tourism on local development of Trikala

As in recent years a strong interest in the tourist development of Trikala appeared, which is largely based on its cultural wealth, the inhabitants of the sample were asked to give their views on the effects of cultural tourism in various fields, such as economy, society and culture. The average of their responses showed that cultural tourism has contributed much to the development of the city and improved the residents' quality of life (Graph 6).

The 68% of the respondents consider that cultural tourism contributes much to maintain the city’s cultural heritage. The 60% considered that one of the benefits is maintaining a distinct cultural atmosphere, while the 64% agree that it helped in making more cultural events. Subsequently the 60% supports that cultural tourism helps to revive traditions, customs, local art and crafts and preserves the traditional folklore and culture. The 68% thinks that helps to the conservation of natural resources. The 52% of respondents agree that cultural tourism reduces looting the cultural, historical and religious sites. The 70% agree that it encourages residents to participate in cultural activities, and the 64 % support that it sensitized residents of the city for their cultural heritage. The 68% think that increases the pride of the local population, while most of the residents (72%) believe that the development of cultural tourism increases the sense of local identity. The 50% support that increases the quality of life for the residents of the city .The

68% disagree with the view that negatively affects the lifestyle and social relations. The 56% of respondents believe that can hold their young ones in their city. The 60 % disagree that cultural tourism negatively commercializes the local culture. The 72 % consider that develops (greatly) the local economy and market. Indeed, the 66% of them notes that it offers more employment and new jobs opportunities. The 44% disagree that increases the cost of living and the same percentage (44%) disagree that it economically benefits only a few people .The 66 % disagree with the aspect that increases crime. The 52% of respondents support that cultural tourism helps to improve the city’s infrastructure (streets, sidewalks, bridges, etc.). The 40% think that it increases the noise, pollution, congestion and overcrowding in most crowded parts of the city.

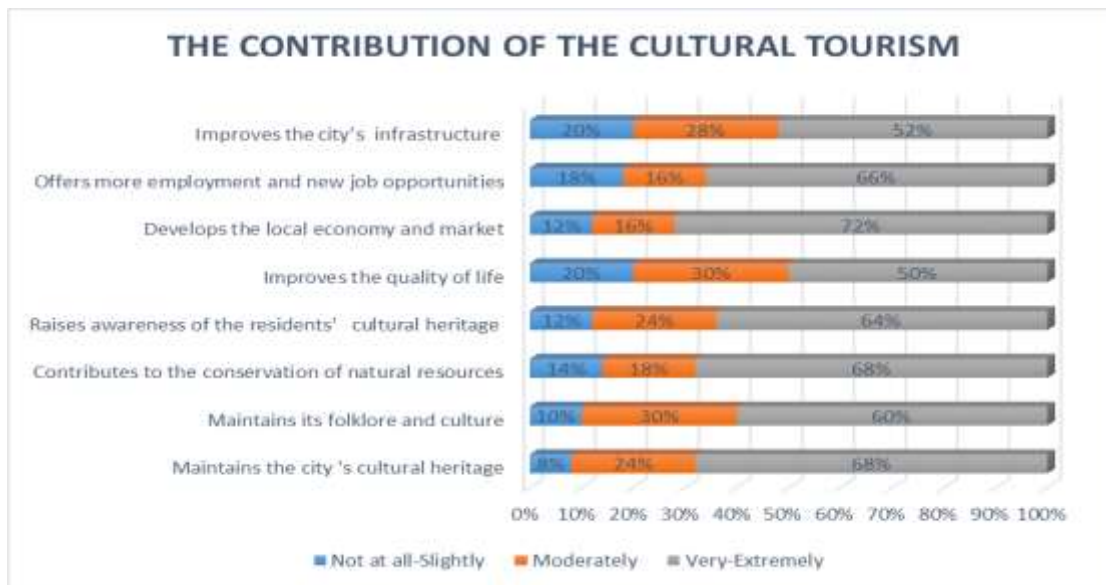


Chart 6. The contribution of the cultural tourism

The role of the cultural routes

Respondents highlighted cultural routes as a means of promoting cultural tourism (57%) , which led to the development and promotion of certain “tourism packages” (43%) , the promotion of cultural tourism programs abroad (36%) and the use of existing living and intangible material (25 %).

Finally, as far as the main question of our research is concerned the 68.6% agree (very much) that cultural routes promote a sustainable cultural tourism of high quality.

Conclusions

Considering the general economic and social context within cultural tourism operates and is developing in Greece, we tried to present the cultural routes as a means of promotion and interpretation of cultural heritage and of the memories of the city of Trikala. The long history of the city, the great cultural wealth of Trikala, cultural and athletic presence at national and

international level, the natural beauty of the wider region, as well as the contemporary cultural creation, constitute comparative advantages in order to make the cultural heritage a lever of growth.

The development of cultural tourism offers leverage in a region, a country. Cultural tourism is one of the fastest growing and most dynamic industries in absolute terms. For the development of cultural tourism and especially cultural routes it is required the activation of local government. Also is required the empowerment and active participation of the local community. Creating networks of volunteers and attracting sponsorships / donations can also contribute in this direction.

The responsible officers must ensure responsible and calculated protection of these buildings while at the same time the monuments are fully exploitable. At a local level, this kind of protection extends to those who are responsible for guarding and protecting them, while at a national level requires the adoption and implementation of appropriate legislation, instructions and controls to ensure that these areas are to be protected in the best, most complete and most scientific manner. The cultural heritage of each area is a lever for sustainable development, major concept at this circumstance.

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