

THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT APPROACH OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE STUDY OF THE CITY OF VERIA, GREECE

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Abstract *The culture of any city undoubtedly promotes its development. The formulation and implementation of cultural policies, a key issue for urban economic development, relate to a variety of economic sectors. The cultural elements that can contribute to urban development could be either a direct promotion of its cultural identity, or the contribution made by local residents towards the achievement of a good quality of life, generating competitiveness between similar cities. The research aim of this paper is the investigation of the ways that a city's cultural reserve can be the means of its development. The particular research methodology was a questionnaire survey, addressed to the inhabitants (200) and visitors (50) of Veria, a medium-size city in northern Greece. The research object was Veria's cultural environment and its impact on urban regeneration. It is of vital importance to establish whether Veria's residents are familiar with their local culture, whether they appreciate it and, related to this, whether they are satisfied with the relevant promotional policy. Interviewees were asked to evaluate the current management policy of their city's cultural reserve, and they were also asked to give their observations and proposals. Furthermore, the research looked at whether Veria's culture could be a stimulant for visitors, by requesting from respondents a direct evaluation of the applied cultural promotional policy. It was observed that tourism was one of the main visiting criteria, followed by commuting to work, and using the city as a passage point to other neighbouring destinations. Visitors claim that Veria's cultural environment could definitely be the main stimulant for cultural tourist attraction, if promoted in the appropriate manner. The residents' discontent was also expressed in terms of the city's poor management of its cultural reserves. They believe that Veria's local culture could contribute not only to urban regeneration, but also to regional development. A formulation of innovative management policies is critical, as*

well as an immediate need for the inclusion of innovative technologies in Veria's cultural promotion plans.

Keywords culture, urban development, questionnaire survey, cultural policy, cultural tourism, urban regeneration

Introduction

The determination of culture as a factor of exceptional importance in the economic development of cities constitutes a scientific and inquiring field with particular interest, mainly the two last decades in Europe (Barnett, 2001; Richards, 1996).

In the modern era of international competition between cities, there prevails a differentiation in the elements that support their growth. Apart from the support regarding productive activities, there has been an increase in the extent and effect of activities related to consumption, which in turn corresponds to the domination of the service sector. The interest of the individuals who deal with the scale of the city (academics, researchers, urban planners, municipal sovereigns, etc.) has been turned, away from the work-residence-transport aspect and towards the leisure (entertainment) aspect, a consideration that is not regarded as a separate and distinct subject in most handbooks of urban planning (Deffner, 1997).

The four main and interrelated activities of leisure are: sport, cultural, tourism and the activities of social life. According to their economic role, it is predominantly the three last categories which have a particular relationship with the symbolic economy, which is constituted by two parallel systems, both of which are of vital importance for the material life of the city: the production of space, which is characterized by the cross-correlation of capital investments with the cultural meanings, and the production of symbols, which constitutes a use of commercial transactions as well as a language of social identities (Zukin, 1995).

Culture makes a more marked contribution in the enterprising dimension of a city, namely, the elements that are attractive to tourists and the particular competitive side of the city (Zukin, 1995). In the '80s, "cultural development policies" emerged, that constituted the main component of the regeneration of cities and rendered them ready to face the socio-economic changes of the period. Their application constitutes a tool for the economic development of a city, in particular in the area of tourism.

During the last decades we have seen, internationally, an increasing tendency on the part of tourists to visit cultural sights or watch artistic events as part of their tourism activity. Research reveals a hard core of cultural tourists with specialised cultural motives that prompt them to visit a number of cultural sights. There are reliable indicators to prove that over the last few years, the market for general cultural tourism has increased more rapidly than the tourist market as a whole (Richards, 1996). Internationally, an increasing number of states, regions and cities are successfully using their cultural sights or institutions and events to support cultural tourism, in combination with policies of urban reformation, as an integral part of regeneration strategies at a national or regional/local level (Zukin, 1995; Deffner, 1997).

The contribution of culture in relation to the growth of the city of Veria which is related to the planning and implementation of urban policy activities, focusing on the satisfaction of needs and requirements, the aid and the promotion of its cultural identity and picture, the contribution of residents towards the achievement of quality of life, and the creation of competitive advantage for Veria in relation to other similar cities, all compose the exceptionally interesting objects of research for this paper.

The significance of city and culture are investigated, as well as the relationship between them. Cultural tourism, its significance, its characteristics and its contribution *vis a vis* the competitiveness between European cities', are all analyzed as part of the research..

Then the methodological framework for the research in the city of Veria is outlined, with the questionnaire that was distributed to the residents and the visitors of the city being provided. The approach towards investigation and the collection of information is described, as is the aim of our research, as well as the method of sample collection through a distinct strategic approach

The larger section of the paper includes the result of the analysis of our research. After the data coding and their treatment in statistical programmes, we created figures, which reveal the research results. Finally, interrelations of results, mainly between those of visitors and residents, are analyzed and comment on through the use of figures.

1. City and Culture

Culture, as a source of recollections and pictures, symbolizes “who belongs where” (Coccossis and Nijkamp, 1995). As a composite of architectural subjects, it plays a decisive role in the strategies of urban redevelopment, based on historical maintenance or on local heritage. Cities have always played a fundamental role as cultural centers and centers of economic activity, creating high levels of economic innovation and growth, producing culture in the form of arts, ideas, styles and tendencies (Scott, 1997). With the disappearance of manufacturing industry and the periodic crisis in the economy, culture constitutes more the enterprise of cities, that is to say the basis of tourist attraction and its unique competitive dimension (Zukin, 1995).

At the same time, culture in the modern age, is produced in the light of “goods to consumption”, directing the operation within the framework of conditions that fix the international competitive market (Scott, 2000). The sovereign objective of competition constitutes the tourist income and the economic investments, including the architectural plans, the pioneering artistic representations and the restaurants, which make a city appear to be a centre of cultural innovation, The result is the promotion (via production and consumption) of the symbolic economy of city (Zukin, 1995).

The new symbolic economy in the city comprises four constitutive elements: a) the tourism (which concerns mainly the museums and the congresses), b) the mass media, c) the amusement (which concerns mainly the arts, the markets of recreation and the activities of food and drink), and d) the special events (that concern mainly the culture and the sports) (Deffner 2002).

The two long-term changes which support the growth of the symbolic economy of a city are the economic decline of cities compared to the suburban and non urban spaces and the extension of abstract economic speculation, while the short-term factors which support the growth of the symbolic economy of a city is the mass immigration, the marketing of policy with regard to the identity and the increase of cultural consumption, with the characteristic examples of tourism, the arts, fashion and food (Zukin, 1995).

To completely understand the role of these factors, one needs to understand the culture operation as much as the economic base (Zukin, 1995), that is to say the

economic and urban importance (Deffner, 1997). Important examples constitute America, where the economic role of the arts is increased and where the opinion has prevailed that investment in the arts leads to an increase in the development of other sectors of the urban economy and, in turn, relates positively to the development of tourism. This opinion is supported in two ways: the operation of a city as a territorial expression of cultural capital and the growth of the subjective picture of place, which the city “sells”, mainly through the “tourist economy”. On the other hand, Las Vegas, Los Angeles and Miami show their strategy of economy development to be based on the “tourist sight”, the “sale and consumption of enjoyment”, the arrangement of objects in the space with unique, compact optics (Zukin, 1995).

It is clear to see that the factor “culture” has been used more extensively in various initiatives that concern the regeneration of cities and more specifically their economy development, with the use of specific strategies and tactics (Deffner and Metaxas, 2003). Taking into account this approach, we could support that the existence of the sustainable and effective cultural economy is based on the faculty and the knowledge of internal political forces that cities have and which they use to produce specific plans of activity growth, each time evaluating the fields of cultural policies that may create or constitute competitive advantage for the cities concerned (Metaxas and Kallioras, 2003).

2. Cultural Tourism

Europe is one of the oldest and most important places with regard to the birth of cultural heritage *vis a vis* tourism, and it continues to maintain its main role in the European tourism industry today. According to the European Union, tourism and specifically cultural tourism deserve priority status as regions for the application of policy. Cultural tourism has been recognized as the most important agent for economic and social change in Europe (Smith, 2003).

The cultural and tourism industries are present in all the European nations and regions, and they have stepped into the gaps which have been left by the demise of the construction industry. Culture and tourism create the need for strategic central places in cities. Cultural consumption has increased, and tourism is always the main form of cultural consumption, and as such, it is encouraged and financed by local, national and supra-national bodies. This portrays the change from that period which led from

production to consumption, i.e. the move towards a consumer society where consumption leads to production (Richards, 1996). By attracting consumers via tourism, cities, regions and nations can be guaranteed the level of consumption that they require in order to satisfy their productive capacity.

The cultural market of tourism in Europe has become increasingly more competitive. A growing number of cities and regions in the European Union are based on the premise of tourism growth and, consequently, on the promotion of their cultural heritage so as to add to the number of cultural attractions. The traditional cultural attractive elements, such as museums and art galleries, should reconsider their role and operation, in order to attract more visitors to the area and thus address the increasing element of competition surrounding tourist sights. The opening of new cultural destinations for tourists in Eastern and Central Europe will also add to increased interest from European cultural tourists.

In general terms, Europe has for a long time enjoyed a prime position in the international tourism and cultural industries. Nevertheless, in the same way as the construction industry faces increasing world competition, thus Europe can no longer feel secure in that prime position. Europe is losing its share of the world tourism market, and also it also faces increasing competition in the fields of the production and consumption of culture.

The cultural and tourism industries are increasing, and this is happening faster in those regions where the industries are found on the fringes of total production. An increasing number of tourists are abandoning the Mediterranean beaches in favour of the palm-framed delights of Asia and the Caribbean. The countries in these regions are beginning to rival Europe in the traditional markets of “high culture” (Richards, 1996).

There is now few doubt about how far culture is an important tourism resource in Europe, and there’s a belief that the competitiveness of European tourism is of vital importance and must be maintained. Nevertheless, various questions surround the use of cultural resources on the part of the tourist. Who are the tourists that use these cultural installations? Why do they participate in cultural tourism? How great is the actual requirement for cultural tourism? Which elements of culture attract the cultural tourist? A few earlier studies have, in fact, tried to answer these basic questions (Richards, 1996).

An important obstacle to obtaining valid answers to such questions is the lack of facts with regard to cultural tourism. The determination of cultural tourism as an increasing market in Europe has been based more on statements than information, and more on observation than systematic analysis. Consequently, it is difficult to make a precise and comprehensive assertion about how important cultural tourism really is in Europe, how quickly it has increased, and what exactly are the reasons for this increase (Richards, 1996).

3. Methodological approach – aim of research

The dynamism of culture and the important role that it plays in the regeneration of the cities are obvious in everyday routines. Culture constitutes an integral piece of life in the city and its presence becomes perceptible with the bequests that leave us for future generations. The cultural reserves of a place exist in order to bring welfare to our cities, namely development, but also in order to create a feeling of safety amongst the residents also relating to the question “who they are and where they belong to”.

With the importance of culture and the important role that it plays in the city, it was interesting to try to ascertain whether or not the residents of a city believe that the cultural reserves of their city can constitute, under certain conditions, important factor in its growth. We wanted to research whether or not they were informed about the cultural environment in which they lived, and we hoped to be able to make them suggest to us various ways in which the culture could constitute the major element of their city’s growth. We felt it was very important for us to investigate whether or not the residents were satisfied with the strategy of cultural reserve management that is applied in their region and we wanted to give them the opportunity to evaluate the promotion of their city.

Another important research consideration was the investigation of the motives of visitors to the city. We were interested to learn the real reasons why somebody visited a city, to find out whether or not it was related to the cultural reserve, and we also wanted to clarify whether or not visitors believed that culture can constitute a basic factor of growth for a city. We felt it would be interesting for visitors to try to evaluate the promotion of the city that they had visited and to express their opinion of the behaviour of the local residents towards them.

Our methodology employed the formulation and distribution of questionnaires amongst residents of and visitors to a city. The main motives for the choice of questionnaire research, and according to the related theory, were that:

- in order to study somebody's attitude towards a given problem, it is preferable to ask the individuals concerned;
- individuals can give us interesting and important information, if they are asked suitable questions, the content of which they understand and which they are capable of answering unaided;
- the total number of individuals who are affected by a situation can be suitably represented by a part, often a small part, of this total, i.e. the research sample;
- the concentration of collected answers, after computer treatment with the aid of simplified tables of frequencies, will allow the identification of majority tendencies, and will offer a satisfactory presentation of the total picture, with regard to the problem that was originally studied in the research (Javeau, 1980/1996).

The field of our research constitutes the city of Veria, in Northern Greece. The main reason for this choice is the abundance of cultural reserve in the area, which has meant that, in the last few years, the place has undergone a major shift towards promoting and elevating its status. An important role in our choice was played by the initiative LIGHT ("Light in culture") in the framework of INTERREG IIC – Eastern area, with the co-ordinator being the Public Central Library of Veria, which constitutes one of the five partners of the European Libraries (Bologna, Lisbon, Bekes and Roskilde). The main objective of this initiative was the promotion of a cultural heritage and the improvement of access to the cultural reserve.

The first session of the research concerned the ascertainment of how much the residents of Veria were informed about this cultural environment and whether or not they believe that it can constitute a possible element in the growth of their city. It was interesting for us to establish whether or not they knew about the management institutions of the cultural reserve, and to hear if they agree or disagree with the management strategy that is applied in their city. An important element of annotation of the research will constitute the description of their efforts in the case, where they assigned the management of their culture as well as the report of their own ideas regarding the culture of Veria.

The second session concerned the investigation of the motives of visitors who arrived in Veria. Interest usually constitutes the reason for which somebody visits a city and we sought to ascertain how far visitors to Veria were informed about the cultural reserve of the city. It is remarkable that we recorded their criticism regarding the promotion of the city's culture, and we gathered information which indicates that they do believe that the cultural environment of the city can constitute a development factor. The cultural environment of Veria is judged important, in the opinion of visitors to the city.

4. Material Collection – strategy of sample constitution and planning of questionnaire

The sample, that is to say the total of individuals that were questioned, is part of a wider population. Concretely in our research, our sample was constituted by a number of residents of Veria who responded to the questionnaire, together with a number of visitors to the city (the time of the research was from 05/12/2005 to 04/01/2006).

The choice of sample was random. The place in which the questionnaires were conducted for the residents was in the Public Central Library of Veria, while for the visitors it was lodged in the centre of city and at the Tourist Information Stand at the entrance to the city.

The main reason for choosing the Public Central Library of Veria was the fact that it constituted the busiest cultural institution of the city. At the same time, after an information search and a discussion with the director of Library, we realised that our research and the Community Initiative Light with the co-ordinator of the Public Central Library of Veria (as we have reported in previous unit), had common elements of investigation. For the achievement of program's Light objectives, a research questionnaire was required, aimed at investigating information on Veria's cultural reserve, and addressing both residents of and visitors to the city, which coincides with our objective of research.

We proceeded, therefore, in collaboration with the Library of Veria and the questionnaires were distributed by three library workers. Our sample was therefore made up of the residents of the city who arrived in the Library (to borrow a book, to carry out an Internet searches, etc.) and the completion of questionnaires were realised ad hoc, without the guidance of the inventory-takers.

As for the visitors to the city, the total sample was made up of people who were staying in the city during the questionnaire, as well as people who arrived at the Tourist Information Stand in search of information. The visitors had the opportunity to complete the questionnaire at the reception desk of their accommodation, either when they arrived or on leaving the place.

It should be noted that the research time period spanned Christmas, an important period for the arrival of a large number of visitors to the city, but also a period of increased activity at the Library as well. So, in all, 200 completed questionnaires were collected from residents and 50 from visitors. The total was 250 questionnaires.

In the present research it was very difficult to follow any method other than that of the “distributed questionnaire”. There were a number of reasons for this:

- Personal interviews could not be carried out because that would have required a large number of suitable interviewers during the research period;
- It was not possible to post questionnaires to the residents of the city, because their addresses were not part of the information we held;
- Telephone contact was not adopted, because it would have led to collection a limited number of answers because of the difficulty of being specific;

Thus, we chose to employ the distributed questionnaire, despite knowing that this presents the following disadvantages:

- There was no possibility of further contact with persons who were questioned;
- Asking somebody to give up a little of their time in order to complete a questionnaire can be considered a nuisance (Eleftheriadis, 1980).

On the other hand, the distributed questionnaire method has the following important advantages:

- It does not have the particular cost implications that other research methods do;
- It does not require particularly specialised personnel to conduct the “interviews”;
- It ensures the anonymity of the respondents, which often helps them to express themselves freely, even when they want to express opinions that are opposite to those of the majority.

The formulation of the questionnaire was based on:

- Discussions with residents of and visitors to the region, as well as with local institutions;
- A study of the relevant bibliography;
- Previous research that was conducted in the region;

The questionnaires could be characterized as “management” questionnaires (Siardos, 1997), because people were asked to complete the questionnaires by themselves. The questionnaires included a total of 27 questions for the residents and 28 questions for the visitors: the questions were a mixture of simple, open type, closed type, and a combination of closed questions with open questions of equal importance (Damianos, 1999).

It was considered that certain questions should be open type, in order to enable people to express themselves freely when asked their opinion on certain subjects (Matsiori, 2002).

5. Survey findings

The results are described through concise tables and figures, the interpretation of which should help in the understanding of the results themselves. The description is executed by way of a comparison of the common responses between the residents and the visitors, whilst any differences are dealt with individually.

62% of the residents who responded were women, and 38% were men. One important observation regarding the completion of questionnaires is that the percentage of women who expressed a wish to complete the questionnaire was higher than that of men. With regard to the visitors, we found that 50% were women and 50% were men. It should be noted that the choice of the sex of respondents was random.

The majority of respondents were in the 25- to 39-years old category. Specifically, 101 of the 200 residents belonged to the age range from 25 to 39. Correspondingly, in the visitors, we found that 18 of the 50 respondents were between 25 and 39.

Regarding the level education of residents and visitors, 61 of the 200 residents of the region were graduates of a Lyceum, and the 48 were graduates of Higher Education Institutions. From the visitors, 22 of the 50 respondents were graduates of Higher Education Institutions.

As far as the place of origin is concerned 71% of the residents came from Veria and 29% were not from there originally. On the visitors' side, 9 of the 50 respondents came from Athens and the others were from various cities in Greece.

The profession of the residents and visitors was also defined: 42 of the 200 residents were private employees, 40 were free professionals, and 27 were educationalists. From the visitors, 7 of the 50 were educationalists, 6 were free professionals, 6 were students, with 6 being pensioners, 5 public servants, 3 are engineers, 5 private employees, 4 archaeologists, 2 doctors, 2 householders, 1 agronomist and 1 lawyer.

The reason for which the visitors had visited the city of Veria at the time of sampling is determined from their answers to the question about whether they had visited the city in the past. So, 23 of the 50 visitors answered that the reason for their visit to the city was tourism. A further 14 were in Veria for work, 10 answered that the city was en route to some other destination, and 2 claimed they had visited the city for entertainment. In the question about whether they had ever been to the city of Veria before, 46% of the visitors answer negatively and 54% positively.

Moving on to the issue of the cultural reserve of Veria we registered the opinions of the residents and visitors regarding the cultural environment of the city, as well as information about how frequently they visited such reserves. The residents and the visitors were asked if they knew the museums of the city and if they had visited any of them. It transpired that 190 of the 200 residents knew the Archaeological Museum of Veria and 157 of them that had visited it. The Byzantine Museum was known about by 174 people, 83 of which had visited it. Regarding the "Vlahogianneio" Museum of Newer History and Art, this was known about by 151 people and it had been visited by 39 of them. There were 7 residents who answered that they did not know any of the museums of the city. On the other hand, 37 of the 50 visitors answered that they knew the Archaeological Museum of Veria and 21 of them had visited it; 22 people knew the Byzantine Museum and 12 of them had visited it; 8 visitors knew the "Vlahogianneio" Museum of Newer History and Art and 5 of them had visited it. But there were also 11 people who declared that they did not know any of the museum of the city.

The responses of residents and visitors to the question about whether they knew any archaeological places of the city and if they had visited any of them showed that 140 of the 200 residents answered that they knew the ancient walls and 101 of

them had visited them; 196 persons knew the Royal Graves of Vergina and the 177 had visited them. From the visitors, 49 of the 50 declared that they knew the Royal Graves of Vergina and 46 said they had visited them.

We also asked whether residents and visitors knew conserved traditional districts of the city and if they had visited any of them. 189 of the 200 residents answered that they knew the Traditional District of “Kyriotissa”, and 196 people knew the Hebraic district of “Barbouta”. 183 of them declared that they had visited the Traditional District of “Kyriotissa” and 193 the Hebraic district of “Barbouta”. Correspondingly, 46 of the 50 visitors answered that they knew the Traditional District of “Kyriotissa” and 47 people knew the Hebraic district of “Barbouta”. Of them, 44 visitors declare that they had visited the Traditional District of “Kyriotissa” and 42 persons had visited the Hebraic district of “Barbouta”.

We sought to ascertain the number of residents and visitors who knew any cultural institutions of the city, and if they have visited any of them. 197 residents answered that they knew the Public Central Library of Veria and 189 of them declare that they had visited it; 181 people knew the Cultural Institution “Space of Arts” and 137 of them had visited it; 190 residents knew the Open Theatre “Melina Merkouri” and 171 of them had also visited it; 192 residents knew the Room of “Efxinos” Club and 182 of them had visited it. From the 50 visitors, 27 declared that they did not know any cultural institution of Veria.

The results to the responses of residents and visitors to the question about whether if they knew of any habits, customs and traditions of the city indicated that 62% of the residents knew of some habits, customs and traditions of their city, while 38% didn't know any. From the visitors, 9% of them knew some of the habits, customs and traditions of the city and 91% didn't know any.

The responses of residents and visitors to the question about whether they knew and had tried any local cuisine revealed that 199 of the 200 residents answered that they knew the local traditional sweet called “revani” and 198 of them it had tried it, and 196 people knew the traditional “loukoumades” and 191 of them had tried them. All 50 of the visitors answered that they knew the local traditional sweet called “revani” and 50 of them had tried it.

The next questions dealt with the way that the residents and the visitors are informed about the cultural reserve of the city and how they judge its promotion. 151 of the 200 residents declared that they have got information about sights, cultural

activities, traditions and local cuisine of Veria from their acquaintances. 27 of the 50 visitors declared that they have gained information about the sights, cultural activities, traditions and local cuisine of Veria from their acquaintances. In response to the question about how the residents judged the promotion (briefing-information) of their town, 82 of the 200 judged it as “middling” and 54 judged it as “good”. Respectively, 23 of the 50 visitors judged the promotion of city that they were visiting as “middling”.

For the question about whether they had visited the Public Central Library of Veria, 40% of residents answered positively and 60% negatively. Respectively, 29% of the visitors who were asked answer positively and 71% of them answered negatively.

80% of the residents responded positively to the question about whether they would use new technology, provided that they had the opportunity, in order to be informed about the cultural events and the cultural heritage of city, while 20% of them responded negatively. At the same time, 69% of the visitors answered the same question positively while 31% answered negatively.

The question about specific new technologies had to be answered only by those people who had responded positively to the previous question. In detail, 107 of the 200 residents chose the Internet as the most popular way to receive information using new technology, and 54 of them chose the mobile telephone. Correspondingly, 33 of the 50 visitors selected the Internet, 10 the mobile telephone and 7 chose GPS.

61% of the visitors responded positively to the question about whether, if it was easy to obtain information about the culture of Veria using new technology, that would provide a motive for visiting the city. 39% of them responded negatively to this question.

The responses of residents and visitors to the question about how they would want to be informed in the future about sights, cultural events, etc. that exist in the city, are presented in the following section. 132 of the 200 residents declared that they would want to be informed by information booklets, and 114 declared they would want to be informed via the Internet. 28 of the 50 visitors declared that they would want to be informed via the Internet, and 26 declared they would like to be informed by booklets.

When asked if they knew about the program LIGHT and its activities regarding the promotion of cultural heritage of Veria with the use of new

technologies, 10% of residents answered positively and 90% negatively. Respectively, 9% of visitors answered positively and 91% negatively.

The following responses of residents and visitors resulted from the question regarding which element of city's culture they believe constitute main reason for its growth. 131 of the 200 residents answered the conserved traditional districts of Veria, 130 persons believed it was the archaeological places, and 116 of them said the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine monuments of the city. 18 of the 50 visitors answered the conserved traditional districts of Veria, 17 of them believed it was the archaeological places, and 15 believed that all the elements together accounted for the city's growth.

Next, the answers of visitors to the question about which element of the city's culture would attract them to Veria. Specifically, 18 of the 50 visitors identified the conserved traditional districts of the city and 11 of the visitors felt that all elements of the culture would attract them. Regarding the residents, they answered the question about which element of their city's Culture could be seen as "strong" or "weak" . 166 of the 200 believed that the archaeological places of Veria comprise the "strong" elements and 29 of them believed that they comprised the "weak" elements; 156 of them believed that the Public Central Library of Veria is a "strong" element and 35 of them believed that it is a "weak" element. 145 of them believed that the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine monuments are "strong" elements and 47 of them believed that they are "weak" elements.

Visitors were called to identify which element of the city's culture they consider the most and least attractive. 21 of them believed that the archaeological places of Veria were the most attractive element, 12 visitors believed that the local cuisine was the most attractive element, and 22 of them believed that the conserved traditional districts of the city constituted the most attractive element of its culture.

Then, the visitors were called upon to answer a question about which category they would classify the behaviour of local residents in. So, 11 of the 50, answered the "most excellent", 11 of them answered as "very good" and 6 answered "good".

Finally, the residents were asked about whether they knew the institutions of the cultural management of their city and were asked to evaluate them. 194 of the 200 residents knew the Public Central Library of Veria, 190 of them knew the Municipality of Veria, the 188 persons know the Prefecture of Imathia, the 167 know the Municipal Regional Theatre of Veria, and 118 residents knew the Municipal

Enterprise of Culture of Veria. As for the evaluation of the management of cultural reserve, 75 of the 200 residents judged it as “middling”, 67 of them as “good”, 27 of them as “bad”, 15 as “indifferent” and 14 judged it as “very good”.

6. Interrelations of results

We individually processed interrelations between the answers of the residents and the visitors and dealt separately with the answers of residents and visitors respectively where necessary. The results are described through the use of figures.

Since our sample is non-homogeneous, the interrelationship between the sex of the residents and visitors (Figure 1) is only achieved with difficulty as the predominance of women as respondents emerged. This differing response rate became apparent to the people who were carrying out the distribution of questionnaires. Women expressed a greater degree of interest and eagerness to take part in the process - something that was not discerned in the men. Men seemed to consider the questionnaire a waste of their time and expressed their refusal to participate. The women’s behaviour can be perhaps explained from the “sensitivity” they have to the care and appearance of a place generally. They consider that the cultural heritage of a region constitutes an element of beauty, and they believe that with the appropriate care and attention, they will live in a beautiful and neat environment.

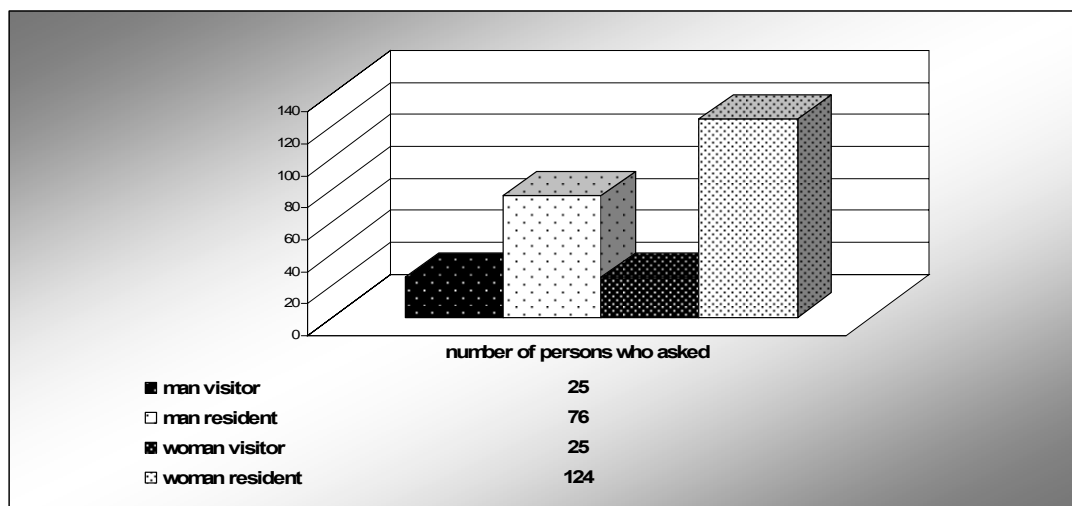


Figure 1. Representation of residents’ and visitors’ sex

Through the age-related depiction (Figure 2) , we can distinguish that the larger percentage of the sample belongs to the age category from 25 to 39

years. It is encouraging for a region that individuals of such a young age show interest and seek to respond to this kind of research. It helps if they have received a higher level of education throughout their childhood, as does the stimulation that they gain from their everyday routines. They participate in these processes because they have an opinion or some concerns, and they believe that in this way they can freely express any concern that worries them and put forward innovative arguments for the future improvement of their area.

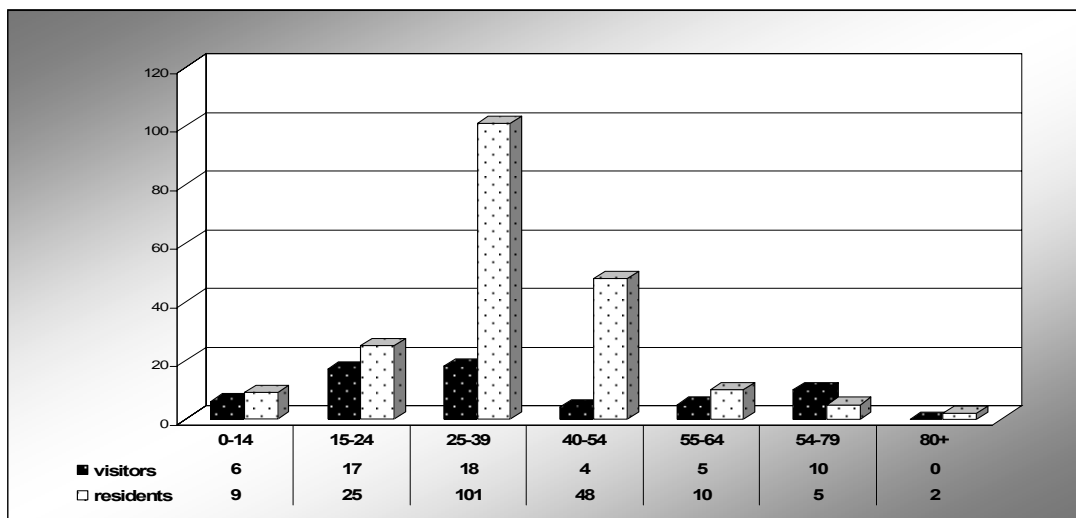


Figure 2. Representation of visitors' and residents' date of birth

Most of the visitors and residents are graduates of higher education institutions and graduates of Lyceum, rather than other categories of schools (Figure 3). The educational level of visitors and residents can be characterized as high, something that is considered to be a positive element for the carrying out of our research. The questionnaire that they have to respond to is easily comprehensible from them and they have opinions on the subject which it deals with. They can express and argue their opinions and their thoughts, without particular difficulty and with the use of reason. They specifically answer whatever is asked of them without guidance, thus facilitating the coding and the treatment of the answers. Moreover, their educational level contributes to their considered thought as well as in the growth of their concerns on issues surrounding policies for cultural development.

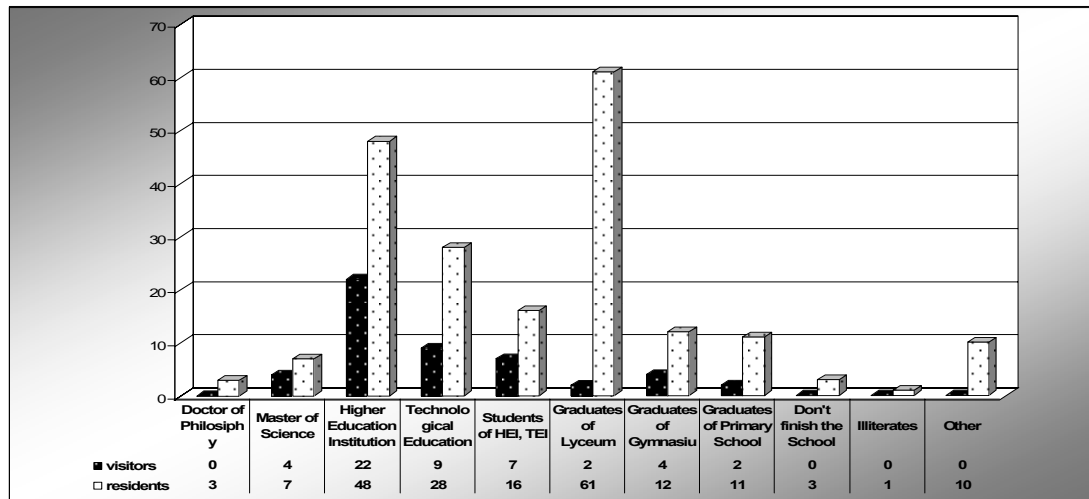


Figure 3. Representation of the education level of visitors and residents

The majority of visitors and residents are scientists and liberal professionals, or, in large proportion for the residents, private employees (Figure 4). The liberal professionals and the private employees are two professions with affinity between them and they are practised, according to the majority, in the centre of the city. Their daily association with residents and their communication with visitors in the region both bring them nearer to the problems of the city and may heighten their dissatisfaction regarding issues of management. They feel, through their everyday routine, that the cultural environment constitutes the “mirror” of their city and they are sensitive to related issues. They believe that the questionnaire constituted a means of expression and communication on cultural development issues. The scientists are sensitive to cultural issues and perhaps they feel the need for their attention to be given to relevant research. They constitute the main mediators for the cultural training of children, and they sensitise them in such types of issues from an early age. They take part in cultural events and they are familiar with the subjects of management and cultural development.

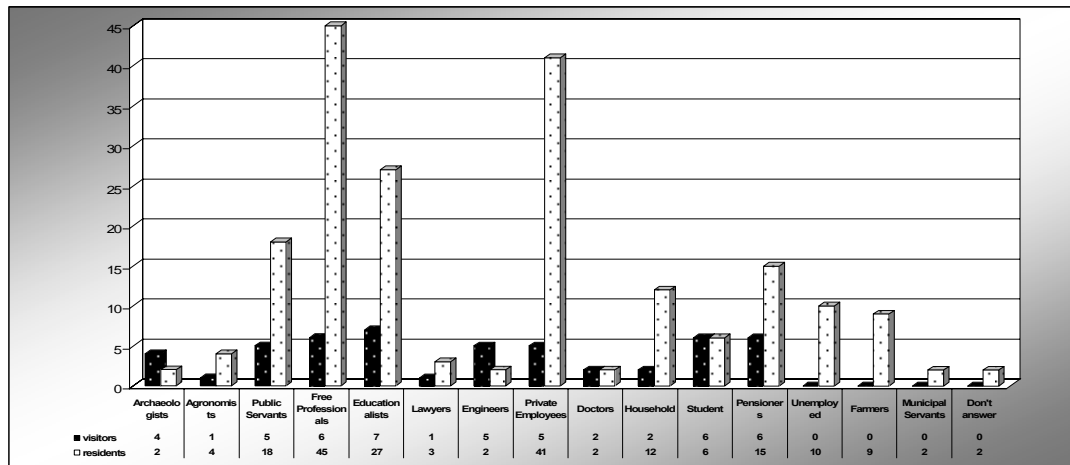


Figure 4. Representation of the professional categories of visitors and residents

The interrelation between the answers of visitors and residents regarding the question about the extent of their information on the cultural environment of Veria is portrayed in Figure 5. People marked on the questionnaire that the way in which they had been informed about the cultural reserve of the city was from their acquaintances. This answer is not encouraging for the development of Veria, because oral rather than formally presented information, can lead to inaccuracies and misinformation. The information “from familiar persons” is subjective and not objective, but nevertheless constitutes easy, no-cost information for people who are interested. It is deplorable that they do not seek of their own volition to validate the information about the culture at their place of destination or abode, through the use of institutions, information booklets, the Internet or a Tourist Information stand. This makes us realise how inadequate the promotion of the city really is, a subject which occupies us and which we comment on in the following figure.

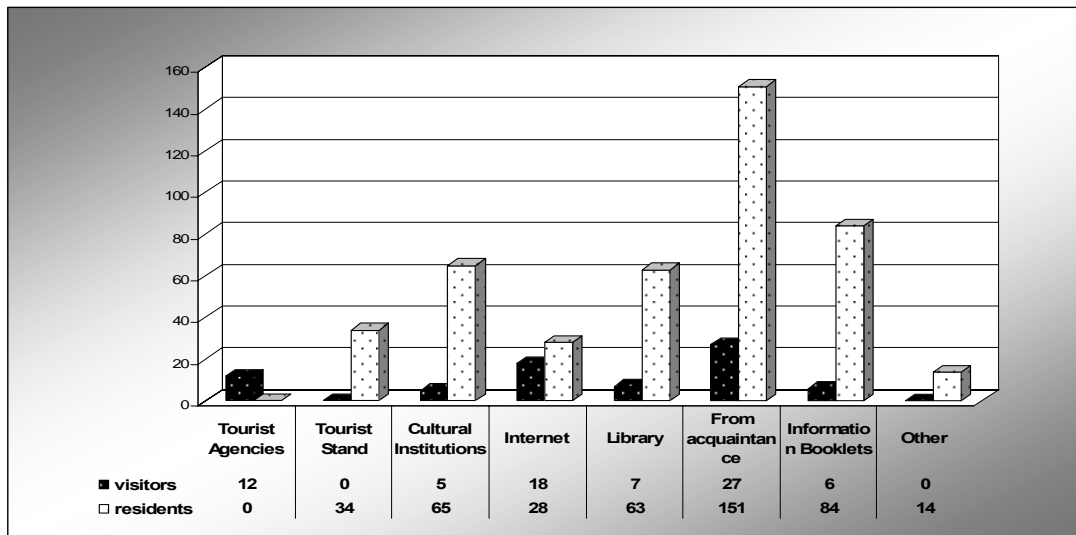


Figure 5. Representation of the responses of visitors and residents to the question about the way they gained their information about the cultural environment of the city

Most of the visitors and residents, with high percentages, judge the promotion (briefing – information) of the city as “middling” and with this answer they express their dissatisfaction (Figure 6). It is clear, through this figure, that the information is insufficient, consequently the search for information is “from familiar persons” (Figure 5). When the information booklets or the Tourist Information stands are insufficient, it is justifiable for someone to search for information from other people who are informed about the culture of Veria. The library, which has its own website on the Internet or better still, the website of the city, unfortunately features low in the rates of preference, and that’s because visitors or residents are not so keyed in to for the use of websites. Deductively, we realise that this insufficient promotion leads people to less valid sources of information, and accordingly to misinformation about the cultural environment of the city.

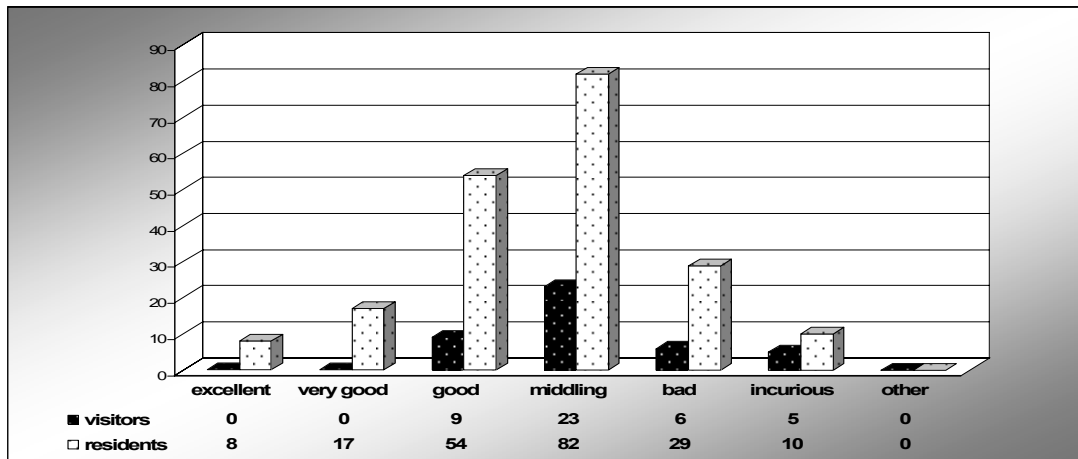


Figure 6. Representation of the responses of visitors and residents to the question about how they judge the promotion (briefing-information) of the city

The majority of the visitors and the residents answered positively to the question about whether they would use the new technology to gain information about the cultural environment of Veria (Figure 7), and this makes their views on them and the type of information that they provide clearer to us. As we realised from previous figures, most of the sample are young people (Figure 2) who have had a high level of education (Figure3), a fact that justifies their stance on new technology and their wish to obtain information about the culture of city via such methods. These answers reveal the requirements of young people for promotion and information using new technology.

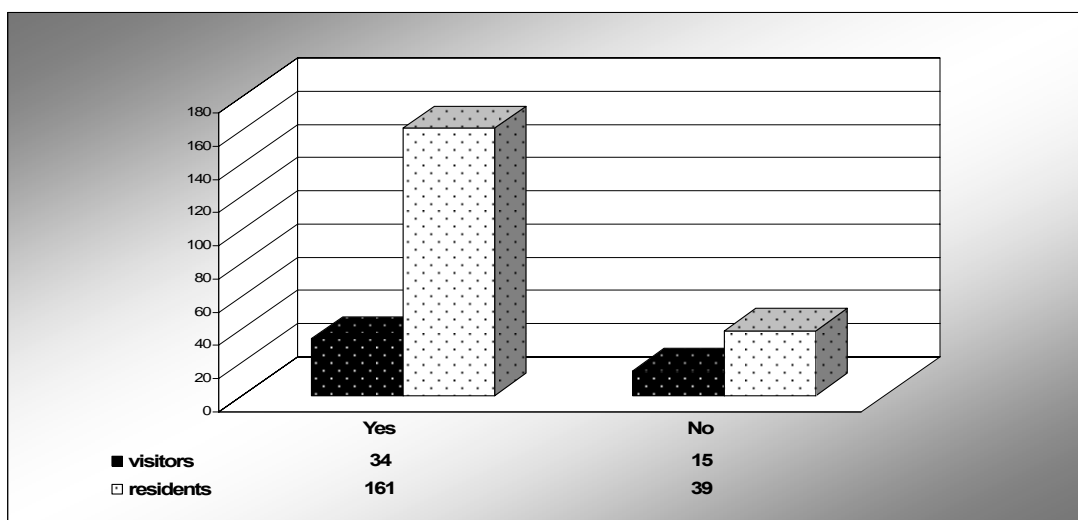


Figure 7. Representation of the responses of visitors and residents to the question about whether they would use the new technology to gain their information about the cultural environment of Veria

Most of the people answer positively with significant percentages to the question about whether they believe that the culture of Veria could constitute a motive for visiting the place (Figure 8). This shows that the two categories (visitors and residents) believe that the city of Veria has enough “cultural riches” to display to its visitors. They are convinced that interested people can visit the city and the culture can “transport” them back to important periods of the past (Byzantine, Ottoman, etc.) through the bequests that have been left for future generations. The information that results from the figure is that the city has an abundance of cultural reserve, which can capture the interest of visitors through more aggressive and structured programme of promotion (Figure 7).

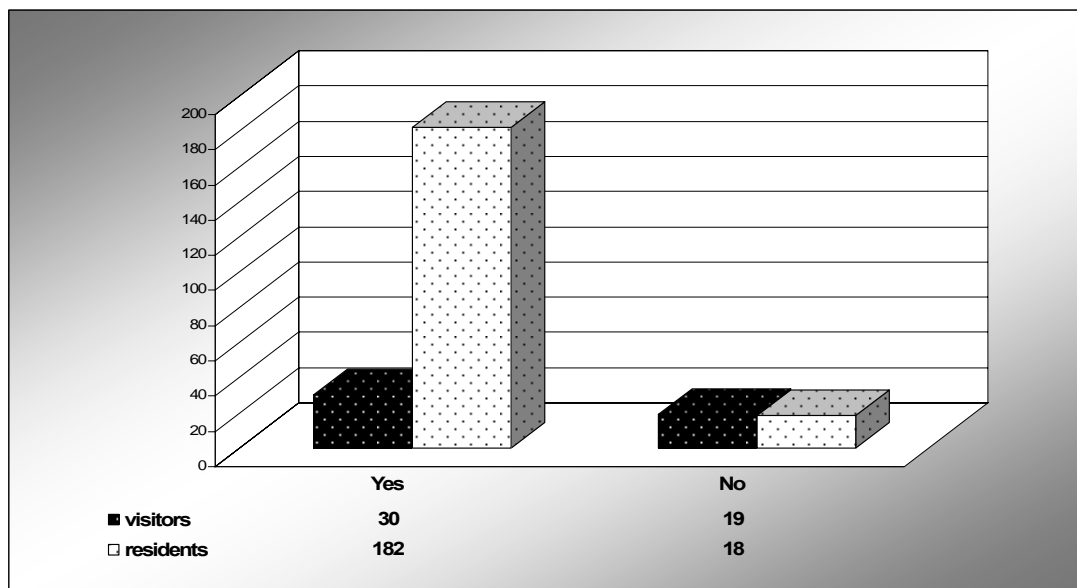


Figure 8. Representation of the responses of visitors and residents to the question about whether they believe that the culture of Veria can constitute a motive for visitors

One can only be but impressed by the responses of residents and visitors to the question about which element of the culture of Veria they believe could constitute the main factor of development (Figure 9). The most popular answers are the

archaeological places of Veria, the conserved traditional districts, and the local cuisine, and a large percentage answered that all the cultural elements could contribute to the development of the city. The information that emerges from these figures is that it is important to promote the cultural reserve of the city (Figure 7), according to the hierarchy of preferences of the sample, and this in turn is useful in the development of the city via various economic sectors (e.g. tourism). It is clear that the strong elements of the city will constitute a factor in terms of its attraction for visitors, which will consequently involve the economic development of the city. Growth can also be achieved by equipping residents with information about the culture of the city which they experience daily.

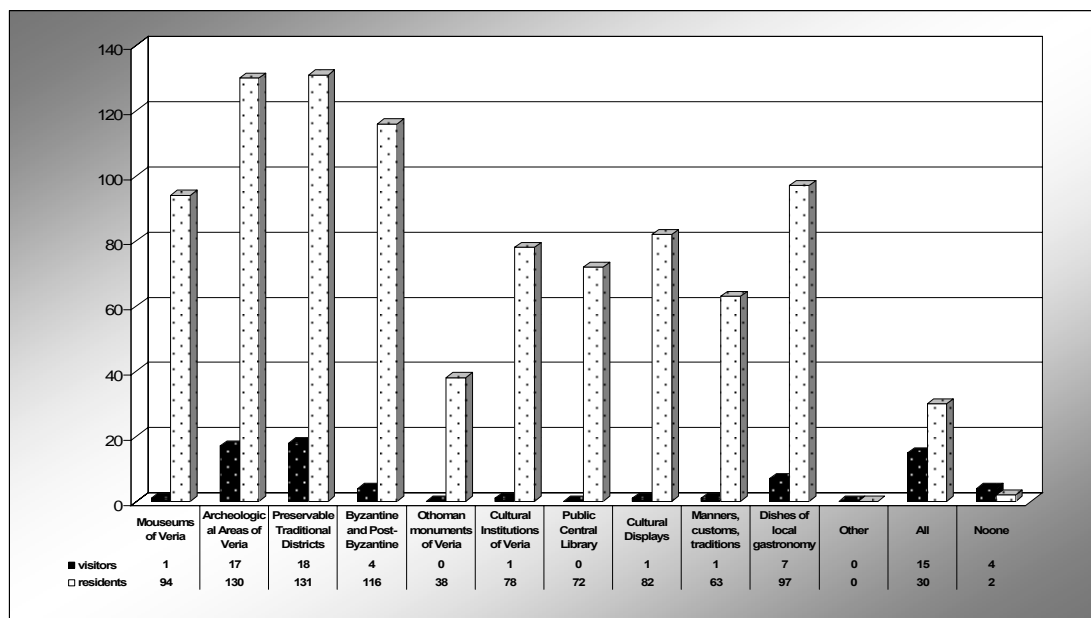


Figure 9. Representation of the responses of visitors and residents to the question about which element of the culture of Veria they believe can constitute a main factor for development

In Figure 10, the interrelation between the educational levels of visitors and their answers to the question about how they judge the behaviour of local residents is presented. Visitors of all educational levels are gratified by the behaviour of local residents. There is no discrimination towards visitors on the part of the residents and that they relate to all visitors equally and extend hospitality to them. They therefore give a good impression to the visitors, and this is an important element of the city's culture, which serves to encourage visitors to come to Veria again.

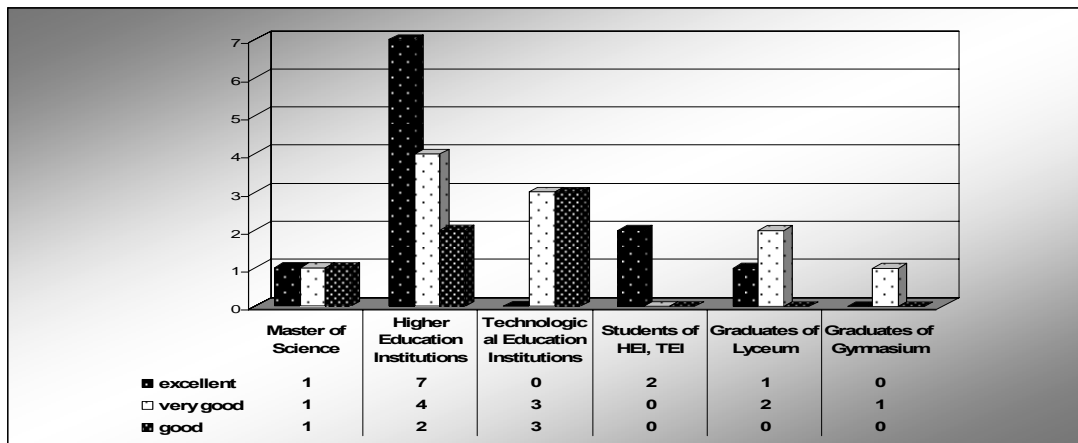


Figure 10. Representation of the interrelation between the educational level of the visitors and their answers to the question about how they judge the behaviour of local residents

In Figure 11, the interrelation between the educational level of residents and their evaluation of the management of the cultural reserve of their city is presented. It can be seen that the high educational levels of residents, a fact that has been discerned in Figure 3, means that they are not satisfied with the policy management of culture which is applied at the present time in their city. They responded with the answer “middling”, and that’s because they don’t want to blame the management and the administrators of culture of Veria, but also they don’t want to be seen as supporting the administration or accepting the efforts that are currently being made. With this answer, the insecurity of residents regarding the future of their culture is revealed; this is an important element that should take into consideration by the responsible institutions.

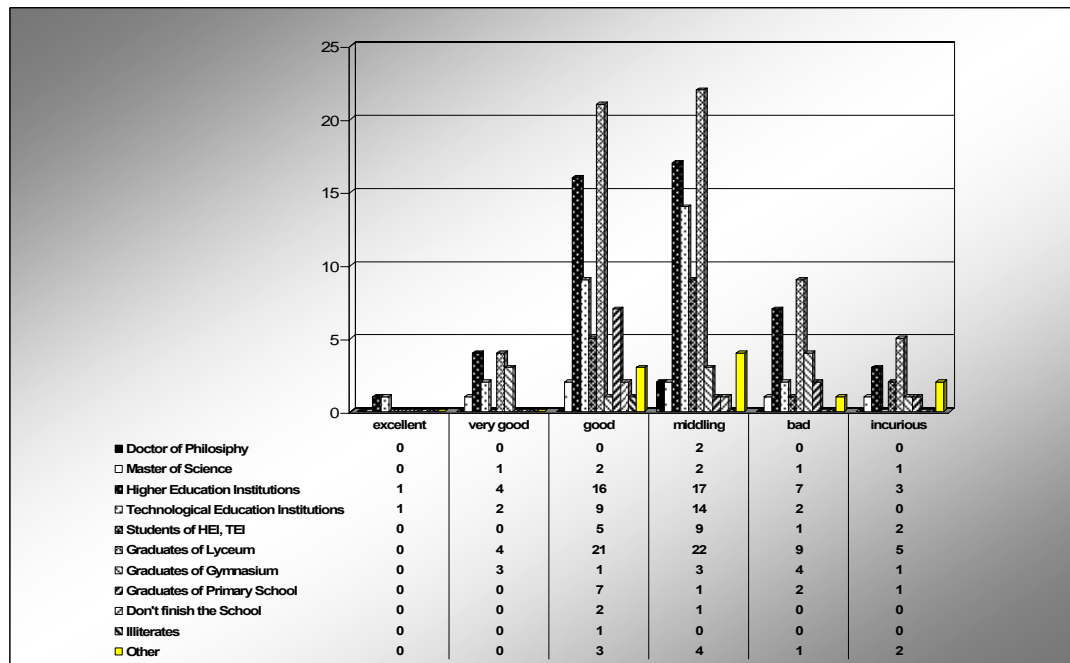


Figure 11. Representation of the interrelation between the educational level of residents and their evaluation of the management of the cultural reserve of their city

7. Conclusions

It is important to begin with the description of people's reactions at the moment that the inventory-takers put them in contact with the questionnaire. Beginning with the residents of the region, we observed that it was interesting for them to complete the questionnaire and that they are involved with the subject matter. At first, it was curiosity that led them to respond, then this in turn caused them to need to express their opinions on something they are concerned with. We believe that through this process, they wanted to express their opinions and to propose what they believed were the best solutions, given the opportunity to have their say through the questionnaire. We realised that the visitors of region were more inaccessible. This assertion is also backed up by our sample (50), which is comparatively small compared to that of the residents (200). Their interest was far more limited and most of them considered that it was a waste of time to complete a questionnaire concerning the city which they were visiting at that moment.

The interest of women in questionnaires is supposed to be greater, something that is also confirmed by the results of our research, through the figures for the sex of

the the sample of residents. In contrast, the sample of visitors comprised an equal percentage of men and women, a fact that which happened accidentally.

The larger percentage of residents that completed the questionnaire is in the age range from 25 to 39, and they were born in the city of Veria, a fact that may explain their interest in taking part in our research, as it constitutes for them their place of birth. Our sample consists of people from a high educational level, with the bigger percentages being graduates of Lyceum and of higher education institutions, which explains their ability to give such well-considered answers, and the correctness of their use of language. The more popular professions amongst respondents are private employees and the free professionals, who deal with the public on a daily basis, and who feel more concern about the needs of their region and are in a position to identify the impossible and possible elements of their city.

The visitors belong to the age range 25 to 39 as well as some being between 15 and 24 years old, and their educational level belongs to the category of those that have graduate from higher education institutions. Most of them practise the profession of educationalists and the next largest groups are pensioners and students. Most of them declared that they had visited the city before and the reason for their visit at the time of the research was for tourism, for work or on their way to another destination. According to their answers in the questionnaires, the visitors who belong in the age ranges from 15 to 24 and from 54 to 79, i.e. students and pensioners gave tourism as the motive for their visit. The visitors who belong in the age range from 25 to 39 were educationalists and they were in the city for work. We would say that it is possible to claim that the young people are in search of new destinations, smaller places, which they detected using their own initiative.

The briefing of visitors on the cultural environment of the city that they were visiting is limited, according to the results of the research. Their information is supported mainly by what they have heard from their acquaintances and they judge it as “middling”. They know about the famous cultural elements, such as the Archaeological Museum of city and the Royal Graves of Vergina. The traditional districts of Kyriotissa and Barbouta that constitute important elements of popular architecture are famous, as well as the Holy Abbey of Pangaea Soumela that constitutes one of the most famous such sites in the world. Most of them declare that they do not know any of the cultural institutions of the city nor any cultural events, nor do they know any local habits, customs and traditions of the city of region. The

local dish called “revani” is famous and visitors want to try it. Deductively, we would say that the briefing of visitors is insufficient and this is due mainly to the insufficient promotion of city via the responsible institutions. Visitors declare that they wish to use new technology in order to be informed about the place, mainly by using the Internet. It is sure that the lack of a “powerful” website which provides all kind of information on the city of Veria is a disadvantage.

The visitors believe that the culture of Veria would constitute a motive for their visit and they specifically state that the main element that would attract them more is the conserved traditional districts of Veria, perhaps as a whole. They consider more the conserved traditional districts, the archaeological places and the local cuisine as the main elements of attraction to the city, and they see as less attractive the habits, customs and traditions, as well as the cultural events of the city.

It is significant that the respondents support the fact that the culture of the city could constitute a main factor that will contribute considerably towards its development. They give “hope” for the prospect of growth in the local society and they really believe in the cultural reserve of the city. They recognize its importance and the characteristic uniqueness that distinguishes it. They claim to be satisfied with the behaviour of local residents and they class as “excellent” the service that local people provided them with. It is very important for the visitors to leave feeling pleased with the region and feeling that it entertained them. That’s because this can provide them with motivation for a future visit to the city of Veria.

As for the information of residents regarding the cultural reserve of their city, we noted that they are informed mainly by their acquaintances. Specifically, most of the sample knew the museums of the city, but unfortunately only a small percentage of them had visited them. The same applies to the archaeological places, the conserved traditional districts of city, the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine monuments, and much more so to the monuments of the Ottoman conquest, the cultural institutions and the cultural events that are carried out in them, and the habits, customs and traditions. As far as local cuisine is concerned, a high percentage of residents know the local dishes and also have tried them. Deductively, we would say that the residents of the region that represent our sample have a formal briefing of the cultural reserve of their city, a fact that is mainly due to their living for a number of years in the city.

This also resulted from their evaluation of the promotion of their city. A larger percentage characterizes the information-service of the city as “middling”, a fact that

is due to insufficient training regarding the cultural reserve of the city. They express the wish to use new technology for their briefing and specifically, to use the Internet. They believe that in this way, the promotion of the city and its cultural environment will have a worldwide impact and they propose the creation of a comprehensive website, which would capture the interest of each person who visits it.

A result of the research was that the residents know the institutions of cultural reserve management of their city, but they characterize the energies of cultural management of the region, as “middling”. They feel that there is no co-ordination of institutions among them, nor any essential “component” for common objectives action, with prospects of important growth of their city. They declare their dissatisfaction with the policy of management that is now applied by the responsible institutions, and they express their fears for stagnation, in the event that new initiatives are not applied.

Residents believe that the cultural reserve can constitute an important factor in the development of their city. Using new methods of promotion and information for the public, they are certain that they can render Veria a pole of attraction to tourists, which will contribute considerably to urban economic development

In summary, the conclusion is that both the residents and the visitors support that the cultural reserve of Veria constitutes an important element in its development. This development can be economic, with regard to tourist attraction, or growth-related with regard to the quality of life for the local residents, who could be trained in the cultural environment of the city.

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