

The Contribution of Cultural Routes to the Enhancement of Urban Cultural Tourism

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Abstract: The purpose of the research was to investigate the importance of cultural routes as a means of highlighting the historical and cultural heritage and urban cultural tourism in general. The promotion of Athens and other areas. The quantitative approach was considered to be the most appropriate, while deliberate sampling was applied. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. The results of the survey showed important findings, since the participants consent to the importance of cultural routes for the promotion of areas. However, the majority of them seem to be unaware of the specific way in which targeted aid policies will be taken for these cultural products and have shown the lack of coordination and communication between actors as the most important problem, hindering key partnerships and initiatives. Some of them who were been interviewed were unable to know the answers to a very specialized and demanding questionnaire, with knowledge about cultural routes and cultural tourism as a prerequisite. Urban cultural tourism has shown particular growth in recent years in Greece and abroad, with its forms, such as city breaks and cultural routes, being selected by different target groups. In fact, in many cases, routes are planned inside and outside urban centers, including visits to monuments and archaeological sites. This paper fulfills the importance in the development of urban cultural tourism, the creation of cultural routes as USP, as well as the existence of policies to support them.

Keywords: Place branding, cultural heritage, cultural routes, urban cultural tourism.

Introduction

The global tourism trends of recent years show an inclination towards alternative forms of tourism. One of the emerging forms of alternative tourism is urban cultural tourism, which arose from the recognition of the rallying of visitors in urban centers and the need to improve the benefits offered at this level. The states and especially the European capitals are constantly in the process of creating competitive holiday packages, in order to meet the expanded tourist needs, while anticipating the sustainable development of the areas and monuments. Cultural routes, as a characteristic type of urban cultural tourism, are an effective way of highlighting urban areas and enhancing this tourism. In fact, they are enriched with authentic experiences concerning the identity of the place of visit. Athens is a city in which many cultural routes can be developed, with the help of financial packages and appropriate marketing plans.

Policies to support urban cultural tourism in Europe and Greece

Since the 1980s, interest in urban tourism has increased rapidly, in parallel with the growing attention paid to the need to regulate and address the negative external effects of tourism in historic cities (Hayllar, Griffin, & Edwards, 2010). Transport in the European Union has revolutionised tourism, as it has strongly influenced traveller flows both quantitatively and qualitatively. Low-cost carriers (LCC) move travelers off traditional routes, creating new destinations **Invalid source specified.**(Kakoutis, 2019).

Regarding Greece, urban tourism and the strategy developed for it emerged from three different levels: the national, the local and the one that concerns the formulation of regional policy. At national level, the EPXSAA (Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development) in collaboration with the tourism framework for the development of the National Strategic Reference Framework, as well as the guidelines on the promotion and promotion of Greek tourism, created a common basis for the development of the city breaks market. These Frameworks, however, focus on the two largest urban centers, Athens and Thessaloniki (Pappa, 2018).

At the local level, various promotional activities were carried out for the promotion of urban destinations, while aiming to overcome the effects brought about by the reform of law 3852/2010 (Kallikratis). The Municipality of Athens is one of them, investing in the Athens Convention & Visitors Bureau. Through this business plan (2013-2015), "*areas have been developed, such as the awareness of the local community, the utilization of alternative B2B marketing channels, the background of the research of the Destination Management Organization, the strongest presence on social media, etc.*" (Pappa, 2018, p.25).

Finally, at the level of regional policy, the Regional Operational Programs of Attica aimed until 2020 to lay the foundations for the sustainable development of urban tourism. At the same time, the Athens-Attica master plan (2014) contributed to the enrichment of the spatial planning for tourism, which has been set by the EPXSAA (Kravaritou, 2016).

At the heart of the policies for the support of urban tourism is the Local Government of Organizations in tourism, the political guidelines at national and regional level for tourism, as well as the subordinate national and Community financial means, which can determine the line of action of Local Government towards the promotion of tourism initiatives at urban level (Lagos, 2012). Initially, the participation of local authorities in the planning of local tourism development is necessary, especially in Regions where tourism activity develops in an irregular way or is completely underdeveloped (E.E.T.A.A., 2020). Local Government organizations may establish development agencies / companies to undertake and support special forms of tourism related to the carrying capacity of the place of reception of tourists. At the same time, the support of small and medium-sized tourism enterprises, through financial programs, becomes crucial. Cooperation with collective managers, entrepreneurs or employees in the context

of the tourism sector can also support the creation of tourism policy guidelines, the provision of technical assistance, but also the use of Community financial resources through the submission and implementation of proposals on Community programs and initiatives (Lagos, 2012).

Strategy for the development and diversification of urban cultural tourism

In recent years there has been a growing link between local development and culture. The value of the monuments and cultural goods of each place is highlighted, and modern tools are used for their utilization. Place or City branding is one of these tools, as it attempts to reflect for each city its competitive advantage, that is, the element that differentiates it from all other cities. Branding in the place can help enhance its attractiveness for visitors and investors and thus create the basis for economic growth. This tool aims at the development of cultural tourism, which utilizes the available cultural elements either from the material objects of culture (traditional buildings, etc.) or through the intangible aspects of culture (cultural activities taking place there) (Peeters et al., 2018).

It is now a reference point for regions and cities to try to use communication tools to emphasize specific characteristics or values (Aitken & Campelo, 2011). Smart homes, life in nature, "thematic" neighborhoods, famous residents, cultural routes are elements that can attract targeted population groups, creating a USP. Also, in recent years, there are many cities that are trying to create an ecological "green" identity, using targeted campaigns and symbols (Couch, Sykes, & Börstinghaus, 2011).

The process of developing a strategic branding of a place is directly linked to the search for a new identity and a developmental vision of a city, a wider region or a region or even an entire country (Kazakov & Nikolova, 2015). However, the effort of a city to differentiate itself and project something special is the difficulty, as most of today's cities have similar characteristics, mainly in terms of infrastructure and services they offer to their visitors. In order to gain this comparative advantage, over their competitors, they need to develop and then promote the functionality of their products and the added value of their use, which must be combined with a certain identity, with specific principles and values, copying, in a way, the processes of creating a corporate branding (Lucarelli & Olof Berg, 2011).

The contribution of an intelligent (S.M.A.R.T.) urban cultural strategic plan for tourism development

It is commonly accepted that urban tourism is inextricably linked to cultural heritage. Therefore, in order to support it, it is appropriate to ensure the protection and preservation of monuments and historical sites, within a framework of sustainable development of tourism. To achieve the above, the creation of a smart (S.M.A.R.T) a marketing plan that will incorporate the appropriate means and ways of managing its cultural heritage is considered

necessary. The construction of a marketing plan begins with the investigation of the internal and external environment, in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each project / business / destination. In this way, the current situation, the threats and opportunities presented are examined. Subsequently, the goals are formed, after the target groups have been recognized (Moshi, 2020).

Regarding the means of integrating cultural heritage into the smart strategic marketing plan for urban tourism, they concern the communication mix. Advertising uses all means to bring results, which in this case is to promote urban tourism packages, as an alternative form of sustainable development (Vitouladitis, 2000)." In the case of urban tourism, media are selected both traditionally (media, magazines and press releases) and digitally (blogs, magazines, social media) (Zineldin & Philipson, 2007). Also, bloggers or influencers can be selected, who are involved in tourism and have the opportunity to propose destinations, to maximize the results (Paskaleva-Shapira & Besson, 2006).

With regard to the ways of integrating and managing cultural heritage in the promotion packages to be developed, in order to achieve the objectives, it is necessary to create collaborative networks, both in advertising and supporting the programmes, and in ensuring their sustainable development (Hernández-Martín, Rodríguez-Rodríguez, & Gahr, 2017). It is important to involve the Destination Management Organizations, the Local Government, the Environmental and Cultural Associations, the nationals themselves, in order to create a common vision (Sehremeli, 2019). This will also be central to place branding, for the construction and management of the site image, for the continuous interaction with the recipients of the package, for receiving feedback and carrying out improvement actions, where necessary each time (Krasanaki, 2020).

Forms of urban cultural tourism in Greece

Cultural tourism plays an important role in the economic life of a place. It is important to adapt our perception to the new data and to understand that the future of tourism and the quality of our lives depend on the organized management of our destinations (Poulaki et al., 2021). In Greece it seems that urban tourism has been booming in recent years, with more and more forms emerging and attracting new target groups. Cultural and cultural routes are particularly supported by national and local initiatives and programs. At the same time, city breaks are a new way of escaping and getting to know the city, it is worth noting, finally, that urban breaks are combined with other types of tourism (Pulido-Fernández & Sánchez-Rivero, 2010).

Cultural routes

As far as cultural routes are concerned, these concern tours, linked to the environment, acquaintance with the local tradition and the visit of historical

monuments and settlements. At the same time, as a form of alternative tourism it includes the participation of tourists in cultural events. Cultural routes give special cultural and economic value to the regions, while contributing to their sustainability (Banila, 2016). In recent years there has been an increased trend in cultural products that enclose the authenticity of a place and the special characteristics of a people. Cultural destinations are very popular and continue to attract expanded audience groups. This trend is linked to a general change in mentality, to a focus on environmentally safe choices, as well as to the selection of accommodation that respects biodiversity and the local community (Mitoula & Kaldis, 2020).

More specifically, the cultural routes support the social and environmental structure of the area, while offering autonomy to the visitor (Karahalis, 2006). This also serves the needs of tourists in the last decade who seek personalized holiday packages (Mitoula & Kantzoura, 2016). Thus, limited capacity accommodations are identified to offer cultural routes and independent companies in cooperation with the Municipalities. The smaller the impact on the environment, the more competitive the tours. Parameters that support sustainable development, through the promotion of cultural routes as "tourist products", are the establishment of a development model that is balanced in the existing structures (Buhalis & Costa, 2005. Mitoula, Theodoropoulou, Kaldis, & Chalioris, 2016).

Cultural routes were officially declared a cultural product by the Council of Europe in 1987, with the Santiago de Compostela Declaration. Based on the Declaration, therefore, the cultural routes were defined as a collaborative project, which aims to promote culture, educate and sensitize visitors about the historical and environmental wealth of the areas. Routes are usually developed on the basis of a historical route or a cultural concept and aim to understand and promote common European values (Council of Europe, 2020)."

Good practices for the development of cultural routes in Greece

The sustainable development of cultural tourism can preserve, protect and promote cultural heritage by encouraging contemporary cultural creation, but also by enhancing the networking of national, regional and local cultural life (Poulaki et al., 2021). In Greece, several good practices for the development of urban cultural tourism are identified, with the main ones being cultural routes. which enjoy European recognition and support are the following:

This is the Route of The Mediterranean Intercultural Dialogue, which was certified in 2003 and belongs to the 38 Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. This route is developed in the region of Thrace and gives visitors the opportunity to get to know the multiculturalism that characterizes it. Furthermore, tourists can get in touch with mythological, historical and cultural elements of the region, as they were shaped through the East-West meeting (Council of Europe, 2020).

Another certified cultural route since 2005 is "The Roads of the Olive Tree", an initiative that combines history, material and intangible heritage and urban

cultural tourism. The route is found in more than 20 countries, including suggested routes of discovery and promotion of the olive culture, with points of interest such as: olive museums, olive mills, traditional soap factories, archaeological sites, olive groves with special characteristics, millennial olive trees, etc. The Routes of the Olive Tree have been recognized by UNESCO, as a "Global Route of Intercultural Dialogue & Sustainable Development", by the Council of Europe as a "European Cultural Route" (2005) and honored with many international awards and distinctions (Council of Europe, 2020).

Cultural routes as a tourist product in Athens and more widely in the Region of Attica

Athens as the capital and more broadly the Region of Attica attract millions of tourists every year, due to the rich cultural reserve that is located there, combined with other entertainment opportunities. Forms such as cultural routes or city breaks can be easily developed and attract tourists or visitors who are already in the city for some work or other form of tourism. (2019).

Despite the fact that Athens has often been excluded from special cultural tourism programs, precisely because it attracts a large number of tourists anyway and is densely populated, in recent years there have been actions to include cultural routes in projects. Among them are the "Great Walk" and the "Trilogy of Athens". These cultural routes were made in collaboration with the Region and the Association "DIAZOMA", which has been active for the last 11 years and more in the promotion and protection of cultural heritage. DIAZOMA undertakes the creation of cultural routes as branded (diazoma.gr, 2021) tourist products / experiences, in order to stimulate the tourist demand of special interest in Attica.

For the "Athens Trilogy", specific challenges were identified regarding the brand of Attica, which needed to be addressed. Initially, the image of the capital was not connected to neighboring destinations, while there was not even the required infrastructure for the special product of cultural routes. As a result, there was a lack of promotion of tourist products. The "Athens Trilogy", as the future-shaped USP, includes a narrative that unites the timeless elements of the city, as a city, with the cultural, economic and commercial life that characterize it since classical antiquity. its diversity (Gratsani, 2012).

As a project included in an ITI development program, it is expected to create opportunities for local businesses, attract investment and secure funds for the conservation of archaeological monuments. The success of the marketing plan depends on factors, such as the institutional framework, those involved in the project, the quality of the services provided and the possibility of optimal operation and performance of the tourism product (Diazoma, 2018). In order to support the promotion of tourist destinations, Tourism Management and Development Organizations must be established, which will act as a link between the bodies, services and potential visitors.

In conclusion, such projects are projects of modern entrepreneurship, which upgrade the quality of life of nationals and are important tools for attracting the interest of businesses and visitors, but also opportunities at European level (Diazoma, 2018).

The role of cultural routes in the development of urban cultural tourism

Cultural routes, through the advantages they offer, are a strategic tool for the development of urban cultural tourism. The cultural heritage itself, as a product of planning, can make a decisive contribution, not only to urban reconstruction, but also to the strengthening of cultural tourism (Region of Epirus, 2017). Urban tourism is now an important form of tourism now, from an economic point of view. From the evolution of societies, the "profile" of a European citizen, and the changes in his preferences and needs (Charalabopoulou, 2019).

In order to understand the uniqueness and identify the similarities of each tourist site, researchers tend to examine them in three different ways: First, as heterogeneous territorial parts, meaning that they are different and differentiated in terms of their size, geographical location, appearance, history and the functions they have. Secondly, as large-scale urban areas, in which the different functions offered at the same time make them multifunctional and unclear. Thirdly, as functions of urban tourism, which are rarely produced or consumed only by tourists, but on the contrary are used by a huge number of people (Lagos, 2012). Cultural routes can also belong, which are directly related to urban tourism and are in a constant interaction with tourist products (Somarakis, Lambrou, Panagiotopoulou, & Stratigea, 2016).

In particular, cultural routes can highlight a city and shed light on unseen aspects of the local cultural heritage. With narratives that include different periods of time, they involve stories and people and connect the past with the present. In fact, they can create a renewed brand, since they are an alternative form of tourism. For their design and realization, the financial tools that will be used will contribute to urban regeneration, to the promotion of the place, to the attraction of investors and expanded groups of visitors. Will allow global advertising of products (Castela, 2018).

Methodology

The purpose of the research was to investigate the importance of cultural routes as a means of highlighting historical and cultural heritage and urban cultural tourism in general.

1. What is the importance of cultural routes in the development of the domestic tourism product?
2. What is the USP (Unique Selling Proposition) of the cultural routes, to which target groups it is addressed, and which bodies are responsible for its management?

3. What are the development strategies of this tourism product on a long term level and how can they be an added value for urban cultural tourism?

For this research, a quantitative approach was considered more appropriate, with data measurements both qualitative and quantitative, which are then analysed using standardized statistical techniques. The main research tool was the structured questionnaire (Creswell, 2016). The selection of participants was made critically and the sampling applied is characterized as intentional (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2008).

The collection of the data started in October 2021 and was completed in December 2021. The survey focused on people associated with tourism development and promotion, entrepreneurship, catering and accommodation.

The survey was based on 75 people, 56 women and 19 men. 68% of the participants were between 36 and 55 years old. At the same time, 56% belonged to married people and 44% to unmarried people. Regarding the level of education, 54.7% had a Master's degree and 34.7% had a university degree / TEI. At the same time, 62.7% of the sample belonged to employees and 22.7% to freelancers. As for the institutions or businesses of work, 17.3% of the sample belonged to ministers – deputy ministers – general secretaries and to administrative staff of tourism and culture. 13.3% belonged to people associated with the Municipality of Athens and 9.3% of the participants were related to catering businesses. 8% were tourism enterprises and the same percentage were related to cultural enterprises.

The participants' responses were statistically analyzed in the Social Package for the Social Sciences 25.0.0.SPSS. Descriptive and inductive statistics were used.

Results

Initially, the profile of the survey participants is presented through data such as gender, age group, marital status, level of education, professional status and institution or work enterprise. Then, the results for the first, second and third research questions are presented regarding the importance of cultural routes in the development of the domestic tourism product, the USP of cultural routes and the strategies for the development of this tourist product in the long term in Greece and abroad respectively.

Axis 1 – Research Question 1

The first axis included 4 questions. Initially, 57.3% of the sample stated, regarding the levels of demand and supply at which urban cultural tourism in Greece has been moving in recent years, that there is a dynamic and ever-increasing course. However, 24% said this relationship is at a low level.

When asked whether specific policies have been adopted to support urban cultural tourism in Greece and Europe, 32% answered positively, while 17.3%

answered negatively, but the majority (50.7%) answered that they do not know or do not answer.

In addition, 21 people proposed policies to support urban cultural tourism in Greece and Europe. Of these, seven noted specific actions and programs, such as Visit Greece, six referred in general to exhibitions, events and general actions and three suggested urban tours and the presentation of cities as tourist destinations, as well as promotion and communication policies. Finally, two people proposed to support businesses and tourism operators.

The importance of cultural routes in the development of the domestic tourism product was multidimensional for 69.3%, since they stated that the importance is: a) the new target groups, b) the investigation of seasonality, c) the improved positioning in the market and d) the increase of tourist flows.

At the same time, 45.3% of the sample referred to the fact that the strategy for the development and diversification of urban cultural tourism and cultural routes are interrelated elements and 44% said that the two concepts are largely linked.

Axis 2 – Research Question 2

The second axis included 4 questions. Regarding the USP of cultural routes, 64.7% of respondents noted that the USP should concern all cultural elements, which are part of urban areas and which coexist with modern life. In addition, 17.6% noted that the USP is related to the different and unique elements associated with cultural routes.

At the same time, for 54.5% of the sample, they said that the USP of cultural routes is aimed at certain tourists, with specific characteristics, and 45.5% said that the USP of cultural routes was aimed at everyone regardless of age, preference and educational level.

As for the entities responsible for the management of the USP of cultural routes, 54.2% chose the local bodies within the boundaries of the Municipalities, 29.2% chose entities in the wider context of regions and the state, and 16.7% referred to the combination of local and wider bodies.

It is noteworthy that 45.3% of the sample noted that cultural routes present a tourist dynamic that has not been exploited, as it should be, by local and national bodies and at the same time, 33.3% noted that there are still many actions to be carried out, so that cultural routes contribute decisively to the development of urban cultural tourism. In another perspective, 21.3% answered that cultural routes are a very dynamic and decisive factor in the development of urban cultural tourism.

Regarding the role of Destination Marketing and Management Organizations in the promotion of cultural routes, for 48% of the sample this role is necessary and for 48% it is always important.

Regarding the existence of an Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) to support cultural routes, the majority (61.3%) answered that they do not know or

do not answer if it exists, while 28% answered negatively and 10.7% responded positively.

Axis 3 – Research Question 3

The third axis included 4 questions. In relation to the development strategies of this tourism product at a national level, 31.6% of the sample referred to the lack of strategies, while 26.3% noted advertising, promotion, communication and marketing. There were also cultural routes (10.5%), ITI (7.9%) and regional grants (7.9%).

Regarding the extent to which cultural routes are effectively communicated and promoted as tourist products abroad, in order to be good practices in Greece as well, 48% of the sample answered that they are communicated in combination with other tourist products, 32% answered that weight is given to other tourist products and 14.7% noted that cultural routes are effectively communicated as an independent tourist product.

Participants were then invited to note the most important obstacles they have encountered in implementing strategies to promote cultural routes. The most important obstacle was the inability to coordinate bodies (38.7%) followed by the combination of four obstacles with 29.3% (the inability to coordinate bodies, the priority in other products, the lack of funds and the reduced demand). Also, 16% of the sample noted as an obstacle the priority in other products, while the lack of funds was chosen by 8% and the reduced demand by 4%.

Finally, the participants were asked to note the tools they considered necessary to increase the tourist demand for this tourist product. 43.2% of respondents scored strategies such as visibility, promotion, communication and marketing. Also, 33.3% noted the coordination between bodies and the general collaborations and 7.4% noted the understanding of the tourism product.

General results – Question correlations

The analysis showed that the question of the extent to which the strategy for the development and diversification of urban cultural tourism was linked to cultural routes and the question about the importance of cultural routes in the development of the domestic tourist product showed a statistically significant relationship [$\chi^2(15, N = 75) = 40,898, p < .000$].

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	40,898	15	,000
Likelihood Ratio	21,656	15	,117
Linear-by-Linear Association	,114	1	,736
N of Valid Cases	75		

The results showed that 26 of the 34 who noted that the two aforementioned concepts are interrelated, claimed that cultural routes bring a combination of results in the development of the domestic tourism product. The same was true of 22 of the 33 who noted that the strategy for the development and diversification of urban cultural tourism was largely linked to cultural routes. It was observed, however, that 2 out of 5 who believed that the strategy of development and diversification of urban cultural tourism was moderately linked to cultural routes, stated at the same time that cultural routes offer only improved market positioning.

It was also found that the question about the extent to which cultural routes are communicated and promoted as a tourist product abroad and the question about the degree of connection of the strategy for the development and diversification of urban cultural tourism with cultural routes showed a statistically important relationship [$\chi^2(15, N = 75) = 10,344, p = .798$].

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10,344	15	,798
Likelihood Ratio	12,444	15	,645
Linear-by-Linear Association	,888	1	,346
N of Valid Cases	75		

The results showed that 20 out of 36 people, who stated that cultural routes are communicated in combination with other tourist products, replied that the strategy of development and diversification of urban cultural tourism was largely linked to cultural routes. Also, 13 people out of the 24 who stated that importance is given to other tourism products abroad, replied that the strategy for the development and diversification of urban cultural tourism and cultural routes are interrelated concepts. The same was true for six of the 11 people, who said that cultural routes are effectively communicated as an independent tourist product.

In addition, it was found that 11 out of 16 who believed that cultural routes are a very dynamic and decisive element in the development of urban cultural tourism and 17 out of 34, who believed that cultural routes have not been exploited, stated that the role of Marketing and Destination Management Organizations in the promotion of cultural routes is necessary.

At the same time, it was observed that no matter how one understands the USP of cultural routes, it considers that the role of The Marketing and Destination Management Organizations in the promotion of cultural routes is necessary or important.

In addition, it was observed that in most cases, regardless of what the participants believe the strategies for the development of the specific tourism product at national level are, the most important obstacle is considered to be the inability to coordinate bodies. In the case of those who stated, however, that the

development strategy is advertising, promotion, communication and marketing, the main obstacle does not seem to be one, but a combination of many obstacles (4 out of 10). Also, one person who referred to the revision of the legislative framework highlighted as a major obstacle the priority in other products.

It is important that the question about obstacles, as well as the aforementioned question about the extent to which cultural routes are communicated and promoted as a tourist product abroad, showed a statistically significant relationship [$\chi^2(35) = 53,760$, $p = .022$].

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	53,760	35	,022
Likelihood Ratio	39,980	35	,258
Linear-by-Linear Association	1,053	1	,305
N of Valid Cases	75		

It was observed that 20 out of 36 people who stated that cultural routes are communicated in combination with other tourist products, argued that a major obstacle was the inability to coordinate the actors. At the same time, however, 6 of the 11 people who stated that cultural routes are communicated effectively, as well as 10 out of 24 people who said that weight is given to other tourism products, responded that the obstacles are a combination of factors, such as lack of funds, reduced demand, but also the inability to coordinate.

Conclusions-Research Limitations-Proposals for future research

More specifically, regarding the relationship between demand and supply of urban cultural tourism (**first axis**), more than half of the respondents replied that there is a dynamic and ever-increasing course of it. and Europe in recent years. Regarding the importance of cultural routes in the development of the domestic tourism product, they argued that these routes play a decisive role in urban development, the strengthening of the city brand, the appeal to new target groups and consequently the increase of tourist flows, as well as the fight against seasonality. increasing tourism demand in the product of urban cultural tourism, while promotion, marketing and communication are necessary tools in order for cultural routes to become a domestic tourism product to be developed.

The institution of cultural routes in the Attica region, **the second axis**, showed a lack of knowledge of the participants about their importance in the development of urban cultural tourism, the creation of cultural routes as USP, as well as the existence of policies to support them. Cultural routes are a potential tourism sector of development, which has not been exploited by local and national bodies, while as a sector it can contribute decisively to the development of urban cultural tourism, which is also in line with the views of the research participants. In fact, it is distinguished that the participants have knowledge about traditional methods of promoting tourism, such as The Marketing and

Destination Management Organizations (DMMO's), considering their role in the promotion of the cultural routes of each destination to be a major one. tourism. A large part of the sample did not know if there was an Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) to support cultural routes, although they pointed out the significant contribution of DMMO's to the promotion of cultural routes. lack of coordination of the bodies, the lack of organization and planning, as well as the lack of legislative regulations, although some routes were recently included in the NSRF or the Recovery Fund.

Regarding the **third axis**, the strategies for the development of this tourism product at a national level, the respondents underlined the need for the use of effective marketing and communication by experts in the region of Attica, which will include elements, in addition to the tourist products themselves. like the package "sea - sun". The main problem that emerges and is underlined through the answers is the lack of coordination of the competent bodies, as well as the priority in other tourism products. strategies for the promotion of cultural routes, especially in the Region of Attica. The majority of respondents consider, in addition, that urban tourism and cultural routes are interrelated concepts and for these reasons it needs to be further strengthened and promoted as a diversified tourism product in the tourism market, despite any initiatives to date at national and local level.

Regarding the research limitations, although the size of the sample can be considered small, its representativeness was relatively high, because the relationship of those who answered the questions was not only direct to tourism and culture, but are individuals who find themselves in key decision-making positions. However, the results of the survey cannot be generalized. Despite the advantages it offers, it is not uncommon for factors to affect its reliability. Initially, it may be that the participants did not honestly answer the questions, which often arises either from a lack of time and willingness to participate, or in order to consent to commonly accepted views, or because some of them were unable to know the answers to a very specialized and demanding questionnaire, with knowledge about cultural routes and cultural tourism as a prerequisite.

The results obtained from a qualitative survey with semi-structured interviews would probably have greater credibility. Based on what has been presented so far and specifically, taking into account the limitations and conclusions of the research, it is proposed to design a new research, which will focus on the factors that are a brake on the smooth cooperation and coordination of actions between institutions and professionals involved in the tourism and cultural sector.

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