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INTEGRATING CULTURAL HERITAGE INTO CONTEMPORARY LIFE THE PERSPECTIVE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF ARCADIA, GREECE

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Abstract

The current study aims to highlight the importance of integrating cultural heritage into contemporary life as a means to contribute to the economic and tourism development of a historical area and as an asset to local development. The study focuses on the cultural goods of Arcadia in central Peloponnese, Greece, an area of great history and rich architectural heritage, which gives a distinct cultural identity to the region. The overall objective of the current research is to describe how the different kinds of cultural benefits, derived by tourism, are perceived by the local community. A questionnaire based survey, conducted in Arcadia during the period 2012-2014, demonstrates that the locals strongly support the promotion of the architectural richness of the region in order to become an attraction for visitors, contributing both to the improvement of the quality of life, as well as the economic and tourism development of the area. The survey results confirm that cultural tourism is seen as an opportunity to contribute to the economic and cultural sustainability of the area and the local community. The implementation of a linear regression model shows that education is the key factor influencing the residents' view regarding the promotion of cultural tourism in the region.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Cultural Tourism, Monuments, Arcadia, Local Community

1. Introduction

The global dimension of cultural heritage along with the debt of humanity for its preservation is nowadays widely recognized. The protection both of natural and cultural environment should be achieved within a framework of comprehensive, viable and sustainable development and should fulfil the need of people to upgrade, improve and enrich the quality of life. Modern legislation expands the scope of protection, taking into consideration the integrated management and rational conservation of monuments for the next generations (Bandarin *et al.* 2011; Christofilopoulos, 2005; Georgitsoyanni *et al.* 2013).

In many areas around the world cultural heritage acts as a means to promote and enhance their tourism competitiveness and attractiveness. Moreover, emphasis has been given in regenerating areas and improving locals' living conditions, while promoting the cultural, historical and aesthetic characteristics of a place, thus ensuring the preservation and the promotion of its cultural assets. Therefore, the protection of architectural heritage is not limited

only to the preservation of historic buildings and complexes, but extends to reusing them, integrating them into a broader contemporary urban planning and a spatial organization (Bachleitner and Zins, 1999; Bandarin *et al.* 2011; Besculides *et al.* 2002; Dimitsantou-Kremezi, 2006; Ivona, 2003; Liu, 2003; Matarasso, 1999; Prayag, 2009; Shin, 2010; Tomljenovic, 2002).

The unique cultural resources of a territory contribute to increased tourism attractiveness (Bandarin *et al.* 2011; OECD, 2009; Polo and Frias, 2010; Tomljenovic, 2002). Communities which are rich in cultural heritage can provide tourists with a wide variety of recreational and cultural opportunities. Museums, historic sites, cultural centres, and other attractions allow tourists to interact with local residents, learn about, and experience the foreign culture. The touristic exchange fosters a cross-cultural communication that can promote understanding between the host and the guest. However, culture requires also long-term investments into the physical and technical infrastructure, accommodation facilities, urban and residential remodelling, improvements in traditional settlements, training, and capacity building in order to realize economic and social potential (Besculides *et al.* 2002; Esu and Arrey, 2009; Leonard *et al.* 2004; Monterrubio *et al.* 2012; OECD, 2009; Prayag, 2009; Puczko and Ratz, 2005; Quinn, 2007).

Recently the emphasis on local development has been given on the connection of sustainable development with culture and tourism and the value of local natural and cultural assets found in a region. Additionally, increasing emphasis has been given on alternative forms of tourism, which are focused on the protection of the natural and cultural environment in an effort to solve the problems of mass tourism (i.e., low wages, seasonal employment, and environmental degradation). Thus, cultural tourism is one of the largest and fastest-growing global tourism markets, which constitutes an alternative strategy of sustainable local development (Esu and Arrey, 2009; OECD, 2009; Russo, 2002; Sdrali and Chazapi, 2007).

Protecting the cultural, religious and natural sites and providing economic opportunities for local residents are two dominant concerns of the heritage management process. Cultural tourism can contribute to the local economic regeneration and prosperity along with collateral benefits on the environmental and social level (Konsola, 1993; Polo and Frias, 2010; Tomljenovic, 2002; Tsartas, 2003), generating new job opportunities for the host population as well (Andriotis, 2004; Buckley, 2012; Bujosa and Rossello, 2007; Harrill, 2004; Ko and Stewart, 2002; OECD, 2009; Sdrali and Chazapi, 2007). Therefore, tourism is seen in such a way that the satisfaction of economic, social and aesthetic needs cannot disturb or threaten the cultural integrity, the biological diversity or the natural ecosystem but rather preserve them (Palaskas *et al.* 2006).

2. The Perspective of Local Communities

Tourism impact has recently become a popular topic in tourism research. Many locations are now actively developing their tangible and intangible cultural assets as a means of developing comparative advantages in an increasingly competitive tourism marketplace and creating local distinctiveness in the face of globalization (Bachleitner and Zins, 1999; Besculides *et al.* 2002; Esu and Arrey, 2009; OECD, 2009; Sdrali and Chazapi, 2007). However, the residents' attitude and perception towards the impacts of tourism development is considered to be essential to tourism planning and management, since tourism has both positive and negative socio-economic effects on their lives. Determining the local residents' perception of tourism development and the involvement of local communities in decision making and in shaping the tourism strategy is considered to be crucial for sustainable tourism development (Andriotis, 2004; Brunt and Courtney, 1999; Georgitsoyanni *et al.* 2013; Iakovidou, 2006; Leonard *et al.* 2004; Tsartas, 2003).

The most important benefits for the residents, derived by cultural tourism, are the good knowledge of their culture, the maintaining of the traditional way of life and the feeling of being part of a community rich in culture and history. At the same time, local and foreign investments are encouraged and infrastructure and services are improved (Andriotis, 2004; Bachleitner and Zins, 1999; Besculides *et al.* 2002; Brunt and Courtney, 1999; Buckley, 2012; Bujosa and Rossello, 2007; Esu and Arrey, 2009; Ko and Stewart, 2002; OECD, 2009; Sdrali and Chazapi, 2007; Tomljenovic, 2002; Turker and Ozturk, 2013).

A number of studies have shown that, in general, residents have a positive perception of tourism development. In particular, the majority of locals think that tourism has improved the quality of products and services in their area, has contributed to the preservation of the natural environment, and has become an incentive for the restoration of historic buildings (Ambroz, 2008; Andriotis, 2004; Georgitsoyanni *et al.* 2013; Hall, 2008; Lotfi *et al.* 2010; Pavlogeorgatos and Konstantoglou, 2005; Quinn, 2007). Poria *et al.* (2003) found that tourists who consider a monument or a historic site as a common cultural heritage are emotionally connected to it and have a better chance to visit it again. Studies have also demonstrated that those residents who have a personal interest in tourism, also have a tendency to agree with the positive impact of tourism and are most likely to support the further development of tourism in their community (Brunt and Courtney, 1999; Bujosa and Rossello, 2007; Latkova and Vogt, 2012; McGehee *et al.* 2002; Nunkoo *et al.* 2009; Sharpley, 2000).

Many inhabitants agree that tourism has a positive impact on their economic condition, especially in times of economic crisis. They firmly believe that their community should support the development of tourism and are willing to participate personally in the development of alternative forms of tourism. Furthermore, the findings of previous studies reveal that when residents realize that the positive effects are likely to be greater than the negative, they do not only consent on the tourism development of their area but also they strongly support it (Andriotis, 2004; Bachleitner and Zins, 1999; Besculides *et al.* 2002; Lotfi *et al.* 2010; McGehee *et al.* 2002; OECD, 2009). Finally, those employed in the tourism sector and are financially dependent on it seem to have a more positive attitude towards cultural tourism, since it can be considered as a means of preserving their cultural heritage and increasing local income as well (Brunt and Courtney, 1999; Bujosa and Rossello, 2007; Ko and Stewart, 2002; Liu, 2003; Quinn, 2007; Sdrali and Chazapi, 2007; Shin, 2010).

The main objective of the current study is to highlight the richness and diversity of the cultural and natural heritage of Arcadia in central Peloponnese, Greece, and to stress the need for protection of local cultural, religious and natural sites which may constitute the basic resources for the development of local tourism. A second objective of the survey is to underline the importance of the involvement of local communities in decision making and in defining the tourism strategy related to cultural heritage. The local residents' perception of the cultural benefits of tourism was evaluated by conducting a questionnaire survey in order to gain a better understanding of the residents' evaluation of tourism impacts and of their support for the development of tourism in their area.

3. The Study Area

3.1. General Features

The current survey was conducted in Arcadia, the largest prefecture of Peloponnese, Greece, with a population of 86685 inhabitants. It is an area with a variety of geophysical features, long history and rich cultural resources. The area was chosen as a case study because of its rich cultural tradition, which is still generally unknown, but which could be promoted in order to lead to local sustainable development and the improvement of the residents' quality of life. Its total land area is 4419 km², of which 62.56% is mountainous landscape with small valleys and plateaus, while only 8.82% of the area shows a flat relief. In Mainalo, the highest and most imposing mountain of Arcadia, impressive geomorphologic characteristics, such as caves, gorges and canyons, offer shelter to different animal species and attract visitors. Furthermore, Parnon, the second largest mountain, has been declared as a protected monument of nature by national authorities. Arcadia is an ideal tourist destination throughout the year offering a number of different activities, such as hiking, archery, cycling with mountain bike, water sports (rowing, rafting, canoeing and kayaking), horse riding, climbing and skiing. At the same time, several areas of the prefecture (e.g. the mountain tops of Parnon and Mainalo, the ecosystems of the lakes Taka and Moustos, the gorge of the river Dafnon) are included in the European Ecological Network 'Natura 2000' (Karapanagiotou, 2010; Municipality of Tripolis, 2011; Sarandakis, 2008).

3.2. The Cultural Heritage of Arcadia

Arcadia has an intense and continuous history from antiquity to the Byzantine and modern periods. According to the Greek mythology, the first ancestor of the Arcadians was Pelasgos, who is considered the founder of the human race. The son of Pelasgos, Likaonas, built the city of Lycosoura on the holy mountain Likeo, which is considered to be the most ancient known city in the world. Likaonas had fifty sons and a daughter, the very beautiful Kallisto, who gave birth to the son of Zeus and was transformed by Hera into a bear. The child was named Arkas, 'child of the bear'. The area started being called Arcadia instead of the previous names Pelasgia or Apia (land of the pears). Arcadia was always considered to be the paradise of the shepherding and carefree life on earth. Thus, after the Renaissance, the phrase '*Et in Arcadia ego*' (I also lived in Arcadia) was first introduced by the famous painter Poussain in his painting 'The Shepherds of Arcadia'. This phrase that was written on the epigram of a shepherd's grave became a synonym of bucolic relaxation and absolute freedom. The Arcadian Ideal, known as Arcadianism, became a worldwide movement and embraced human nature itself, emphasizing the relationship between human existence and the natural environment (Behraki, 1997).

Arcadia has unique and authentic tourist assets and outstanding natural landscapes. The long history of the area is marked by the archaeological sites, the Byzantine churches, the post-Byzantine towers with guardrooms and ramparts, the neoclassical buildings, and monuments of pre-industrial technology, which represent different architectural, artistic and cultural models of different historical periods. Moreover, the numerous monasteries of the region, some of which date back to the 10th century, are wonderful monuments of art and technique, combining Greek Orthodox tradition with the development of architecture and painting. There are also remarkable buildings, e.g., towers of post-Byzantine times and mansions of modern times, which, although declared protected by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, they are poorly preserved and often seen abandoned. However, there are buildings of traditional architecture that are adequately preserved and are now being used for contemporary purposes, as tourist accommodations, museums, exhibitions, restaurants and municipal services. In total, 46 places of Arcadia have been declared as traditional settlements.

4. Empirical Analysis

A questionnaire survey was conducted with the aim to investigate the perception of the residents of Arcadia about the monuments of the area and the potential of developing the region through the promotion of cultural heritage and alternative forms of tourism. A structured questionnaire of 26 multiple-choice questions was distributed to a random sample of 550 residents of Arcadia prefecture, aged between 18-65, i.e., the economically active population, during the period September 2012 and June 2014. The questionnaire was sent by post or was given in person. A number of 458 answered questionnaires were gathered, which corresponds to a rate of 83.3%. The sample was designed based on three groups of questions. The first group (questions 1-9) referred to the socio-economic profile of the respondents, i.e., gender, age, marital status, education, profession, income. The second group (questions 10-11) dealt with the inhabitants' knowledge about the most significant monuments of the area. The third group (questions 12-26) measured the residents' perceptions of cultural heritage and tourism, relating to the fields of economy, community and entrepreneurship. The overall aim of the questionnaire was to record the cultural knowledge and activities of the inhabitants, as well as their attitude towards cultural tourism and its potential socio-economic impact on the region. Both the benefits and the drawbacks originated from the development of cultural tourism in the area, the actions of local authorities towards the strengthening of cultural tourism and the protection and enhancement of the monuments in the area were investigated.

In order to discover the factors which influence the respondents' awareness of the local cultural monuments, the impact of specific socio-demographic and economic variables were analyzed. The empirical analysis was derived from a binary regression model, a popular statistical technique in which the probability of a dichotomous outcome is related to a set of explanatory variables. The aim of the regression analysis was to discover whether a

respondent's awareness of cultural assets bore any relationship with his or her socio-economic profile.

4.1. Results and Discussion

The majority of the respondents are female (57.2%) in the age of 31-40 (28.4%) and married with two children (53.9%). Around 66.0% of the respondents have a higher education background, 67.2% work in the tertiary sector (services, transport, tourism, trade, etc.) and a significant percentage of about 14.0% are unemployed. However, only 8.3% of the respondents answered that part of their income is gained from cultural and tourism activities (tourist shops, hotels, restaurants, cafes, shops, private museums, etc.). As far as their awareness of the local historical monuments is concerned, the survey showed that less than half of the residents (46.7%) knew about their existence and around 29.0% have already visited them as well.

Those who answered that they have never visited any of the monuments claimed that they have not been given the opportunity (60.3%) or that they were not aware of their existence (29.7%). A small percentage (5.2%) responded that they have no general interest in monuments and around 3.0% indicated that the access to them is difficult. In total the residents suggested that cultural tourism (77.1%) as well as ecotourism (55.6%) are the main alternative forms of tourism that should be developed in the prefecture of Arcadia. Less popular forms of tourism among the respondents are rural tourism (52.3%), religious tourism (36.3%), sports tourism (23.7%) and conference tourism (22.7%).

The residents indicated that the most promising tools that can contribute to the promotion of the cultural heritage of Arcadia are new technologies, such as internet applications and digitization, alternative forms of tourism, and marking of the traditional buildings and placing information signs (Figure 1). The reuse of the protected buildings, such as to accommodate hostels, municipal services, offices of cultural associations or museums is also considered to be a promising way of promoting the local cultural assets. Organizing workshops, conferences, events and education programs on the protection of cultural heritage, and the creation of folklore collections as well are considered moderate promotional activities. The creation of open-air museums showed the highest percentage among those tools that contributes less at the promotion of cultural heritage.

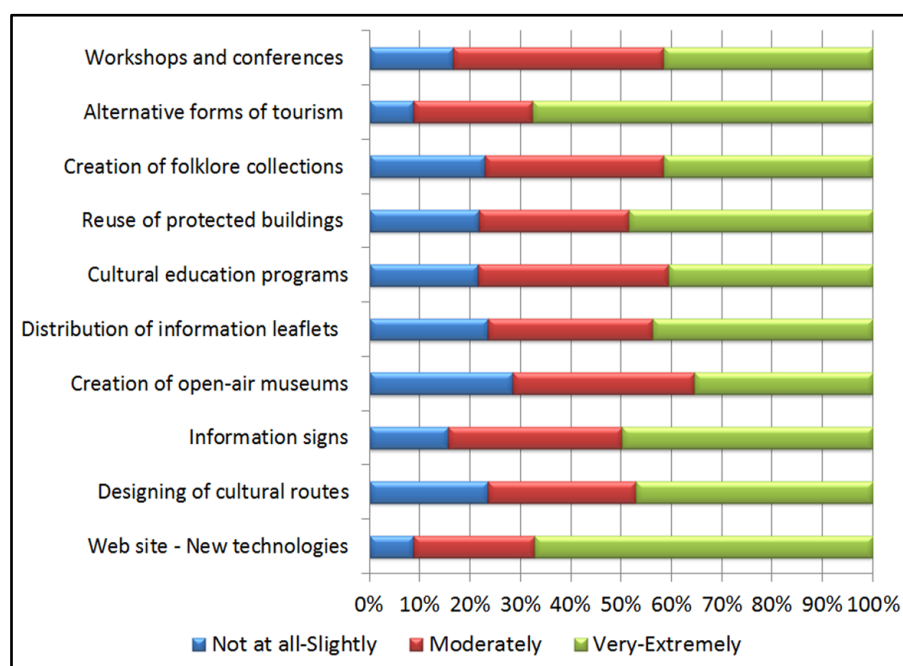


Figure 1. Survey results concerning how promotional practices can contribute to the protection and enhancement of the cultural heritage in Arcadia

The inhabitants also indicated that the owners of the protected buildings should be given incentives to restore them, such as government funding (59.6%), tax exemptions (52.6%), grant free loans (46.9%) and private funding (24.1%).

Concerning the impact of tourism growth, as shown in Figure 2, most of the respondents consider that it will help in the population containment, mainly of the young inhabitants (52.6%), leading in the increase of job opportunities (60.5%), in the improvement of the infrastructure and the accommodation facilities (52.0%) and in new business and investment (54.1%). The educational training of the residents on cultural and tourist issues will be moderately promoted (39.7%). Increased state funding (35.2%) and the revival of traditional occupations (32.8%) are considered among those that will be less positively affected by the tourism development. With regard to the negative effects on the socio-economic life that may result from the growth of tourism, the residents indicated that this will not lead to environmental degradation (62.5%), to an increase of criminality (80.8%) and to traffic congestion (54.8%). However, the prices of many goods and services are expected to increase considerably (52.0%), while the local character of the area is expected to be slightly altered (70.1%).

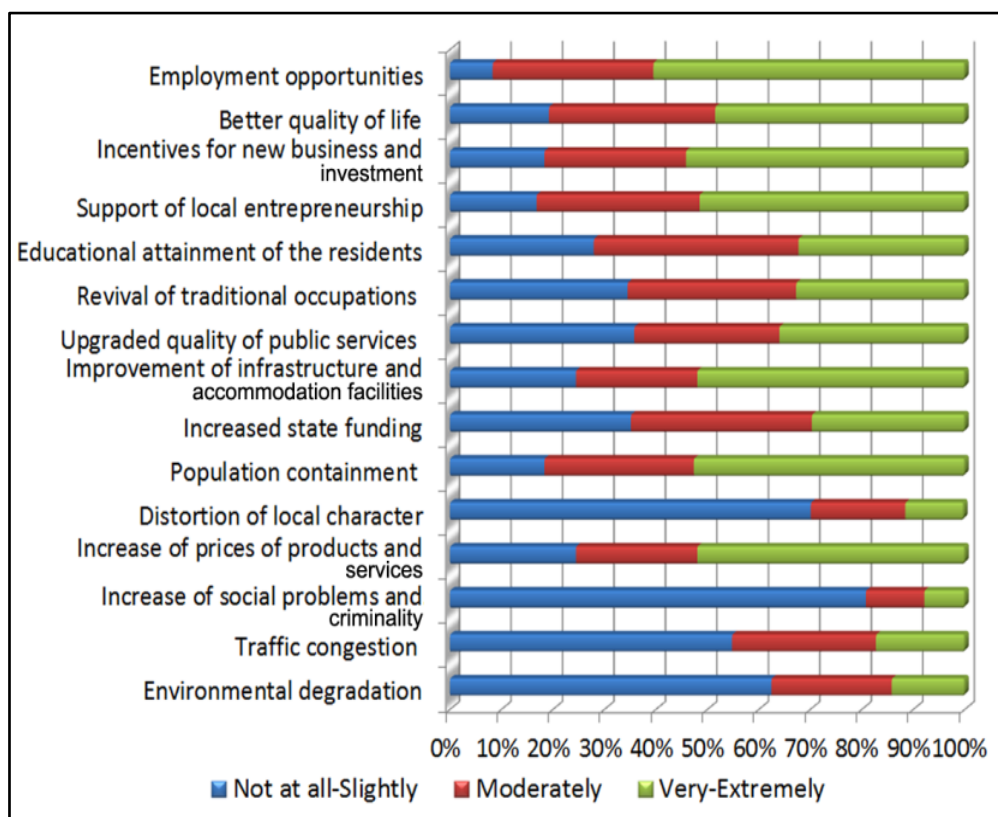


Figure 2. Survey results concerning how tourism growth may affect the local socio-economic life

Moreover, the survey revealed that the main factors that might be an obstacle to the protection of monuments are the lack of coordination among the stakeholders (32.8%), the insufficient funding (25.3%) and the lack of awareness raising in a local scale (20.1%). The poor infrastructure (11.8%) and the lack of signing at monuments (7.9%) are considered to restrain less this effort.

In addition, a large sample of the residents (77.3%) stated that they are not aware of the European funding programs concerning the protection and promotion of cultural heritage and that they do not know the provisions of the Hellenic Archaeological Law about the traditional settlements and the protection of monuments (84.1%). However, the majority of the residents

(91.7%) strongly believe that the development of the region should be based on the promotion of the cultural heritage and tourism, which can act as a means of economic growth in the area.

In order to discover the factors which influence the respondents' awareness of the local cultural monuments, a regression analysis was employed for every monument of Arcadia:

$$\text{KnowCM}_i = b_0 + b_1\text{Gender}_i + b_2\text{Age}_i + b_3\text{Education}_i + b_4\text{Income}_i + u_i \quad (1)$$

'KnowCM_{*i*}' is the binary dependent variable that indicates whether the respondent *i* is aware of the cultural monument examined. The variable takes the value 1 when the respondent's response is positive and 0 otherwise. 'Gender_{*i*}' is a dummy variable that reads as 0 if the respondent is male and 1 if female. 'Age_{*i*}' is the respondent's age. 'Education_{*i*}' is a dummy variable that has the value 1 if the respondent has a higher education background and 0 otherwise. 'Income_{*i*}' is the respondent's monthly private income in euros and 'u_{*i*}' is an error term.

The results derived from the estimation of Equation 1 applied to two representative monuments of the region and are shown in Table 1. The first one, the Open Air Water-Power Museum in Dimitsana, represents a monument which is widely known throughout the country, while the second, the Malliaropoulou Municipal Theatre in Tripolis, is mainly known to the local communities.

Table 1. Estimated ordinary least square model of residents' awareness of the Open Air Water-Power Museum in Dimitsana and Malliaropoulou Municipal Theatre in Tripolis

	Open Air Water-Power Museum in Dimitsana	Malliaropoulou Municipal Theatre in Tripolis
Constant	1.345	0.998
Gender	-0.055	-0.315
Age	-0.023	0.003
Education	0.904*	1.263*
Income	-0.011	-0.312

Notes: * Represents the level of significance at < 0.05.

As shown in Table 1 the gender and age of the respondents are not statistically significant factors in the awareness of cultural assets of Arcadia. Similarly, the respondents' monthly private income does not explain the differences in the awareness level of cultural assets. On the other hand, educational attainment is a statistically significant factor, at level of significance < 0.05, which positively affects the knowledge of local monuments reported by the respondents. The same factors were found to be significant for the other monuments of Arcadia. It is concluded that those who have completed higher education studies are more informed about the cultural heritage of the region.

Furthermore, the probability of a resident believing that the development of the region should be based on the promotion of the cultural heritage and tourism was examined. Two subsets of independent variables were used in this analysis, namely: (a) socio-demographic factors and (b) economic variables. The following probit specification was employed:

$$\text{Develop}_i = b_0 + b_1\text{Gender}_i + b_2\text{Age}_i + b_3\text{Education}_i + b_4\text{Income}_i + u_i \quad (2)$$

'Develop_{*i*}' is the binary dependent variable indicating whether the respondent *i* considered that the development of the region should be based on the promotion of the cultural heritage and tourism. The variable takes the value 1 when the respondent's response is positive and 0 otherwise. The independent variables are the following: 'Gender_{*i*}' is a dummy variable that reads as 0 when the respondent is male and 1 when the respondent female. 'Age_{*i*}' is the respondent's age. 'Education_{*i*}' is a dummy variable that has the value 1 if the respondent has a higher education background and 0 otherwise. 'Income_{*i*}' is the respondent's monthly private income in euros and 'u_{*i*}' is an error term. The empirical results derived from Equation 2 are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Estimated binary probit regressions for the probability of the residents' opinion that the promotion of the cultural heritage and tourism can act as a means of economic growth in the area (yes: 1; no: 0)

Independent variables	
Constant	1.746
Gender	0.192
Age	0.013
Education	1.198*
Income	-0.089

Notes: * Represents the level of significance at < 0.05.

As shown in Table 2 the estimated coefficients for education are positive and statistically significant (Equation 2). More precisely, the empirical result indicates that as the educational level becomes higher, the probability of considering that the promotion of the cultural heritage and tourism can contribute to local development also increases, at level of significance < 0.05. Particularly, those responders who reported higher education studies tended to recognize the importance of cultural heritage and cultural tourism for the development of Arcadia. In addition, the results indicate that men were more likely to consider cultural heritage as an opportunity for local development than women were. Finally, the results confirm that the age and income of the respondents were not statistically significant factors regarding their opinion on the contribution of cultural heritage and tourism to local development.

5. Conclusions

The case study of Arcadia is a representative example of how cultural heritage can be integrated into contemporary life. The natural landscapes, the different kinds of tourist destinations and the rich historical and cultural tradition of the area should be promoted in order to support the sustainable development of the region and the improvement of the residents' quality of life. A great number of sites, such as antiquities, Byzantine and post-Byzantine monuments, castles, medieval towers, neoclassical buildings, monasteries and churches, monuments of pre-industrial technology, museums and exhibition centres are evident proof of the local cultural richness. The protection of the local cultural heritage should aim not only at the preservation of the monuments but also at reusing them in a sustainable way (primary use or new compatible one), integrated into contemporary life.

The current study resulted in a better understanding of the residents' perceptions and evaluation of tourism impacts and their support for tourism development in their region. The survey exhibited that cultural tourism can be beneficial to the local community by providing socio-economic, cultural, educational and ecological motivations to maintain their heritage and to promote cultural practices. It is necessary that cultural property in Arcadia is preserved by implementing practices towards a sustainable mild tourism development. However, in order to achieve the regeneration and revitalization of traditional settlements, the participation and cooperation of the local community are essential prerequisites.

In general, the results of the survey indicated that the residents have a positive perception of tourism development in the region. They think that tourism can improve the quality of products and services in the area, increase the local cultural value and contribute to the preservation of the natural environment and the restoration of historic buildings. They strongly believe that their community should support tourism growth in Arcadia for which they showed great willingness to be personally involved in. The residents indicated that cultural tourism can offer new job opportunities, mainly for young adults and women, by providing tourism destinations throughout the year. The findings of the survey revealed that the residents think that the positive impact of cultural tourism in the region is greater than the negative one and is considered as an alternative development strategy for mitigating economic difficulties.

Policies aimed at increasing the residents' acceptance of cultural heritage and cultural tourism can contribute to the successful adoption of activities towards the economic development of the area with respect to the local culture. In this context, investigating the socio-

economic profile of respondents who were receptive to the adoption of cultural tourism in the region would be useful when one considered targeting specific groups for marketing.

The survey has, therefore, focused on discovering which factors significantly influence the residents' views regarding the promotion of cultural heritage, employing cross sectional data from the area. The results suggest the importance of educational attainment of the residents with regard to culturally based local development. Finally, the study finds that the economic characteristics of the respondents were not statistically significant factors that affected their positive attitude regarding development based on cultural tourism.

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