



The importance of internal evaluation and the role of the external environment in the organizational and economic development of cultural entities - The case of the “Chios Mastic Museum” of the Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation

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Abstract

During the current time period, where catalytic changes are taking place on a global scale, cultural entities are facing a variety of operational and organizational difficulties that hinder their development. In this context, "cultural management" must focus on accelerating the analysis and record-keeping of the conditions, primarily of the external environment, which forms a precariously shifting landscape in the endogenous environment of the entities in question. In this regard, it becomes necessary for them to proceed with the adoption of the new best surveillance practices, the rationalization of their available resources and means, as well as the understanding of the expectations, impulses, and experiences of their visitors, in order to appropriately and purposefully shape their programming to maintain their sustainability, i.e. to become capable of producing results of the same or higher quality over time.

In this article, the authors initially describe the critical parameters that define the framework of the economic development of cultural entities in light of the challenges of the present era. Subsequently, they highlight the importance of using modern management techniques for their self-assessment focusing on risk management, internal control, and data utilisation tools. Furthermore, they examine the main components of the external environment in order to emphasize their contribution to the structuring of the organizational and economic preparation and development of cultural entities. For this purpose, they present the Chios Mastic Museum of the Cultural Foundation of the Piraeus Bank Group, as a representative example/case study.

Keywords: Data analysis, Internal Audit, Risk Management, External Environment, Museums, Chios Mastic Museum, Organizational and Financial Preparation, Cultural Entities, Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation, Cultural Managers

PART 1: CURRENT CHALLENGES

INTRODUCTION

During the first decades of the 21st century, radical socio-economic and geopolitical changes have been observed at a regional and global level, attributed to increased migration flows, in "rearrangements in the power balance, the COVID-19 pandemic, the upheavals in the global supply chain, the global energy crisis and the possible recession" (Vlachos & Vidakis, 2022), which have recently intensified "for the worse" (reformation in peius) following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The aforementioned factors were and continue to be the trigger for cultural management to seek and utilize innovative techniques regarding the processes of managing cultural institutions, in order to maintain their sustainability, especially in extreme, war-torn conditions, where attempts to undermine and appropriate the national cultural identity of the adversary through the destruction of cultural infrastructure and/ or through the confiscation/ expropriation of works of art, exhibits, and collections are made. For example, during the dynamic damage assessment of the cultural assets of Ukraine, based on reliable sources and in accordance with the provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, it is recorded that: "As of 25 April, UNESCO has verified damage to 110 sites since 24 February – 48 religious sites, 10 museums, 22 historic buildings, 11 buildings dedicated to cultural activities, 13 monuments, 6 libraries" (Mallard, 2022). In this regard, it is stated that: "Ukrainian officials have accused Russian forces of seizing 'over 2,000 artworks' from museums in the occupied city of Mariupol and moving the pieces to areas of the Russian-controlled Donbas region (...). Ukrainian fears for its cultural assets have been exacerbated by a series of public speeches made by Russian President Vladimir Putin in which he rejected Ukraine's independent identity, language and traditions" (Sauer, 2022).

In this context, it is necessary to adopt a diligent and flexible preparatory process, on the part of cultural management, based on modern administrative practices that incorporate operational plans implementing objectives for the fulfillment of the vision of a cultural organization, through which its aspirations and perspective are expressed. According to Michalopoulos (2003), the vision defines the future of the organization, namely it determines the direction of the policies and the imposed practices for the realization of multiple goals. This specific process can favor the economic sustainability of cultural entities and improve their social contribution by creating new job opportunities - strengthening social cohesion and promoting (national or local) cultural capital (Skaltsa, 1999).

EVALUATION OF CULTURAL ENTITIES WITH MODERN MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Beyond the preparatory phase, the aforementioned methodology encompasses an evaluation model that utilizes financial indicators. According to Niarchos (2004), the main financial indicators fall into the following categories:

- 1) Category of liquidity indicators: they are used to identify the short-term financial status of an organization and recognize the adequacy of dealing with its commitments.
- 2) Category of activity indicators: they are used to measure the level of efficiency of an organization with regard to the possibility of efficient exploitation of its proprietary resources.
- 3) Category of efficiency indicators: they are used to determine the efficiency of an organization mainly in terms of its governance within a specific time frame.

The necessity of the above evaluation is imposed not only by the requirement to minimize the operating costs of an organization, but also for "responding to reasonably likely and significant (...) risks, both inherent and residual" (OECD, 2018), based on the principles of risk management and internal control. After all, "in a crunch-tiknya role of internal audit in risk management include (1) focus the work of internal audit on key risks (...), (2) (...) risk Management throughout the organization, (3) provide assurance to the management of risk (...) (5) provide support and active involvement in the process of risk management, (6) facilitate the identification/risk assessment and line management education in risk management and internal control (...) Assessment of risk management in order to achieve success and achieve business objectives and financial performance of an organization remains a major concern against which to make a decision" (Lastianti et al, 2018)

In this regard, it should be taken into consideration that since 2004 "there has been a global move towards an enterprise-wide approach to risk management, with internal auditors playing a key role in providing both assurance and consulting services with respect to the management of risk within their organisations (Sarens and De Beelde, 2006)" (Zwaan et al, 2011).

In addition, the evaluation is considered the main tool to mitigate the future uncertainty arising from modern market liquidity, but also to forge opportunities for financial prosperity (Gantzias & Korres, 2011).

Another notable factor that is consciously required to be included in the methodology of productive management and evaluation of cultural entities is the "radical action that is conducted through the full exploitation of the innovations and methods offered by modern science and especially Statistics" (Vlachos, 2019), taking into account that "every social activity is now accompanied by the output of an explosively expanding amount of data, which is produced and made available as such through the generalized integration of computing and communication technologies into the entire material environment" (Tympas, 2018). Statistics is no longer just the production of quantitative analysis and market research data, but is extremely useful for improving decision-making processes, when applied accordingly (Fraser, 2009).

In the following Figure 1 "the feedback-assisted process of statistical analysis in the discovery and continuous reproduction of knowledge and decision-making for the optimization and reform of an integrated system, whether of private or of public nature, is represented" (Vlachos, 2019)

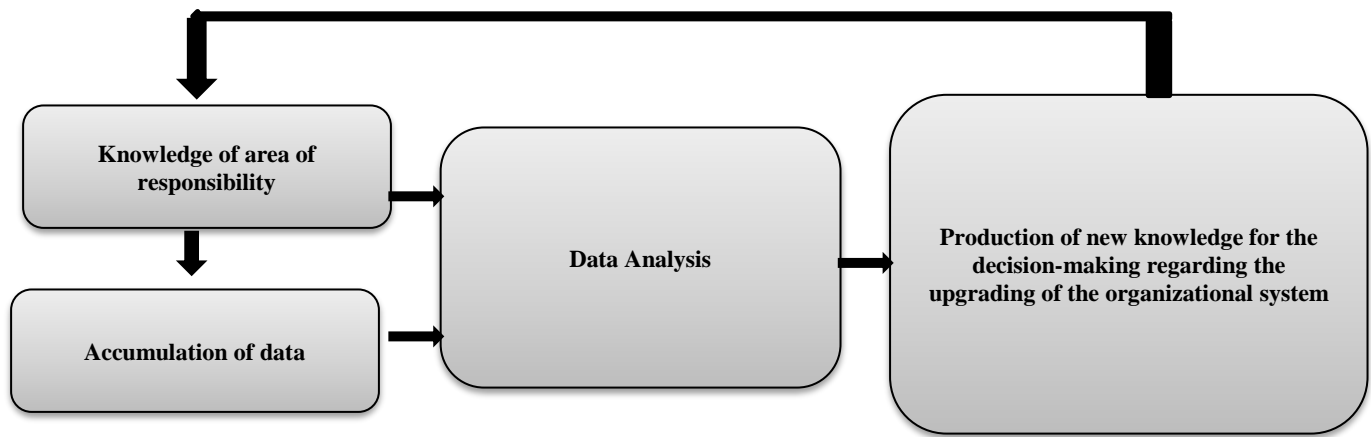


Figure 1. The role of data analysis in improving an organization (Source: Adapted from Tyrinopoulos & Kepaptsoglou 2015)

In conclusion, cultural managers, in order to ensure the resilience of the organizational structure and the realization of its strategy, must, through a set of evaluations and procedures that include the correct, systematic, and effective utilization of available material resources and human forces, achieve the stated expectations of the cultural entity, in order to maintain its viability and sustainability (Doulgeridis, 2006).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL ENTITIES

Every cultural entity, such as a museum, aims to preserve tangible/material and intangible heritage and traditional moral values. It is an active and realistic environment that shapes the awareness of the historic evolution of the past and acts as a shaper not only of the regional but also the national cultural identity (Bounia, 2010), so as to ensure its sustainability and social contribution, within a "rapidly and ever-changing global environment" (Vlachos & Vidakis, 2022). Therefore, the correct management policy of cultural entities contributes to the utilization of new forms of funding and ensures the necessary resources to cover their expenses and effectively offer their products and services to the public (Kotler, 1998).

In this context and as the institutions in question constitute by definition a separate category of organized administrative and operational entity, due to the object they produce and manage, they contribute to a significant extent to the broader socio-economic prosperity and the increase of public revenues. According to Papanastasiou (2017):

- 1) They contribute to the reduction of unemployment.
- 2) They inspire the creation of cultural products and services.
- 3) They organize cultural events that indirectly contribute to the economic empowerment of other regional markets.
- 4) They contribute to the upgrade of the technological equipment and infrastructure of the wider area of their registered office and/or headquarters.

Furthermore, they might lead to long-term benefits, both in the social field and in the economic prosperity of a geographical area, as the revenues that come from the respective cultural events and happenings and the regional development that they generate are remarkable (Gantzias & Korres, 2011).

THE BASIC COMPONENTS OF PROGRAMMING AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMIC

DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL ENTITIES

The ongoing development of cultural entities is inextricably linked to their planning. Therefore, the duties of competent officials include the planning of the economic agenda, the strengthening of human resources, the modernization of technological infrastructure, and the general upgrading of the management system. The dynamically changing conditions of the supply of cultural goods make it necessary to establish objectives focused on securing financial resources, adopting innovative and pioneering administrative models to upgrade the organizational and operational framework, and to explore appropriate strategic options so that financial support for cultural entities can soon emerge (Papanastasiou, 2017).

Financial managers, in order to shape the factors of financial planning, must primarily evaluate:

- 1) The profit profile of the cultural entity (profit or non-profit).
- 2) The sources of capitals and the methods of funding the cultural entity according to each case (state body, private body, municipal body, partnerships of bodies).
- 3) The legal framework governing the cultural entity.
- 4) The regulatory framework of the cultural entity, which regulates the extent and authorizations of its management system (and therefore its economic operation), clearly specifying the responsibilities of the organic units, the tasks corresponding to each job position, and the qualifications of the executives in charge of making the decisions and implementing the planned actions.
- 5) The applied technology that can be developed in the cultural entity without disrupting the spatiotemporal continuum and with true commitment and absolute respect towards the exhibits and the natural environment.
- 6) The human resources employed in the cultural entity must proactively defend individual ethical behavior and institutional integrity. All staff members, volunteers, and administrative bodies must follow an ethical code of conduct in order to integrate its principles into their daily work.

As it is recorded: "Museums and those who work in and with them should:

- Act in the public interest in all areas of work.
- Uphold the highest level of institutional integrity and personal conduct at all times
- Build respectful and transparent relationships with partner organizations, governing bodies, staff and volunteers to ensure public trust in the museum's activities" (Bastable, 2021).

RISK ASSESSMENT METHODS AND THE ANALYSIS OF THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT OF CULTURAL ENTITIES

In addition, beyond the internal dimension aimed at the effective management of human, technological, financial, natural resources,

Therefore, a cultural manager, after previously determining specific operational and strategic objectives, must choose a level of risk impact or risk severity, based on the impact that the risk will have if it were to occur. An illustrative example related to this is presented in Figure 2 below.

an important pillar of the sustainability and economic prosperity of cultural entities is the exogenous environment that influences their actions. The external environment is defined as the broader global socio-cultural ecosystem, as well as a complex composition of mainly financial, political, legal, cultural, demographic, technological, sanitary, geo-political, and geo-energetic peculiarities, which need to be taken into account in order to estimate the size of the impact they bring to the functionality, planning and general management of a cultural entity. It is noted that «in risk management, risk quantification usually consists of a combination of the risk 'likelihood' (how likely is the event to happen) and the risk 'impact' (what consequences will the event have, financially and non-financially)» (European Commission, 2014).

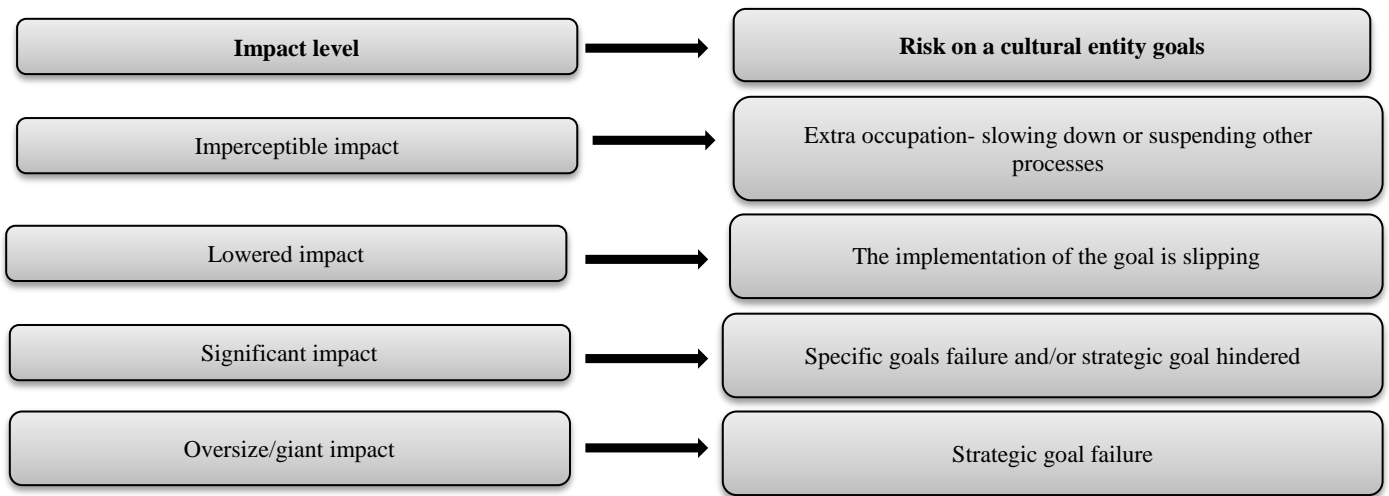


Figure 2: Map of correspondence between impact levels and induced risks

Furthermore, in the field of cultural entities, the methodology for identifying, capturing, and categorizing risks can be schematically illustrated as Figure 3 demonstrates below:

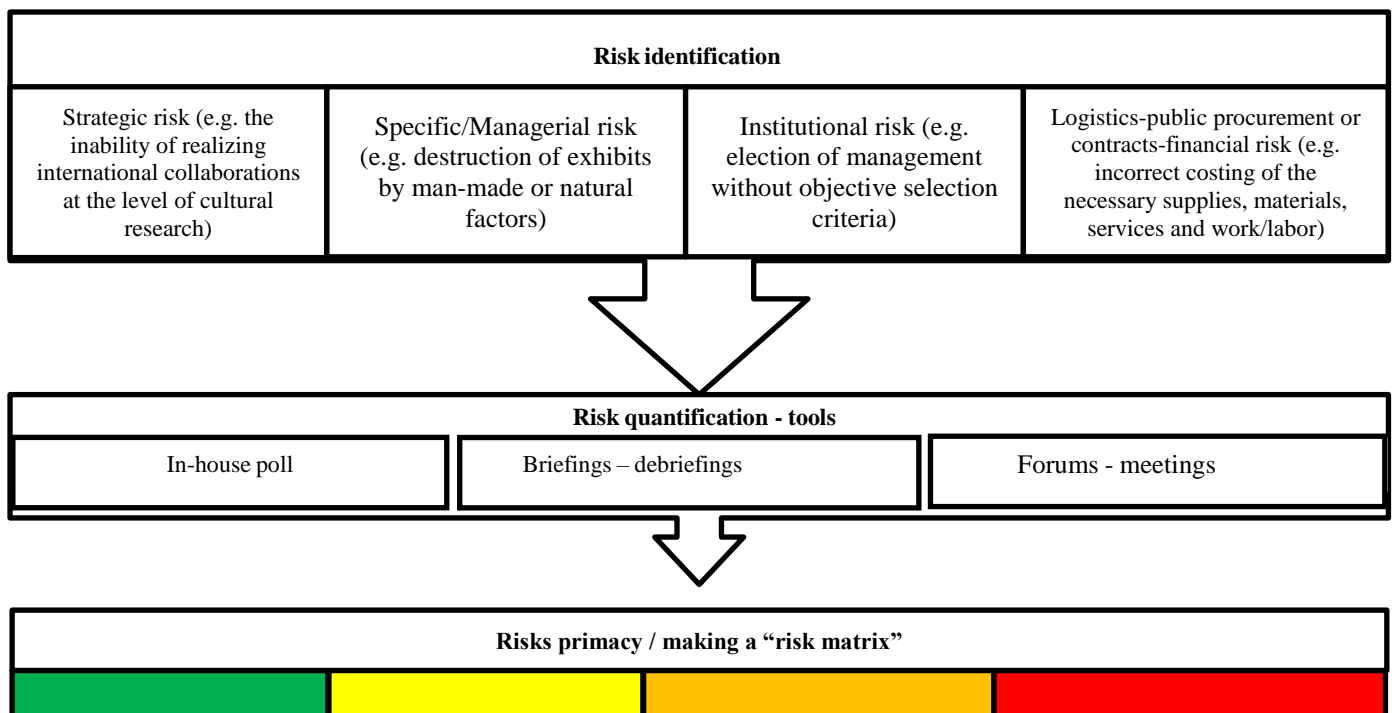


Figure 3: Methodology for identification, mapping, and categorization of indicative risks in cultural entities

Despite the fact that some of the peculiarities mentioned above appear to be beyond the scope of the examination of the external influence of cultural entities, nevertheless, further investigation reveals the absolute compatibility of the relevant fields, grouped together when necessary for reasons of current proximity, as follows:

A. Social, health, and technological field: due to the social distancing imposed in recent years as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, public cultural activities have been hampered. Institutions such as museums, theaters, libraries, and galleries ceased their operations, events were suspended or cancelled, and employment relationships were terminated. This negative impact of the pandemic combined with the already established technological breakthroughs of the century (expansion of online communication and of the commercial use of the internet, extensive but uncritical digitization of knowledge and human relationships as well as the physical characteristics of artworks, robotics, machine learning, use of 3D applications, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, etc.) contributed to the dramatic reduction of cultural output (contraction of the cultural product itself) and, by extension, of the on-site visits and profitability of cultural entities and especially museums.

On the contrary, cultural managers, when making their decisions, have to take into account three main technology-related aspects: the innovation process, the technology transfer process, and current state-of-the-art technology. Besides, in cases of the relatively recent past where innovative technology had been employed, the conclusions were sufficiently positive and the appropriate credit was given. For example, *“in September 2019, a curated version (...) was on view at The National Gallery of Art in Washington,*

D.C., and at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, the exhibition Leonardo da Vinci: 500 Years of Genius, which displayed reproductions of Leonardo’s inventions and a 360-degree replica of the Mona Lisa (...) Although the Mona Lisa was not included in the exhibition, it was on display in the Louvre, and its appearance complimented by a VR show of the Mona Lisa, designed for the Louvre by Vive Arts, created an enormous sensation (...)” (Giannini & Bowen, 2020).

The acceleration of the systematization of new technologies in the cultural sector due to the COVID-19 pandemic appears to be strengthening the expansion of the global interconnection of museums, cultural collections and exhibitions, specialized academic institutions, and researchers, which leads to the redistribution of human resources from secondary activities to their engagement with/commitment to “critical tasks requiring high-levels of human intelligence, creativity, and abstract thinking as museums become more open to digital innovation, fresh interpretations, and socially relevant storytelling. With this approach, collections come alive and are open to discovery from the dual-perspectives of curators, visitors, and users – so, a more inclusive democratized system with sharing for cost-reduction of routine activities that are not the main menu, while favouring more investment in artists, exhibitions, curatorial, creative computing and research” (Giannini & Bowen, 2021).

B. Geopolitical field: “Culture gives to a nation a collective consciousness and a sense of identity, and pushes it to acquire a specific worldview, attitude and behavior. With

this approach, culture is linked to Geopolitics. Nations that are aware of their cultural background can more easily make strategic-level decisions such as the development of a National Strategy and the choice of alliances (...) The cultural dimension gives geopolitical analysis breadth and depth” (Martzoukos, 2021).

Moreover, “(...) museums and cultural centers have long served as cultural ambassadors and foreign policy instruments, bridging diplomatic relationships among nation-states and institutions” (Mariano & Vårheim, 2021).

In confirmation of the inextricable link between geopolitics and culture, the global art and museum organization “Getty” emphasizes that *“cultural heritage has the power to unite us and is critical for achieving peace. It is also too often the target of war, another way to destroy and overtake a society by erasing its memory”* (Cuno, 2022).

C. Geoenergy field: Researcher Ioannis Vidakis, after initially focusing on the concepts of Geopolitics and Geoeconomics in his dissertation, proposes the introduction and adoption of a third new concept, “Geoenergy”. According to this perspective, the great interests in the space of the global power centers should first and foremost be investigated and studied, since energy, due to its importance, is an object of desire and a source of competition among the International Forces. The main conclusion of this thesis refers not only to the strong interconnection of energy with economic power and with politics – but also to the increased dependency of the latter two on the former, forming hotbeds/focal points of tension and areas of conflict in cases where the existing relations between economics and politics are being destabilized (Vidakis, 2016).

In addition to the above, *“energy issues may prevail over politics and economics in international decision-making. Many international political decisions spring from energy-related matters. From the geoenergeia point of view, two criteria argue for the prioritization of energy over politics and economy: the appearance of new technologies and the scarcity of energy resources”* (Vidakis & Baltos, 2015).

Taking into account the aforementioned, the theory of energy’s contribution as a generator of new cultures and the interconnection of its forms used with the level of development and the technological capabilities of civilization, as introduced by Nicolai Kardashev in 1964, should also be taken into consideration. Specifically, according to Miller et al (2009), Kardashev created the “Kardashev scale” in which a civilization’s level of technological advancement is based on the amount of energy it is able to use and is graded on four (4) energy points that take values from zero (0) to three (3). More specifically, at the value of zero (0) a civilization, such as the human one, utilizes energy produced by the planet, drawing/extracting it mostly from soft forms of energy (renewable energy) or sources produced from now-dead life forms, such as oil and natural gas (fossil energy). The transition path between the values zero (0) and one (1)—a point where energy is considered to be controlled—constitutes a turning point, as the civilization at this stage has not yet developed sufficient levels of collective intelligence and has not mastered the use of the new capabilities, which combined with adverse environmental effects might eliminate it before the full transition is complete (e.g. use of weapons of mass destruction, climate change effects, etc.).

In addition, in a systemic approach to the matter, Figure below illustrates the interconnection between the research fields: Geo-politics, Geo-economics, Geo-energeia, Geo-geography, and Geo-culture. These fields are supposedly characterised by objectivity

and scientific accountability, but the respective experts of these fields are filled with prejudice and, influenced by geostrategic factors, usually discriminate in favour of their own national, international, and global policies.

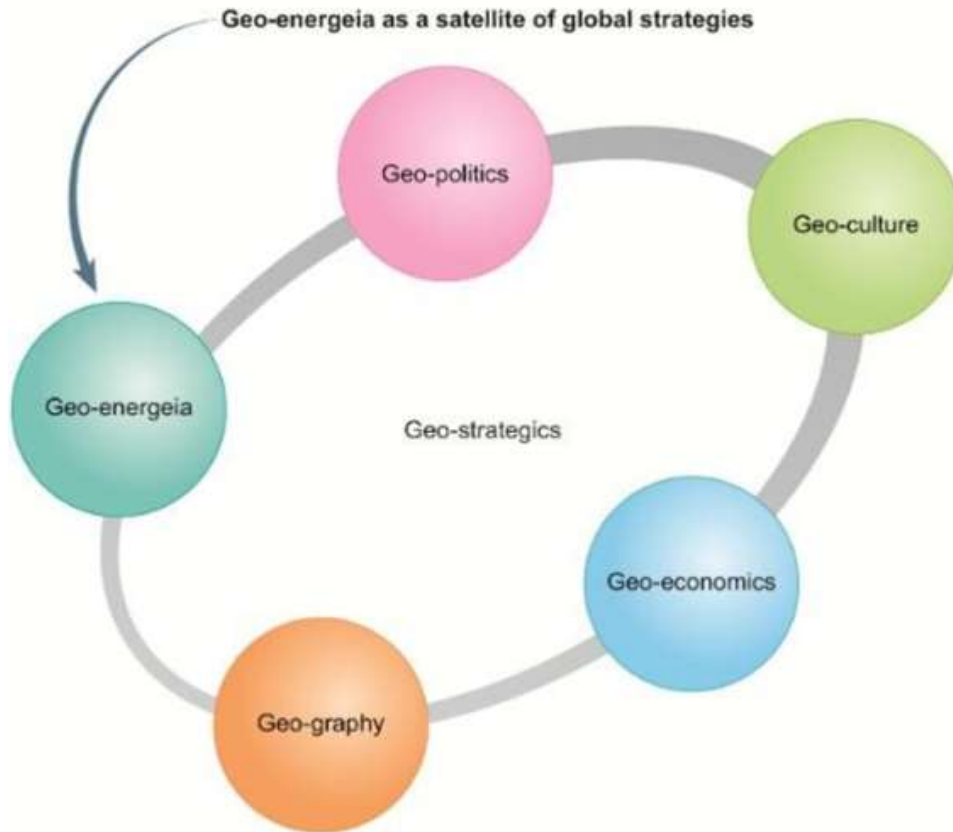


Figure 4: The correlation between Geo-politics, Geo-economics, Geo-energeia, Geo-geography, Geo-culture (Source: Vidakis & Baltos, 2015)

D. Governmental-political-legal field: Political and legal factors include the government stability and the political circumstances of the countries in which each entity is based. They operate globally and the global political and legal conditions affect them. In this field, the foreign policy that is implemented through the tool/method of public diplomacy is also included. Since public diplomacy can be considered a platform for the enforcement of power, culture can be considered an integral part of it, and its role in its practical application is significant, through the combination of state affairs and cultural norms in foreign policy actions (Tereshchuk, 2018).

Moreover, the rate of taxation, laws, and rules of the country, and the stability of the governments of the countries in which they operate are the external factors affecting the entity (Saeed, 2015). Similarly, labor legislation and government policy on public expenses, infrastructure projects, and privatizations are fundamental components of the political environment (Sarsentis, 1996).

In addition, the enforced implementation of appropriate government policies constitutes an opportunity for entities in particular to access support for their management function on various facets of their life cycle, such as the development of skills of the workforce through the implementation of training programs in the field of culture, financed by national and/or EU resources. Nowadays, the tasks assigned to the employees of museums and other cultural entities in general present particularities and require professional specializations beyond the usual. The (preparatory

and/or executive) regulatory engagement/occupation with financial and administrative care, internal control, service marketing, personnel, and material security are included in these specializations. *“Many of the staff working in these functions will not have had a traditional education or training within the museum sector, and may very well move on to exercise their professional or technical skills in a quite different field within a few years. It is therefore strongly recommended that any training activity or programme should involve as wide a range of museum staff and specializations as possible so that each group can exchange information and views on their own roles and experiences, whether within the museum profession or more widely. Bringing together, for example, curatorial and administrative or public relations staff, with education and security staff into a mixed study or project groups can strengthen the institution overall through increasing knowledge and understanding of other parts or activities of the museum, of its overall objectives and functions”* (Boylan & Woollard, 2006).

In that regard, the need to encourage and nurture/boost volunteering and its complex official/corporate organization in the cultural sector, inevitably acts as a driver for the expansion of political initiatives to carry out advisory actions for the benefit of cultural entities, taking into account that *“(…) there are many ways of organizing volunteer work at a museum, and there may not need to be a “right” and a “wrong” way, but rather different ways depending on the overall goals of the museum and the context - for example regarding the size of the museum and how the museum is funded. There are seldom any one-size-fits-all models to apply”* (Wollentz, 2022).

E. Socio-cultural field: The optimization of the educational level of the population is a cornerstone of cultural creation and development. It is an ambiguous-to-be-investigated relationship between these two social factors, which contributes to the understanding of the value of history, tradition, and culture. “(...) *Culture is the main medium of education, whereas education and training are the guarantee of the continuity of culture (...) a more comprehensive analysis of the links between education and culture remains particularly relevant (...) both education theoreticians and practitioners need a broad cultural awareness. Such awareness would enable specialists to perceive culture and tradition as a live, dynamic and creative process as well as to understand that a rapid change in culture automatically does not implicate the relativity of tradition, does not contrast it with innovations, does not push it out of life –all the novelties are based on the past achievements and traditions function in one or another form even when its existence is negative*” (Stonkuvienė, 2013).

However, it should also be mentioned that in modern times the concept of the "educational level" reflects the now necessary digital literacy and digital proficiency in general, i.e. according to Ribble & Bailey (2007), as well as the knowledge and ability to exploit digital technology correctly. The educational empowerment of the population, in order to be able to react to the necessity of the digital ability to access, produce and reproduction reality (including culture) and ultimately accomplish it, is considered absolutely necessary. “*The balance of “digitality” and reality is something that all citizens in a technology-driven society must increasingly negotiate (...), also with respect to museums (...). Museum professionals themselves need appropriate digital skills as well*” (Borda & Bowen, 2021).

Approaching the aforementioned relationship from an economic point of view, the possibility of implementing a practice that appears to be widely applied in the modern era by a multitude of profit-driven or non-profit organizations is considered worthy of discussion by cultural administrators; setting up sophisticated postgraduate study programs with and for the care of cultural entities in cooperation with Academic institutions, which constitutes a methodology with multiple benefits, in addition to upgrading the educational level, as mentioned below:

- 1) Promotion of scientific research on cultural issues of specialized interest.
- 2) Interconnection of cultural entities with the labor market leads to the emergence of specialized graduates who will be absorbed as administrative or scientific or artistic executives. The assignment of relevant degree theses should aim at the adoption of applicable solutions during the exercise of administrative care.
- 3) Any allocation of scholarship funds or other related funding should not act as a deterrent, since, in the light of modern marketing methods, the promotion of the principles of social responsibility of the cultural entity may boost its reputation and probably lead to an increase in traffic/visitor flow and revenue and/or attracting donors and sponsors.

According to Montana & Charnov (2002), other elements that make up the broader socio-cultural field and clearly influence the

operation of any organized entity, are considered among others to be the following:

- 1) The formation of multicultural societies mainly due to the increase in migration flows [which is expected to intensify in the future due to climate change (Krotsi & Pappaspyropoulos, 2018)].
- 2) Religious differences.
- 3) The social status of women.
- 4) The attitude and stance of employees towards work.
- 5) The personal experiences and individual values of the customers-consumers, as well as the quality level of the exploitation of their free time.
- 6) Social care for people belonging to special population groups (e.g. the disableds) and the adoption of accessibility measures in public and private building structures.
- 7) Income distribution and consumerism.
- 8) The demographics of the area. The science of demography reliably studies critical population data and can both predict and allow the managers of each organization to estimate the upcoming variations and changes in society.

A very interesting additional layer to be highlighted within the sociocultural field is the origin of visitors of cultural entities, which could be considered monothematic. Especially regarding museum structures in the countries of the Western world, whose policies of social elitism have been since long criticized because they perpetuate different kinds of discrimination that are based on remnants of colonialism and the ongoing impact of the digital revolution (which remains peripheral to the lives of the majority of people) and have been exacerbated by drastic cuts in public funding, the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent revision of organizational models (Black, 2020).

According to Ang (2005), a key goal of cultural policies should be to improve the participation of demographic minorities in the arts. In this context, an integrated process that could ensure inclusive access to museum structures is the "Social Design", which, according to Black (2020):

- 1) It came from the "Design Thinking" activity of Stanford University, as a method of ‘designing’ positive social changes, through the social integration of marginalized populations.
- 2) There are expectations for transformation at the level of both the museum experience and the organizational function, if, on the one hand, there is universal recognition of the essential, inevitable and urgent need for change, and, on the other hand, cultural managers and decision-making bodies provide unreserved support.
- 3) It directs administrative planning towards human needs with measures such as participation, co-creation, social interaction, and community well-being and also balances the website content with the tangible product (building facility) and the supporting product (e.g. cafeteria, souvenir shop, etc.).
- 4) It examines administrative aspects that promote free admission programs for special populations.

F. Financial-Economic field: It refers to the general financial situation and in this case the developments that take place in the macroeconomic and microeconomic sectors, which affect the standard of living and by extension, in market

terms, the impulses of customers-citizens-visitors on a case-by-case basis.

According to Tzortzakis and Tzortzaki (2007), the executives of an organization (management) are interested in the collection of data and information related to the consumers-customers, i.e. the relevant "target group". Consumers-customers directly influence the strategy of the organization with their moods and desires, as they wish to have the goods delivered in the appropriate place and time, but also in the appropriate form (Petridou, 2011). Therefore, the two-way relationship between organizations and consumer-customers risks becoming precarious if the administrative management of each organization becomes or is presented as inadequate and is unable to satisfy the "target group".

In addition to the aforementioned factors and bearing in mind the high-intensity shifts that characterize this specific field, the investigation of the exogenous environment of cultural entities and its obvious interaction with the endogenous one, assists cultural managers in identifying the parameters that contribute to their orderly and efficient financial operation.

Therefore, in order to face emerging difficulties, reduce costs, inspect financial results and draw up profitable financial programs, they must weigh and evaluate any changes that develop especially in the world of socio-economics, so as to outline a precise and successful financial activity.

These actions must delve into components that are also observed in the technological field, incorporating digital marketing practices which are facilitated by the global interconnection-digitalization offered by the internet and social networks. Such suggested interdisciplinary practices (including elements of management science, statistics, and informatics) are:

- 1) Cluster analysis: it is the process through which provided goods are addressed to specific consumer-customer groups according not only to quantitative data (e.g. demographic) but also to qualitative data (e.g. social, political, cultural, and other preferences). According to Petridis (2015a), the groups in question "*have common characteristics, clearly differentiated from those of other groups (...) In this way, cluster analysis promotes finding specific relationships between the data without providing corresponding explanations or interpretations (...)*" as a result cluster analysis is not going to flourish as an automated process but as a repetitive interactive procedure of improvement of the identification of the elements with the implementation of test and failure which might also demand a reorganization of the initial parameters".
- 2) Logistic regression: its objective is to form a model for predicting and studying the values of a necessarily discrete dependent variable based on the theory of probability. In the basic version of this model, the dependent variable is usually binary in nature. "*(...) In logistic regression, the estimated value ranges from 0 to 1. More clearly, logistic regression reveals the possibility of particular consequences for each subject (for example; "passed" or "failed")*" (Çokluk, 2010). The techniques of the precise selection of possible candidates for regression but independent variables (in most cases they are distinct) and the diagnostic criteria of validity and reliability of the model are usually applied.

In other words, "*logistic regression is used to predict the probability of an event occurring*" (Petridis, 2015b), such as the prediction of a customer-consumer's intention to acquire a good or service, i.e. market research (study of markets and evaluation of information, which should normally be separated from research related to marketing). That is, what characteristics does the customer-consumer have: what are the variables to make/not make the purchase.

At the same time, within the scope of digital marketing, it would be beneficial to adopt a modern model for revenue generation, namely the conclusion of planned/programmatic agreements with international "digital giants". "Museums are being lured by the big corporations such as Disney, Netflix, and Amazon – not just for sponsorship but rather collaboration" (Giannini & Bowen, 2021).

PART 2: THE MASTIC MUSEUM OF CHIOS AS A CASE STUDY*

PRESENTATION OF THE MUSEUM

The Chios Mastic Museum is located in Pyrgi, one of the medieval Mastic Villages of southern Chios (Greek island of the north-eastern Aegean), where the Lentisk/Mastic plant ("Pistacia Lentiscus Chia") is cultivated, from which the famous mastic is produced.

The main objectives of the Museum are:

1. The promotion of the long history of the cultivation of the mastic bush and the processing of the produced fruit (aromatic mastic), as a uniquely mastered product not only in the Mediterranean but also worldwide.
2. Integrating Mastic into the cultural landscape of the island and establishing/securing the timelessness and sustainability of this incomparable product from Chios. Besides, in 2014 traditional mastic cultivation was registered in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO, 2014).

The specification of the building construction of the museum is adapted to the natural environment, connecting the visitor with mastic cultivation (Kallinikidou, 2017), while it has state-of-the-art equipment, which makes it particularly innovative and competitive in the wider field of culture.

During the tour of the permanent exhibition of the Museum and its surrounding areas, the visitor recognizes the Lentisk (Mastic Tree), as well as the unchanged-over-time stages of the traditional cultivation of mastic, the know-how of its production and the handling of the final product, through a multidimensional interactive and experiential experience. At the same time, the visitor is given the opportunity to understand the architecture, history, and social organization of the Mastic villages. They also have the opportunity, through multi-phase applications, special models, and standard operating machines, to learn about the cooperative exploitation and processing of mastic in recent years and its export to the world market. Finally, the opportunity, to come into direct contact with the plant and the natural environment in which it grows and thrives through a unique outdoor exhibition that operates outside the Museum is provided as well.

In addition and taking into account that, in general, museums must have multi-purpose rooms in order to highlight their role as living

cultural organizations (Demesticha & Vlachou, 2008), the Chios Mastic Museum host periodic exhibitions, organize various cultural

THE INFLUENCE OF THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT ON THE STATUS OF THE MUSEUM

The Cultural Foundation of the Piraeus Group (PIOP) is responsible for operating the Chios Mastic Museum. The Foundation in question has set up a Network of nine (9) Thematic Technology Museums that extend throughout the region of the Greek territory. It is a non-profit-making organization that functions in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, local and regional self-government, the local community, university institutions, research centers, and cultural institutions, as well as with expert scientists in Greece and abroad. Based on the relevant statute, its operating expenses, including those for the Museums, are covered by Piraeus Bank, while co-financing from national and European programs is also a sought-after solution. Among its main objectives are the preservation and promotion of cultural identity and heritage and the interconnection of culture with the environment, education, and sustainable development (Handjinicolaou, 2016).

PIOP follows careful financial planning for all the Museums of its Network, with the aim of recognizing and assuming their operating costs, based on a multidimensional and rational sustainability model. Considering that many - mostly regional - cultural entities make wrong staffing choices based on the belief that the organizational mechanism of a museum should be "classical" by analogy to a typical government or private organization, this model:

- 1) Basically operates with external processes, as it utilizes the services and human resources of PIOP and Piraeus Bank at a central level for almost all critical operational functions, apart from the reception and service staff who mediate with the local community and an administrator as an agent of the respective person in charge of the remote monitoring of each Museum (Karamaouna, 2020). Also, some core principles of administrative practice are acted upon by a committee composed of representatives drawn from the Ministry of Culture, local government, and PIOP, while central administration officials or external collaborators occasionally move to the region to coordinate important ceremonies (The network of thematic technology museums of the Piraeus Group Cultural Foundation, 2012).
- 2) It has finite possibilities, not only in the present but even if a logical development framework predetermined by global data is considered, especially in the financial sector, taking into account other external assumptions such as the possibility of state financing, the institutional framework of the local of self-government, the further

events, and run educational programs to promote culture in its multi-purpose rooms.

professional specialization/competence of the local population and the legal complexity of 'the sponsor regime' (The network of thematic technology museums of the Piraeus Group Cultural Foundation, 2012).

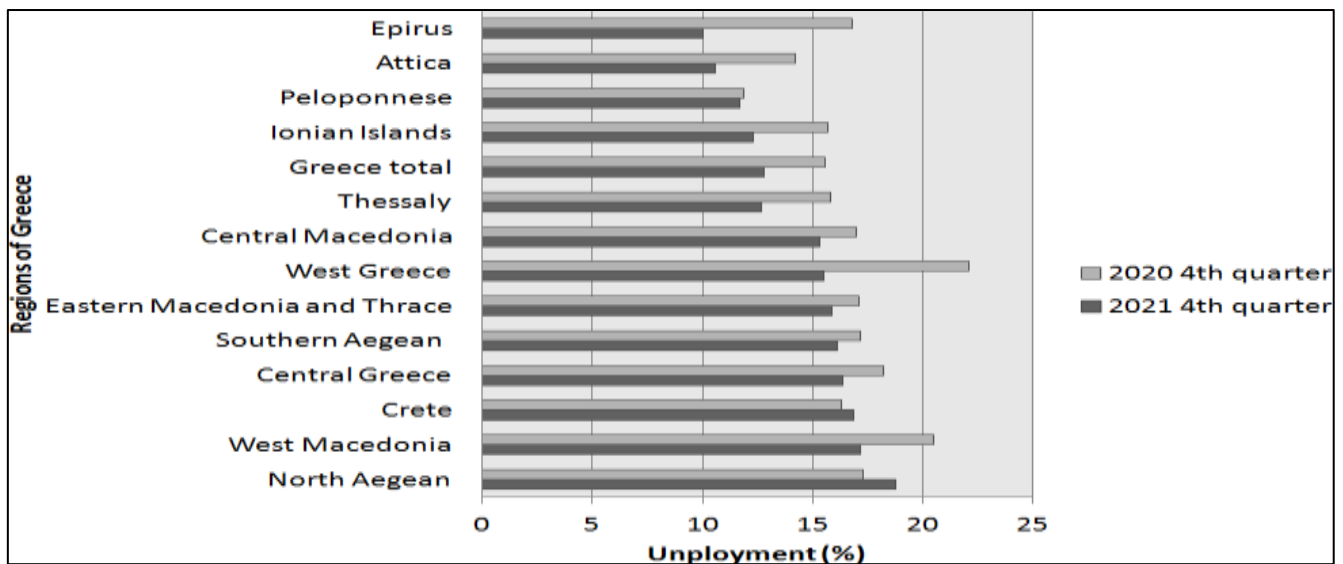
A comparative advantage for the Chios Mastic Museum is the island of Chios itself where it is located, as it is considered a popular tourist destination. The museum functions as a landmark of the island's cultural activity, it gives added value to the local cultural heritage, boosts the historical prestige and glamor of the place, and highlights its special characteristics through actions that respect the natural environment. For example, in the context of the celebration of the International Museum Day for the year 2022, with the theme "*The Power of Museums*", important cultural events were organized in collaboration with the University of the Aegean (Celebrating the International Museum Day at the Mastic Museum of Chios, 2022).

Despite its relatively recent six-year operation, the museum has already contributed significantly by stimulating local economic development and producing wealth, creating new jobs and reducing urban sprawl, upgrading the island's infrastructure, strengthening local markets, and attracting new visitors and tourism growth (Karamaouna, 2020).

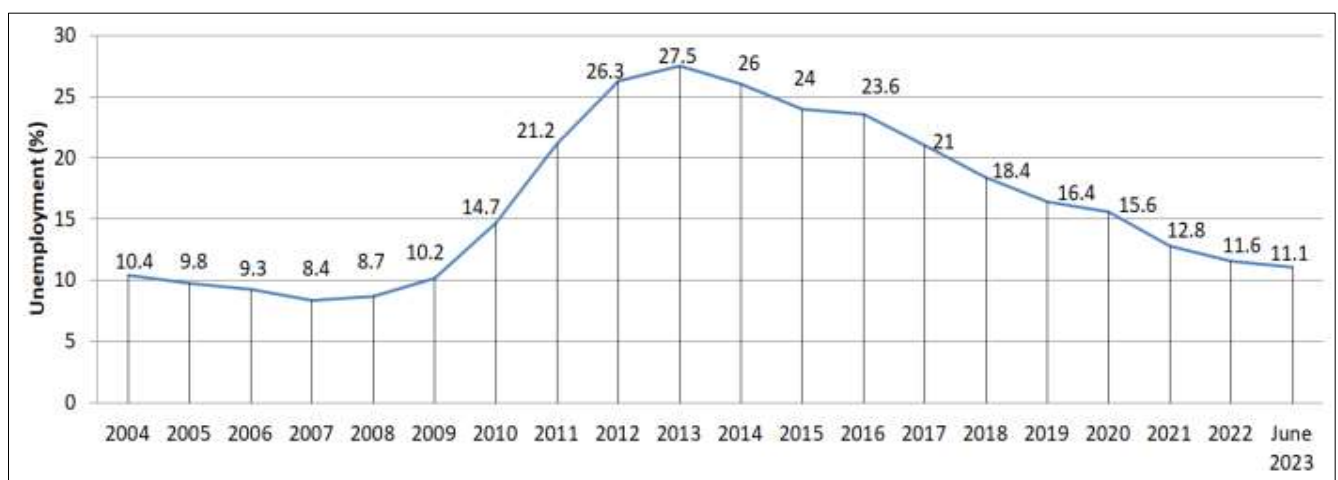
Inevitably, the resulting socio-economic benefit functions reciprocating and feeds back to the Museum, as it enhances its prestige. It turns it into a pole of attraction for hosting seminars, creative workshops, artistic performances or exhibitions, experiential games, and scientific meetings (Karamaouna, 2020) through the use of modern technological applications. Therefore, by extension, it contributes to its earnings/revenue.

However, other critical elements should not be ignored such as:

- 1) the financial status and standard of living of Museum visitors who come from the local population, as there is a high unemployment rate in Chios island and generally in the islands of the North Aegean. Specifically, according to the official data of the Hellenic Statistical Authority, the rate of unemployment in the islands of the North Aegean in the fourth quarter of 2021 amounted to 18.8%, while in the corresponding quarter of 2020, the number was at 17.3% (Graph 1), making the administrative region in question, one of the two (2) Regions of Greece where an increase in unemployment was recorded. In other words, an increase of 1.5% is observed within a calendar year, as the general rate of unemployment in Greece has been continuously decreasing in recent years (Graph 2) and is returning to levels before the financial crisis.



Graph 1: Comparison of unemployment rates in the Regions of Greece between the 4th semester of 2020 and the 4th semester of 2021
 (Source: Adapted from the Hellenic Statistical Authority, <https://www.statistics.gr/>)



Graph 2: Unemployment rates in Greece from 2004 to June 2023
 (Source: Adapted from the Hellenic Statistical Authority, <https://www.statistics.gr/>)

2) The excessive flows of migrants (legal or illegal) and refugees that overwhelmed the geographical area of the North Aegean especially during the period 2014-2018, due to geopolitical realignments, especially in the eastern Mediterranean and the political-military instrumentalization of these events by Turkey. The construction of infrastructure, initially under "ghetto" conditions, for the reception of people with, mostly, Muslim characteristics in a geographical area that was historically the "shield" of Western civilization and dominated by the Christian element, was the fuse that lead to turbulent local developments at the political, religious and, by extension, at the socio-cultural level, from the inability to embrace liberal European principles and traditions. Besides, the economic foundations were also deconstructed with wider negative effects, since there was a decrease in the tourist flow, in the midst of macroeconomic distress, as reflected in a relevant survey conducted by the Laboratory of Tourism Research and Studies of the Department of Business Administration of the University of the Aegean. In particular, according to Stavrinoudis & Ivanof (2017), the tourist influx in the businesses that were concerned suffered a significant blow in 2015 compared to 2014 (Table 1), while the

estimates for the years 2016-2017 were similarly inauspicious (Table 2).

Tourist Arrivals	Percentage Change (%)
Overnight Stays	-18,75
Number of visitors	-22,79
Prices	-12,45
Employment	-5,26
Operating cost	+5,66

Table 1: Percentage change in key tourism metrics in 2015 versus 2014

[Source: Adapted from Stavrinoudis & Ivanof (2017)]

Tourist Arrivals	Percentage Change (%)
Overnight Stays	-40,63
Number of visitors	-42,58
Revenue	-35,16

Table 2: Estimated percentage change in key tourism metrics for the two years 2016-2017

[Source: Adapted from Stavrinoudis & Ivanof (2017)]

The above unfavorable financial consequences were partially compensated, as several tourist structures were used to house executives of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) who rushed to welcome immigrants-refugees. For this reason, restaurants and transport companies did not suspend their operations during the winter season (Stefatos et al, 2015), while some incidents of profiteering were also reported (Georgas, 2016). However, it is estimated that these phenomena cannot compensate for the tourism losses that reflect undesirable outcomes in the cultural sector. After all, in cultural tourism, there is an increase in consumer spending and overnight stays compared to other forms of tourism (Mercer, 2004).

Under these circumstances, PIOP attempts to continuously collect data on the endogenous and mainly the exogenous environment of the Chios Mastic Museum, as a way to adapt its programming accordingly in order to maintain its visitor ship and its administrative benefits at satisfactory levels, while reducing its operational costs. At the same time, it continues to provide quality and innovative cultural services with social value while maintaining low prices for the sale of tickets and cultural goods.

To sum up, the Chios Mastic Museum, through the original organizational methodology that governs it, constitutes an avenue of growth for the island of Chios and also a point of reference for culture, as it preserves the local cultural heritage in a geographical area with multiple peculiarities. Moreover, it relates culture to the environment and promotes new interactive technologies.

CONCLUSIONS - SUGGESTIONS

PIOP is a modern organization, whose managers realize that the dynamically changing external environment is an important factor that they must take into account and interpret effectively, through a multidimensional yet flexible administrative mechanism that analyzes every local, national, or international parameter, both during planning and during the day-to-day management of a cultural entity and in this case a museum such as the Chios Mastic Museum. This methodology seeks to listen to/satisfy the real needs of the cultural public and aims to optimize the services provided by the affiliated cultural entities to ensure their sustainability.

However, current issues dominating the headlines, such as the health and energy crisis, fluctuations in the global supply chain, and the evolving local geopolitical revisionism—particularly concerning the legally baseless challenge to the sovereignty of Greek islands in the Eastern Aegean, fueled by the "example" of Russia's invasion of Ukraine—are sources of economic and social insecurity, with the potential difficulty of highlighting, promoting and reproducing local cultural values through a museum.

Based on these conditions, it is considered necessary to reorganize the actions of cultural managers, towards intensifying the promotion of timeless local cultural traditions through experiential methods, new marketing strategies, improving language proficiency, and conducting more focused audience research.

It is deemed necessary to establish a mandated, collectively coordinated strategy in cooperation with the relevant governmental authorities, surpassing regional and national boundaries through the internationalization/upgrading of these specific cultural issues at the EU level, as culture is inextricably linked to its external mobility. "Culture within the framework of the EU's external relations is one of the three pillars of the European agenda for culture (2007). Developing a strategic approach in this field has been a priority for the Council's work programs on culture since

2011. A significant step was taken with the preparatory action of the European Parliament on 'Culture in EU External Relations' (2013-14), which highlights the significant potential of culture within the context of Europe's external relations and emphasizes that the EU and its member states stand to gain much from better coordination of cultural diplomacy" (Karvounis, 2017). Cultural diplomacy aims to engage both the general public and the elite of other nations in support of their own interests and values (Ham, 2010). It involves the mutual exchange of information, ideas, language, art, and other cultural reference points between nations and their citizens, in order to enhance common understanding and trust (Waller, 2008). According to Vasileiadis & Boutsiouki (2015), cultural diplomacy exerts legitimate influence through the cultural pathway, preserves cultural heritage, seeks to establish strong relationships, is regarded as a factor for peace and reconciliation, and constitutes a source of revenue, as it is considered one of the most critical economic pillars when properly utilized.

The components of intra-governmental (in-house) collaboration among the involved public entities and the participation of recognized Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are considered factors that strengthen and systematize the actions of cultural managers, and can contribute to qualitative changes within the local community.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental administrative principles such as internal evaluation and analysis of the external environment contribute to the reliable definition of the operational plan, the success of the scheduled timeline, and efficient management. This has a positive impact on achieving the desired autonomous and strategic development goals, as well as fulfilling the mission and ensuring the sustainable evolution of cultural entities.

The maximization of the value of cultural entities is considered a source of enrichment for local cultural capital, as well as security and multifaceted development of the geographic regions in which they are based, with significant national and/or international cultural, political, social, economic, and other critical implications.

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