

THE IMPORTANCE OF INBOUND TOURISM IN FRANCE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ITS RESIDENTS WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON CULTURE TOURISM

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Keywords:

- foreign tourism,
- inbound tourism.

Abstract:

The paper deals with issues connected with the importance of inbound tourism in France, especially in its capital – Paris, from the perspective of its residents. The author wonders how visitors are seen by the inhabitants of the country that has been the leader in tourist attractiveness for many years with the highest number of arrivals of foreign tourists in comparison to other European countries and the whole world. The research results indicate that the respondents do not have an entirely positive attitude towards tourists because of many reasons, e.g. pathologies, lack of understanding, etc.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the article is to show to what extent inbound tourism in France is important for its residents. First of all, the author attempts to show the attitude of the inhabitants of Paris, the capital of France, towards foreign tourists related to their behaviour, difficulties resulting from increased tourist traffic, the development of infrastructure, etc. The main research question concerns the advantages for France resulting from foreign inbound tourism. With reference to the previously published research results, the authors notices that they refer to the French tourist market and the influence of inbound tourism on the country's economy. The present article also deals with the above issues; however, it focuses on how tourists are perceived by French residents, mainly in Paris, which is visited by the highest number of foreign tourists from all over the world. Additionally, the author focuses on one of the most popular forms of tourism, i.e. culture tourism related to the abundance of historical monuments and buildings from many historical periods.

In order to define culture tourism, it has to be mentioned that the relation between tourism and culture seems to be obvious since, by participating in a tourist trip, visitors participate in the cultural life of the visited places [Kowalczyk 2008: 13-14]. What is more, tourism constitutes cultural transfer and is a cultural factor [Przeclawski 1999: 17].

If the departure point is the established definition of tourism and the nowadays commonly accepted and broadly defined notion of culture perceived as 'the entirety of spiritual and material accomplishments of humankind, created in the general historical development, collected, preserved and enriched', culture tourism can be defined as 'all the group or individual journeys of tourist nature, where the fundamental part of the itinerary or the most compelling reason for an individual decision about the journey or the participation in the journey is constituted by the encounter of the participants of the journeys with buildings, facilities, events and other values of high or popular culture or the increase in the participants' knowledge about the surrounding world organised by man¹ [Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2008a: 31].

¹ Translation mine.

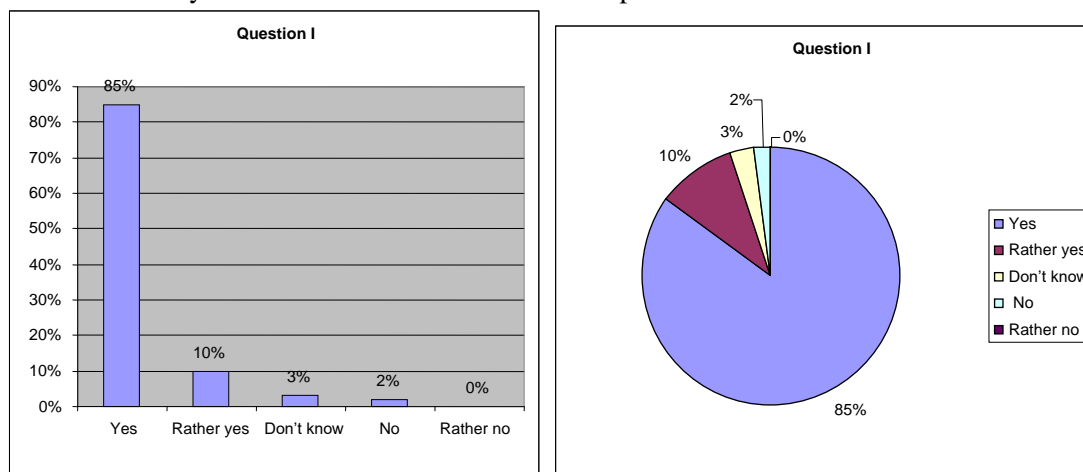
France has such a rich culture, tradition and history that, undoubtedly, it is the leader in the number of historical monuments in Europe. One of the most popular places visited by tourists is its capital, Paris. Apart from the historic richness offered by Paris, France itself is a perfect holiday destination. The south of France, especially Cannes and the French Riviera can enchant anyone with their beautiful nature, sandy beaches and the Mediterranean climate. The French Riviera is a stretch of shore of the Mediterranean Sea in the French Provence (from Cassis in the west, east of Marseilles, to the Italian border). The French Riviera is visited yearly by about 10 million tourists and its most popular locations include: Marseilles, Cannes, Toulon, Saint-Tropez, Nice, Grasse, Draguignan, Frejus and Menton. Moreover, Brittany and Le Mont St. Michel, castles on the Loire River, the French Alps are great tourist attractions for millions of tourists from all over the world.

The undisputed opportunity for an even bigger growth of tourism is the creation of new tourist cultural trails in France, e.g. CERTO (Cultural European Routes: Tools for a Coordinated Communications & Marketing Strategy), TECH-TOUR (Technology and Tourism – promotion of Roman and Byzantine trails), the tourist trail of the lower and middle Danube (reaching as far as France), ODYSSEA CULTURES EURO-MED – cultural trails of Mediterranean ports and WE.COME - (hidden WondErs of our COMMon European heritages) [<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/cultural-routes>, accessed on 14.05.2015].

THE METHODOLOGY OF CONDUCTED RESEARCH

Quantitative research was conducted in order to obtain the research goals. Accordingly, two research methods: CAWI (computer-assisted web interview – a method of direct interview via the Internet with a questionnaire for individual completion) and PAPI (Paper&Pen personal interview – a direct interview conducted by means of a paper questionnaire completed by a qualified interviewer). Both methods are used when analysing social aspects of various phenomena, in this case – mass tourism phenomena. PAPI research was conducted in a group of 500 respondents, mainly the inhabitants of Paris. The research was conducted between September and October 2015. The results of the research in the form of charts with a short analysis and interpretation are presented below.

1. Do you think that tourism and its development is beneficial for France?

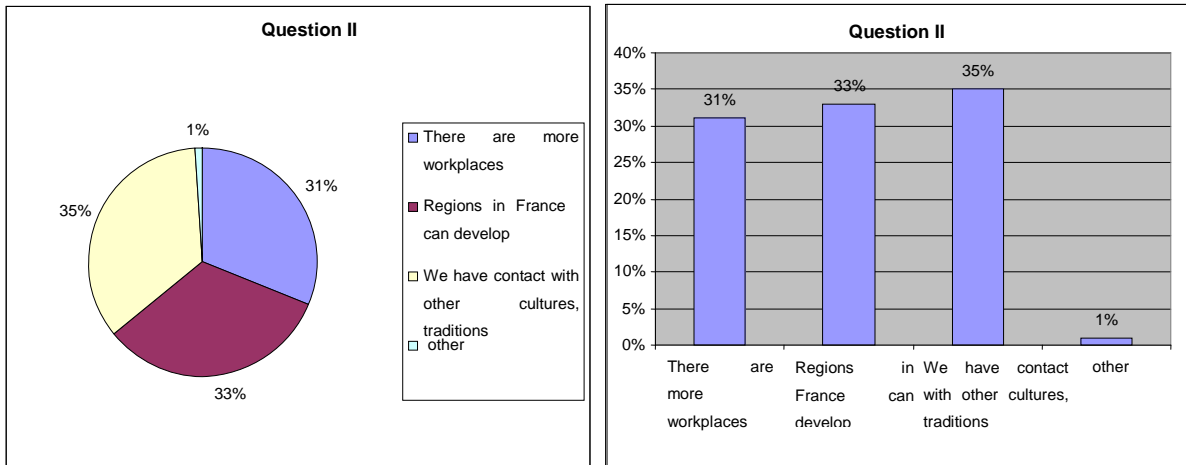


Source: own's elaboration

With regard to the question concerning the benefits for France resulting from tourism, as many as 85% of the respondents think that tourism and its development is beneficial for France. About 10% of the respondents think that it is rather beneficial and only 3% have no

opinion on this subject, while 2% think that tourism and its development is not beneficial for France.

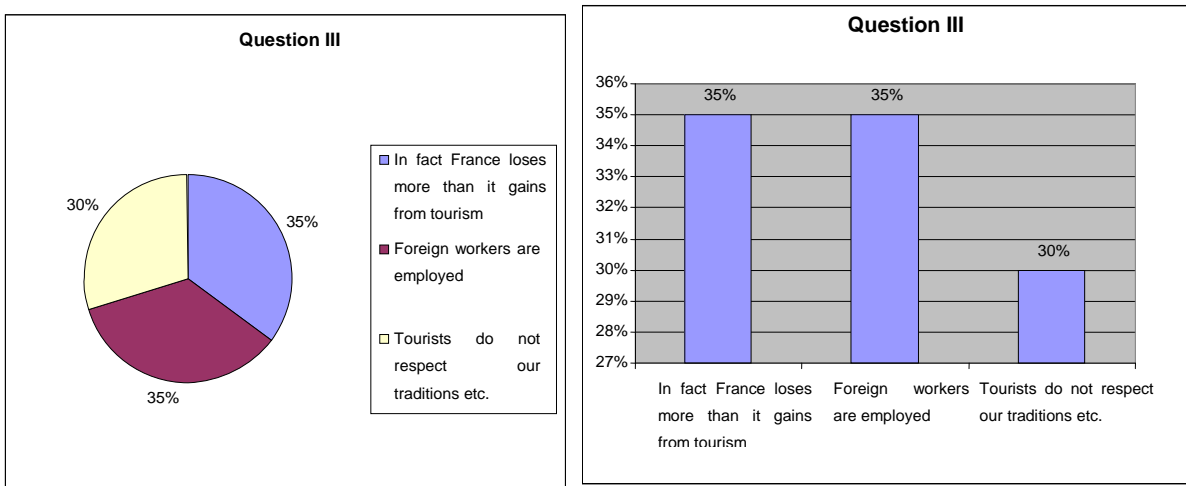
2. If yes, why?



Source: own's elaboration

The analysis of the results shows that with respect to reasons why tourism might be beneficial for France the respondents' opinions are divided. About 35% state that it is beneficial because of the contact with other cultures and traditions, 33% state that it is because of the opportunity of regional development in France and 31% state, in turn, that new workplaces constantly created because of the influx of tourists are most important for them.

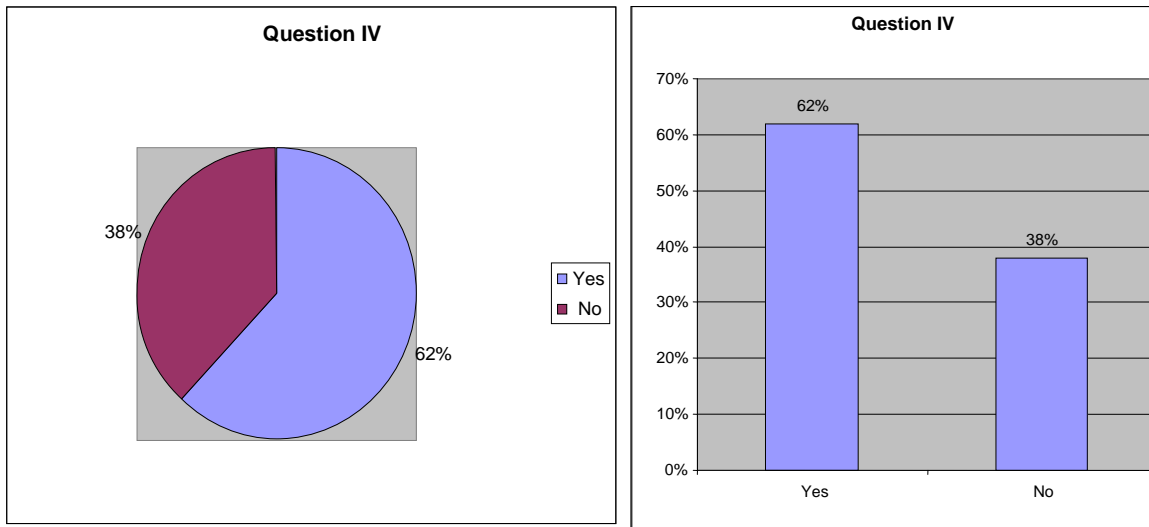
3. If not, why?



Source: own's elaboration

From 2% of the respondents who answered that tourism and its development is not beneficial for France, 35% claim that it is because France in fact loses more than it gains from tourism. Moreover, the reason for this state of affairs is, according to the respondents, that many foreign workers are employed (35%) and, in the opinion of 30% of the respondents, tourists have no respect for the French tradition.

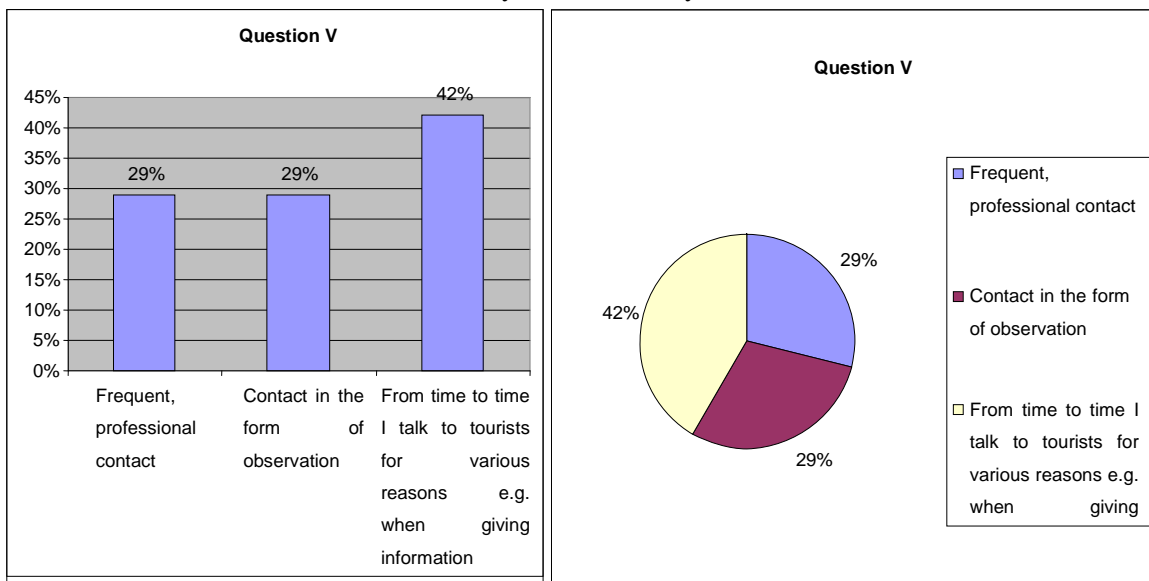
4. Did you have a direct or indirect contact with tourists?



Source: own's elaboration

62% of the respondents had a direct or indirect contact with tourists, while 38% did not.

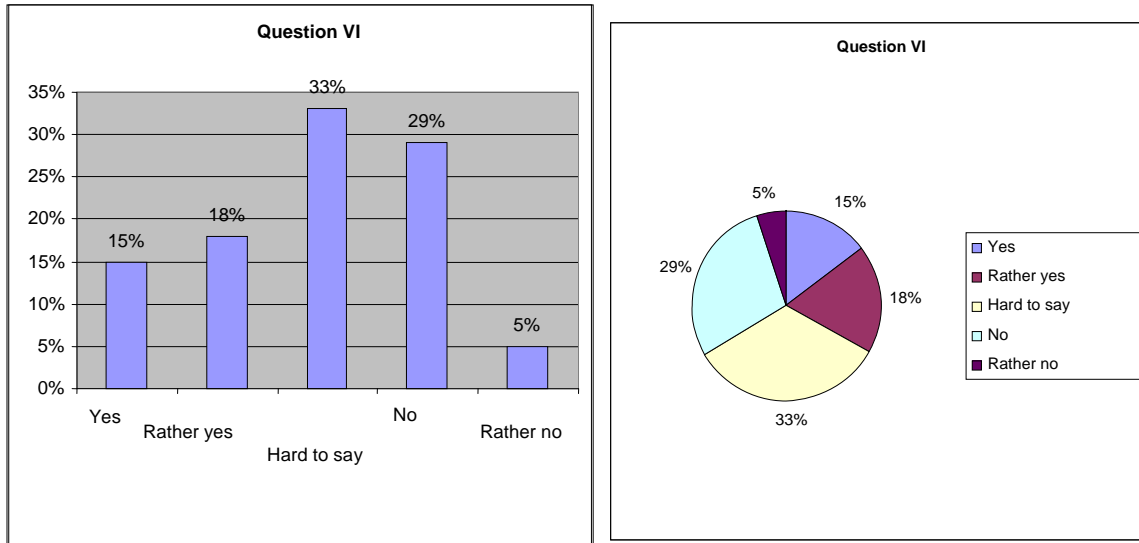
5. If yes, in what way?



Source: own's elaboration

From people who had a direct or indirect contact with tourists, 42% from time to time had a conversation with them for various reasons e.g. giving information and 29% had frequent professional contacts with tourists and contact in the form of observation.

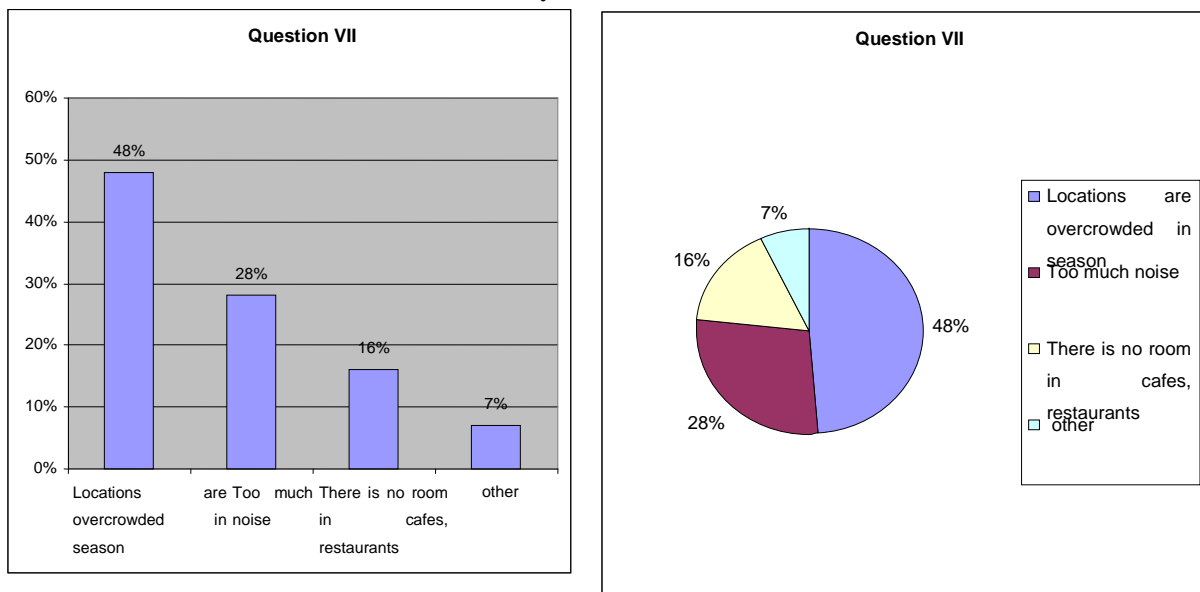
6. Are any inconveniences related to the high number of tourists?



Source: own's elaboration

More than 1/3 of the respondents i.e. 33% think that it is hard to say whether any inconveniences are related to the high number of tourists. Almost 30% of the respondents think that there are no major problems and 18% claim that there are some problems with a high number of tourists. Moreover, 15% firmly state that there are difficulties related to the high number of tourists, while 5% say that there are rather no related problems.

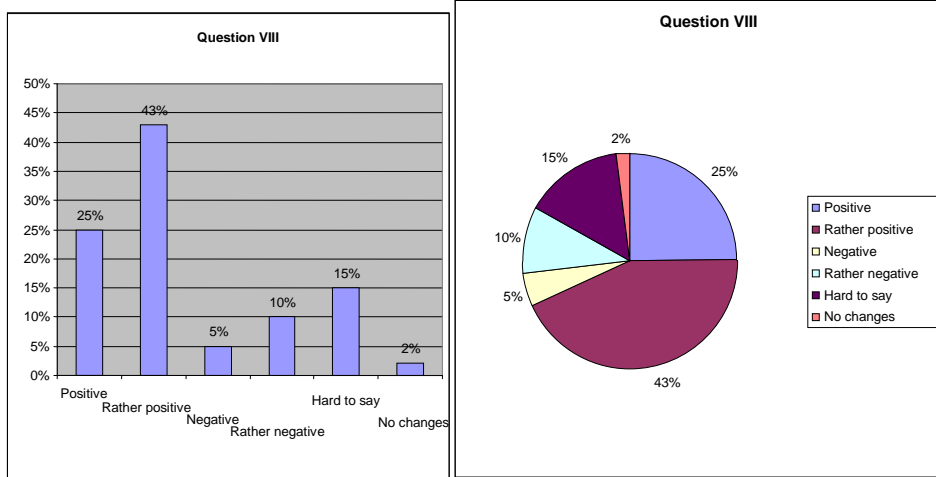
7. If yes, what kind?



Source: own's elaboration

From the respondents who think that a high number of tourists entails inconveniences, 48% state that the reason for the inconvenience is the overcrowding of locations in season, 28% - that it is caused by too much noise; 16% respondents, in turn, complain about the lack of room in cafes and restaurants.

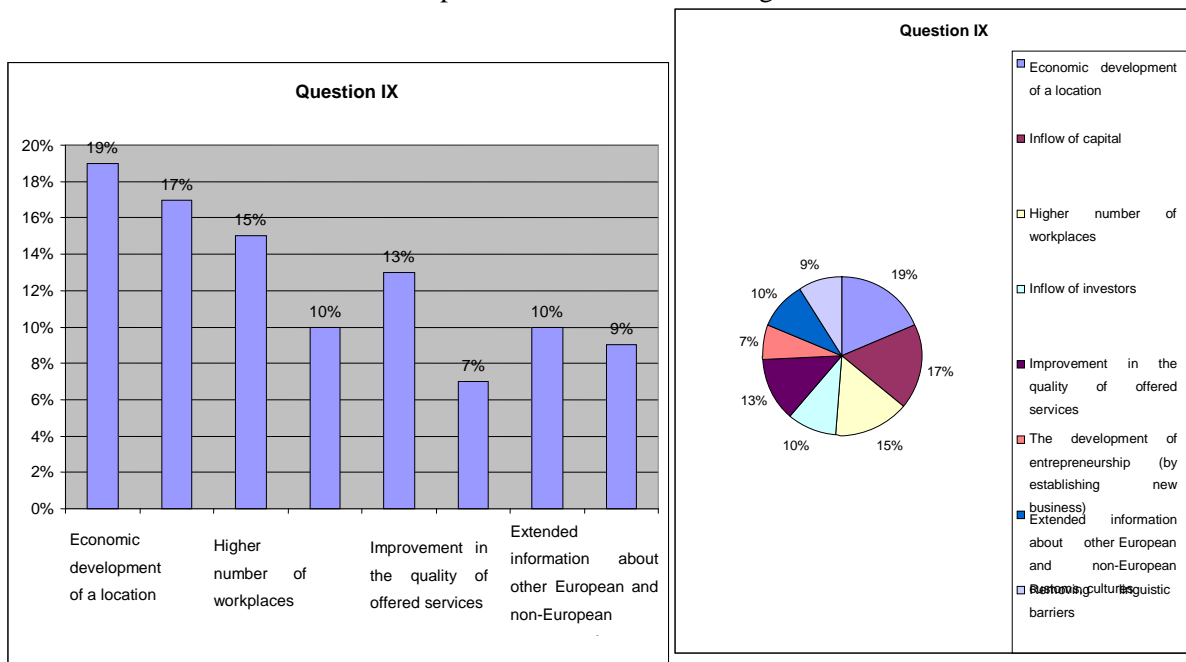
8. Does the presence of tourists cause any changes?



Source: own's elaboration

43% of the respondents claim that the presence of tourists causes rather positive changes, 25% think the changes are positive, while 15% claim that it is hard to say what changes are caused by the presence of tourism. 10% think they are rather negative and 5% state that they are negative. 2% of the respondents state that the presence of tourists does not cause any changes.

9. If positive, what kind of changes?

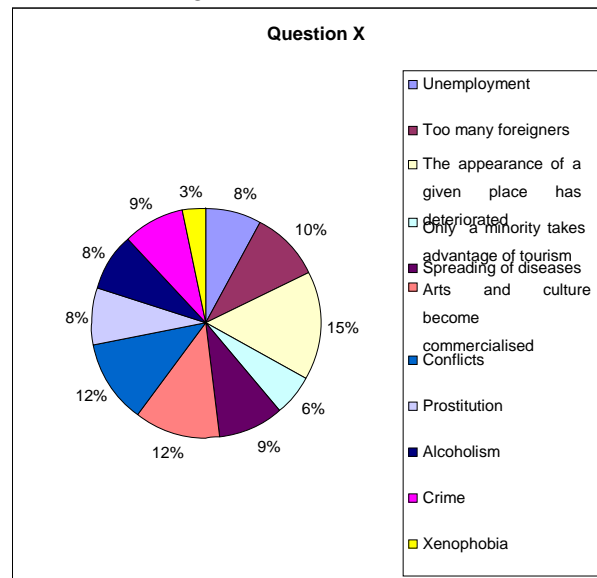
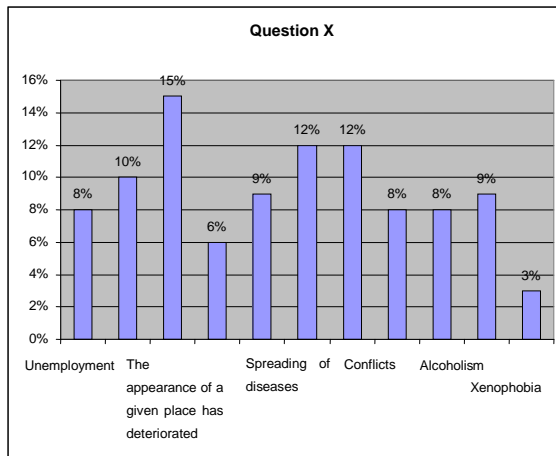


Source: own's elaboration

From the respondents who think that the presence of tourists causes positive changes, 19% think that that it is because of the economic development of a location. 17% claim that it is because of the inflow of capital. 15% are glad about new workplaces, while 13% think that thanks to tourists the level of services has improved. 10% claim that it is because of the inflow of investors and the same percentage of respondents are satisfied with the extended

information about other European and non-European customs and cultures. 9% of the respondents credit tourists with removing linguistic barriers.

10. If negative, what kind of changes?

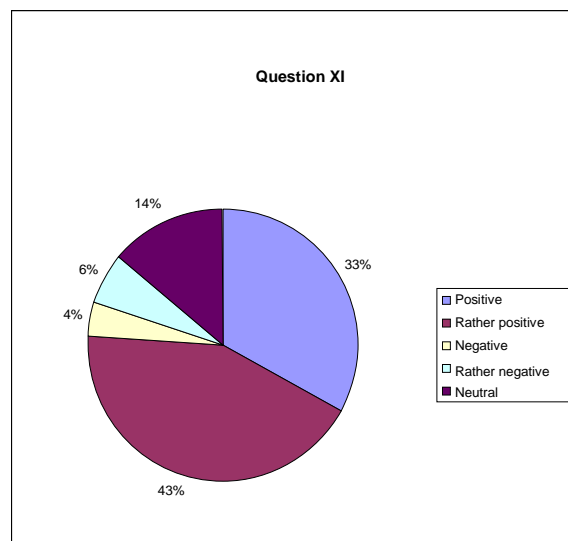
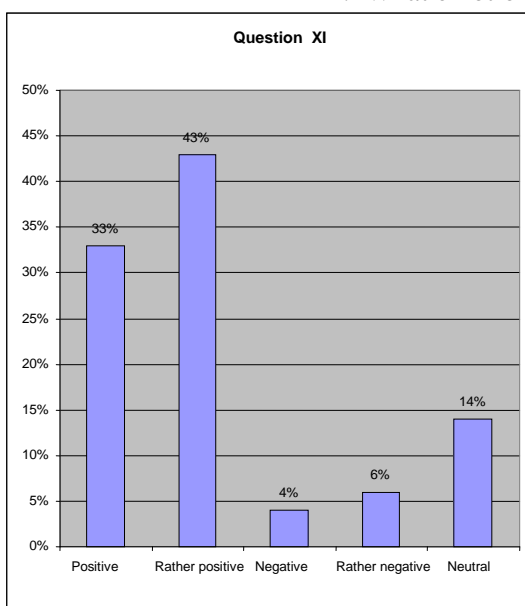


Source: own's elaboration

According to the respondents, a negative change resulting from the presence of tourists is, first of all, the fact that the appearance of a given place has deteriorated – 15% answers. For 12% the negative change consisted in the commercialisation of arts and culture. 10% think that there are too many foreigners. 9% opted for crime and the spreading of diseases. About

8% respondents considered alcoholism and prostitution as the corollary of tourism. According to 6% of the respondents only a minority takes advantage of tourism. Only 3% indicated xenophobia as the result of tourists' presence.

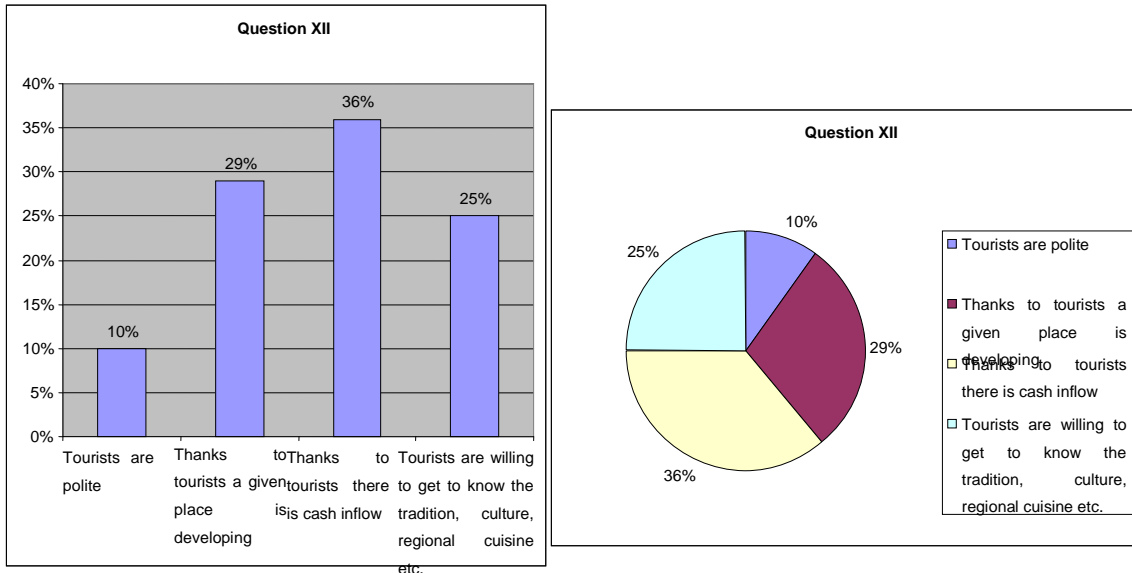
11. What emotions are evoked by tourists?



Source: own's elaboration

As many as 43% of the respondents think that the presence of tourists evokes rather positive emotions and 33% claim that they are positive. Only 4% of the respondents think that negative emotions are evoked, while according to 6% they were rather positive. According to 14% the presence of tourists in their country does not evoke any emotions i.e. they evoke neutral emotions.

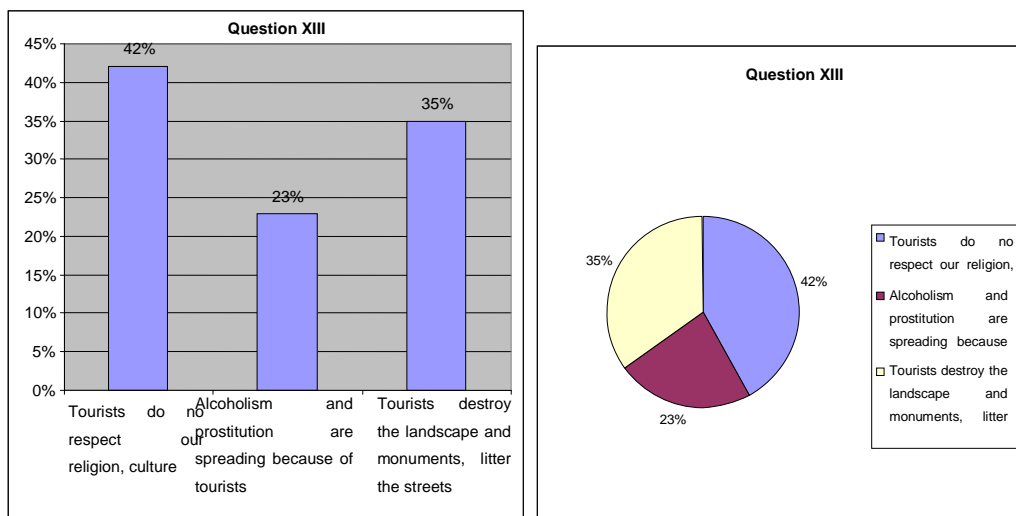
12. If positive emotions, why?



Source: own's elaboration

About 36% of the respondents think that thanks to tourists there is cash inflow. The reason for positive perception of tourists by 29% of the respondents is the development of a given location. 25% think that tourists are willing to get to know the culture, tradition and local cuisine. According to 10% of the respondents the positive perception of tourists is related to the fact that they are polite.

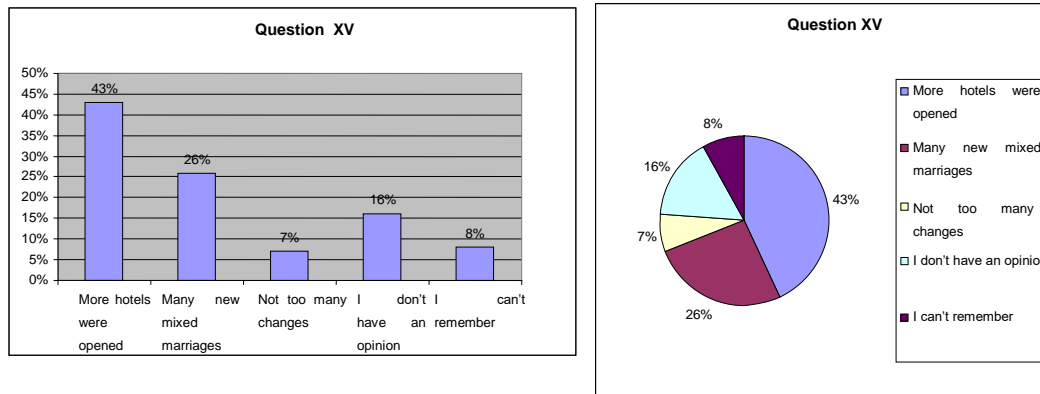
13. If negative emotions, why?



Source: own's elaboration

The negative perception of tourists is related mainly with the fact that they do not respect religion and culture according to 42% of the respondents. The destruction of the landscape and historical monuments and littering the streets is another reason for the negative attitude for 35% of the respondents. 23% claim that tourists contribute to the spreading of alcoholism and prostitution.

14. What changes have taken place since tourists started to visit the country?



Source: own's elaboration

The changes that have taken place since tourists started to visit France include the opening of new hotels – according to 43% of the respondents. Another consequence is the fact that there are many new mixed marriages – 26% of the respondents gave this answer. About 16% of the respondents have no opinion on this subject, 8% cannot remember and 7% think that there are not too many changes.

62% of the respondents are women and 38% - men. The average age was 38.7 years old. 33% of the respondents have secondary education, 30% - vocational education, 21% are students and 16% respondents have higher education. Most participants, almost 73%, have a job. Only 27% of the respondents are unemployed. As many as 46% respondents describe their material situation as good. Over 20% claim that their material situation is very good and 30% state that it is on a medium level. Only 5% think that it is bad, while none of the respondents considers it to be very bad.

SUMMARY AND FINAL CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, it has to be stated that France, undoubtedly, is a country attractive for tourists. According to statistics and reports of tourism organizations such as UNWTO or WTTC, France is a European leader when taking into account its tourist attractiveness. However, this was not the subject of the research. The main aim was to show the attractiveness of France, based on the example of Paris, from the perspective of Parisians and their perception of advantages and social costs related to this phenomenon. The results of the research are not optimistic, since they indicate a series of difficulties related to the increased tourist traffic and, generally speaking, to the inbound tourism in France in the eyes of its residents. Aspects related to social costs resulting from mass tourism (as is the case in Paris) were mainly highlighted e.g. social pathologies, alcoholism, stereotyping etc. Respondents also pointed to the commercialisation of culture and arts and the negative influence of tourism on the communities of the visited areas. On the other hand, if the influx of tourists is considered to be a source of profit (regardless of tourists' motivations), the possible advantages also include economic benefits i.e. cash inflow and powering the economy thanks to tourism. It has to be underlined that despite many inconveniences and social costs resulting from the influx of tourists to a given country, location or, generally speaking, receptive area,

financial benefits and the general economic growth powered by the tourist industry outweigh the negative consequences of this phenomenon.

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