

DAFNI MONASTERY: PILLAR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP. ARE THERE POSSIBILITIES?

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Abstract

Daphni is an eleventh-century monastery on the outskirts of Athens. It is considered a superb example of Middle Byzantine architecture, with sublime mosaics representing the visualisation of the Christian cosmos. The monastery is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list and has attracted significant scholarly attention. The ravages of time and a destructive earthquake in 1999 triggered an extensive, multi-million-dollar restoration project funded by the Greek state and the European Union to preserve the building and the mosaics for future generations.

The popularity of neoclassicism in the 19th century condemned many remnants of Byzantine architectural heritage to oblivion. However, the concerted efforts of European artists, architects, and archaeologists eventually contributed to the study, rescue, and conservation of the most prominent religious buildings. In the 1870s, the historian Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos integrated the Byzantine Empire into Greek history. Preserving Byzantine and medieval monuments became necessary to serve the broader goals of the Great Idea.

Contemporary attitudes toward Byzantine monuments are less ideologically charged, but the meaning and significance of the monuments to the public continue to evolve. Cultural heritage has become a cornerstone of sustainable development at a local level, which raises interesting questions regarding the enhancement of the Daphni Monastery's tourist potential. Is the monastery's value known to the general public? What elements impress its visitors? Is public transport accessibility satisfactory? Finally, what cultural entrepreneurship opportunities does the monastery offer to assist local development?

As part of the study, Daphni Monastery visitors received questionnaires to explore their attitudes towards the monument. The survey will underpin efforts to develop the area's

cultural entrepreneurship potential and to enhance Daphni Monastery's visibility and popularity as a tourist destination. The proposals include improving access, strengthening cooperation with local businesses, and promoting Daphni Monastery as an essential cultural destination.

Keywords: *Daphni Monastery, UNESCO World Heritage Site, Byzantine Empire, Education, Tourism, Sustainability*

1. INTRODUCTION

Daphni is an eleventh-century monastery on the outskirts of Athens. It is considered a superb example of Middle Byzantine architecture, with sublime mosaics representing the visualisation of the Christian cosmos. The popularity of neoclassicism in the 19th century condemned many remnants of Byzantine architectural heritage to oblivion. However, the concerted efforts of European artists, architects, and archaeologists eventually contributed to the study, rescue, and conservation of the most prominent religious buildings. Preserving Byzantine and medieval monuments became necessary to serve the broader goals of the Great Idea. Contemporary attitudes toward Byzantine monuments are less ideologically charged, but the meaning and significance of the monuments to the public continue to evolve. Cultural heritage has become a cornerstone of sustainable development at a local level, which raises interesting questions regarding the enhancement of the Daphni Monastery's tourist potential.

2. THE HISTORY OF DAPHNI MONASTERY

The Daphni Monastery was built in the sixth century on the side of the famous Sacred Way, leading from Athens to Eleusis. A sanctuary of Apollo stood on the site for centuries. According to the ancient traveller and geographer Pausanias, who visited the area in the second century AD, the sanctuary consisted of a wall enclosing a large temple and another building with columns. These buildings provided the material for the monastery's construction after numerous imperial edicts against the pagan religion completed the sanctuary's abandonment that had begun with the destructive raid of the Goths in 395. The first Christians erected a basilica using many ancient columns and capitals. Emperor Justinian I (527-565) repaired the fortifications protecting the church and added battlements and towers to secure the strategic pass through the mountains connecting Athens and the plain of Eleusis. At some point between the 7th and the 9th century, the basilica was abandoned [Lazarides, 1977].

In the eleventh century (around 1080), a new church was built using the cross-in-square church of the octagonal type, which became popular throughout Greece. It was dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin and served as the katholikon of the monastery. A massive dome (eight meters in diameter) covered the central square nave and the short arms on each side, which formed a Greek cross. The quality of craftsmanship suggests the employment of workers from Constantinople. It was a time of relative stability and prosperity, so the restored monastery thrived. A refectory to the north of the katholikon and rows of cells served the needs of the monks. A smaller chapel was attached to the cemetery within the enclosure [Lazarides, 1977].

Gradually, the katholikon expanded with the addition of an exonarthex (approximately thirty years after the completion of the main church). In 1207, after the Frankish conquest of Attica, Othon de la Roche, the first Frankish Lord of Athens, offered Daphni Monastery to a group of Cistercian monks from Belleveaux who left their indelible imprint on the building. They gave the arched openings in the western façade of the exonarthex a distinctive Gothic

look and remodelled the second floor above the narthex and the exonarthex into defensive battlements [Kyriacopoulou, 1956].

The Daphni Monastery is also renowned for the quality and splendour of its mosaics. An impressive and well-preserved cycle of gold mosaics adorns the interior of the katholikon. The depiction of Christ Pantokrator (Ruler of All Things) holding a book within a rainbow almond-shaped aureole of light in the central dome is paradigmatic. It has frequently been used in books dedicated to Byzantine art [Westcoat *et al.* 2014]. Initially, the mosaics covered the upper surfaces of the walls. However, the ravages of time and frequent earthquakes caused significant damage to the mosaics. The surviving segments are scattered in the nave, the exonarthex, and the dome. They illustrate the dogmatic teachings of the Greek Orthodox Church as they were formulated during the Comnenian dynasty in the late 11th and early 12th centuries [Connor, 2016].

There are nineteen narrative scenes dedicated to the lives of Christ and the Virgin Mary, as well as isolated figures depicting archangels, prophets, saints, and martyrs (approximately 107 figures). The artists who created the katholikon mosaics attempted to produce naturalistic figures and focused on the narrative of the stories from the Gospels rather than the dogma. Interestingly enough, there seems to be a progression of emotion from the dome to the lower walls. Christ Pantokrator is severe and almost intimidating to those looking at him from the floor, while the figures closer to them on the walls have a softer, more compassionate expression. There are various interpretations for this difference in style, ranging from a long period of construction (Byzantine artists typically began working on the higher parts of the church and gradually lowered the scaffolding) or a conscious decision to adjust their style to elicit different responses from the faithful in the various parts of the iconographic program [Cormack, 2018]

Irrespective of the motives guiding the execution of the artistic plan, the mosaics are evidence of the Byzantine Empire's ability to fund expensive building and creative projects in faraway corners. Eleventh-century Athens was almost an imperial backwater; nevertheless, the unknown patron or patrons who decided to finance the construction of the katholikon and its decoration with expensive, high-quality mosaics could marshal the materials, money, and artistic skill to produce a masterful work of art [James, 2017].

The Cistercian monks abandoned the monastery after the abolition of the Duchy of Athens following the city's conquest by the Ottomans in the late 1450s. Over the following centuries, the monastery served various functions. The Ottomans returned it to the hands of Greek Orthodox monks for long periods, but the monastery was abandoned in the 18th century [Cormack,]. Still, the complex also played a military role during the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s and the early years of the independent Greek kingdom in the 1830s when it hosted garrisons of Greek and Bavarian troops. From 1883 to 1885, the monastery became a public mental hospital.

Wars and neglect were constant threats to the monastery's survival. However, earthquakes were equally dangerous. The monastery was built on a Neogene graben between Egaleo and Korydallos, an area considered tectonically active [Miltiadou-Fezans *et al.*, 2003]. As a result, the katholikon and the surrounding buildings suffered significant damage during a series of earthquakes in the late 19th century (most notably in 1886, 1889 and 1894). However, on September 7, 1999, an earthquake in Athens severely damaged the load-bearing structures of the katholikon and the mosaics. The vertical walls, piers, arches, and vaults had cracks, and the vault's structural condition was extremely critical. A strong aftershock (or another earthquake) could collapse the dome, a fate shared by numerous octagonal Byzantine churches that survive without the original dome [Miltiadou-Fezans *et al.*, 2003].

The Hellenic Ministry of Culture formed a multidisciplinary scientific group to create a comprehensive plan for the protection, conservation, and restoration of Daphni Monastery.

European Funding Programs and the Greek State financed the multi-year restoration project (1999-2016). It included extensive laboratory investigations and structural interventions to preserve the Katholikon and improve its seismic behaviour. The experience and knowledge acquired during the restoration also provided an educational opportunity that may prove invaluable in similar structural restoration projects concerning other World Heritage monuments [Miltiadou-Fezans and Delinikolas, 2019].

3. DEALING WITH THE BYZANTINE PAST

The katholikon of the Daphni monastery is a fine example of the so-called “Helladic School” of Middle Byzantine architecture. Because of its outstanding significance, it has been on UNESCO’s World Heritage List since 1990, alongside the monasteries of Hosios Loukas in Boeotia and Nea Moni in Chios. It is one of Greece’s nineteen properties on the List. It is currently an archaeological site under the jurisdiction of the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports (Ephorate of Antiquities of West Attica).

However, recognising the church’s cultural significance was not always so evident. The autocratic rule of Byzantine emperors and the dominant role of the Church in state affairs offended the enlightened sensitivities of intellectuals in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. They considered Byzantium ridiculous and underdeveloped, an opinion crystallised in Edward Gibbon’s monumental *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The English historian described the millennium of Byzantine rule as the triumph of barbarism and religion [Runciman, 1976]. He refused to acknowledge even a single positive contribution of the Byzantines to the happiness of mankind. Such harsh criticism shaped the view of the Byzantine culture for many generations. Modern Greeks were often considered the descendants of their ancient forefathers without any connection to the generations that inhabited the same lands during the Middle Ages [Stathakopoulos, 2023].

The modern Greek state was correspondingly hostile to its medieval inheritance. Numerous Byzantine churches in Athens were demolished in the nineteenth century to facilitate archaeological excavations, to “liberate” classical monuments from the evidence of foreign domination or medieval ignorance, to make room for the construction of roads, or to provide building material for neoclassical mansions and public buildings [Tziovas, 2014]. However, as popular opinion seemed determined to condemn the Byzantine Empire to oblivion, new scholarly attitudes emerged and revisited all aspects of medieval Greece. The Greek historian Constantine Paparrigopoulos laboured for decades to integrate Byzantium into the continuum of Greek history from antiquity to the present day. His seminal and multi-volume *History of the Greek Nation* provided readers with a substantive and detailed narrative of the Byzantine state, to which he attributed the survival of the Greek language, religion, and national identity [Ricks and Magdalino, 1998].

These new attitudes encouraged a new look towards at least the most important extant Byzantine monuments. In the late nineteenth century, European Byzantinists and Greek scholars started publishing scholarly articles and monographs about churches and monasteries. Foreign visitors also turned their attention to these long-neglected remnants of medieval Greece. They provided detailed descriptions in travel accounts that aroused considerable interest and encouraged the authorities to start restoring them [Kourkoutidou-Nikolaidou, 1998]. The Greek state entrusted the French architect Eugène Troump with repairing the damage caused to Daphni monastery by the earthquakes in the late nineteenth century. Troump reconstructed the narthex, the walls of the upper floor, and the dome according to the original plans in a multi-year project that was completed in 1907 [Chlepa, E. 2024, and Troump, 1896]. At the same time, Byzantine history and culture began to be accepted as essential elements of Greek national identity and narrative with their inclusion in schoolbooks.

The Byzantine and Christian Museum was established in Athens in 1914, followed four years later by the establishment of the Association for Byzantine Studies. The first professor of Byzantine history and art was appointed at the University of Athens in 1921, the same year the government enacted the first legislation to protect Byzantine churches and castles [Liakos, 2009].

The transformation of attitudes towards the Byzantine Empire was influenced by romanticism towards a past deemed more intimately associated with the “authentic Greek soul”. Early-twentieth-century intellectuals embraced the country’s perceived medieval past and proclaimed their affinity for its material remains. The influential politician and writer Ion Dragoumis exalted in his ability to visit what he described as “the Byzantine cities” of Macedonia, walk their old streets, and visit their old houses. They were “Byzantine and lordly” [Dragoumis, 1927]. Nostalgia, romanticism, questions of continuity, antagonism with other Balkan states over the heritage of the Byzantine Empire, and a sense of responsibility towards the past encouraged Greek intellectuals and the state to preserve the monuments and assemble collections to underpin and embellish the national narrative of Hellenism’s uninterrupted continuity over the millennia [Bounia, 2020].

4. UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

UNESCO World Heritage Sites are often listed among the most popular tourist destinations. The transformation of local places of interest into sites of universal significance has an immense effect on local economies and cultures. In less than half a century since the convention guiding the work of the World Heritage Committee, a small cluster of twelve Western sites has become a global network of more than 1200 properties of cultural and natural importance spread over 168 countries. Tourism is the largest and fastest-growing global industry, and World Heritage Sites attract millions of tourists annually [Bourdeau *et al.*, 2017]. Visitor numbers for Daphni Monastery are not readily available. However, according to surveys of World Heritage travellers, as of January 2025, the site ranks approximately in the 704th spot among 1223 monuments. [<https://www.worldheritagesite.org>, accessed 15 January 2025].

There is no scarcity of definitions of tourism. Still, Gaburn’s idea of tourism as a sacred journey undertaken to experience a formative change from the mundane nature of everyday life seems pertinent to monuments of a religious nature like Daphni Monastery [Gaburn, 1989]. Equally applicable appears to be a classic definition of tourism as an activity demanding geographic change and mobility [Noronha, 1979]. Combining both concepts in the person who decides to abandon their routine and visit a monument as part of a broader embrace of leisure proved immensely profitable for states and local stakeholders. Tourism at World Heritage Sites was relatively inexpensive to utilise as a resource. It delivered immediate short-term cash flows to communities that often had little recourse to alternative sources of income. Many monuments were located in remote areas, requiring infrastructure development to access. Since the concept of the World Heritage List seems to emphasise tradition and preserving a “genuine” image of the past, the underdevelopment of sites and regions seemed a benefit rather than a drawback. Direct and indirect employment empowered local communities and alleviated poverty [Bourdeau *et al.*, 2017].

The concept of World Heritage Sites tourism was not despite its drawbacks and problems. The paradigm of UNESCO’s World Heritage Sites program as a getaway for the betterment of local communities often fails to consider the exclusion of local stakeholders from tourist interactions. A superficial approach to cultural monuments can mutate them into resources to be economically exploited to the maximum with total disregard for local sensitivities or the associated environmental impact. What was long considered a tool employed by society to

endow their world with meaning can become a meal ticket for outside actors keen to benefit from a resource that does not properly belong to them [Di Giovine, 2010].

The environmental impact of global tourism is significant. Aeroplanes and automobiles allow millions of people to travel, but both modes of transportation are energy-intensive and contribute approximately five per cent of the total global carbon emissions. Although it may appear that the number is not exceptionally high, reports suggest that within the next quarter of the century, emissions from tourism will more than double. Unplanned or poorly managed development seriously imperils World Heritage monuments and the local communities around them. Climate change poses a whole array of threats to cultural and natural heritage. Extreme weather events can become more frequent and destructive, leading to damage or irreparable loss of attractions and infrastructure. Rising insurance costs, environmental degradation, water shortages, dangerous fires, or oppressive heat waves reduce destinations' attractiveness and jeopardise stakeholders' livelihoods. As economic opportunities dwindle, there is less enthusiasm or motivation to protect heritage sites, a process that has often been repeated in the past and which (ironically) has usually determined the nature and current levels of preservation of numerous World Heritage assets [Markham, 2016].

An unexpected downside of heritage conservation, exemplified by the UNESCO list, is the discontinuity between the monuments and the people in the associated communities. The fundamental objective of heritage conservation is to protect the building or natural setting from degradation and/or irreparable loss. There is a noticeable emphasis on the past and an implied assumption that the authenticity of the tangible remains cannot be renewed. Heritage conservation practices emphasise the preservation of the original, the avoidance of falsification, the compatibility of restoration materials, and the need to distinguish between original and new materials. Since the past and the present are considered discontinuous, preservation usually selects a frozen "glorious" past phase of the monument and removes evidence of previous or subsequent (less desirable) phases [Poulios, 2014]. Life on the site stops in an attempt to preserve the landscape or the monument's desired features. This quest for authenticity has been denounced as an illusion [Lowenthal, 1985], but such criticism has failed to encourage the adoption of a different approach.

There is also a noticeable absence of meaningful engagement with communities and the public since no official World Heritage mechanism exists to ensure local input in the nomination and inscription process. A survey of nomination dossiers revealed that the local community is usually considered a threat to the site's survival, and the participation of local stakeholders in the identification and management of the heritage site is not deemed essential or even desirable [Taruvunga and Ndoro, 2003]. The result of this ambivalence is evident. Heritage authorities are keen to identify a local community that will derive concrete and substantial benefits from the designation of a monument as a World Heritage site while avoiding establishing a mechanism to ensure the community's involvement in site management [Poulios, 2014].

Cultural heritage faces more threats from its use as an economic resource. Affluent societies can often afford the cost of protecting and restoring monuments. Less affluent societies cannot afford similar levels of investment. It is frequently difficult or unethical to support heavy expenditures on preserving buildings or sites when local communities suffer from poverty. Cultural heritage is usually considered a non-renewable resource, bankable, and a development asset that could alleviate poverty and address the needs of destitute communities. This is the so-called "economy of heritage," best exemplified in a slogan in the UK in the 1980s that proudly declared, "Preservation pays" [Ost, 2014]. However, economic opportunities and heritage conservation are not always compatible. Income from the growth of tourism can provide resources to assist in safeguarding and restoring monuments. After all, tourism is a significant source of income (and employment) in many countries. An adequately

managed tourist strategy can provide local communities employment, income, and a sense of pride that will encourage them to continue protecting their cultural assets, generating all these benefits [Korka, 2014].

5. CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND MONASTERIES

Cultural entrepreneurship refers to creating cultural businesses and promoting products and services with artistic value, simultaneously bringing economic benefits [Maniou et al., 2024]. An example of this entrepreneurship is the organisation of thematic routes starting from monasteries that connect cultural points of a city or region, attracting visitors, enhancing local development and promoting sustainability. The advantages of these initiatives include the promotion of cultural heritage, stimulating the local economy and creating new jobs [Maniou, 2024]. In Greece, religious tourism also significantly contributes to the economy and society. Visitors, whether pilgrims or tourists, support the local economy through accommodation, catering and the purchase of local products. In addition, the preservation and restoration of religious monuments creates new employment opportunities and enhances sustainable development [Maniou, 2023; Manola, & Papagrorgoriou,2020). Greece provides a unique religious tourism experience, combining spiritual quest with cultural exploration. Through its religious monuments, traditions, and cultural wealth, it invites visitors to live a comprehensive experience [Tsatalbasoglou & Koltsikoglou, 2021]. Religious tourism not only contributes to the economic well-being of the local community, but also helps preserve each place's cultural heritage. Developing business activities around monasteries can strengthen the local economy, with visitors buying souvenirs, dining in local restaurants, and participating in cultural events. Tourism-related businesses, such as hotels, cafes, local product shops, and tourist offices, benefit from the proximity to monasteries. (Manola et al.,2023; Trikalitis & Manola, 2024) Some of the businesses operating around monasteries include:

- ✓ Souvenir and local product shops: An everyday business activity around monasteries is shops selling souvenirs and local products. “Magnets” are a classic souvenir [Manola, 2020]. Shops operating near or inside monasteries often offer religious items, such as icons, prayer beads and candles, and local products, such as honey, herbs or wine. According to Shackley [2001], visitors prefer buying items representing their visit experience.
- ✓ Accommodation and restaurants: Another form of business activity around monasteries is the creation of accommodation. Traditional or modern accommodation can serve visitors' needs. In addition, local cuisine, primarily based on monastic recipes or regional ingredients, can attract tourists.

Cultural entrepreneurship in monasteries is a modern model of sustainable development, integrating cultural heritage and religious tradition with economic activities. With the development of religious tourism, monasteries are no longer limited to their spiritual mission but become pillars of local development, attracting visitors from all over the world while revitalising the local economy. (Maniou et al.,2024a ;Maniou et al.,2024b; Maniou et al.,2025).

6.CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACTIVITIES

Organisation of thematic routes: Monasteries are often the center of thematic routes that connect cultural monuments, religious sites, and natural landscapes. These routes attract visitors, promoting the local cultural heritage. For example, the route that includes the Monastery of Saint Raphael in Lesbos can be combined with visits to local archaeological

sites and museums, attracting pilgrims and tourists with a cultural interest [Maniou et al., 2024; Manola & Trikalitis, 2022; Papaioannou et al., 2024)

Conservation and restoration of monuments: The restoration of historical monuments is another focal point of cultural entrepreneurship. Monasteries often receive funding to conserve their buildings, which creates new jobs and strengthens the local economy [Maniou, 2023]. Restoration contributes not only to the preservation of cultural heritage but also to the promotion of monasteries as tourist destinations.

Production of local products: Monasteries rely on the traditional production of local products, such as honey, wine, herbs, and soaps. These products are the result of centuries-old knowledge transmitted within the monastic communities. They are a source of income for the monasteries while contributing to the preservation of tradition and cultural identity of the region [Georgiou, 2017]. By purchasing these products, visitors support the monastic communities and participate in a circular economy based on sustainability.

Promoting religious tourism: Monasteries are a magnet for pilgrims and tourists from all over the world. Visitors either come for spiritual pursuits or to admire the architecture and art housed in monasteries [Tsatalbasoglou & Koltsikoglou, 2021]. Religious tourism is an essential source of income for local communities, as visitors stay in local accommodations, eat in restaurants, and purchase local products, enhancing the region's sustainable development.

7. BUSINESS ACTIVITIES AROUND MONASTERIES

Souvenir and local product shops: Visitors to monasteries often seek out items that will remind them of their experience. Shops operating near monasteries typically offer religious items, such as icons, candles, and prayer beads, as well as local products, such as honey, herbs, and wine, produced either by the monasteries or local producers [Shackley, 2001]. These businesses enhance visitors' connection to local tradition and heritage while financially supporting monastic communities and the local economy. (Manola & Balermipas, 2020)

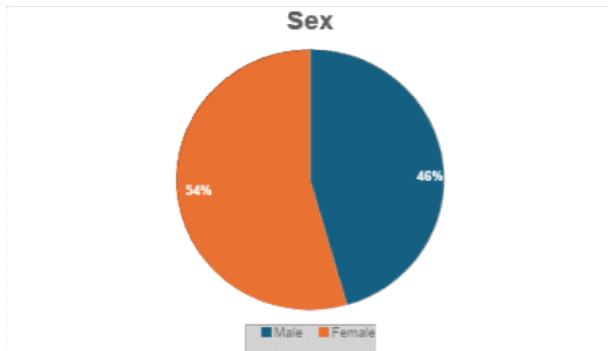
Accommodation and restaurants: Visitors who come to worship or admire the monasteries need accommodation. This has led to the development of local accommodation that offers traditional and modern hospitality experiences. In many cases, the monasteries offer visitors hospitality, thus creating new business opportunities. At the same time, restaurants that offer local dishes based on traditional monastic recipes attract tourists who want to enjoy authentic gastronomic tradition [Manola, 2020].

Cultural entrepreneurship around monasteries benefits local communities in multiple ways. Beyond economic support, monasteries promote preserving cultural heritage and regional identity. Through these activities, visitors gain a deeper connection with the region's culture while contributing to the development of the local economy.

8. RESEARCH RESULTS

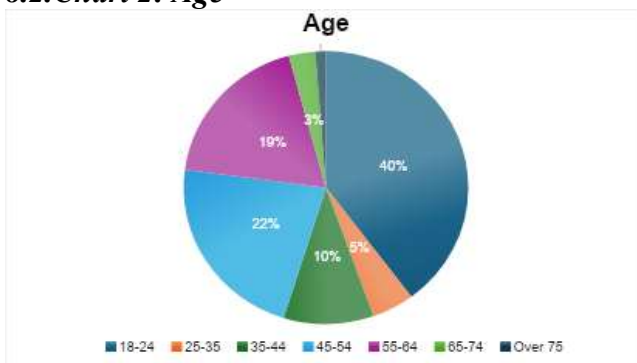
One hundred ninety-one questionnaires were correctly completed. The answers came from students, secondary school teachers, and the students' families and friends. The participants' results are initially presented by gender, age group, educational background, and place of residence. Most participants (54%) were men, and women accounted for 46% of the respondents.

8.1. Chart 1: Gender



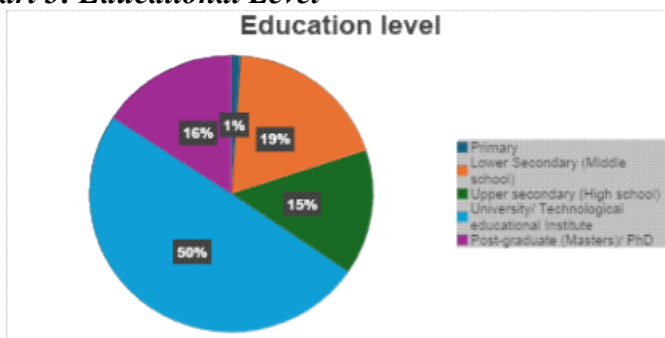
There was a considerable spread in the age of participants. The largest percentage of them belonged to the 18-24 age group (40%), followed by the 45-54 age group (22%), 55-64 age group (19%), and 35-44 age group (which accounted for ten per cent of respondents). The smallest age group was 51-60, making up approximately 4% of the respondents. Very few participants were from the older demographic groups (people over 65) or young adults aged 25-34.

8.2. Chart 2: Age

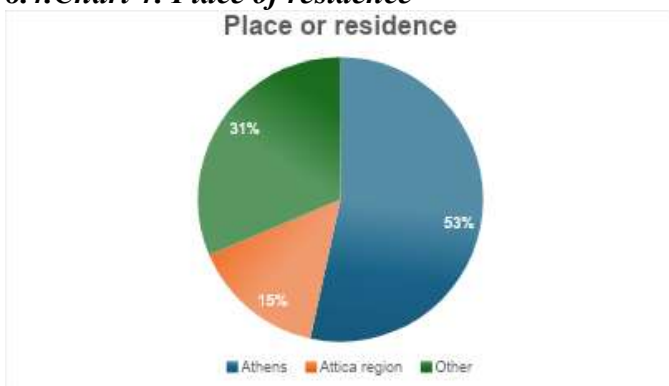


Regarding the participants' level of education, half of them were university or Technological Educational Institute students. The second largest group were Middle School students (19%), while postgraduates and high-school students each accounted for approximately 15% (with postgraduates being marginally more numerous). Barely one per cent of participants were still in primary school, which seems pretty reasonable since visitors who are so young would be rather unlikely to be interested in filling out a questionnaire about a cultural heritage monument.

8.3. Chart 3: Educational Level

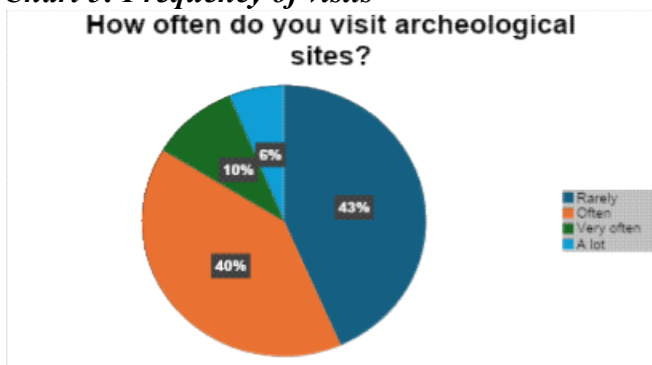


8.4. Chart 4: Place of residence



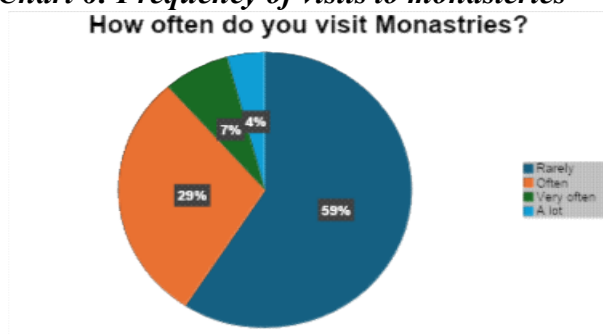
Most participants (68%) were residents of Athens or the wider Attica region. There is some ambivalence about whether this reflects the international popularity of Daphni Monastery as a heritage destination or simply the low number of foreign visitors to Athens at the time of the survey. Only a third of the participants resided somewhere outside Attica.

8.5. Chart 5: Frequency of visits



Regarding the frequency of visits to archaeological sites, 43% of participants responded that they rarely visit them, while forty per cent described themselves as frequent visitors. A small percentage (approximately sixteen per cent) declared a very high rate of archaeological site frequency. Overall, it seems that the Daphni Monastery can attract the interest and attention of people who consider cultural heritage a potential leisure destination and include it in their touring schedules.

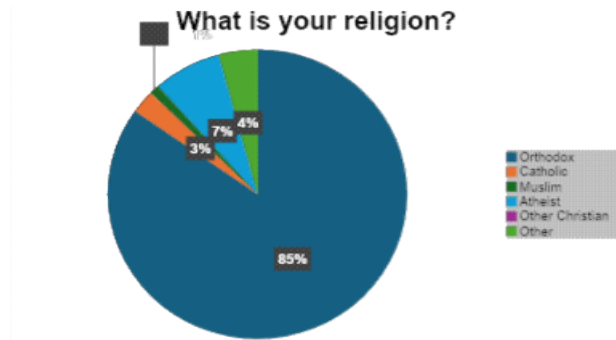
8.6. Chart 6: Frequency of visits to monasteries



Although technically not a monastery, since no monks reside within its walls, Daphni Monastery is widely regarded as an archaeological site with a prominent religious aspect, so it

would be interesting to explore whether religious tourism or religious faith and practices affect the number of visitors. According to the survey, it seems not to be a crucial factor. Almost six in ten participants said they rarely visit monasteries, while 29% said they often frequent such sites. A small percentage (4%) appear to be very passionate about monasteries and see them “a lot”.

8.7. Chart 7: Religious Affiliation



The religious affiliation of survey participants indicates that visitors of many denominations and religions chose to explore the Daphni Monastery. However, their numbers were relatively low, and the overall results are heavily skewed towards Greek Orthodox visitors (accounting for 85% of the survey participants), which seems consistent with visitors' place of origin. Most of them were from the wider Attica region. Despite the lack of quantitative data and the debate about the levels of secularisation in modern urban centres [Beaumont and Baker, 2011], the Greek Orthodox church still claims that most Attica residents are faithful to the doctrines of Eastern Christianity.

8.8. Chart 8: Sources of information

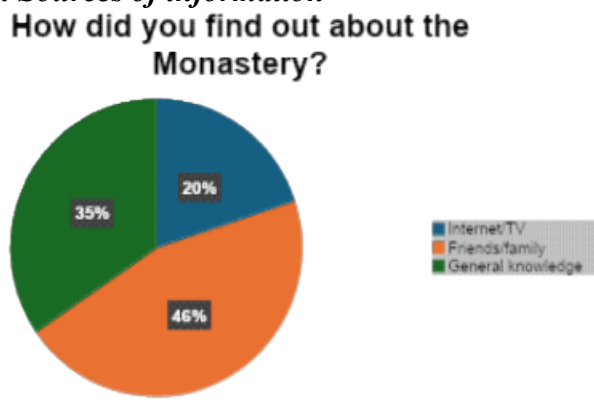
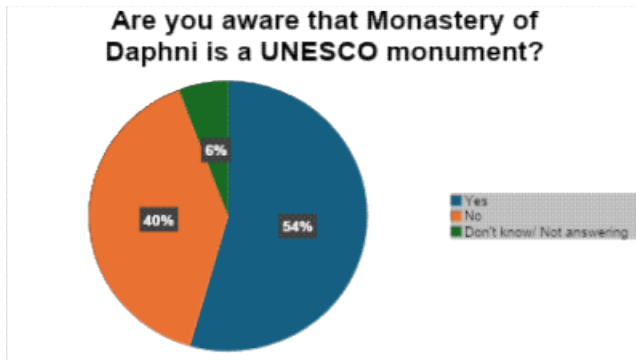


Chart 8 indicates that despite the Daphni Monastery’s status as a UNESCO World Heritage site, almost half the participants claim they learned about it through family and friends (46%). The internet or television accounted for another fifth of the responses, with the rest falling into a broad category of unspecified sources of information. This is an area where more work could be done to expand knowledge about the monastery in Greece and perhaps overseas. Word of mouth is an important source of information. Still, it can hardly be considered an effective or efficient method to increase the monument’s visibility and ensure wider benefits for the local community [Keller and Berry, 2003]. Chart 9 suggests that over half of the participants knew the monastery’s status as a UNESCO World Heritage site (54%).

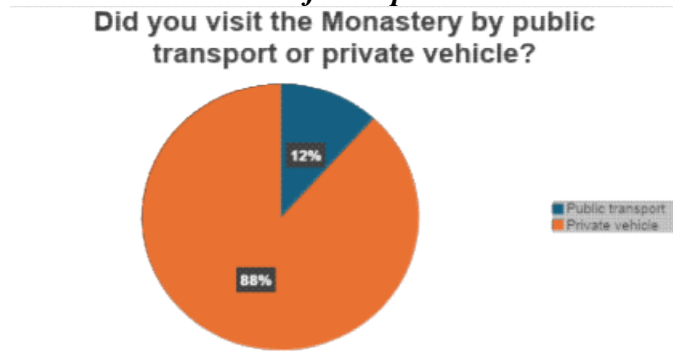
Nevertheless, this number still implies that many visitors were unaware of the Daphni Monastery’s cultural, archaeological, and historical significance before their visit.

8.9. Chart 9: Status awareness



Accessibility is a crucial factor determining the sustainable development and use of cultural heritage sites. Physical accessibility to remote sites can often be a serious challenge, but even access to urban monuments can be equally difficult or challenging for numerous reasons. Suitable transport to and from the site is essential but not always readily available [Adie, 2019]. The Daphni Monastery, although by no means remote, is situated in a somewhat awkward area, just outside the urban core and on the side of a major national road leading from Athens to the Peloponnese. Chart 10 reflects this difficulty. The vast majority of visitors used private vehicles to reach the site. Barely twelve per cent used public transport, which means a bus or taxi, since these are the only options available to potential visitors.

8.10. Chart 10: Mode of transportation



8.11. Chart 11: Ease of access

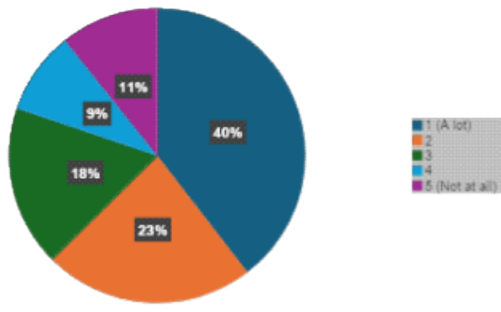


Considering the previous points, it is not surprising to discover that most people who chose to use public transportation to visit the Daphni Monastery encountered various levels of difficulty in accessing the site. A quarter of the participants claimed that access was difficult

or demanding. Nevertheless, another substantial percentage (39%) seemed to have encountered almost no obstacles or complications and described access as easy.

8.12. Chart 12: Level of satisfaction

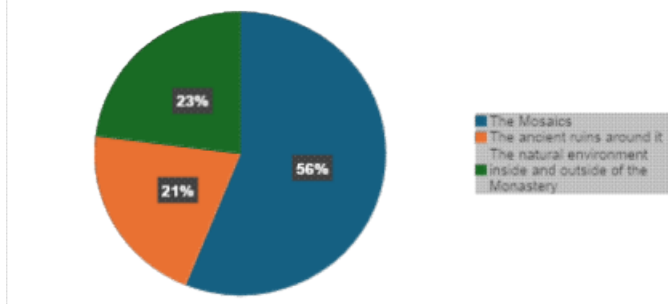
How much did you like what you saw?



Visitors' satisfaction levels with what they encountered while at the Daphni Monastery varied but were generally positive. Forty per cent declared they liked what they saw a lot, while another 23% seemed equally pleased. Approximately a fifth of the visitors did not like what they saw. Still, the numbers were lower than those of people who never visit archaeological sites or monasteries, which could be considered at least favourable.

8.13. Chart 13: Points of Interest

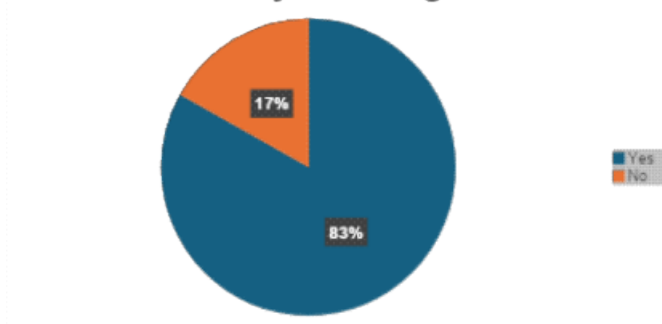
What impressed you the most about the Monastery



Not surprisingly, the mosaics attracted most visitors' attention and are clearly listed as the most impressive element of their stay at the heritage site. Almost six in ten participants identified the mosaics as the main attraction (56%). The others focused more on the surrounding landscape (the monastery was built in a valley between two verdant mountains) and the ruins of the monastery's other buildings (the refectory, etc.).

8.14. Chart 14: Repeat visits

Would you visit again?



Irrespective of what particular point of interest attracted their attention, the participants' determination to revisit the Daphni Monastery in the future seems overwhelming. Four in five (80%) expressed a desire to return to the archaeological site at some point.

8.15. Chart 15: Recommendations

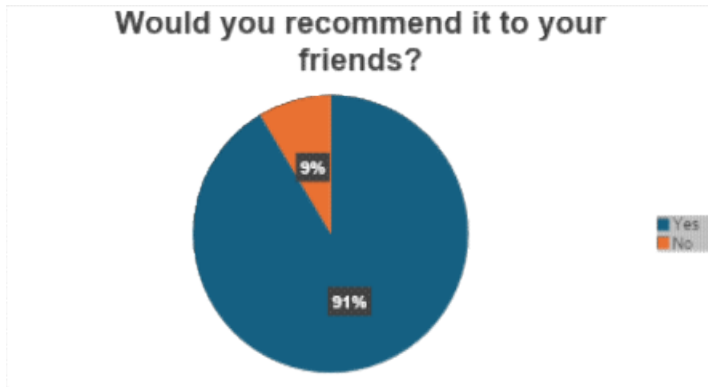


Chart 8 demonstrated the importance of word-of-mouth as a determinant of visitor numbers. Almost half the survey participants said they heard about the Daphni Monastery from family and friends. Chart 15 reinforces the point by showing an overwhelming desire to recommend the site to their family and friends. Less than one in ten seemed unwilling to suggest a visit to the monastery.

8.16. Chart 16: Guided tour availability



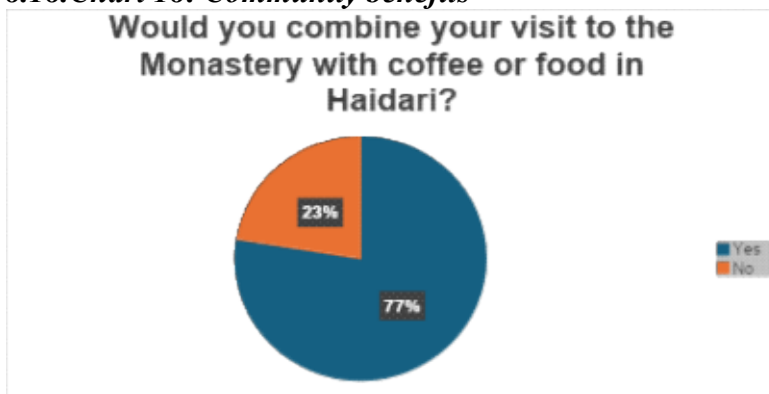
There is currently no guided tour offered at the Daphni Monastery. Visitors can explore the site independently and read about its history and significance on the available information panels. However, the survey suggests a strong desire for guided tours. Almost nine out of ten participants answered positively about the desirability of guided tours. There has been extensive research on the role of tour guides and a broad recognition of the multifaceted nature of their work. Scholars attribute pathfinding and mentoring roles to tour guides, who are often invited to supply traditional geographic way-finding information and logistical arrangements while acting as educators and spiritual advisers [Weiler and Black, 2014]. Since tour guides serve a crucial role as representatives of local people and cultures to visitors [Nelson, 2017], guided tours in Daphni Monastery would add value to a cultural product already recognised as important globally.

8.17. Chart 17: Paying for guided tours



Chart 17 also reflects the strong demand for guided tours at Daphni Monastery. Although the survey did not consider cost, four out of five respondents (eighty per cent) expressed a willingness to pay for a guided tour.

8.18. Chart 18: Community benefits



Haidari is a suburban town west of Athens city centre. The municipality has a population of approximately 47,000. The Daphni Monastery is the oldest and most significant point of interest within its boundaries and the only UNESCO World Heritage Site in Attica (other than the Acropolis of Athens). Due to the monastery's location, Haidari is the closest area that provides amenities to visitors, with numerous coffee shops, restaurants, hotels, retail stores, etc. Therefore, the residents of Haidari can be considered the local community that would stand to benefit or suffer the most from the proper or improper development of the Daphni Monastery. Fortunately, there seems to be a corresponding willingness among visitors to the heritage site to take advantage of whatever opportunities are available in Haidari. Almost four out of five participants said they would combine their visit to the Daphni Monastery with food and/or coffee in Haidari.

9. CONCLUSION

The sustainable development of the Daphni Monastery requires the adoption of specific measures to improve accessibility, overall cleanliness, and visitor experience, always with respect for the historical and religious character of the monastery. It is essential to revamp public access by establishing a new and safe bus stop right in front of the monastery so that visitors are not forced to cross the busy highway, thus ensuring their safety and convenience. In addition, the recruitment of permanent cleaning and/or gardening staff will contribute to a permanent, thorough, and effective maintenance of the buildings and the surrounding area

(including the gardens). The amelioration of common areas, such as paths and courtyards, is equally crucial, with regular maintenance and cleaning that will make them more welcoming for visitors.

At the same time, cultural and religious events in the monastery's courtyard can offer visitors a unique experience, provided they are held with absolute respect for the monastery's sanctity and historical value. Another helpful measure is the establishment of a kiosk near the entrance to the monastery, where visitors can purchase souvenirs and enjoy refreshments in a small cafeteria, enhancing the heritage site's sustainability.

Finally, improving signage and access to the café-restaurant next to the monastery will facilitate more visitors' visits. Proper landscaping will make the café more visible, and clear signs will make it more accessible and enhance the visitor experience. Through these measures, the Daphni Monastery can evolve into a model of sustainable development, combining the care of the historical site with modern visitor service.

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