

## CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN LEMNOS

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### **Abstract**

*Lemnos, one of Greece's remote islands, holds a unique position on the national and cultural map of the country. Its geographical location in the northeastern Aegean and its proximity to the borders with Turkey give it strategic importance, while its rich history and cultural heritage make it a significant hub between the ancient and the modern world.*

*This study aims to highlight Lemnos' tangible and intangible cultural heritage while also examining the possibilities for enhancing cultural entrepreneurship as a key driver of sustainable development for the island. The themes explored include the significance of religious monuments, gastronomy, cultural events—such as music and dance festivals—the management of archaeological sites, and the contribution of literature through works by Yiannis Ritsos and other creators inspired by Lemnos.*

*As part of the study, a quantitative analysis was conducted using questionnaires, which were exclusively distributed to residents of Lemnos. The data collection focused on recording and analyzing the local population's views on the opportunities and potential offered by cultural entrepreneurship for the island's sustainable development. The results of the research aim to form proposals for connecting the local cultural heritage with economic, social, and environmental sustainability, strengthening local identity and development.*

**Key words:***cultural entrepreneurship, sustainable development, literature, festivals, cultural events, Lemnos, Mediterranean.*

## **1.INTRODUCTION**

Lemnos has historically been a field of conflicts and crossroads of cultures. From antiquity to the present day, it has been a bastion of Greek civilization and a strategic point for controlling the Aegean Sea. Its historical role as a supply base and military presence, especially during World War I and the Gallipoli Campaign, underscores its geopolitical significance.

Lemnos' tradition is closely tied to the daily life of its inhabitants, as well as the preservation of collective memory. Its historical connection with Imbros and Tenedos, islands with common cultural roots, strengthens its identity as a link in the chain of Greek culture in the Aegean (Maniou, 2024).

As a frontier island, Lemnos faces challenges such as geographic isolation, limited access to resources, and economic dependence on tourism and agriculture. Lemnos is a living example of frontier resilience and adaptability, having developed models of sustainable development based on the utilization of its cultural and natural heritage. By leveraging its rich cultural heritage, promoting cultural entrepreneurship, and enhancing sustainable tourism

development, it can ensure a promising future, honoring its history and supporting its inhabitants.

From antiquity to the present day, Lemnos' economy continues to rely mainly on the primary sector. Despite gradual tourism development, the extensive arable land reaching up to the sea remains a characteristic feature of the landscape (Mantzaris, 2017, p. 7). The volcanic soil, the alternation of plain and semi-mountainous areas, wetlands, and rare geological formations give the island unique diversity (Dimopoulos, Dimitropoulos, & Georgiadis, 2018). Cultural development refers to promoting cultural heritage and creativity as key elements for social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Cultural development incorporates cultural elements into development strategies to enhance social cohesion, create economic opportunities, and promote environmental protection (Maniou, 2023; Maniou, 2024b).

## **2.SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT- CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN LEMNOS**

Sustainable development in Lemnos is directly linked to the protection of the island's natural resources and the management of production using traditional methods that respect the environment. Traditional cheese production and other local products require fewer resources and have a smaller environmental impact compared to industrial production. Products such as *melichloro* (a traditional cheese) rely on natural processes and limit the use of chemicals or other harmful substances, enhancing environmental sustainability (Lyrtzaki & Masouras, 2019).

The integration of traditional agricultural and livestock methods within eco-tourism promotes sustainability, allowing visitors to experience a lifestyle that respects nature and the environment while supporting the local economy. Developing partnerships between local producers, tourism organizations, and environmental groups can further strengthen sustainable development efforts, protecting the island's natural landscapes and encouraging sustainable farming and production practices (Papadopoulou, 2023). Unlike conventional models of tourism, which may marginalize or exploit local communities, sustainable development seeks to empower residents economically and socially (Mitoula, Astara, 2012; Maniou et al., 2024a; Maniou et al., 2024b).

Entrepreneurship is the process of creating, developing, and managing a business with the aim of making a profit. It involves the ability to recognize opportunities, develop innovative ideas, and implement them in sustainable business models (Manola, 2022). Cultural entrepreneurship emerges as a driving force for development through religious monuments, music and dance festivals, natural resources, archaeological sites, the promotion of local products, gastronomy, and the revival of cultural traditions. With proper management of these resources, Lemnos can serve as an example of sustainable development that respects its roots and invests in the future. (Maniou & Mitoula, 2025; Maniou et al., 2025a).

## **3.RELIGIOUS MONUMENTS**

Lemnos has a rich ecclesiastical heritage, with many churches, monasteries, and chapels that have become significant cultural landmarks. These sites not only preserve the religious traditions of the island but also contribute to cultural entrepreneurship and tourism, strengthening the local economy (Lampadaridou-Pothou, 2010).

**3.1. The Panagia Kakkaviotissa**, a small chapel from the 14th century, built on a rock without a roof, attracts visitors for both pilgrimage and hiking, linking religious tradition with alternative tourism (Loupou, 2012).

**3.2. The Church of the Archangels in Moudros**, built in 1835, stands out for its impressive wooden iconostasis and serves as a reference point in the ecclesiastical art and history of Lemnos, attracting religious visitors and scholars of Byzantine history (Votsis, 2015).

**3.3. The Feast of St. Sozon**, the patron saint of Lemnos, is one of the island's largest religious events and is associated with the maritime traditions of the area, offering a unique opportunity for religious tourism and social cohesion (Papadopoulou, 2023).

**3.4. The Ecclesiastical Museum of Lemnos**, established in 1991, hosts valuable ecclesiastical relics and strengthens the preservation and promotion of the island's cultural heritage, attracting visitors interested in the history and art of the church (Lampadaridou-Pothou, 2010). In general, the religious heritage of Lemnos, through its monuments and events, contributes to the strengthening of the local economy, promoting sustainable development and the island's long-term sustainability. The numerous ecclesiastical monuments of the island are key pillars for its cultural heritage, while simultaneously enhancing cultural entrepreneurship and sustainable development. (Manola & Angelopoulos, 2020).



*Photo nr 1: The Panagia Kakkaviotissa*  
*Resource: limnos-guide.gr*



*Photo nr2: The Church of the Archangels*  
*Resource: pemptousia.gr*



*Photo nr 3: The Feast of St. Sozon*  
*Resource: limnos-guide.gr*



*Photo nr 4: www.tripadvisor.com.gr*  
*Resource: The Ecclesiastical museum of Lemnos*

#### 4. THE GASTRONOMY

The gastronomy of Lemnos is indeed one of the island's most important pillars, combining traditional values and innovation. Local products such as the melichloro cheese, wines, and pasta represent symbols of regional production, while the strengthening of cultural entrepreneurship through traditional dairies and workshops offers visitors authentic gastronomic experiences. Additionally, gastronomic festivals, such as those organized on Lemnos, promote sustainability and social cohesion, strengthening the relationship between tourism and the local economy. (Manola & Koltsikoglou, 2020).

The connection between local gastronomy and ecological awareness, as well as environmental protection, is also noteworthy. The use of traditional production methods with a low environmental impact not only preserves the island's cultural heritage but also contributes to the conservation of its natural beauty. Furthermore, linking tourism with local culture, nature, and society enhances sustainable development and highlights Lemnos as a model for sustainable tourism growth (Manola & Koufadakis, 2020 ; Manola, 2019)

It is clear that gastronomy in Lemnos is not only an integral part of its culture but also a driving force for the island's economic development, while simultaneously promoting sustainability and social well-being.

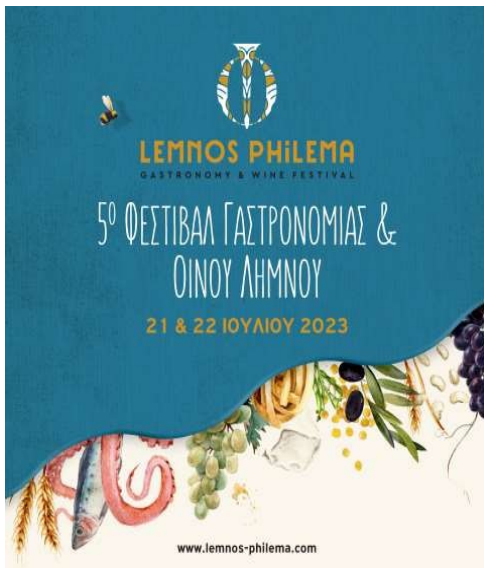


Photo nr 5 Gastronomy's Festival  
Resource: [limnosfm100.gr](http://limnosfm100.gr)



Photo nr 6 Gastronomy's Festival  
Resource: [limnosfm100.gr](http://limnosfm100.gr)

#### 5. THE MUSICAL AND DANCE TRADITION

The musical and dance tradition of Lemnos is characterized by the coexistence of the old musical tradition with influences from the East. The island's farmers and livestock breeders were connected to the traditional rural music, which included melodies accompanied by traditional instruments such as the lyre and the tsambouna. However, the refugee influx, particularly after the Asia Minor Catastrophe, brought significant influences from the shores of Asia Minor, contributing to the creation of new musical ensembles or bands that incorporated urban sounds from the East (Htouris & Papageorgiou, 2009).

Local festivals play an important role in preserving and promoting the musical and dance tradition of Lemnos. Events such as the Lemnos Dance and Music Festival, held every summer, attract local and international artists and draw a large number of visitors. These

cultural events promote collaboration between local authorities, businesses, and artists, strengthening cultural entrepreneurship (Antonios, 2018).

Cultural events, such as music and dance festivals, contribute to the preservation of the island's cultural heritage and boost the local economy. By highlighting the musical tradition and local products, a balance is achieved between cultural preservation and economic development, while these actions offer a model for sustainable tourism development that respects the environment and the local community (Papadopoulou & Mavroeidis, 2020).

Cultural entrepreneurship includes activities that connect culture with the local economy, such as the sale of traditional products, the promotion of local culture through festivals, and the creation of cultural spaces that host activities throughout the year. The involvement of local businesses in these events enhances the local economy by providing jobs and promoting sustainable development (Papadopoulou & Mavroeidis, 2020).



Photo nr 6:Lemnos Dance and Music Festival  
Resource :lifo.gr

## **6.NATURAL RESOURCES AND UTILIZATION**

Lemnos, with its rich natural resources, is an ideal example of an area where cultural entrepreneurship can be developed through the utilization of natural assets. Since 2013, a number of extensive fossil-bearing areas on the island have been declared "Protected Natural Monuments" (Decentralized Administration of the Aegean, 2013).

**6.1.The Petrified Forest**, which is a continuation of the Petrified Forest of Lesbos, is divided into three areas, offering valuable information on the phytogeographical evolution of the region. These monuments provide significant opportunities for geotourism and scientific studies (Nikolaidis, 2015).

**6.2.The Faraklou Geological Park** is another important natural attraction. The geomorphological value of its formations offers possibilities for the development of geotourism activities, with the natural rocky formations attracting visitors from all over the world (Papadopoulos, 2018).

**6.3.The Alyki Lagoon**, which has been included in the Natura network 2000, offers ecological and tourism potential. It hosts rare bird species, such as pink flamingos, making the area ideal for ecotourism. The Alyki Lagoon, part of Natura 2000, offers both ecological and tourism opportunities. It hosts rare bird species, such as pink flamingos, making the area ideal for ecotourism. Additionally, the lagoon has historical value for salt extraction, which can be

integrated into tourism activities, linking the island's history with modern cultural entrepreneurship (Karydis, 2016).

**6.4.The Sand Dunes**, the only desert in Europe, are also an important natural resource that can attract visitors. The unique landscape, with minimal vegetation and characteristic sand dunes, creates a one-of-a-kind experience for visitors (Koutroupis, 2017).

Notable are the underground jars in Lemnos, which have been used since ancient times for storing food and drinks. These traditional vessels, still found in the village of Romanou, can be utilized in gastronomic and cultural tours that highlight traditional methods of food production and storage (Loukas, 2019).

**6.5.**Finally, Lemnos was a **place of exile** for many personalities, including Yiannis Ritsos, Tasos Livaditis, and Aris Alexandrou. The cultural heritage of exile can be incorporated into the island's cultural tourism, with the creation of literary routes inspired by the works of these significant writers (Maronitis, 2013; Ritsos, 1963). This is a form of alternative tourism—literary tourism—which offers a sustainable and authentic solution by promoting culture through books. (Tsatalmpasoglou et al., 2025). Visitors seek locations related to literary works, either due to the presence of authors or the fictional worlds created in stories (Fawcett & Cormack, 2001). Manola (2019) notes that readers aspire to experience the world depicted in the book in a tangible way. This form of tourism enhances the uniqueness of a place and promotes sustainable development. (Maniou et al., 2024 ; Maniou et al., 2025).

## **7.ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MUSEUMS OF LEMNOS**

Lemnos boasts a rich archaeological heritage, with prominent archaeological sites. The management of these sites presents challenges related to the need for preservation, protection, and proper promotion. The potential for further development of these sites is significant, as the growing demand for cultural tourism offers substantial opportunities for sustainable development. Cooperation between public and private entities in creating new cultural initiatives can increase visitor numbers and contribute to the island's economic prosperity (General Secretariat for Culture, 2020).

The archaeological sites of Poliochne, Hephaestia, and the Sanctuary of the Cabeiri are central attractions for visitors wishing to discover the island's history, attracting cultural tourism that contributes to the local economy (Archontidou-Argyriou, 1998). The Archaeological Museum of Lemnos in Myrina hosts artifacts from these areas, contributing to the preservation and promotion of the archaeological heritage (General Secretariat for Culture, 2020).

**7.1.Poliochne**, one of the most important archaeological sites in Lemnos, is considered the first organized settlement in Europe and holds particular interest for the archaeological community and visitors. The Archaeological Museum of Lemnos showcases artifacts from Poliochne, such as pottery and household items, which testify to the advanced civilization of the region during the 3rd millennium BC (Archontidou-Argyriou, 1998; Platzos et al., 2005).

**7.2.**In Lemnos, **the archaeological site of Hephaestia** is also found, which is a city from the Chalcolithic period and, after Myrina, is the second most important city on the island. In Hephaestia, the sanctuary of the Great Goddess of Lemnos was built, and furthermore, the city had a number of necropolises, baths, as well as palaces and a Hellenistic Roman theater, which was recently renovated and hosts performances, mainly ancient tragedies. (Greco, 2004)

**7.3.The Cabeiric Mysteries** were a celebration held once a year and were related to the rebirth of nature and the fertility of the earth. In fact, the ancient sanctuary of the Cabeiri, where the faithful were initiated into the Cabeiric Mysteries, is still located on the island in the area of Moudros. (Gerontoudis & Gerontoudis, 1990) Last century (1885), in the village of Kaminia, at the chapel of Saint Alexander, the stele of the Kaminia was discovered, which is a limestone slab depicting a warrior with a spear. At the top of it, there are two inscriptions that, although written in the Greek alphabet, the language remains unknown to this day. (Belitsos, 2022)



*Photo nr 7: The oldest parliament building in Europe, Polichni*  
*Resource: limnosfm100.gr*



*Photo nr 8: The Cabeirian Sanctuary Lemnos*  
*Resource: limnosfm100.gr*

## **8.CULTURAL HERITAGE**

The traditional customs of Lemnos, such as the Kakanoures and the Saint George's horse races, are significant elements of the local culture and are closely linked to the sustainable development of the island, offering a model that integrates cultural heritage, entrepreneurship, and tourism. The preservation of these customs is not only important for the local community but also for promoting a tourism strategy that respects and protects traditions, the environment, and the local economy. ( Manola et al.,2022 ;Tsatalbassoglou & Manola,2024)

**8.1.The tradition of Kakanoures**, which is revived every year on June 23, is a custom with its roots in ancient times when jumping over the fire served as a form of purification. This tradition, which involves lighting large bonfires and jumping over them, is associated with the harvest season when the locals would try to clean their clothes from fleas and lice. Today, the tradition not only preserves cultural heritage but also attracts a large number of visitors from other regions and countries, strengthening the local economy through tourism.

The revival of such traditional customs promotes local culture, creates opportunities for enhancing the tourist product, and encourages community involvement in the production and consumption of cultural goods (Votsis, 2015). Additionally, these customs help maintain social cohesion by strengthening bonds among residents and their local identity, while simultaneously incorporating sustainability through the limited environmental impact of these activities.

**8.2.The Saint George's horse races**, which are revived every year in the village of Kalliope in Lemnos, are a custom that attracts a significant number of visitors and strengthens the local economy through cultural tourism. Participants in the event prepare the horses for an entire year, which enhances cooperation and community participation, while also promoting

sustainable development through the promotion of local products and the strengthening of the local market (Belitsos, 2012).

This tradition has historical roots and is linked to the local history of Lemnos, as it is said that the people of Kalliope hid the Turkish horses during the Ramadan festival, resulting in the establishment of the horse races tradition. The revival of this custom, along with the modern business activities surrounding the organization of the event, strengthens the sustainability of the area, as it attracts tourists and encourages local community participation (Vavliakis & Mari, 2004).

## **9.METHOLOGY**

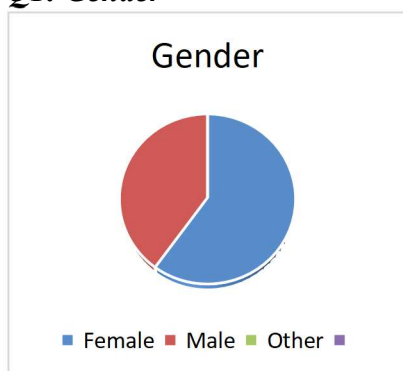
The specific questionnaire was distributed to a total of 132 people. The sample was targeted, consisting of individuals who either lived in or originated from Lemnos. The questionnaires were written in Greek. The questionnaires were filled out on-site, after it was clarified to the participants that the research was voluntary and that the results would be presented only in the form of statistical data and graphs, while the answers would remain confidential and anonymous.

For the statistical processing of the data, Microsoft Excel was used, and the analysis includes data in the form of tables and graphs.

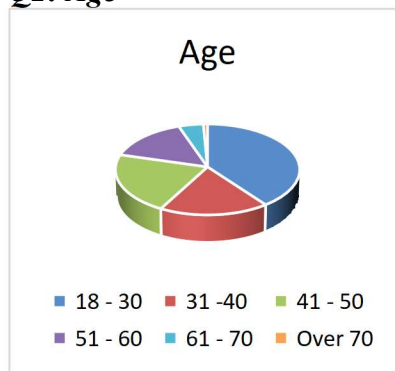
### **9.1.Research**

The purpose of the research is to highlight the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Lemnos and to examine the possibilities for strengthening cultural entrepreneurship as a key driver of sustainable development for the island. The primary research was conducted in the form of a questionnaire, which included closed-ended questions to confirm the assumed hypothesis of the study. The questions were multiple-choice and were used exclusively for the needs of this paper.

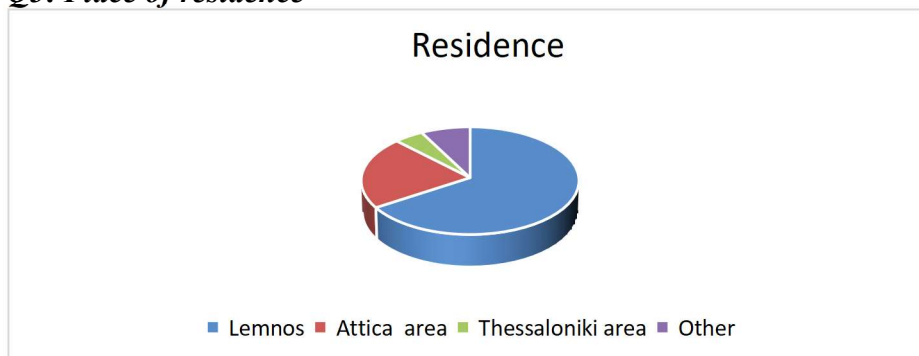
#### **Q1: Gender**



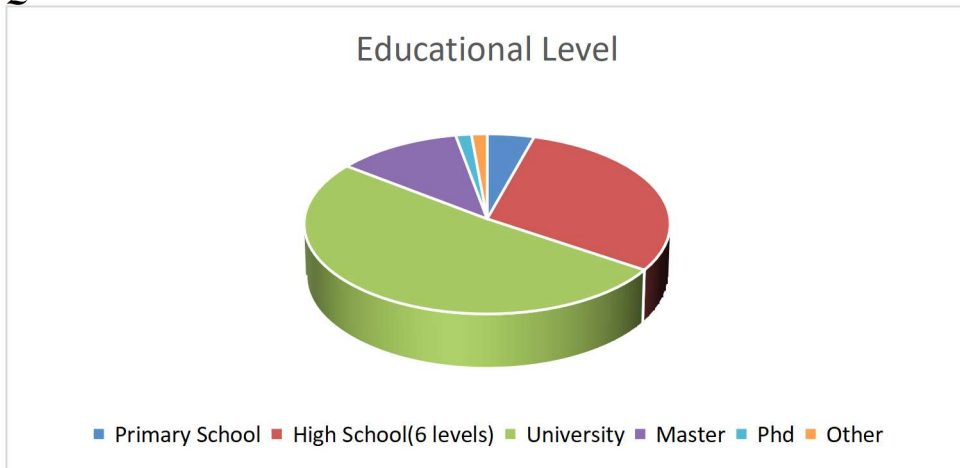
#### **Q2: Age**



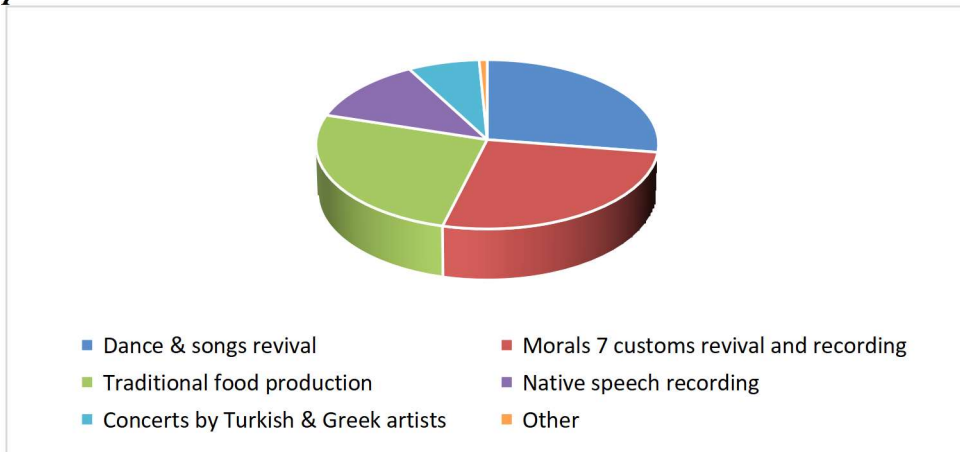
#### **Q3: Place of residence**



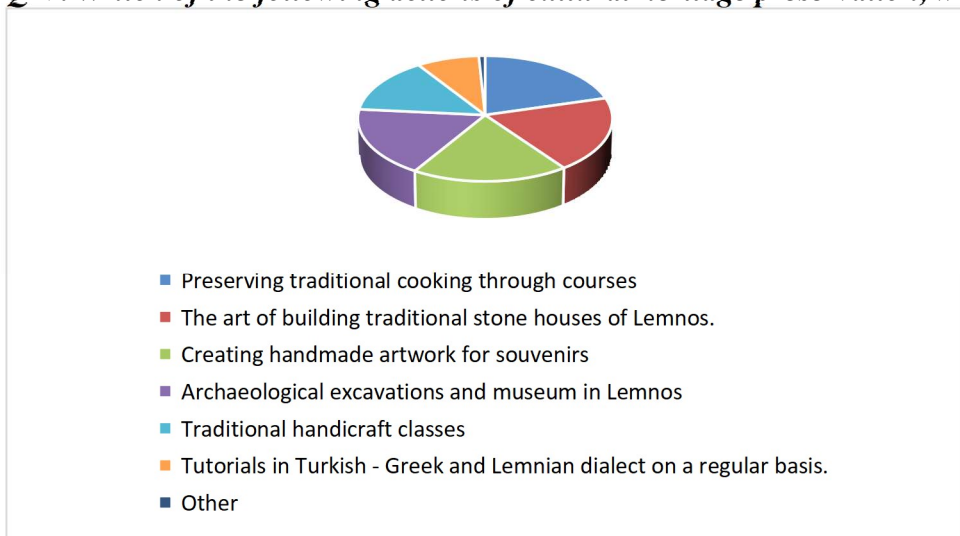
**Q5: Education Level**



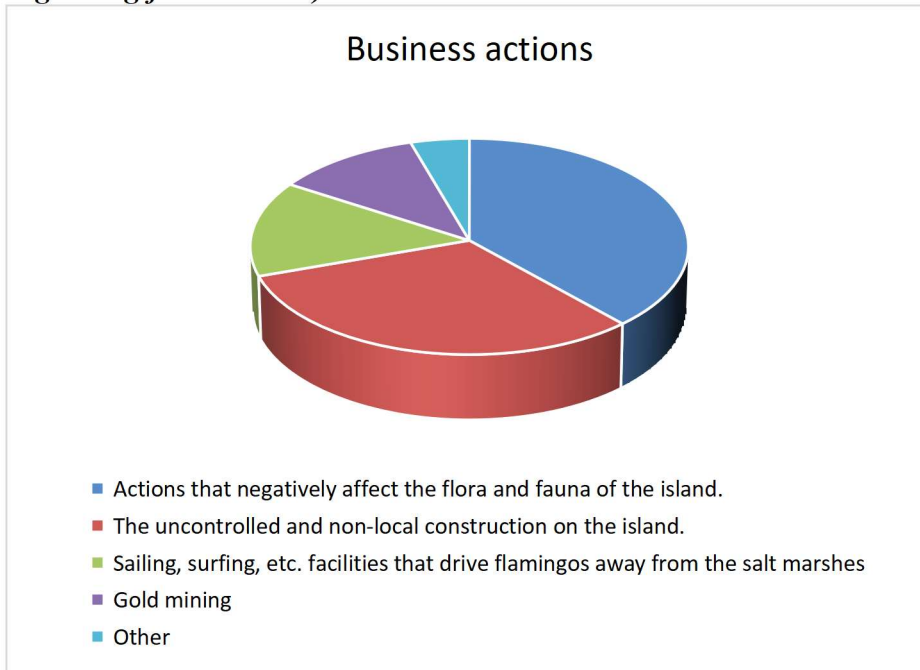
**Q13: Do you consider, if some of the following ways of preserving cultural heritage, takes place in Lemnos?**



**Q17: Which of the following actions of cultural heritage preservation, would you like to see?**



**Q24: Which of the following business actions affect the sustainable development of the island? (Sustainable Development means development to meet present needs, without neglecting future needs)?**



**Q1: What kind of cultural activities-events would you like to attend on the island?**



### 9.3. Research Results

After the data from the questionnaires were collected, the following results emerged in the form of diagrams and graphs in order to record and analyze the opinions of the locals regarding the opportunities and possibilities that cultural entrepreneurship offers for the sustainable development of the island.

The results of the research aim to form proposals for linking the local cultural heritage with economic, social, and environmental sustainability, strengthening local identity and development.

## **10.CONCLUSIONS**

According to the results of the survey, the majority of the responses came from women (60%) of the participants. The age group with the most responses was 18-30, followed by the 31-40 age group. Many respondents also belonged to the 41-50 and 51-60 age groups, while fewer were over 61. In terms of place of residence, the majority stated the island of Limnos, followed by the Attica region. The fewest responses came from Thessaloniki. A small number of respondents selected "Other."

In response to the question about education level, the largest percentage of answers was for "University," followed by "High School." A significant number of responses were also for "Master's," while the other options (Elementary, Doctorate, Other) gathered significantly fewer responses.

Regarding the question, "How often do you visit Limnos?" the largest percentage answered that they "live permanently in Limnos," followed by a large percentage who visit "once a year." A fairly large percentage answered "twice a year," and a somewhat smaller percentage selected "rarely." The options "once every two years" and "once every three years" received even fewer responses, with particularly small percentages choosing "Other." The question "Which of the following business activities affect the island's sustainable development? (Sustainable development means development that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs)" received the highest percentage of responses for the option "Actions that negatively impact the island's flora and fauna." A significant percentage of responses were also observed for the option "Unregulated and out-of-local-standards construction on the island." Fewer respondents chose "Sailing, surfing, etc., facilities that drive away flamingos from the salt flats," while even fewer selected "Gold mining." The option "Other" gathered very few responses.

The question "Do you know if any of the following methods of preserving cultural heritage are taking place in Lemnos?" received the highest percentage of responses for "Revival and documentation of the customs and traditions of Lemnos" as well as "Revival of dances and songs in Lemnos." Nearly the same percentage of responses was recorded for the option "Production of traditional foods," while the options "Documentation of the local dialect of Lemnos" and "Concerts by Turkish and Greek artists together" received a significantly smaller number of responses. The option "Other" received the lowest percentage of responses.

As we can infer from the responses above, cultural entrepreneurship on the island of Limnos is developing to some extent, but there is room for improvement and further growth. In order to achieve this, the cultural resources of the island should be utilized properly, such as the museums, books related to the island, as well as the activities that form the intangible cultural heritage of the area. This can be accomplished through the organization of festivals, events, exhibitions, and other activities aimed at highlighting the island's cultural heritage and attracting visitors. Significant growth potential seems to exist in literary tourism as well as gastronomic tourism.

For the proper and sufficient development of cultural entrepreneurship, it is essential to have cooperation between the local population, relevant agencies and organizations, and local authorities.

The creation of a museum in Limnos dedicated to the exiled fighters and the island's historical heritage would strengthen the connection between cultural entrepreneurship and history, promoting education and awareness. Promoting gastronomy and local traditions, such as the production of "melichloro," contributes to sustainable tourism development and strengthens the local economy.

Cultural events, music and dance festivals, and the highlighting of archaeological sites can strengthen the link between cultural heritage and economic development, promoting a sustainable tourism model. Additionally, the development of literary tourism based on the works of Yiannis Ritsos and other authors connected to Limnos could bring new momentum to the island's cultural entrepreneurship, enhancing local identity and tourism attraction.

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