

CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE HEROIC ISLAND OF PSARA

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate cultural entrepreneurship on the island of Psara and examine its contribution to the region's tourism development. Although small in size, Psara possesses a rich historical heritage and natural beauty. Its cultural identity is deeply intertwined with the destruction it suffered in 1824 during the Greek Revolution against the Ottoman Empire. The devastation of Psara is recorded as one of the most tragic historical events and inspired the famous poem by Dionysios Solomos. This research focuses, on one hand, on analyzing the ways the island utilizes its natural and cultural resources to enhance tourism, and on the other hand, on exploring the potential for cultural development based on the opinions of residents, collected through a quantitative survey of 130 questionnaires.

Keywords: *Cultural Tourism, Coastal Islands, Cultural Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Development*

1. INTRODUCTION

Psara is a small but inhabited island in the northern Aegean Sea, located about 15 nautical miles from Chios, the nearest large town with the municipality of Heroic Island of Psara as its seat. It has a population of 422 inhabitants and an area of 42 square kilometers; it is mainly a barren island.

The island's long history, culminating in the heroic sacrifice of the people of Psarians during the 1821 Revolution, is a major attraction for visitors, combining culture and tranquility away from the popular tourist destinations. Cultural tourism on the island offers authentic experiences. The most tragic historical moment of Psara was the holocaust of Black Raki on 22 June 1824, when the town of Psara fell into the hands of the Turks. Those of the civilians who made it in time fled by boat. The rest were killed or drowned. The 'Black Battle', immortalised by Solomos, was elevated in people's consciousness as a symbol of sacrifice and total commitment to the cause of Freedom. Those Psarians who were saved from the catastrophe fled to the surrounding islands (Kriezis, 2021; Spanos, 2018; Municipality of Psara, 2023).

2. TOURISM AS A MEANS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN PSARA

Tourism is one of the main pillars of the Greek economy, but also of the global economy (Poli, 2019). In the case of Psara, tourism has the potential to be directly linked to the cultural heritage of the island, offering a unique opportunity for sustainable development. Although tourism has been studied in many parameters, there is no universal definition of tourism. Tourism is a 'product' of the ever-expanding tourism industry, which is defined by five key factors: facilities, services provided, hospitality, freedom of choice, and tourist experiences (Manola et al.,2022; Manola et al., 2022; Trikalitis & Manola, 2024; Tsatalbassoglou & Manola, 2024; Poli, 2019).

Tourism in Fishery is not only an economic phenomenon, but also a social and cultural phenomenon. As an economic phenomenon, tourism development is influenced by the laws of supply and demand, as visitors choose Psara for the natural beauty of the island, its cultural heritage, and the experiences offered. Socially, tourism leads to interaction between visitors and locals, strengthening social relations and creating new opportunities for social mobility and development. Culturally, tourism in Psara creates a juxtaposition of different cultural stimuli, enhancing local identity and cultural dialogue. Maniou, 2023b; Manola & Koufadakis, 2022; Maniou, 2024).

Further, sustainable tourism development can be achieved through the integration of cultural heritage into the island's tourism product. This requires the development of tourism infrastructure that respects the natural and cultural environment, the promotion of tourism as a cultural experience, and the strengthening of the local economy through sustainable practices (Manola, 2019; Manola, 2022; Manola et al.,2023q; Poli, 2019).

Psara, with its rich history and unique cultural heritage, has the potential to develop sustainable business models based on tourism. The island can leverage its cultural assets, such as the Black Ridge and archaeological sites, to create sustainable tourism businesses that promote the values of the local community while enhancing economic and social well-being. The development of sustainable tourism businesses will require the adoption of policies that ensure the protection of the natural environment, the promotion of local products, and the strengthening of the local community through social entrepreneurship. (Miaoulis, 2021)

3. CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN PSARA AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES

Cultural entrepreneurship in Psara represents a key factor for the island's sustainable development, linking its historical and cultural heritage with the modern economy. Organizing cultural routes titled "*In the Footsteps of Heroes*" or creating a cultural park that connects the island's historic monuments could serve as a significant incentive for business development and the enhancement of cultural tourism (Maniou et al., 2024; Maniou et al., 2024a; Maniou et al., 2024b). The promotion of cultural heritage through festivals, educational programs, and experiential tourism activities can contribute to Psara's economic growth by attracting visitors and creating new job opportunities. At the same time, strengthening cultural entrepreneurship could also stem from collaboration with other island communities, utilizing best practices in the fields of cultural tourism and sustainable development. (Maniou & Mitoula, 2025; Maniou et al., 2025a; Poli & Malagas, 2024a).

The use of new technologies and digital tools can play a crucial role in disseminating the island's cultural heritage. Virtual tours, online archives, and interactive applications can enrich the visitor experience, making Psara's cultural heritage more accessible and appealing to the general public (Maniou et al., 2025; Poli & Malagas, 2024).

The destruction of Psara and the holocaust of Mavri Rachi in 1824 was a historical event that shocked all of Europe. In recognition of Psara’s contribution to Greek history and the bravery and self-sacrifice of its people, the Hellenic Parliament voted to rename the Municipality of Psara to the *Municipality of the Heroic Island of Psara*. Below is a list of the historical and archaeological sites of this heroic island. Psara possesses a rich cultural heritage with great potential for promotion through organized initiatives, cultural events, and modern forms of tourist development (Kaltsas, 2021; Koumarianou, 2021).

Points of Interest Contributing to the Identity and Tourism Development of the Island

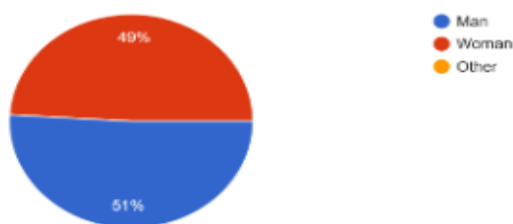
- **Mavri Rachi Hill** is an iconic site of remembrance of the Greek Revolution, where in 1824 the Psarian people chose self-sacrifice rather than surrender to the Ottomans. Today, a modest monument honors their sacrifice, offering opportunities for further development through guided tours and commemorative events.
- **Church of Saint Nicholas**, built in 1793 and closely associated with the destruction of Psara, has been renovated and functions as a significant religious and cultural site. Promoting it through new technologies can boost religious tourism and the local economy.
- **The bust of Konstantinos Kanaris**, located near the church at the site of his family home, enhances historical memory and cultural entrepreneurship through events, storytelling, and festivals that attract visitors.
- **The Spitalia**, an old quarantine station renovated by Aris Konstantinidis, and **the captain’s houses (kapetanospita)** in the area of Kavos, reflect the island’s maritime tradition and could be key elements in thematic tourism.
- **The Mycenaean settlement at Archontiki** offers valuable insight into prehistoric habitation on Psara, with findings displayed at the Archaeological Museum of Chios, strengthening the island's link with cultural tourism and archaeological research.

Overall, Psara is a land with a rich cultural legacy and strong potential for sustainable tourism and local development (Miaoulis, 2021a; Nikodimou, 1862; Spanos, 1967; Spanos, 1962; Psara-Link, 2023; Exploring Greece, 2023; Ferryhopper, 2023; Karatzas, 2023; Mantis, 2013).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

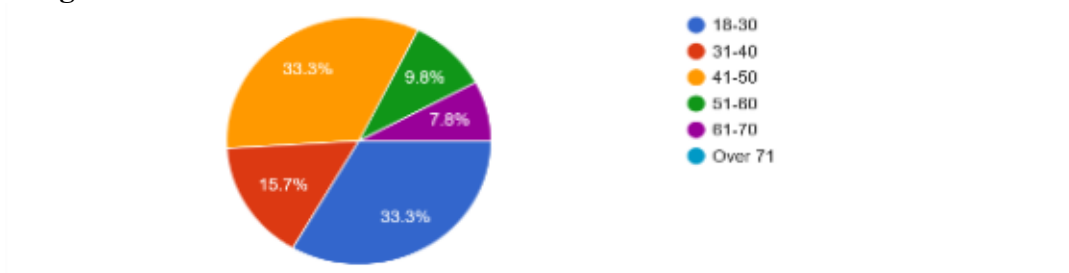
The quantitative research conducted for this study involved questionnaires distributed both to residents of the island of Psara and to individuals originally from Psara who do not reside permanently on the island but visit due to their origin. A total of 130 questionnaires were distributed, and the research lasted for 3 months, from October to December 2024.

1. What is your gender?



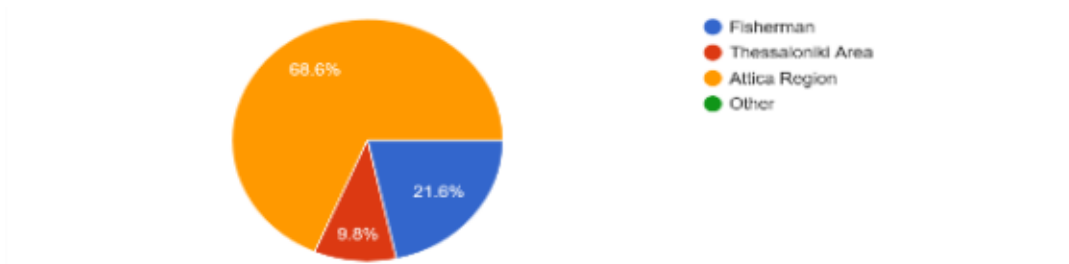
Graph 1: According to the research data, 51% of the respondents were male and 49% were female.

2. Age



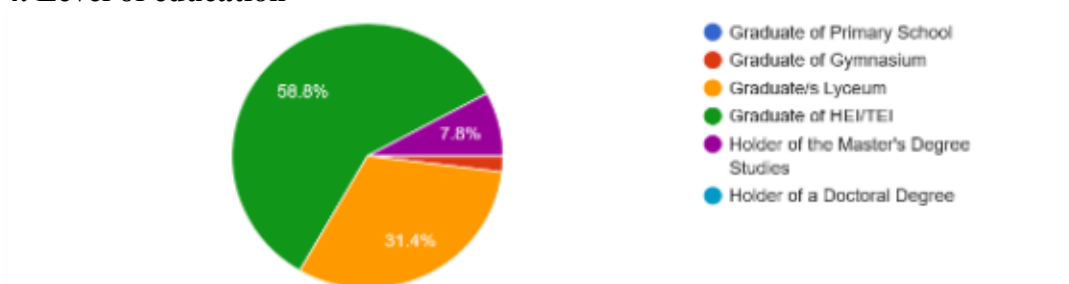
Graph 2: The majority of participants fell into the following age distribution:

3. Place of residence



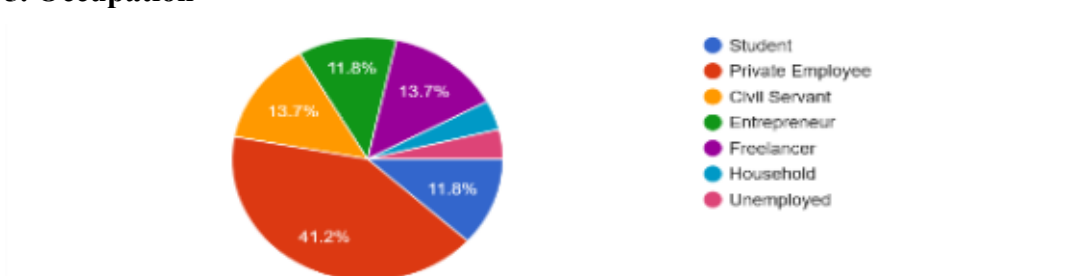
Graph 3: Regarding the respondents' place of residence

4. Level of education



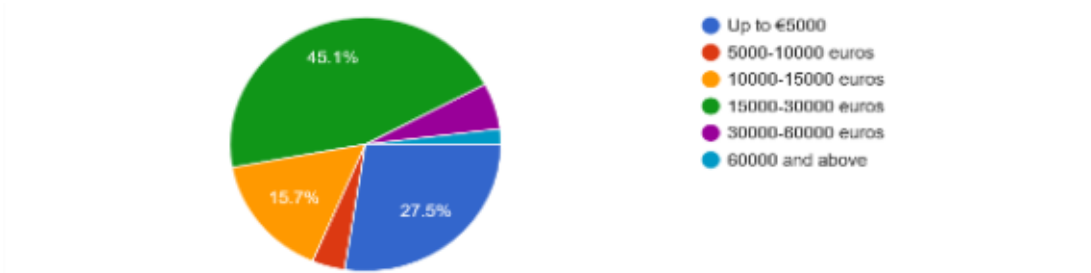
Graph 4: The educational level of the participants is distributed as follows: The sample shows diversity, with a strong representation of university graduates.

5. Occupation



Graph 5: The professional profile of the respondents is as follows: These figures indicate that the majority are in stable employment, primarily in the private sector, which may influence their perception of economic development and opportunities on the island.

6. Personal income



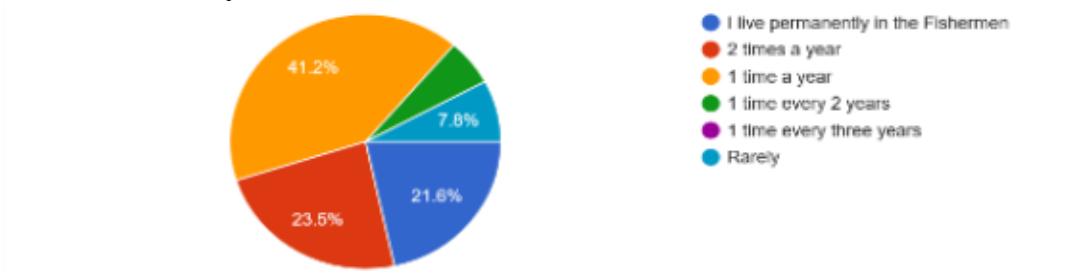
Graph 6: The income levels vary significantly: These results suggest that a large portion has moderate incomes, while a notable percentage has very low income, potentially affecting their priorities and needs regarding the island.

7. Are you from Psara?



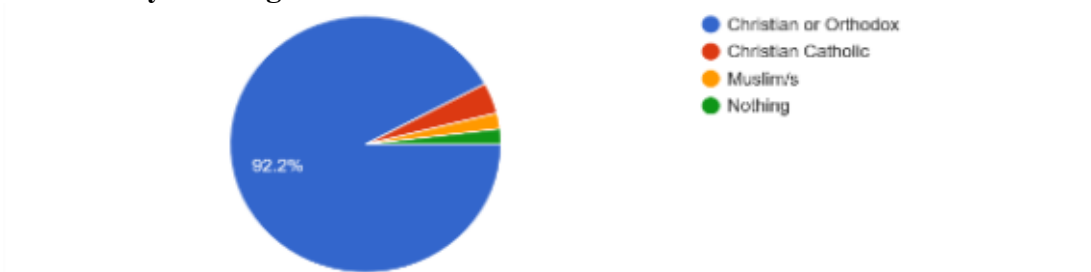
Graph 7: The sample provided a homogeneous response, with 100% indicating that they are originally from Psara.

8. How often do you visit Psara?



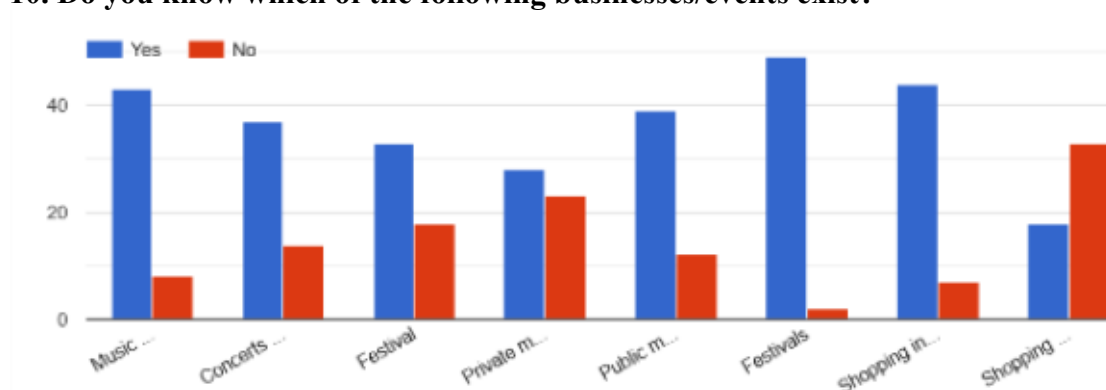
Graph 8: In response to the frequency of visits to Psara:

9. What is your religion?



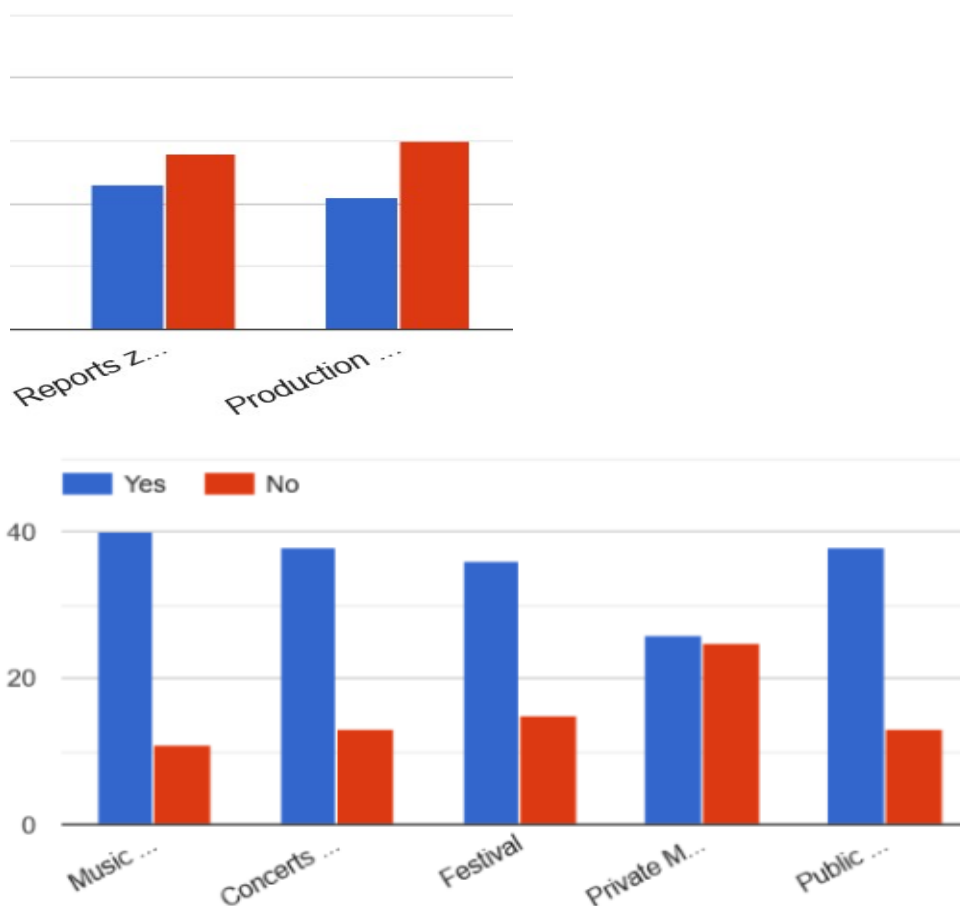
Graph 9: 92.2% of respondents identified as Greek Orthodox Christians, highlighting significant homogeneity relevant to the cultural context of Psara.

10. Do you know which of the following businesses/events exist?

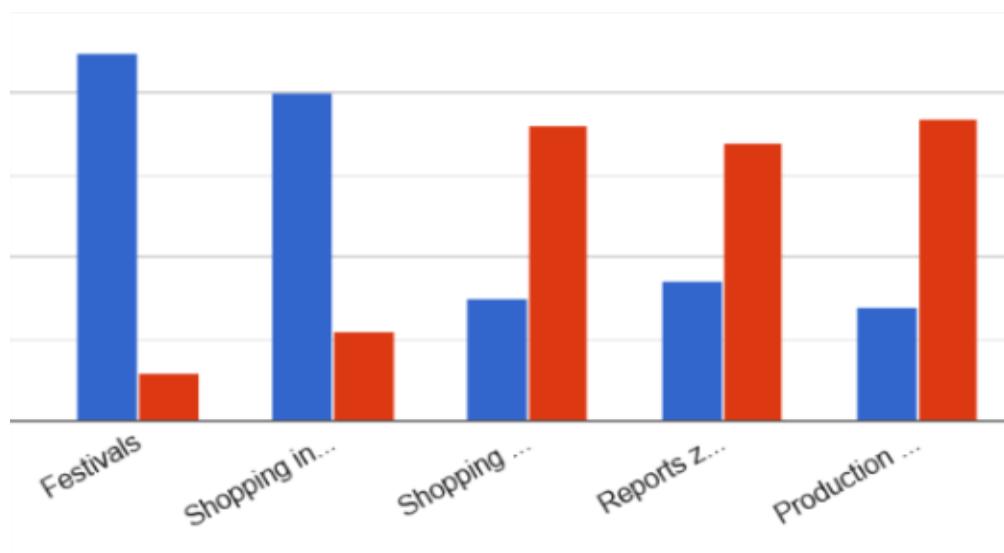


Graph 10: This graph reveals the participants' level of awareness of cultural businesses in Psara. The distribution of answers shows a satisfactory level of awareness for most initiatives.

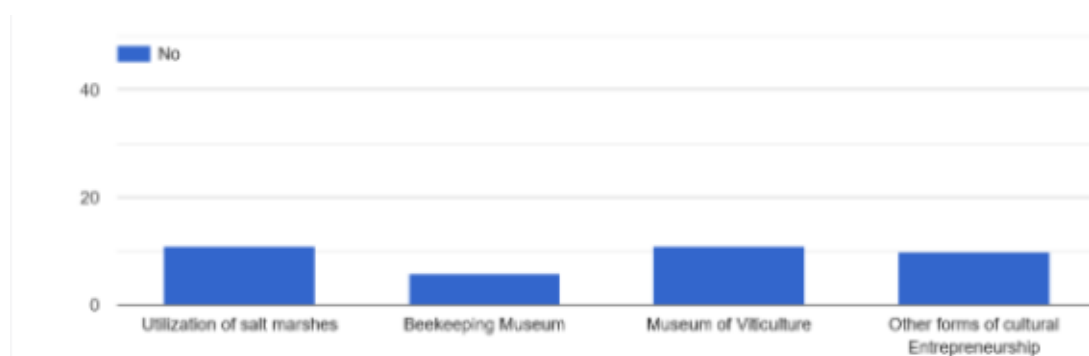
11. Which of the following businesses/events have you visited?



Graph 11: This data reflects which participants have visited cultural businesses or events in Psara. Comparing this graph with the previous one may show similarities between theoretical knowledge and practical participation.

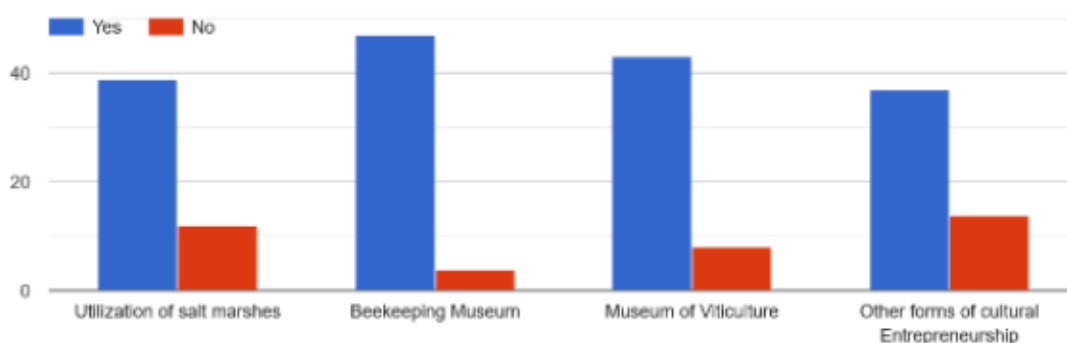


12. The following forms of cultural entrepreneurship do not exist today in Psara. Which of these would you like to exist?



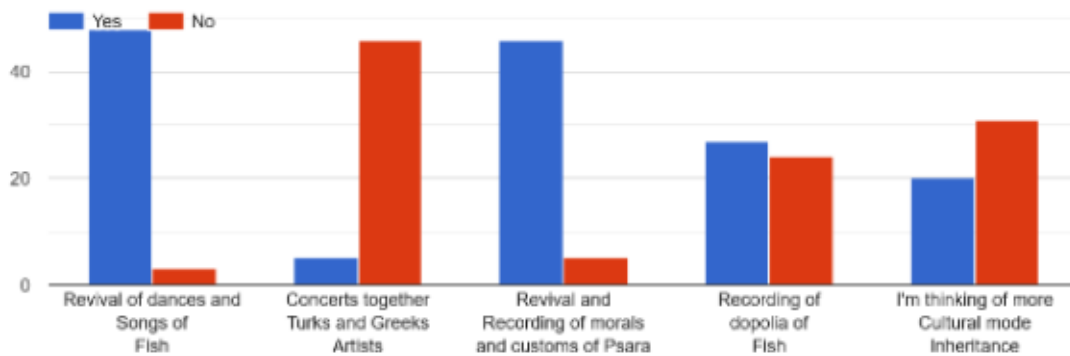
Graph 12: This graph highlights participants’ interest in new forms of cultural entrepreneurship. Their preferences reveal potential areas for future development.

13. Would you pay a ticket to visit the forms of cultural entrepreneurship in Psara if they existed?



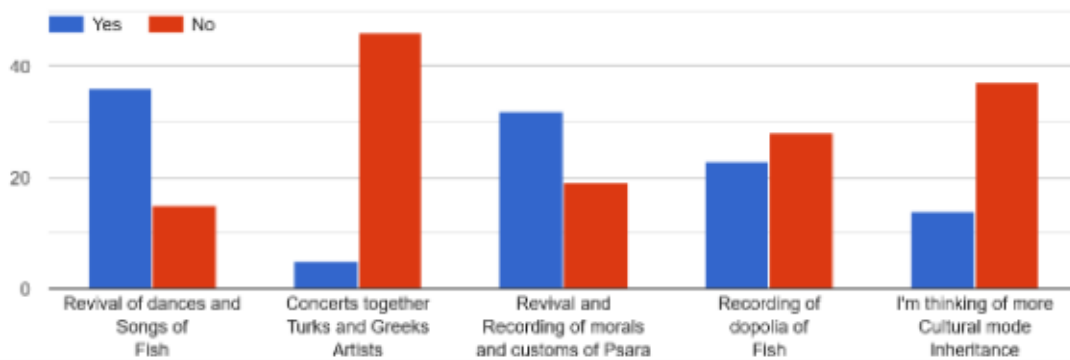
Graph 13: When asked about willingness to pay for entry to cultural ventures, the majority responded positively, suggesting the viability of such actions and a recognition of the island’s cultural value 14. Are you aware of any of the following ways of preserving Cultural heritage in Psara?

14. Are you aware of any of the following ways of preserving Cultural heritage that exist in Psara?



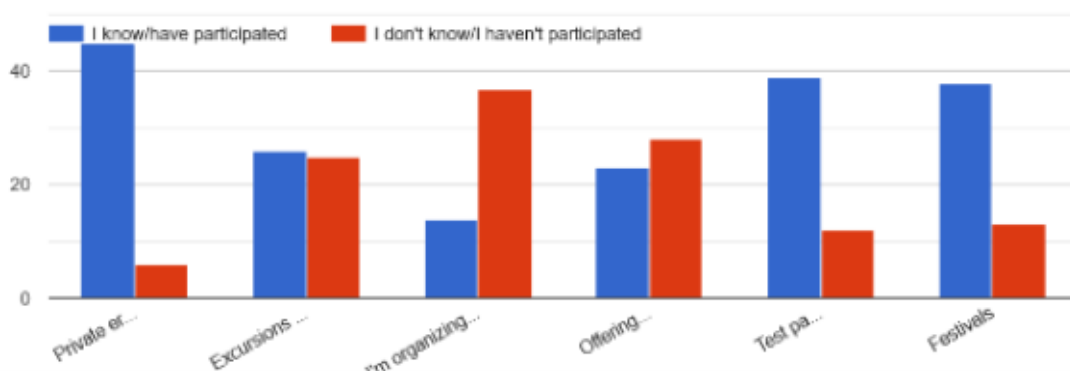
Graph 14: Awareness of heritage preservation methods indicates the population’s level of sensitivity and the need for further educational efforts, as a significant portion answered negatively.

15. Have you participated in/attended any of the following intangible cultural heritage events OUTSIDE Psara related to the island of Psara?



Graph 15. Participation in intangible cultural heritage events outside of Psara indicates the degree of community mobilization for the preservation of the cultural identity of the island. A necessary question for this research, as it shows the potential for future events or initiatives outside of Psara that could enhance the interest and visibility of the island.

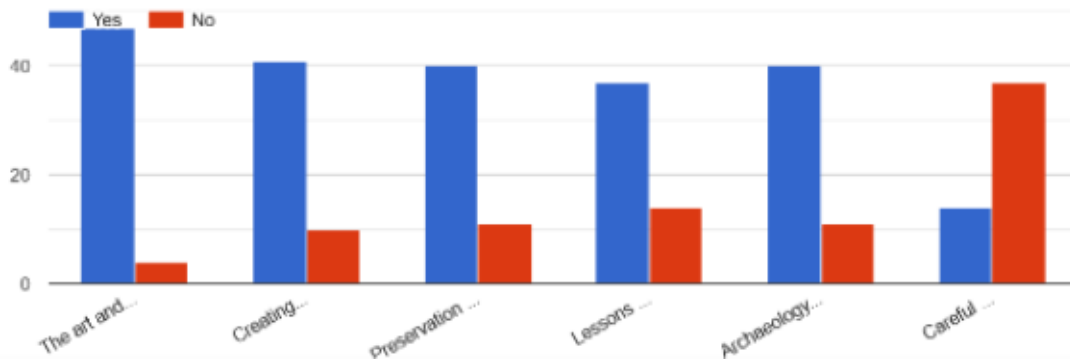
16. Are you aware of/have you participated in the following cultural heritage preservation activities taking place on the island of Psara?



Graph 16. Awareness of or participation in cultural heritage preservation activities on the island of Psara reveals the local activity and the interest of the residents in it, giving varied

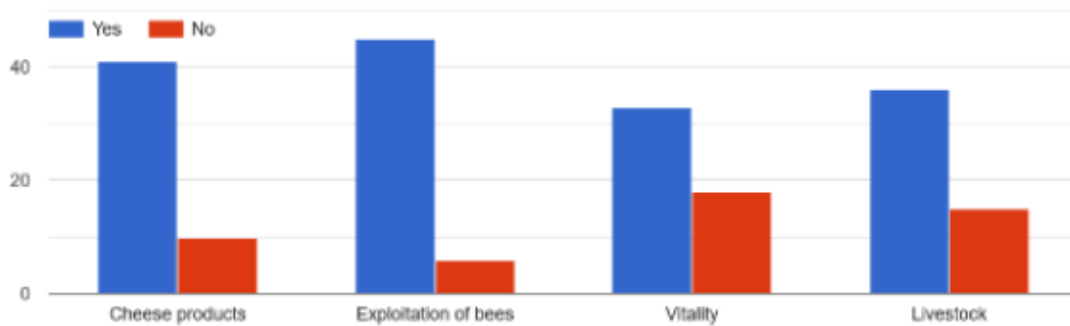
answers depending on the activity, a positive result as it reveals potential for improvement, but also interest and motivation from the survey participants.

17. Which of the following cultural heritage preservation activities would you like to exist?



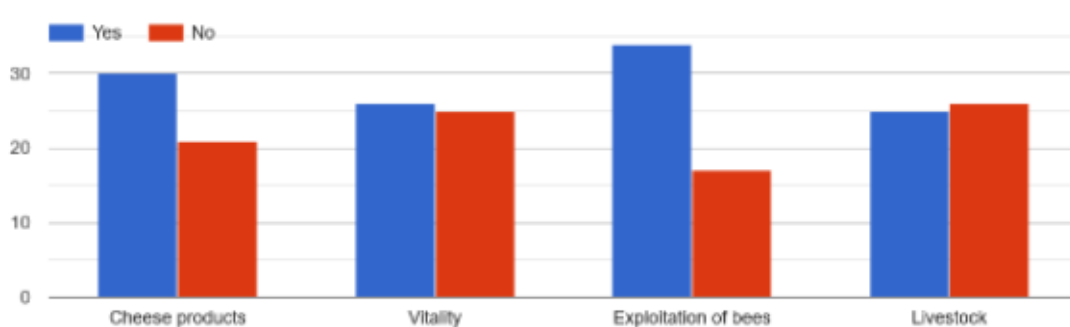
Graph 17: The above graph displays the possible desired cultural heritage preservation activities, revealing which initiatives have a greater chance of success if implemented.

18. Are you aware if actions are being taken to revive traditional farming methods for the following products?



Graph 18: The information on the revival of traditional farming practices shows the respondents' connection to the island's agricultural tradition, indicating that there is a particular emphasis on local cheese products and the island's beehives.

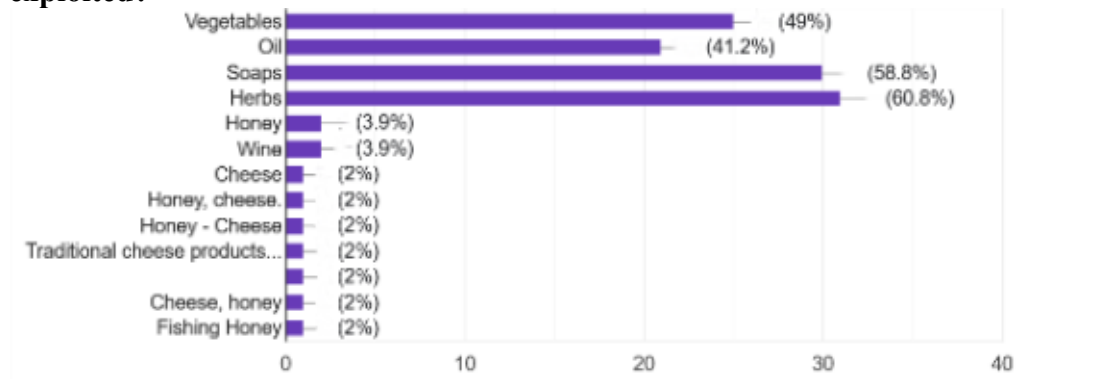
19. Have you participated in promotional activities for the revival of traditional farming methods?



Graph 19: Participation in actions promoting traditional agricultural methods reveals the degree of involvement with agriculture and interest in sustainable development, linking the

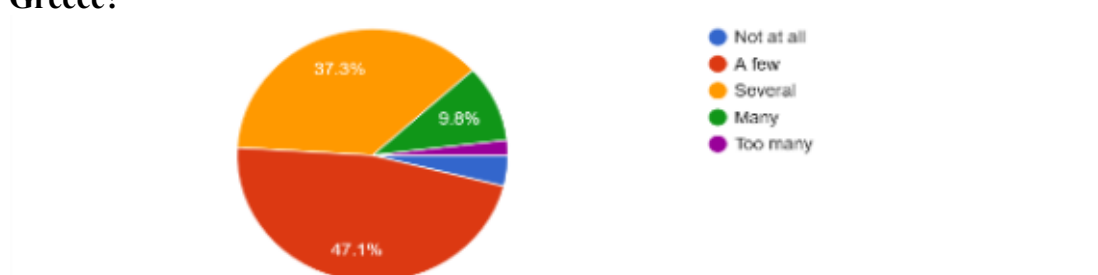
previous question with the present one, and showing once again the importance of the beehives of Psara for the cultural identity of the island.

20. Which of the following traditional products would you like to be commercially exploited?



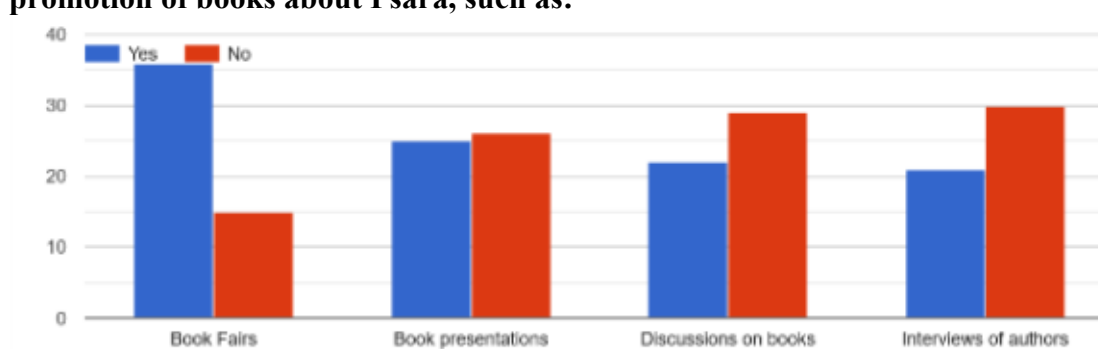
Graph 20: Preferences for commercially exploited traditional products indicate the possible directions of local economic development, with 60.8% choosing herbs as an option, while other possible options seem to be soaps (58.8%), oil (41.2%), and vegetables (49%).

21. Are you aware of any publications that preserve historical memory and heritage in Greece?



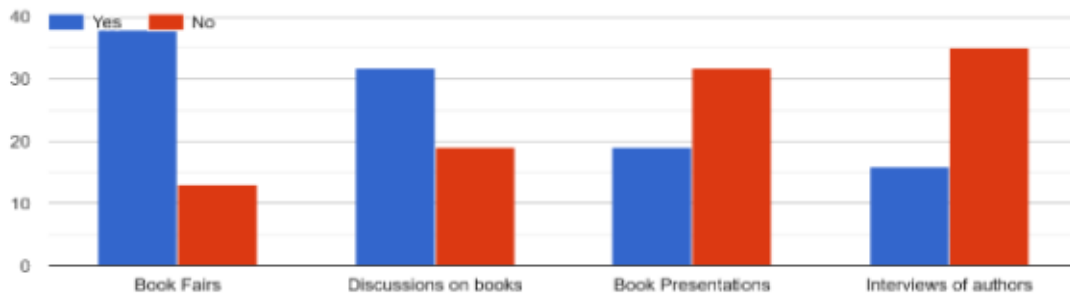
Graph 21: Awareness of publications that preserve historical memory underlines the importance of written documentation on cultural heritage, showing that 47.1% of the sample is aware of only a few corresponding texts.

22. Are you aware of or have you attended any actions WITHIN PSARA for the promotion of books about Psara, such as:



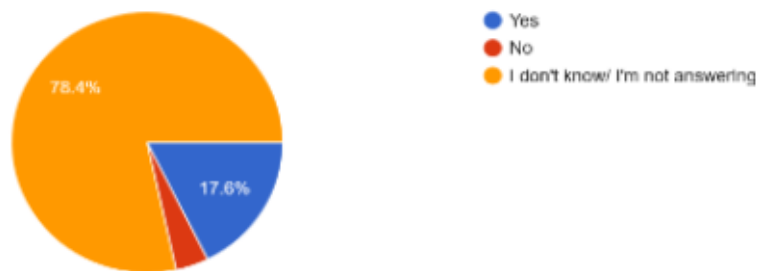
Graph 22: Participation in actions for the promotion of books about Psara within the island shows the need to improve the degree of mobilization of the local community about their literary heritage.

23. Are you aware of or have you attended any actions OUTSIDE PSARA for the promotion of books about Psara, such as:



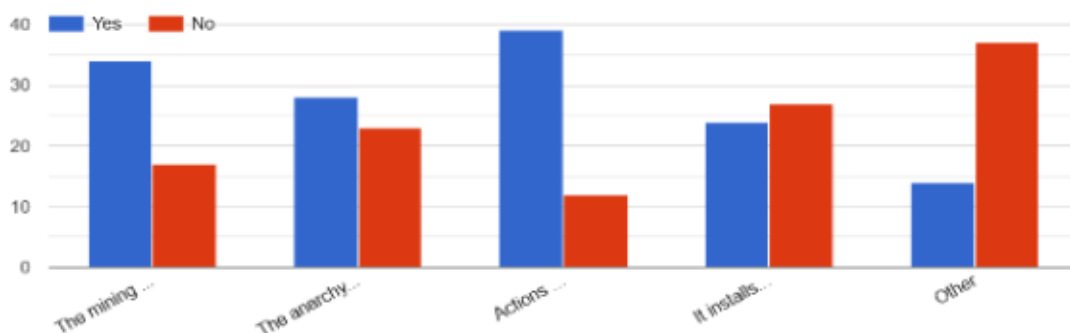
Graph 23: Participation in actions for the promotion of books about Psara outside the island reveals the effort to preserve the cultural identity to a wider audience, another area that needs strengthening.

24. Are you aware if the current legal framework provides subsidies for young entrepreneurs?



Graph 24: Information on subsidies for young entrepreneurs shows the level of information residents have about economic opportunities, with a significant percentage selecting the "don't know/no answer" option.

25. Which of the following business actions affects the sustainable development of the island? (Sustainable Development means development that satisfies present needs without compromising future needs)



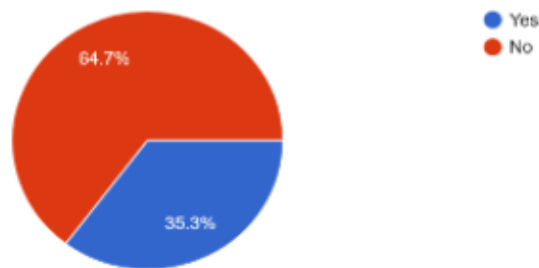
Graph 25: The next question presents the business actions that affect sustainable development and underlines the importance of a balance between economic and environmental well-being.

26. Have you read any of the following books that are related to Psara?



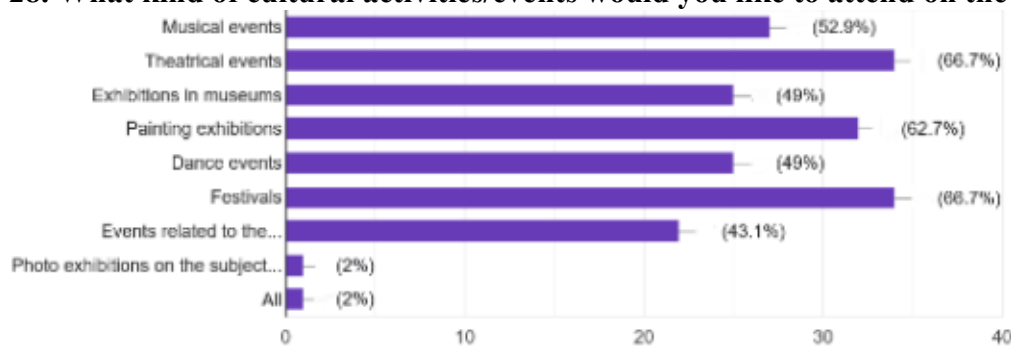
Graph 26: Reading books related to Psara shows interest in local history and cultural preservation, showing a variety of responses, with most participants choosing books about Psara during the Turkish occupation and the history of the island.

27. Are the transportation services (ferry and local transportation) sufficient to serve both the locals and the tourists?



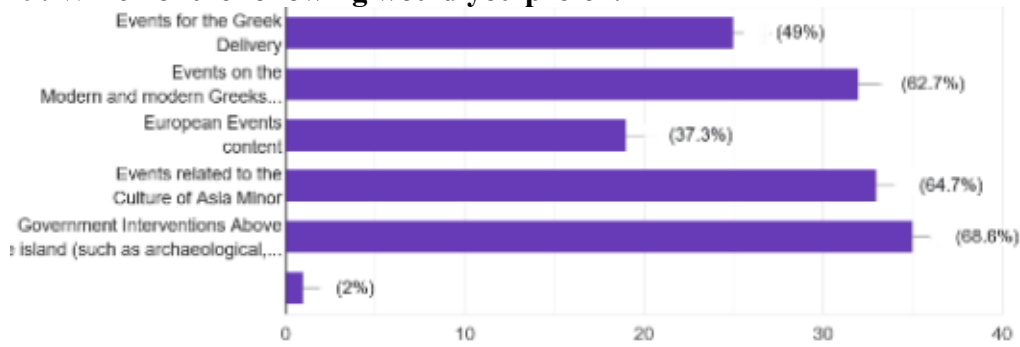
Graph 27: The adequacy of transport services affects both the daily life of the local people and the tourist development, and the answers for such a crucial issue show great room for improvement, as 64.7% of the sample stated that public transport does not work well enough.

28. What kind of cultural activities/events would you like to attend on the island of Psara?



Graph 28: Preferences for cultural events on the island indicate the needs and interests of the public, contributing to the targeted development of cultural activities such as theatre performances (66.7%), art exhibitions (62.7%), and festivals (66.7%)

29. Which of the following would you prefer?



Graph 29: Finally, the choice between different proposals shows the respondents' priorities regarding the cultural and economic development of Psara, a question that revealed that the participants' preferences differ, but that all proposals were chosen by at least 37.3%.

4. FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY ON THE CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF PSARA

Participation in book promotion activities for Fishers outside the island highlights the effort to preserve the cultural identity for a wider audience. However, this is an area that requires further strengthening. Similarly, participation in book promotion activities within the island demonstrates the need for greater mobilisation of the local community for its literary heritage.

The knowledge and involvement of residents in initiatives to preserve the cultural heritage of Psara reveal local activism and interest in its protection and promotion. Responses vary according to the activity, suggesting both the potential for improvement and the existing mobilisation of residents. In addition, participation in cultural events outside Psara indicates the degree of community awareness of the preservation of the island's cultural identity and the potential for future activities that could enhance its extroversion and promotion.

In terms of entrepreneurial activity, residents' awareness of grants for young entrepreneurs reflects the level of information about economic opportunities. It is noteworthy that a significant percentage chose the answer "don't know/no answer", indicating the need for better dissemination of information in this area. At the same time, the business actions affecting the sustainable development of the Fishers underline the importance of a balanced approach between economic and environmental well-being.

Reading books about the Fishers is an indication of interest in local history and cultural preservation. Responses varied, with most participants choosing books about the history of the island and the period of Turkish occupation.

A particularly critical issue for the daily life of residents and tourism development is the adequacy of transport services. The responses show considerable room for improvement, with 64.7% of respondents stating that public transport does not adequately meet their needs.

Finally, the choice between different cultural and economic development proposals revealed a variety of preferences among participants. However, each proposed action garnered at least 37.3% of preferences, suggesting an interest in multi-level development on the island.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Cultural entrepreneurship in Psara can act as a driver of sustainable tourism development, using cultural routes, local festivals, and religious events to enhance local identity. It is a key axis for preserving historical memory and strengthening the local economy. The combination of cultural heritage, tourism, and local traditions can create a sustainable development model

that will contribute both to the promotion of the island and to improving the living conditions of its inhabitants

Archaeological sites, such as the Mycenaean settlement at Archontiki, and historical monuments, such as the Black Ridge and the church of Agios Nikolaos, are central points for the promotion of cultural tourism. Their exploitation through organised tours, educational programmes, and digital technologies can enhance the interest of visitors, attracting both researchers and tourists interested in the history and culture of the island

The promotion of the cultural heritage of Psara through cultural entrepreneurship actions can lead to the creation of a resilient and sustainable development model, based on the history, traditions, and natural resources of the island.

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