

Agritourism Development in the Caspian Sea Region of Iran: Does Culture Matter?

Desarrollo del Agroturismo en la Región del Mar Caspio de Irán: ¿Importa la Cultura?

Maryam Mahmoodi¹

¹ Seed and Plant Improvement Institute, Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Organization, Karaj, Iran

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to take a phenomenological perspective to understand the role of local culture on development of agri-tourism ventures in agrarian regions bordering the Caspian Sea in Iran. The article contributes a phenomenological analysis of 26 agritourism entrepreneurs to reveal the elements of local culture useful to their venture launch and expansion. This study offers empirical support that local culture indeed has an impact on entrepreneurial tasks that structure business launch and expansion. A mix of monetary and non-monetary motives for launching an agritourism venture was observed. It was also found that entrepreneurs in this study were characterized as collectivist rather than individualist; they had high level of ambiguity tolerance; and they favoured learning more frequently from established role models to provide a practical education. Findings indicate that local culture can be considered as variable influencing individuals' motivation, values, beliefs, and entrepreneurial behaviour. Findings of this research contribute to the provision of a solid basis of Iranian cultural values that works as the foundation for the future development of dimensions of Iranian cultural values in the agritourism context.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial culture, phenomenology, entrepreneurship, agritourism.



Resumen

El propósito de este estudio es adoptar una perspectiva fenomenológica para analizar el papel de la cultura local en el desarrollo de emprendimientos de agroturismo en las regiones agrarias adyacentes al mar Caspio, en Irán. El artículo presenta un análisis fenomenológico basado en 26 emprendedores de agroturismo, con el objetivo de identificar los elementos culturales locales que facilitan el establecimiento y la expansión de sus iniciativas empresariales. Los resultados aportan evidencia empírica de que la cultura local incide de manera significativa en las tareas emprendedoras que estructuran tanto la creación como el crecimiento de los negocios. Se observó una combinación de motivaciones monetarias y no monetarias para la puesta en marcha de los emprendimientos. Asimismo, se constató que los emprendedores se caracterizaban por una orientación colectivista, elevados niveles de tolerancia a la ambigüedad y una preferencia por el aprendizaje a través de modelos consolidados que ofrecieran formación práctica. Los hallazgos sugieren que la cultura local puede considerarse una variable determinante en la motivación, los valores, las creencias y el comportamiento emprendedor. Esta investigación contribuye a establecer una base sólida de los valores culturales iraníes que sirva de fundamento para el desarrollo de futuras dimensiones culturales aplicadas al contexto del agroturismo.

Palabras clave: Cultura emprendedora, fenomenología, espíritu empresarial, agroturismo.

1 Introduction

Diversification of agriculture is advocated as one of the main strategies to stabilize and increase farm income, improve employment opportunities and conserve natural resources (Dwivedi et al., 2017). Agritourism, which combines agriculture and tourism, is referred to as one of the main approaches for farm diversification (Choo & Park, 2020). It refers to enterprises and activities of hospitality that are performed on farms or agricultural sites for the purpose of education and recreation of tourists (Van Sandt, 2018).

Although agritourism in Iran has been recognized as an effective strategy of diversifying farmers' income in rural areas, and some farms are already providing services related to this form of tourism, this kind of tourism has yet to achieve the expected level of growth and expansion. This is particularly significant in the northern regions of the country, which are situated along the Caspian Sea and attract an average of around 10 million tourists annually (Mododi Arkhudi et al., 2025).

It is evident that the advancement of agritourism in rural regions is influenced by a multitude of determinants, encompassing infrastructural development, accessibility to financial resources, governmental policy frameworks, and socio-cultural dynamics. Among these, socio-cultural elements assume a pivotal role, as the indigenous culture and belief systems of rural communities can function as both facilitators and impediments to the sector's expansion. For instance, the perspectives of farmers toward tourism, their receptiveness to change, and their propensity to engage in novel activities are profoundly shaped by local traditions and value systems (Zamani et al., 2025).

Given the profound influence of local culture on the behavioral and attitudinal dispositions of rural populations, this study seeks to delineate and evaluate the impact of indigenous cultural frameworks on the establishment and progression of agritourism enterprises in regions of Iran that exhibit the highest annual tourist influx. By attaining a more nuanced comprehension of these cultural influences, the tourism sector can foster the sustainable development of agritourism in a manner that harmonizes with and respects the local cultural milieu.

2 Literature Review

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is a framework used to understand the variations in culture across societies and to discern the ways that business is done across different cultures (Corporate Finance Institute, 2020, p.17). According to Hofstede (1980, 1990) cultural differences across societies can be reduced to four dimensions, including uncertainty avoidance, power distance, individualism, and masculinity (Fig.1).

Uncertainty avoidance refers to people's tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty (Hofstede, 1980). It implies the degree to which people feel uncomfortable with ambiguity and uncertain situations (Hope, 2003). Uncertainty Avoidance negatively affects risk taking behaviour. Cultures scoring high in uncertainty avoidance prefer rigid codes of belief and behaviour, and are intolerant of unconventional behaviour and ideas. Cultures with low levels of uncertainty avoidance maintain a more relaxed attitude in which practice counts more than principles (Hofstede, 2011).

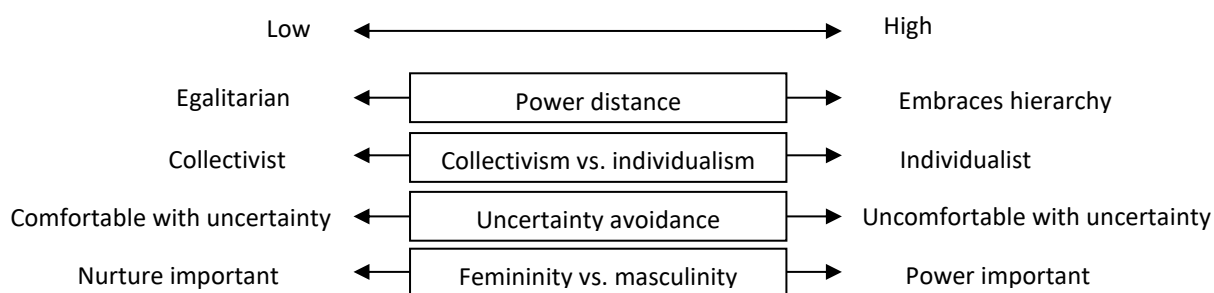
Power distance refers to “the extent to which members of a society accept the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 45). It affects hierarchy and dependence relationships in the family and organizational contexts (Aytan & Sayan, 2020). Cultures with high power distance tend to be hierarchically structured and characterized by

subordinates' dependence on authority figures. According to research, power distance negatively affects entrepreneurship (Autio et al., 2013).

Individualism stands for a preference for acting in the interest of one's self and immediate family, whereas collectivism stands for acting in the interest of a larger group in exchange for their loyalty and support (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). In high individualistic societies, people are expected to care about self-actualization and career progress, whereas people with high collectivism cultures tend to value group benefits and well-being over their self-interests (Soares & Perin, 2019; Efra, 2014).

Masculinity involves the division of roles in society according to gender (Hofstede, 1993). Masculine societies emphasize achievement, wealth, mission, and performance, while in feminine societies dominant values are caring for others, fluid gender roles, and quality of life (Aytan & Sayan, 2020). In high masculinity societies, women can hardly get higher-level and better-paying jobs. In low masculinity societies, women can get more equitable social and economic status (Ranjbar et al., 2018).

Figure 1. Hofstede's cultural dimensions



Adapted from Corporate Finance Institute (2020)

Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been extensively utilized in various scholarly investigations examining innovation and entrepreneurial behavior. These dimensions provide a robust framework for analyzing how cultural contexts influence the propensity for innovation and the manifestation of entrepreneurial activities. By elucidating the interplay between cultural values and entrepreneurial dynamics, these studies offer critical insights into the ways in which societal norms and beliefs either facilitate or hinder innovative practices and entrepreneurial endeavors across diverse cultural landscapes (Chabika et al., 2024; Boubakri et al., 2021; Abdelrahim, 2020).

However, in the entrepreneurial culture literature, in addition to Hofstede's framework, Inglehart (1977) also highlights the importance of achievement motivation to understand the entrepreneurial culture. Inglehart (1977; 1990) has done considerable research using another cultural concept referred to as materialism and post-materialism. The theory of materialism and post-materialism explores the transformation observed in numerous societies, shifting from a culture predominantly centered on materialistic priorities to one where a growing number of individuals value non-materialistic goals over material pursuits (Vaznonis et al., 2024). This theory has been proposed based on two sub-hypotheses, scarcity and socialization. The scarcity concept implies that an individual's priorities reflect his or her socio-economic circumstances; therefore, the greatest value is usually given to relatively scarce goods. People in environments in which material sustenance and physical security are scarce generally tend to prioritize materialistic goals, while post-materialist values such as autonomy, esteem, self-expression and intellectual satisfaction will be emphasized by more prosperous communities (Morales & Holtschlag, 2013).

However, Inglehart argues that the relationship between socioeconomic conditions and value system is not fluid, and therefore he introduces the socialization hypothesis. The socialization concept assumes that the value system of an individual considerably reflects the prevailing circumstances during his or her formative years. "This means that changes in value systems in a society are gradual processes that usually take place through intergenerational replacement (Morales & Holtschlag, 2013, p. 268).

Table 1 synthesises some of the main studies focused on the impact of local or national culture on tourism/agritourism, mainly using the Hofstede framework.

Table 1. Main research on culture and agritourism

Authors (Year)	Purpose	Methodology	Main results
Vena-Oya and Parrilla-González (2024)	Analyse and structure the main olive oil tourism activities using Importance-Performance (I-P) analysis in relation to national and international tourists' satisfaction	Questionnaire, I-P maps	The key olive oil tourism activities differ between the two study target audiences, where a higher requirement was observed on the part of international tourists, so a series of strategies were recommended to help the management of these destinations.
Suryani et al. (2024)	How culture and community creativity can improve agritourism	Qualitative (natural direct observation, talking to Strawberry employees)	Culture when combined with natural resources, may support the growth of agritourism by enhancing the ethno-authenticity of the destination, highlighting its distinctiveness, communicating it, fostering locals'

			creativity, fostering innovation, boosting its popularity, and facilitating marketing.
Abdelrahim (2020)	The effect of Hofstede's cultural values on national rates of innovation	Least squares multiple regression	A country's rates of innovation are most closely associated with the cultural values of uncertainty acceptance and long-term orientation.
Calza et al. (2018)	How national cultural dimensions influence EU rural entrepreneurs' diversification into the tourism sector	The EU data set, bivariate correlation analysis	Linking Hofstede's cultural dimensions to the Total Diversification Indicator, which measures the number of initiatives that rural farms have implemented with the aim of diversifying into tourism activities in each EU country, the paper shows, through a bivariate correlation analysis, that both uncertainty avoidance and power distance are significantly negatively related to the TDI
Boubakri et al. (2021)	Whether and how national culture influences corporate innovation using a newly available	Comprehensive database on innovation around the world (The Derwent Innovation database), Regression analysis	Culture has relevance for innovation: The probability of a firm innovating is higher in individualistic and long-term oriented societies, as well as in cultures with less power distance, less uncertainty avoidance, and less masculine cultures.
Paniccia and Baiocco (2020)	Explaining the intertwined dynamics underlying sustainable agritourism and its determinants using ecological economics co-evolutionary framework	Longitudinal analysis, Interview	Sustainable agritourism emerges within rural destinations through diffused multilevel interactions and feedbacks resulting in organizational practices that enhance the farm and region's identities, and thus competitiveness.
Ohe and Ciani (2011)	Which diversified activities influence the price level of agritourism and how they do so	National databases, Logit model	Agritourism based on local cultural resources can internalize positive externalities, which are uniquely nurtured local cultural resources, into income – unlike facility-based activity that has no connection with local cultural resources.

Source: author elaboration

Despite the considerable academic focus on the socio-cultural dimensions of entrepreneurship, there remains a pressing need for further empirical research to elucidate how local culture shapes the evolution of entrepreneurial activities (Liñán et al., 2020). Specifically, qualitative studies that delve into the nuanced ways in which local culture influences entrepreneurship development are essential. Such research would enhance our comprehension of the role local culture plays in sustaining entrepreneurial processes within communities and provide insights into how to foster and cultivate an entrepreneurial culture that drives both social and economic progress. Given that Iran is undergoing unprecedented economic, social, and cultural transformations, understanding the impact of local culture on entrepreneurial behavior holds significant social and practical

relevance. Consequently, this article seeks to contribute to this discourse by investigating the influence of cultural values on new venture creation decisions. Grounded in the foundational works of Hofstede (1980) and Inglehart (1977), who are regarded as seminal figures in the study of entrepreneurial culture (Cacciattolo, 2014), this study provides empirical evidence to address the primary research question:

Has local culture influenced the development of agritourism enterprises in agrarian regions bordering the Caspian Sea in Iran?

By exploring this question, the study aims to shed light on the interplay between cultural frameworks and entrepreneurial behavior, offering valuable implications for policymakers and practitioners seeking to promote entrepreneurship in culturally diverse settings.

This study focuses on the entrepreneurship motivation, individualism-collectivism and uncertainty avoidance cultural dimension.

2.1 Agritourism in the Caspian Sea Region of Iran

The empirical context of this study includes Caspian Sea Region of Iran. The provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran, occupy the majority of this coastal belt (Fig. 2), and have a diverse terrain, with thick forests, mountains and a coastal plain. These two provinces have a considerable rural population comprising approximately 40 percent of the total population, across 5566 villages (Iran Statistics Centre, 2016). Many family farms in this region need to diversify their offerings to remain profitable (Mahmoodi et al., 2013), offset economic pressures and take advantage of new market opportunities.

Figure.2. Location of the studied provinces



In Iran, agritourism has grown significantly since the late 1990s, becoming a key economic driver in rural regions. This growth was initially driven by farmers searching for alternative revenue streams as agricultural profits declined. Over the past three years, the pandemic has further

boosted the appeal of agritourism. With a preference for outdoor activities deemed safer during COVID-19 (Barreal et al., 2024), farms especially in the coastal areas of the Caspian Sea in Iran (Rezaie Adriani & Nastaran, 2017; Papzan et al., 2012) have become ideal destinations due to their vast open spaces, allowing for easy social distancing in areas like pumpkin fields, apple orchards, and corn mazes.

Today, the industry boasts hundreds of lodging options scattered across various villages. These accommodations vary from simple renovated structures to high-end log cabins with modern facilities. This variety has drawn a consistent influx of local tourists, establishing rural tourism as a vital part of the regional economy. Government backing has been instrumental in this development. The Sixth National Development Plan (2017-2023) and the Seventh National Development Plan (2024-2028) and the Strategic Document for the Development of Tourism in Iran approved in 2020 emphasized the development of a special plan for organizing tourism in the forests and rural areas of the north of the country and also the northern coasts in particular. These documents also oblige the government to develop the infrastructure, facilities and cultural activities especially in rural areas, including the development of roads and public transportation to indigenous and local areas, and the development of sports and water recreation for tourists in these areas (Ministry of Iranian Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, 2021).

Some of the agritourism farms in the coastal areas of the Caspian Sea offer recreational activities, including fishing, hospitality services (such as bed and breakfasts, food services, hosting-related weddings and private parties, and overnight stays of farms), recreational self-harvest, farmers markets, and u-pick fruits or vegetables. The activities most commonly offered are hospitality services, eating at local restaurants, and shopping along the way.

Although these areas have a great potential that can be used in agritourism, this type of activity has been considered only in recent years in these areas. A favourable climate and scenic amenities, across this famous Northern tourism circuit, complete with vast natural landscapes, a diversity of agricultural operations, plus a number of intriguing ethnic groups in these areas, have opened many opportunities for agritourism in these regions. However, entry into agritourism is complicated by limited landowner experience, a complex regulatory system, and limited information about how to find and exploit local opportunities. Despite these issues, this kind of tourism- agritourism has more developed in these two provinces compared to other provinces of Iran, and the farms offering tourism services are further developed in these areas.

3 Methodology

3.1 The phenomenological approach

The intrinsic nature of entrepreneurship and its promoting and hindering factors emerges more effectively from the real entrepreneurs who have their lived experiences (Raco & Tanod, 2014). To investigate it, a researcher should be deeply involved in the lived experience of the entrepreneurs, and their stories should be considered as the main source of information. By telling their stories, the participants express their lived experiences and uncover their own reality, understanding and meaning (Raco & Tanod, 2014, p. 276). It is in line with the phenomenological inquiry, which aims to study human experiences and recognize the subjective nature of 'lived experience' from the perception of those who experience it (Cope, 2003, p.8). Phenomenology is a way of approaching lived human experience—understanding how things are perceived and appear to our consciousness (Wassler & Kuteynikova, 2020, p.3). Phenomenology can be defined as a philosophical study focused on the commonality of shared experiences (phenomena) among several individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It helps in gaining in-depth understanding of a subject by collecting data related to lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2014; Trochim et al., 2016).

As this study aimed at exploring the role of local culture on the development of agritourism enterprises in agrarian regions bordering the Caspian Sea in Iran, gaining the valuable and useful perspective from the lived experiences of entrepreneurs who have started their own business in the region would offer a greater understanding of the key concepts relevant to the impact of culture on entrepreneurial behaviour more meaningfully. So, the phenomenological method was used to achieve an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. It examines conscious experience as experienced through first-hand or –agritourism entrepreneurs' point of view (McNeil, 2020).

3.2 Participants of the study

The participants of this research were agritourism entrepreneurs in the research site (Gilan and Mazandaran provinces), who have real and lived experiences with agritourism venture launch and growth. Entrepreneurs were selected because every agri-tourism entrepreneur has his or her own notions, ideas, and opinions about cultural values fostering or hindering entrepreneurship and their lived and unique experiences can become a real source of knowledge for policy makers and also future entrepreneurs (Raco & Tanod, 2014).

3.3 Research site

Two provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran were selected as the research site of this study. As mentioned in the previous section, agriculture and animal husbandry are one of the top activities and principal sources of income for rural households in this area (Ghaderi & Henderson, 2012) and family farms are the most common operating farming system in this area, which is the most appropriate system for developing agritourism enterprises (Chagunda, 2018). On the other hand, these provinces due to the coastal location are regarded as the most attractive beach and tourist destinations in Iran, characterized by a high seasonality in the summer peaking in September, attracting around 10 million visitors per year. Most of the tourists traveling to this area are usually interested in visiting farms and purchasing local foods and products. For this reason, this area has generally made more progress in terms of agritourism compared to the other regions of Iran. Therefore, since the entrepreneurs of this region have long entered this business and have more experience in this field, they have a greater awareness of the condition of agritourism in general and local cultural stimuli in particular, and will provide more realistic information about the studied subject.

3.4 Sampling

The sampling unit in this study was farm families who had established tourism services on their farms. The person who made decisions on the development of farm tourism business in the family was interviewed. Data collection was implemented in nine districts: four districts in Mazandaran province (namely; Kiakola, Roknkola, Langar, and Baghdasht), and five districts in Gilan province (namely; Talebabad, Abkenar, Shanghai-pardeh, Patavan, and Mahvizan). Since there was no formal statistics showing the number and profile of entrepreneurs active in agritourism in these two provinces, no sampling frame was available for the target population. So, respondents were identified through snowball sampling.

3.5 Data collection

Findings of this study are based on in-depth interviews, undertaken by the author as the interviewer and a co-interviewer, investigating the role of cultural values on agritourism development as an entrepreneurial phenomenon. Interviews conducted with 26 entrepreneurs who had launched agritourism ventures on the farm. Interviews continued until the sample reached an informational saturation point at which no new information or meanings are revealed (Flick et al., 2007). Ryan

and Cave (2005) believe that consensual realities about interviewers' experiences can be identified through sample sizes of 20–25 for exploratory studies. On average, these interviews lasted between 40 to 90 minutes and took place mostly at their agritourism farms and five of the interviews were done at their houses.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to chronicle the participants' experiences, thoughts and opinions about launching an agritourism venture in their community. Interview questions focused on the local culture and venture launch, including, "*What was your motivation to enter self-employment agritourism business?*", "*In starting and expanding agritourism businesses, do you think you are more successful if you work individually or if you work as a team?*", and "*To what extent have the risks and ambiguities such as; economic, competitive and legal risks affected the start-up and development of your agri-business?*".

Additional clarifying questions were used to ensure that the researcher understood the full, intended meaning of the participants' answers. Following the interviews, researcher field notes were kept to note key observations about the interview process and emerging insights (Maguire et al., 2014). All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

3.6 Data analysis

In this study, reduction and thematic description (see Giorgi, 1997 and Hycner, 1985) were used to analyze the data. First, all transcripts were carefully reviewed to refamiliarize the interviewer through deep immersion with participant perspectives (Sang, 2024; Chandra, 2024). Second, participant data were summarized and initially thematically coded, preserving direct quotes where appropriate. This process resulted in the generation of various categorical units that described the essence of participant's experiences with agritourism. Third, categorical units were thematically grouped by clustering units according to common themes, while removing irrelevant, repetitive or overlapping data (Nasiri et al., 2024). Finally, the interviewer analysed each transcript and summary by relating common themes back to theoretically important qualities of the phenomenon in question. This involved assessing the ability of the identified themes to offer a holistic understanding of the participants' experiences, and further refining the identified themes. No software was used to analyse the data.

3.7 Maintaining Study Credibility and Validity

While quantitative researchers often speak of “reliability” and “validity,” terms intended to describe quantitative instruments; qualitative phenomenologists often refer to authenticity, trustworthiness, or credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Generally speaking, Howe and Eisenhardt (1990) understand validity to be the use of research questions to drive data collection (rather than the opposite), consistent application of data collection and analysis, consciousness of the researcher’s subjectivity, connection to theory, and overall merit in practice. Similarly, Polkinghorne (1989, p. 57) suggests five questions that researchers should ask themselves in the course of a phenomenological study, summarized here: 1) Did the interviewer influence the subject’s descriptions? 2) Is the transcription accurate, and true to the underlying meanings? 3) Were alternative explanations found? 4) Is the general description of what is happening connected to the transcripts? And, 5) Is the description specific to one case, or more broadly applicable? The research was undertaken with strict adherence to the stated methodology, and with consciousness that any interpersonal interaction may induce inevitable research biases (Maxwell, 2005). The following is a brief description of how the authors addressed these issues:

1) Did the interviewer influence the contents of the subjects’ descriptions in such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect the subjects’ actual experience? For resolving the bias problem or the influence of interviewer, when descriptions were not clearly understood by the researcher, additional clarifying questions were asked to further ensure that if interviewer understood the full, intended meaning of the participants’ answers.

2) Is the transcription accurate, and true to the underlying meanings? The interviewer transcribed the interviews immediately after conducting the interviews. The interviewer then reviewed each transcript for accuracy. The transcription was once again reviewed by the co-interviewer. Member checking was also used to authenticate the transcriptions by passing copies of the interview transcripts to the respondents. Participants verified that the transcriptions matched their experience. Field notes taken during interviews were also used to substantiate interview transcripts (Truscott, 2007, p. 52).

3) Were alternative explanations found? To satisfy this question, an outside researcher, a professor of lifelong learning, familiar with the phenomenological research methods was asked to review the data, themes and conclusions to ensure the accuracy of data analysis procedures.

4) Is it possible to go from the general structural description to the transcriptions and to account for the specific contents and connections in the original samples of the experience? To ensure the coherence between structural descriptions and the transcriptions, interview transcripts were re-read and reviewed by researchers in conjunction with textural-structural descriptions. In ensuring this coherence, “there was a constant process of ‘returning to the transcript’ and a constant focus on drawing themes only from the data” (Truscott, 2007, p. 53).

5) Is the structural description situation specific, or does it hold in general for the experience in other situations? The generalization of the study has been discussed in the study limitations section.

To further increase the credibility of the study, both Creswell (2014) and Maxwell (2005) suggest the use of multiple validity strategies. This study incorporates Creswell's (2014) techniques of being explicit about researcher bias, and actively discussing negative cases or diverse/discrepant points of view. Maxwell's (2005) suggestion of incorporating quasi-statistics was also utilized at least to describe the characteristics of the sample and any biases this may raise. It was agreed with Maxwell (2005, p. 105), who states that “validity threats are made implausible by evidence [*italics in original*], not methods,” meaning that the deliberate presentation of a breadth of evidence as it has done here— rather than that which supports only one predetermined perspective —suggests a valid, credible study.

4 Results

4.1 Demographic characteristics

Demographic characteristics of the participants are detailed in Table 2. A total of 26 interviews were conducted (ranging from 2-4 interviews per district). The mean age of the participants engaged in the study was about 36 years, with all participants between 27 and 51 years old. All of the participants were male. It is notable that, regards to the agritourism, women in these regions mostly help their husband (as cooker, seller or labour). However, their role as an independent agritourism entrepreneur is not significant in these areas. Personal characteristics, inequalities in access to socio-economic opportunities, and cultural context are the main factors impeding women from progress in self-employment. For example, some men resist their wife's financial independence as it is still believed that such women are hard to be controlled (Munachonga, 1988). However, based on the local information obtained from the local residents, three agritourism farms had been

launched and managed by women who two of these farms were active in cultivating and selling medicinal herbs at the farms and one was active in farming cut flowers. However, the researchers could not talk with them during their research stay at the region to obtain further information about their business activities.

The main occupation of about 70 percent of the respondents was farming and all were founders and managers of privately owned enterprises in the area engaged in agritourism activities.

Table 2. Profils of study participants

Case No.	Age	Main occupation	Resident location	Case No.	Age	Main occupation	Resident location
I.1	41	Farmer	Mazandaran	I.14	47	Farmer	Gilan
I.2	40	Farmer	Mazandaran	I.15	33	Farmer	Gilan
I.3	32	Teacher	Mazandaran	I.16	44	Farmer	Gilan
I.4	28	Farmer	Mazandaran	I.17	32	Farmer	Gilan
I.5	31	Farmer	Mazandaran	I.18	47	Hotel manager	Gilan
I.6	43	Shop owner	Mazandaran	I.19	31	Farmer	Gilan
I.7	29	Student	Mazandaran	I.20	50	Farmer	Gilan
I.8	32	Agricultural expert	Mazandaran	I.21	28	Student	Gilan
I.9	27	Farmer	Mazandaran	I.22	51	Farmer	Gilan
I.10	40	Farmer	Mazandaran	I.23	40	Agricultural expert	Gilan
I.11	29	Farmer	Mazandaran	I.24	33	Farmer	Gilan
I.12	45	Farmer	Gilan	I.25	43	Farmer	Gilan
I.13	31	Student	Gilan	I.26	42	Farmer	Gilan

Source: author elaboration

The following are a summary of findings drawn from the thematic analysis of narrative data.

4.2 Motives driving entrepreneurship

Study respondents were asked to explain their motivations for entering self-employed businesses. The results showed that the motivation of launching agritourism businesses of about one-third of the respondents (9 individuals) were non-materialistic values including: improving social status, self-esteem, risk taking, making the best use of expertise and available resources, and quality of life;

"I've always liked to work for myself, to have my own choices and take responsibility for my choices. I don't like to work for others. ...Although, I don't know much about entrepreneurship and tourism in the farms, I want to learn and continue learning until I get it right. I think I have the ability to grow this business" (I.2).

"I'm so interested in entrepreneurship and now studying it at the university. I'd like to make best use of my own expertise. ...My father is a farmer...So I decided to establish agritourism facilities in our farm" (I.7).

"Besides producing and selling rice and citrus, I'd like to make urban consumers more familiar with the origin of their foods. I want to provide a situation in which they know more about agriculture, the importance of farming on their life. ...I also do it for my own heart... I like risk taking and getting into unknown situations" (I.16).

Increasing self-confidence was one of the other non-economic values motivating the respondents to launch a self-employed business;

"Three years ago, my cousin started his business. He opened a restaurant and served mostly local foods and drinks, there. ...He was so successful. When I observed him, I thought myself that if he can do it, I can do it, too. I can organize available resources for starting and running my own venture, too" (I.3).

In addition to reflecting a "can-do" attitude, this quote also refers to the effects of role models in inducing entrepreneurial choice among potential entrepreneurs and attracting them to start new ideas in the region. This is an idea supported by Lichtenstein and Lyons (2006), whose Economic Development System depends on creating a "pipeline" of mentorship from established businesses to nascent entrepreneurs as a fundamental part of the local support ecosystem.

The next theme, materialism, was mentioned by other respondents. Seventeen (17) respondents attached more importance to economic values in their motivation to start their own agritourism business. They stated their motives for self-employment entry as financial betterment, labour market discrimination, and to find a way around salaried work;

"I'm 28 years old and a student. I searched a lot for a job, but I couldn't find an appropriate job. So, I decided to initiate my own business. ...Now I'm working on a little part of my father's fruit garden" (I.21).

"I'm a farmer and have four children. But I can't afford the costs of living, especially during the last two years when my expenses have tripled. I don't have capital to extend farming...because of this, I decided to make more money from available resources" (I.12).

The results from this research work indicated that there were no significant differences in the business motivations of selected entrepreneurs in the two provinces. On the other hand, most of the respondents in the two provinces (63 percent in Mazandaran and 67 percent in Gilan province) were most strongly motivated by the desire to increase their income, and financial factors were most likely to be linked with the reasons why they venture into agritourism entrepreneurial activities. Considering the impact of the society culture on entrepreneurs' motivation, although non-financial values have also been influential in starting a business in the past, these results reveal that in this community, financial values are stronger incentives than non-financial ones to start and expand the agritourism businesses. This could be due to the fact that especially during the past decade, financial and economic crisis has affected the economy of Iran with great intensity and because of this; materialistic values were stronger motivators than non-materialistic ones in the two provinces.

4.3 Team and group orientation

During the first steps of venture creation, entrepreneurs rarely have anything more than human and social capital and they have to employ those to gain the other resources. Joining networks and entering into strategic alliances are some of the ways to access critical resources without owning them (Bygrave, 1997). The first theme concerns the importance of group-oriented values or collectivism. A majority of the participants (19 respondents) in this study placed value on group contributions, as a traditional cultural norm in their community, in developing agritourism businesses;

"We as entrepreneurs should also consider the vitality of the region. If we operate individually ...we won't have the capacity to offer various agritourism services.... There should be a wide range of good quality services involving agriculture, nature, and culture. There should be good farm-restaurants, farm tours and other farm-activities to attract more tourists to the area...and we won't get there unless we work as a team, we should share our resources and also our new ideas and thoughts" (I.23).

Respondents of this study also believed that through accessing and using resources and skills (such as; sharing workers, fishing facilities, horseback riding instructor, camera for bird-watching, using members' expertise) in the network, some of the deficiencies of small enterprises could be overcome. In addition, commitment among entrepreneurs will be viewed positively in collective-oriented communities – an idea supported by more than one participant.

"...In addition to consciousness-raising through interaction with other entrepreneurs, people with special resources, knowledge and skills could recognize and solve the obstacles the members of a team have confronted. ...It also increases our ability to discover the innovative methods and practices introduced by the colleagues...I think people become more earnest to start and continue their business when they think that they are supported by each other" (I.20).

"By building a network, access to needed information, skills and resources will be increased for entrepreneurs even for potential entrepreneurs of low power groups ...and finally makes the condition better for entrepreneurs and interested people to benefit from advantageous opportunities. ...We should constitute a business network to act successfully in the area" (I.3).

"Even if we won't want to work with each other collaboratively, we should constitute a network in which share our ideas, thoughts, and even our resources to act successfully" (I.15).

These participants stressed the importance of sharing knowledge, technological corporation, and collaboration in the agritourism businesses development process in the region. They also believed that the best solutions and ideas can be identified and tested through joint effort and the resulting trust and sharing of data, information, and innovative ideas fosters the development of agritourism ventures across the community.

The studied entrepreneurs also emphasized the presence of experienced and specialized advisors with relevant skills and knowledge (or role models) as a way to learn new opportunities, knowledge and skills and also to reduce the ambiguity and complexity associated with initiating new ventures. So that, the best way to acquire necessary entrepreneurial knowledge and skills emphasized by more than a half (14 individuals) of the respondents was through positive experiences with role models. They believed that creating a learning society in which knowledge and skills share with the community to influence the change and modify the behaviour is even more effective than courses taught by scientific experts – an idea echoed in Hustedde (2007);

"I think the best way is to learn from one another. Because we understand our language better than anyone else's language. There are some capable people among ourselves [in the region] who are doing very well in their career. They are very knowledgeable

and experienced in the field of entrepreneurship, and are the best teaching resource for the others" (I.9).

"...Even having successful and experienced entrepreneurs as instructors of entrepreneurship training courses is great. Because they have precious experiences and practical knowledge ...they can provide us with helpful information ...and help us to do better in our career" (I.13).

In line with the concepts presented in the theoretical framework, the impact of family support on the development of entrepreneurial activities has also been emphasized by eight respondents;

"My family supports me financially and also in providing the needed resources for my business as far as they can. They encourage me to continue my business ...However; support by the other entrepreneurs in the area is another thing. ...The relationships created among entrepreneurs could be helpful in launching my new ideas, and overall, my business successfully. ...Because each of us has a set of experiences which could be helpful for the others" (I.9).

Market orientation was also observable among seven study participants. Market oriented respondents of this study tend to anticipate potential market opportunities in agritourism and think of investing now in order to reap future profits;

"These days, tourists are seeking variety. The more there is variety, the more tourists will come to the area. So, here we should diversify our services and provide different tourism services in the farms and gardens. ...We should think and plan for providing more attractive businesses and to achieve this, we should build a network to consult each other, with other entrepreneurs of the region. Tourism in the field of agriculture won't develop if everybody offers the same tourist services" (I.11).

"...Sharing information and ideas about providing high quality and organized activities, market trends, competition strategies, and increasing the orientation to serve tourists' demands and needs that help to emerge more opportunities could improve the vitality and quality of agritourism services in the region" (I.7).

Five of the respondents pointed to the role of a leader in the networks to control the team;

"Obviously, building a team and team working has its own problems. ...For example, each member of the team has special beliefs, values and ideas...and so, some conflicts

will arise among the members. ...So, each team needs an experienced leader to manage these conflicts, building trust, getting a consensus and control the team" (I.14).

In contrast, about one forth (seven people) of the respondents were individualists. They believed that opportunities result from working individually, and this solitary work facilitates the identification of radical innovation by entrepreneurs. Respondents with a more individualist orientation emphasized individual choices and other self-oriented values and skills such as self-sufficiency, self-competence and self-responsibility that support independent living;

"In my opinion, competition is very important to be successful in the field of agritourism in the region. So, the more unique services you provide, the more successful you will be. ...So, I don't want to talk about my ideas with other people active in this field, especially in my neighbourhood. I would like to freely make my own choices and work by myself" (I.2).

"I have new ideas that I think those are unique in the region. Now I'm planning to extend these services at my farm. ...I think I myself have the required knowledge, skills and also the needed resources to develop my business. By being a member of a group, you won't be the only one who provides new services in the area" (I.18).

It seems that respondents with individualist orientations do not have trust in other entrepreneurs. They are afraid of their ideas being stolen, and thus restrict their willingness to collaborate, share information, and work jointly with other entrepreneurs in the region.

Three of the respondents were not opposed to collective behaviours, but they rejected them in their own work life;

"Working as a team has some advantages, like supporting by your colleagues, compensating the deficiencies, and also some disadvantages. Anyway, I personally like to work by myself... because I think I can't be compatible with others and I don't like to work collaboratively. ...I also think that by this way [working collectively] my new ideas won't be specific and unique anymore" (I.6).

4.4 Uncertainty avoidance

Almost all participants of this study highlighted the importance of uncertainty acceptance in entrepreneurial decisions. 24 respondents (92%) in this study tended to engage in more risk-taking

situations and demonstrate more tolerance towards unstructured and ambiguous work environment;

"...In general entrepreneurship and starting a new business means risk and uncertainty. Entrepreneurship means that you will face a world of vague and challenging events. That means you have to be ready to fight" (I.17).

"If you want to be a successful entrepreneur, you have to take risks, of course intellectual risks. You have to deal with ambiguities and challenges and even failure; you have to accept failure as success. ...Many successful people have experienced failure in their life and work. ... Each failure can teach you the lesson of thinking and acting better in the next experience" (I.3).

"My work –as an entrepreneurship, is not a predetermined path. I mean, my father did not start it, so now I inherit it. I myself thought of launching it. So, I have to be patient and deal with the uncertain future. ... Of course, not everything is clear, especially in our country, where the regulations change overnight" (I.1).

"If the way ahead an entrepreneur is to be completely clear and unambiguous, it is no longer entrepreneurship. It is a predetermined path that the previous ones have taken and you just follow them. In this way, you are not an entrepreneur. The entrepreneur must be brave, he/she must take risks to be successful" (I.13).

People with low uncertainty avoidance are more willing to take risk and try and adopt new ideas and technologies (Xu & Cheng, 2012). Hofstede (1980) argued that low levels of uncertainty avoidance typically inspire people to show a stronger willingness to take risks in coping with ambiguity in career decision making. It is also an expression of self-achievement, and motivating entrepreneurs to invest in risky ventures, as a perception of opportunities in the environment encourages them to act as first movers in new markets (Calza et al., 2018). Such a tendency is also observed in this study;

"Some things are inherent and inevitable! Sometimes people like to have experiences that are challenging to them. ... Doing things that always seems difficult and challenging has been part of my interests. I have always been a risk taker. I was the first one who started this business in this city about two years ago" (I.22).

"In fact, progress requires risk-taking. ... The most important requirement for being an entrepreneur is to have the risk-taking spirit. If you want to start a business, you need to see if you can take the risk and face the challenges before you start" (I.5).

"Entrepreneurship is a risky business, but risk-taking in entrepreneurship should not be compared to chance-betting. A successful entrepreneur is one who makes well-considered decisions and actions about the risks of his or her business and minimizes the risky nature of his or her business" (I.8).

"Without risk, entrepreneurs will not fail and will not learn from their mistakes. Of course, it is possible to learn from positive experiences, but failure teaches us more valuable lesson that remains in our lives. ... Ambiguity and risk-taking are part of an entrepreneur's life. The low-capital entrepreneur needs to know when to borrow, when to expand their business, when to count on their fixed salary for self-employment, and how to assess the potential benefits of risk-taking" (I.10).

People with low level of uncertainty avoidance usually welcome diversity, deviate from the rules and routines and are open to change which enhances exploration and novelty (Gelfand et al., 2006);

"Before starting my own business, I used to be a government employee. But I do not like situations in which everything is calm and clear and nothing really happens. After a while I felt stuck in a rut ... An entrepreneur should not expect security and stability. The entrepreneur must take the risk, must have the power to face challenges and ambiguities... When I decided to start my own business, I knew I had to deal with a world of challenges, unknowns, and difficulties" (I.18).

Two of the respondents in this study (about 8%) tended to show a stronger desire to establish rules, routines and recommended practices and was less tolerant to rule breaking (House et al, 2004). These rules and regulations are important to provide them a safe environment.

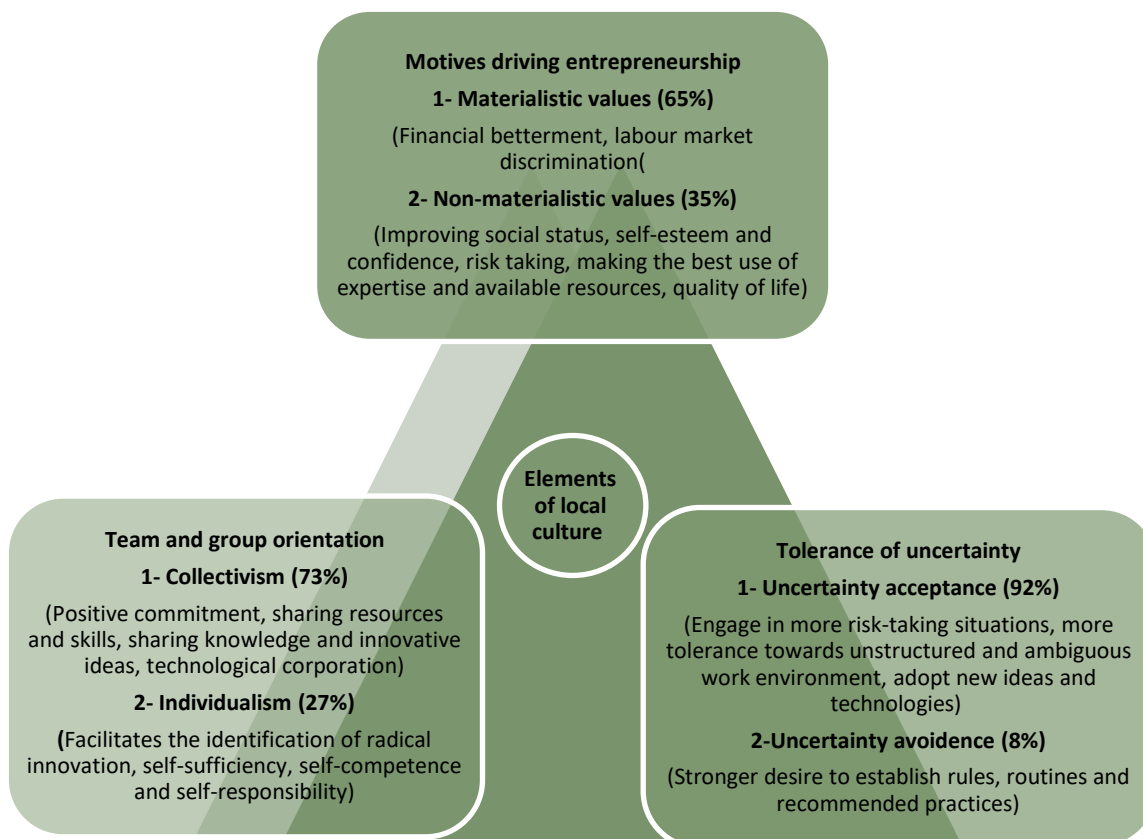
"I think the path should be clear for an entrepreneur. There should be no ambiguity for an entrepreneur so that risk challenges do not engage entrepreneur's mind. ...A safe economic and social environment must be created for the entrepreneur. I need to be confident of return on my investment, so that I can focus on the ideas that are developing my business" (I.2).

Yeong Ng (2012) argues that creating a safe environment for some individuals with relatively high uncertainty avoidance to pursue their ideas is also crucial. In order to achieve this safe environment

for entrepreneurial activities, the community should develop cultures with high trust, high fairness, and high error and failure tolerance by providing greater career stability, establishing more formal rules and providing a clear career path (Hofstede, 1980, p. 45).

Finally, Figure 3 summarizes the findings of this study regarding the elements of local culture which influence the development of agritourism in the coastal provinces of Iran.

Figure 3. Elements of local culture affecting agritourism development in the studied area



Source: author elaboration

5 Discussion

This study offers empirical support that local culture indeed has an impact on entrepreneurial tasks that structure business launch and expansion, either directly or by impacting entrepreneurial competencies as an intervening variable. The findings of this research lend support to some of the entrepreneurial cultural constructs proposed by Hofstede (1980) and Inglehart (1977). It also deepens our understanding of entrepreneurial culture of rural areas in two Northern provinces of Iran. While further research could examine the extent to which this is true, the data examined here

shows clear support for local cultural impacts on entrepreneurial organizing, risk-taking, and venturing. Despite the selection of the Caspian Sea region, it can be argued that the responses found here reflect similar themes and ideas to explorations of entrepreneurial culture in the United States (Fortunato & McLaughlin, 2012; Hustedde, 2007).

A mix of monetary and non-monetary motives for launching an agritourism venture was observed. In several cases, the non-monetary motivation predominated over monetary motivations. While this diverges from classical conceptions of the entrepreneur as a market maker, arbitrageur, and profit-driven economic agent, it aligns closely with observations of entrepreneurship across the tourism industry as a lifestyle choice. On the other hand, a team or group orientation was viewed as being potentially very important to stimulating a more entrepreneurially-supported culture. The predominance of non-financial values as the motivation to enter self-employment agritourism business by this group of respondents is rooted in traditional collectivism and non-materialistic culture, as mentioned earlier. This finding empirically emphasizes the impact of local culture on entrepreneurship development.

The respondents' emphasis on the role of role models in the launching and developing of agritourism businesses is also rooted in the traditional culture of the community, including the establishment of a Hojreh and the role that the owners played in training business techniques to the younger people. Entrepreneurs from this region thus reinforce a trend in the entrepreneurship literature that increasingly views role models as central to the entrepreneurial learning process (see Lichtenstein & Lyons, 2006), drawing from the idea that many entrepreneurs either come from entrepreneurial families or have extended contact (and thus learning opportunities) with current entrepreneurs (Blanchflower et al., 2001). Participants in this study appear to have identified the difference between tacit and codified knowledge in the venture process. While the latter, found in technical and course-based information, may be important for uncovering systemic opportunities, tacit knowledge from mirroring role models helps entrepreneurs to draw on prior experience, and develops habits useful to running a business (Fortunato et al., 2015). These role-based ecosystems are constrained in instances where knowledge sharing is restricted, and entrepreneurs feel they cannot share their ideas with others. This reflects the findings of Fortunato and McLaughlin (2012) found high levels of interaction among entrepreneurs in high entrepreneurship rural communities, while finding high degrees of fragmentation and hesitancy to share information in low entrepreneurship areas.

In general, this community scored low in uncertainty avoidance. With regard to the

entrepreneurship literature, the results of this study confirm that entrepreneurs are people who tend to accept a high degree of uncertainty in their lives and take each day as it comes. They are able to adapt their behaviours to a variety of situations. They are motivated to engage in diversification and are also open to change and innovation.

The findings from this study suggest an approach that addresses local agritourism entrepreneurship across two major dimensions. First, participants stress the importance of building a team-based environment that competes together as a region rather than against one another. The development of a knowledge-sharing ecosystem is well-developed in the literature (see Feld, 2012 for applied examples), and creating a safe space for entrepreneurs to interact, share stories and ideas, and develop strategies that are meaningful to the region as a whole is critical. To do this, regions should consider working with existing entrepreneurs who are known to invite others to the table, and to encourage entrepreneurs to self-organize. Second, attention must be paid to the content of these ecosystem networks. Knowledge sharing is not enough. Bringing the right people, including enhanced involvement from local government will contribute to the generation and expansion of businesses that meet the needs of the local economy, and connect entrepreneurs to local government actors. Additionally, at these meetings, a focus should be placed on learning together, ensuring that entrepreneurs with a range of experience are present and can share their knowledge with others while being exposed to innovative ideas from new and emerging entrepreneurs. This is also an opportunity for investors and government actors to learn about the challenges faced by entrepreneurs, and opportunities for overcoming those challenges as a team. Creating such a system sends a cultural message as well that entrepreneurship is welcome, supported, and encouraged in the region – and that there are many individuals ready to help new entrepreneurs with their agritourism venture. Future research might focus on the different approaches taken across regional groupings to determine which meta-level factors appear to work consistently in developing a functional culture that supports entrepreneurship.

6 Conclusions

This article examined the impacts of local culture on entrepreneurship in agritourism ventures across two agrarian regions bordering the Caspian Sea in Iran. Using a phenomenological approach, 26 agritourism entrepreneurs described the impact of some local cultural dimensions on the establishment and development of agritourism businesses. It was found in this study that entrepreneurs favoured building a more team-oriented approach toward entrepreneurship across

the region, and learning more frequently from established entrepreneurs. The confluence of collectivism and uncertainty acceptance is expected to manifest a culture that is highly supportive of entrepreneurial ventures, and sensitive to the monetary as well as non-monetary motivations of entrepreneurs. In a broader context, the results point to the importance that local culture and social structure play in situating entrepreneurial action in the Caspian Sea region.

Findings of this study confirm the idea that entrepreneurship is a socio-cognitive process and inevitably develop in a context of local social networks which are guided by cultural values (De Koning, 2003), exercised through communication and building interpersonal relationships (Muzychenko, 2009). People's tendency to work as a network can be affected by a shared system of values, thoughts, views, language, expectations and behaviours combined with a local culture and knowledge of entrepreneurship, and within these networks, relationships among the people and institutions would be enhanced (Garavaglia, 2008).

These findings also mirror other empirical findings of the cultural impact on entrepreneurship, including Fortunato and McLaughlin (2012), and Williams (2007). All of these studies point to the diverse impacts different cultures have on entrepreneurship, painting a far more complex picture than singular explanation by rational economic action or deterministic social structure. Instead, cultural systems of support emerge from a variety of dynamic motivations (some noneconomic), and the ability to work together to overcome problems in some cases. This research thus lends support to the idea that the cultural situation in any given place may well be a starting point – rather than an afterthought – in catalysing the entrepreneurial potential of communities and regions by first analysing the cultural properties presented here. However, this research is necessarily limited in its scope due to the deliberate focus on the Caspian Sea region. Further research should be aimed at replicating similar studies in other regions to validate the extent to which these findings are internationally generalizable, and to examine in greater detail some of the meta-level strategies that could encourage an entrepreneurial culture. These findings support the idea that an exclusive focus on the economic determinants of entrepreneurship may not remove cultural barriers to entrepreneurial action, or elevate cultural advantages that can stimulate entrepreneurship, especially when the goal is to stimulate agricultural entrepreneurship that is diversified, robust, and more resilient to economic change.

7 Study limitations

While useful for understanding on-the-ground conceptual issues regarding agritourism and

entrepreneurship in the Caspian Sea region, this study has the same common limitations accompanying all phenomenological and case study work. The external generalizability of the study is low due to the small number of participants, so findings from this study may not be equally applicable in other regions. However, it should be considered that given the similarities in the culture, tradition and social structures of the most regions of Iran, the results of other studies on entrepreneurial culture in other regions would be likely consistent with the results of this study. The use of semi-structured interview protocols, while enhancing a fuller discussion of the underlying concepts, also reduces internal replicability. Transcripts are translated into English, and of course it raises the risk of missing very small nuances that do not translate well from Farsi to English. The use of snowball sampling also may restrict the sample to certain participants, while missing others that have different points of view. Many of these limitations are by design to ensure that the study has high analytic generalizability (see Yin, 2009), capturing many perspectives of the multidimensional idea of entrepreneurial culture. As with any phenomenological study, further replication in other populations, quantitative applications, and repeated trials would enhance the overall generalizability of this work. Another limitation of this study includes collection of data from male respondents and the opinion of few female entrepreneurs towards some of the cultural elements supporting or restricting agritourism development was not expressed in this study.

8 Research implications

The finding of this research provides some theoretical, practical and social implications. This study offers some contribution to knowledge in a number of literature strands, including greater understanding of the influencing cultural factors on agritourism entrepreneurs' decision-making to develop agritourism venture, and identifying some of the cultural elements as perceived by agritourism farmers enabling them in terms of agritourism development. It also provides a major contribution to knowledge by being among the very first studies that examine the impacts of local culture on entrepreneurship in agritourism ventures in Iran.

Practically, this research provides useful guidance for future entrepreneurs on how to exploit cultural opportunities in the community for the development of entrepreneurial businesses. The results of this study could provide policy makers and governmental bodies with more information about the existing trends, conditions and challenges of developing agritourism entrepreneurship in the Caspian Sea region to create a more motivating work environment and fostering an entrepreneurial culture and environment. Furthermore, the findings of this study will empower the

tourism industry and its associated enterprises to significantly benefit from a more profound understanding of the components of entrepreneurial culture and the cultural dimensions that drive business development. By leveraging this knowledge, they can pinpoint regions with cultural contexts that are conducive to entrepreneurial growth and initiate innovative agritourism projects that harmonize with both the cultural fabric and entrepreneurial spirit of the area. This approach not only ensures the sustainability of such projects but also fosters active involvement from local communities. As a result, it enhances the authenticity of the tourism experience while securing long-term socio-economic benefits for the region. This strategic alignment between cultural context and entrepreneurial initiatives paves the way for a more inclusive and sustainable development model in the tourism sector.

Finally, the primary societal implication is that local entrepreneurial culture fundamentally impacts entrepreneurship development. However, further qualitative investigation with a larger population sample is warranted to further explore these findings. Moreover, future researchers might consider creating entrepreneurial culture in support of agritourism businesses based on the findings of this research.

References

- Abdelrahim, Y. (2020). The influence of culture on rates of innovation: Re-examining Hofstede's cultural dimensions. *International Journal of Management*, 11(9), 999-1009. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3711527>
- Autio, E., Pathak, S. & Wennberg, K. (2013). Consequences of cultural practices for entrepreneurial behaviors. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 44(4), 334-362. <https://doi.org/10.1057/jibs.2013.15>
- Aytan, Y.S. & Sayan, I. (2020). Ethics in Management: Ethical leadership and culture. In U. Akkucuk (Ed.), *Handbook of research on sustainable supply chain management for the global economy*. IGI Global Publication, Hershey, PA., USA.
- Barreal, J., Vena-Oya, J., & Mercadé-Melé, P. (2024). Addressing regional tourism policy: Tools for sustainable destination management. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 30(4), 856-873. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13567667231179756>

- Blanchflower, D. G., Oswald, A.J. & Stutzer, A. (2001). Latent entrepreneurship across nations. *European Economic Review*, 45(4-6), 680-691. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0014-2921\(01\)00137-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0014-2921(01)00137-4)
- Boubakri, N., Chkir, I., Saadi, S. & Zhu, H. (2020). Does national culture affect corporate innovation? International evidence, *Journal of Corporate Finance*, 66 (2): 101847. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcorpfin.2020.101847>
- Bygrave, W. (1997). *The Portable MBA in Entrepreneurship*. John Wiley and Sons, New York, NY.
- Cacciattolo, K. (2014). Understanding organizational cultures. *European Scientific Journal*, 2(1), 1-7. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/328024696.pdf>
- Calza, F., Go, F.M. Parmentola, A. & Trunfio, M. (2018). European rural entrepreneur and tourism-based diversification: Does national culture matter? *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 20(5): 671-685. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2215>
- Calza, F., Go, F.M., Parmentola, A. & Trunfio, M. (2018). European rural entrepreneur and tourism-based diversification: Does national culture matter? *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 20(5), 671-683. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2215>
- Chabika, R.C., van Schalkwyk, J.H., van Rensburg, L.R.J. & Müller, R. (2024). Cultural forces shaping social influences: The role of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and individualism. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 13(8), 87-101. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v13i8.3748>
- Chagunda, C. (2018). Towards a better understanding of motivations and challenges in family farm diversification into agritourism accommodation enterprises: A case of South-West Scotland. Proceedings of 10th World Conference for Graduate Research in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure, 2 –7 October 2018, Avanos, Turkey.
- Chandra, P. (2024). A phenomenological study of tourists' categories in the Indian Himalayan Region. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 26(3). <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2656>
- Choo, H. & Park, D.B. (2020). The Role of agritourism farms' characteristics on the performance: A case study of agritourism farm in South Korea. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, 23(3), 464–477. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15256480.2020.1769520>

- Cope, J. (2003). Researching entrepreneurship through phenomenological inquiry: Philosophical and methodological issues". Working Paper, 2003/052. Institute for Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Development, Lancaster University Management School, UK.
- Corporate Finance Institute. (2020). Fast Moving Consumer Goods. Retrieved Feb. 17, 2021 from <https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/other/fast-moving-consumer-goods-fmcg/>
- Creswell, J. W. & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice*, 39(3), 124-130. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- De Koning, A. (2003). Opportunity development: A socio-cognitive perspective. In J.A. Katz, and D.A. Shepherd, (Eds.), *Advances in Entrepreneurship, Firm Emergence and Growth: Cognitive Approaches to Entrepreneurship Research*, (pp. 265–314). Oxford: Elsevier/JAI Press.
- Dwivedi, S., Lata, K., Kumar Sharma, K. & Singh, H. (2017). Doubling Farmers' Income by 2022: A Critical Appraisal. *Agro Economist- An International Journal*, 4(1), 29-34. <https://doi.org/10.5958/2394-8159.2017.00006.8>
- Efra, K. (2014). The direct and indirect impact of culture on innovation. *Technovation*, 34(1), 12-20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.technovation.2013.08.003>
- Feld, B. (2012). *Startup communities: Building an entrepreneurial ecosystem in your city*. Wiley, Hoboken, NJ.
- Flick, U., Kvale, S., Angrosino, M.V., Barbour, R.S., Banks, M., Gibbs, G. & Rapley, T. (2007). *The Sage qualitative research kit*. Sage, London, U.K.
- Fortunato, M.W.P., Alter, T.R., Frumento, P.Z. & Klos, J. (2015). Creating a culture of innovative university engagement for entrepreneurship development in rural and distressed regions. *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, 3(1): 122-138. <https://doi.org/10.11114/ijsss.v3i1.518>

- Fortunato, M.W-P. & McLaughlin, D.K. (2012). Interaction and purpose in highly entrepreneurial communities. *Entrepreneurship Research Journal*, 2(1), 5-5. <https://doi.org/10.2202/2157-5665.1049>
- Garavaglia, Ch. (2008). Clusters' development: spin-offs and external economies. KITeS Working Paper 226, KITeS, Centre for Knowledge, Internationalization and Technology Studies, University of Bocconi, Milan, Italy, November.
- Gelfand, M. J., Nishii, L. H., & Raver, J. L. (2006). On the nature and importance of cultural tightness-looseness. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91 (6), 1225-1244. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.91.6.1225>
- Ghaderi, Z. & Henderson, J.C. (2012). Sustainable rural tourism in Iran: A perspective from Hawraman Village. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 2(3), 47-54. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2012.03.001>
- Giorgi, A. (1997). The theory, practice, and evaluation of the phenomenological method as a qualitative research procedure. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 28(2), 235-260. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156916297X00103>
- Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences*. Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, California.
- Hofstede, G. (1990). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Hofstede, G. (1993). Cultural constraints in management theories. *The Academy of Management Executive*, 7(1), 81-94. <https://doi.org/10.5465/ame.1993.9409142061>
- Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>
- Hope, O. (2003). Firm-level disclosures and the relative roles of culture and legal origin. *Journal of International Financial Management and Accounting*, 14 (3), 218-248. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-646X.00097>
- Howe, K. & Eisenhardt, M. (1990). Standards for qualitative (and quantitative) research: A prolegomenon. *Educational Researcher*, 19(4), 2-9. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X019004002>

- Hustedde, R. (2007). What`s culture got to do with it? Strategies for strengthening an entrepreneurial culture. In: Walzer, N. (ed.), *Entrepreneurship and local economic development*. Lexington Books, New York, NY, pp. 39-58.
- Hycner, R.H. (1985). Some guidelines for the phenomenological analysis of interview data. *Human Studies*, 8(3), 279-303. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00142995>
- Inglehart, R. (1977). *Modernization and Post-Modernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Inglehart, R. (1990). *Culture shift in advanced industrial society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Iran Statistics Centre. (2016). The initial reports of 2016 census of Iran. Retrieved June 12, 2012 from <http://www.amar.org.ir/module/News/shownews/page-1924.aspx?NewsId=278>.
- Lichtenstein, G., & Lyons, T. (2006). Managing the community's pipeline of entrepreneurs and enterprises: A new way of thinking about business assets. *Economic Development Quarterly*, 20(4), 377-386. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891242406289365>
- Liñán, F., Jaén, I. & Martín, D. (2020). Does entrepreneurship fit her? Women entrepreneurs, gender-role orientation, and entrepreneurial culture. *Small Business Economics: An Entrepreneurship Journal*, (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-020-00433-w>
- Maguire, R., Stoddart, K., Flowers, P., McPhelim, J. & Kearney, N. (2014). An interpretative phenomenological analysis of the lived experience of multiple concurrent symptoms in patients with lung cancer: A contribution to the study of symptom clusters. *European Journal of Oncology Nursing*, 18(3), 310–315. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejon.2014.02.004>
- Mahmoodi, M., Chizari, M., Kalantari, Kh., Roknedin Eftekhari, A.R. & Khodaverdizadeh, M. (2013). Estimating the tourists' willingness to pay for agri-tourism services in the Caspian Sea coastal Provinces. *Journal of tourism planning and development*, 2(6), 11-29. https://tourismpd.journals.umz.ac.ir/article_546.html?lang=en
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- McNeil, R. P. (2020). Corporate success: Exploring promotions of minority women to GS-15 and equivalent government positions. [PhD. Dissertation, Northcentral University, School of

Business, USA].
<https://www.proquest.com/openview/89ea501a96619ba72fc0104aeead8b04/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>

- Mododi Arkhudi, M., Ferdowsi, S. and Rahimi Taghanaki, N. (2025). Analyzing and explaining the factors of agricultural tourism development in rural areas (Rural areas of Saman County as a case study). *Journal of Geography and planning*, 28(90).
<https://doi.org/10.22034/gp.2024.59093.3200>
- Morales, C.E. & Holtschlag, C. (2013). Post materialist values and entrepreneurship: A multilevel approach. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, 19(3), 266-282.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/13552551311330174>
- Munachonga, M. (1988). Income allocation and marriage options in Urban Zambia. In D. Dwyer and J. Bruce (Eds.), *A home divided: Women and income in the third world*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, pp.143- 54.
- Muzychenko, O. (2009). International entrepreneurship: developing cross-cultural entrepreneurial competence. In D.J. Newlands and M.J. Hooper (Eds.), *The global business handbook: The eight dimensions of international management*, Gower Publishing Limited, UK.
- Nasiri, H., Kirillova, K. and Wassler, P. (2024). Beyond beauty: Ugly and borderline tourism aesthetic experiences. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 105. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2023.103703>
- Ohe, Y. & Ciani, A. (2011). Evaluation of agritourism activity in Italy: facility based or local culture based? *Tourism Economics*, 17 (3), 581–601. <https://doi.org/10.5367/te.2011.0048>
- Paniccia, P.M.A. & Baiocco, S. (2020). Interpreting sustainable agritourism through co-evolution of social organizations. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29(1), 87–105.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1817046>
- Papzan, A., Karamidehkordi, M. & Karbasioun, M. (2012). Qualitative analysis of tourism difficulties in Yasechah village: going toward rural development in Chaharmahal-va-Bakhtiary, Iran, using grounded theory. *The Journal of American Science*, 8(6): 280-286.
<https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:4849729>
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1989). Phenomenological research methods. In R.S. Valle and S. Halling. (Eds.), *Existential-Phenomenological Perspectives in Psychology: Exploring the Breadth of Human Experience*, Plenum, New York, NY, pp. 41-62.

- Raco, J.R. & Tanod, R.H.M. (2014). The phenomenological method in entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 22(3): 276–285. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJESB.2014.063776>
- Ranjbar, M., Sharifinejhad, Sh, Barati, O., Dehghani Tafti, A., Bahrami, M.A., Montazeralfaraj, R. (2018). Correlation of work-related cultural dimensions and perceived organizational justice: A questionnaire study in Iranian hospitals. *International Journal of Innovative Studies in Medical Sciences (IJISMS)*, 2(2), 10-16. <https://ijisms.org/storage/Volume2/Issue2/IJISMS-020203.pdf>
- Rezaie Adriani, M. & Nastaran, M. (2017). Surveying of agricultural tourism plan in gardens and farms in the suburbs (Case study: northern part of Isfahan Nazhvan region). *Heritage and Tourism*, 2(7): 153-179. <https://sid.ir/paper/257185/en>
- Ryan, C., & Cave, J. (2005). Structuring destination image: A qualitative approach. *Journal of Travel Research*, 44: 143–150. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287505278991>
- Sang, S. (2024). Digital-induced nostalgia: Homeland tourists' nostalgic experiences in traditional-village digital museums. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 61 (2024), 57–65. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2024.09.011>
- Shane, S., & Venkataraman, S. (2000). The promise of entrepreneurship as a field of research. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(1), 217-226. <https://doi.org/10.2307/259271>
- Soares, M. C. & Perin, M. G. (2019). Entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance: An updated meta-Analysis. *RAUSP Management Journal*, 55(2), 143-159. <https://doi.org/10.1108/RAUSP-01-2019-0014>
- Suryani, A., Soedarso, S., Muhibbin, Z., Saifulloh, M. & Nisa, K. (2024). Culture and Community in Agri-Tourism: Contributions of Cultural and Creative Resources to Strawberry Tourism Suryani. *Indonesian Journal of Community Research and Engagement*, 5(1), 297-319. <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.37680/amalee.v4i1.2589>
- Trochim, W. M., Donnelly, J. P., & Arora, K. (2016). *Research methods: The essential knowledge base*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Truscott, R.B. (2007). The lived experience of being privileged as a white English-speaking young adult in post-apartheid South Africa: a phenomenological study. [A mini-thesis of Bachelor

- Science, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, University of the Western Cape]. https://www.connecting-africa.net/query_2.php?rid=B00063268
- Van Sandt, A. (2018). Regional dimensions of agritourism: exploring spatial and traveller heterogeneity. [PhD. dissertation, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, Colorado State University], <https://mountainscholar.org/items/91bae743-7dd7-4771-bab2-365455fd54f7>
- Vazonis, B., Staugaitis, A. J., & Vazonienė, G. (2024). The interrelationship between pro-environmental attitudes and subjective well-being: The case of Central and Eastern European Countries. *Sustainability*, 16(8), 3434. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16083434>
- Wassler, P. & Kuteynikova, M. (2020). Living travel vulnerability: A phenomenological study. *Tourism Management*, 76(2020), 103967. <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:203435880>
- Williams, C. C. (2007). Socio-spatial variations in the nature of entrepreneurship. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, 1(1), 27-37. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17506200710736249>
- Xu, J. & Cheng, C. (2021). Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism and the Readiness of Business-to-Consumer E-commerce. *Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 8(1), 791–801. <https://doi.org/10.13106/jafeb.2021.vol8.no1.791>
- Yeong Ng, J.C. (2012). Implementing intrapreneurship: A structural and cultural approach. *Graziadio Business Review*, 15(3). <http://gbr.pepperdine.edu/2012/11/implementing-intrapreneurship>.
- Yin, R. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Zamani, P., Sadeghiha, M. and Honarvar J. (2025). Investigating measures to revive urban and rural tourism in the post-corona era. *Journal of Applied Researches in Geographical Sciences*, 25(77), 446-465. <https://doi.org/10.61186/jgs.25.77.13>