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Modeling Agritourism Entrepreneurship: A Comparative Analysis of Operational Profiles, Constraints, and Capacity Gaps Across Europe and Oceania

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Abstract

Contemporary global tourism is undergoing a structural transformation toward immersive, experiential "diving" modalities, establishing the countryside as a critical axis for constructive and regenerative travel. Despite this shift, academic literature remains bottlenecked by informational fragmentation, routinely prioritizing consumer demand over supply-side operator agency. To resolve this empirical deficit, this study utilizes a qualiquantitative, multi-sited, sequential mixed-methods research design across Europe and Oceania, focusing on agritourism as a significant sub-sector. The empirical findings reveal that while global agritourism is unified by a profound biographical territorial embedding, its operational architecture splits into two polarized configurations. The European Institutionalized Mature Model is highly market-driven, demand-responsive, and insulated by top-down public policy frameworks, yet it is severely constrained by generational succession grids and an aging demographic. In contrast, the Oceanian Decentralized Identity Frontier Model represents a youth-centric, female-dominated structure born of necessity within Small Island Developing States, driven by intrinsic cultural pride but exposed to a complete policy vacuum and severe climate variability. The research diagnoses an advanced sub-specialization training shortfall in Europe regarding environmental and social agriculture, and a foundational corporate capacity deficit in Oceania concerning financial risk hedging, compliance, and direct-to-consumer digital infrastructure.

Keywords: rural tourism; rural entrepreneurship; regenerative tourism; mixed-methods research; comparative territorial analysis; anthropology of tourism

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1. Introduction

Consumption patterns within contemporary global tourism are undergoing a profound structural transformation driven by emotional and experiential imperatives, as modern tourists increasingly reject the standardized, homogeneous, "off-the-shelf" packages that characterized twentieth-century mass tourism [1]. Instead, contemporary demand shows a marked preference for a flexible approach characterized by personalized, highly adaptable itineraries that foster spontaneity and genuine discovery [2,3]. Faced with escalating global anxieties regarding environmental degradation, overtourism, and the erosion of localized cultural identities, contemporary consumers are drawn to smaller-scale solutions that focus intrinsically on local community life [4]. This dynamic makes the countryside an ideal landscape for "constructive tourism" in which the rural environment serves as an active component of a therapeutic experience, satisfying a rising wellness wave that prioritizes physical and mental rejuvenation through disconnection from urban stressors [5]. Consequently, rural tourism has evolved from a peripheral niche into a structural alternative to mass tourism, functioning as a vital engine of regional resilience and sustainability [6] as well as a crucial engine for heritage management and regenerative tourism, promoting the transitions from a static cultural defense into an active practice of heritage stewardship while driving regenerative dynamics that actively restore regional socio-ecological systems in marginal regions. In recent decades, rural tourism has explicitly emerged as one of the most relevant global strategies for promoting economic and social development within peripheral and lagging territories [7]. Although a universally shared definition does not exist within academic scholarship due to the high mutability of rural spaces [8], the phenomenon is generally understood as a coherent set of tourism activities that take place in non-urban settings and valorize localized resources, including the natural landscape, working agriculture, cultural heritage, and traditional gastronomic practices [9,10]. Taxonomically, the United Nations World Tourism Organization defines rural tourism as a multifaceted category of activity in which the visitor's experience is fundamentally tied to a broad spectrum of products linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyles, traditional cultures, angling, and localized sightseeing. In many countries, particularly those characterized by agrarian dependencies or insular geographies, rural tourism functions as an important tool for diversifying household income streams and supporting localized economic growth in an ecologically and socially sustainable manner [11].

The structural manifestation of these global trends remains deeply rooted in local specificities, as demonstrated by the mature, institutionalized paradigm of Europe compared to the market-driven frontier of Oceania. In Europe, rural tourism dates to the 19th century, particularly within Alpine regions where expanding railway networks first enabled urban residents to access nature [11]. Organized iterations gained widespread institutional momentum in the 1960s and 1970s as a direct policy response to industrialization and rapid rural economic decline [12]. In this setting, rural tourism evolved assuming the features of agritourism, which represents today the most common form of rural tourism in Europe. Initially deployed as a reactive economic survival strategy to generate supplementary income for stagnating agricultural sectors facing urbanization and rural depopulation, the European model has evolved into a sophisticated mechanism for regional development and economic resilience underpinned by the concept of "multifunctionality" [13] that hinges on the development of hospitality and restaurant services within the farms. Thus, this framework views farms not merely as production units for food commodities, but as vital custodians of landscape, biodiversity, and living history, and as potential access points for urban tourists to the rural environment. The contemporary European paradigm is heavily supported by top-down institutional frameworks, most notably the European Union's

Common Agricultural Policy and the LEADER program, which champions bottom-up, community-led initiatives to foster local development [14]. A primary cultural anchor of this village-centric model is its deeply integrated relationship with gastronomy, particularly in Southern Europe, where strict institutional mechanisms like Protected Geographical Indication designations transform the countryside into an active gastronomic deposit where tourists engage directly with the terroir (the profound, intrinsic connection linking food, culture, and place) [15]. In stark contrast to the dense, historically stratified spaces of Europe, the tourism landscape of Oceania represents a market-driven "New Frontier" where rural tourism is actively reshaping traditional visitor flows across vast distances and developing its own ways of interpreting the agritourism model [6]. Within the unique contexts of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and expansive continental states across the Pacific, this specific typology of tourism assumes a highly marked developmental importance because local island and remote regional economies are often heavily dependent on a highly restricted number of production sectors, leaving them profoundly vulnerable to global market fluctuations, macroeconomic shocks, and the accelerating impacts of climate change [16,17]. Historically, the roots of rural tourism in Oceania can be traced to the emergence of farm holidays in New Zealand during the 1930s economic depression as a pragmatic method for farmers to supplement dwindling agricultural incomes, later formalizing in the 1970s via the global adoption of the Willing Workers on Organic Farms movement and parallel indigenous tourism models [18]. Structurally, Oceania largely rejects village-centric tourism in favor of a wilderness-centric model defined by isolation, vastness, and open landscapes, where a core asset is the "station stay", hosting tourists on massive agricultural operations that are frequently accessible only via light aircraft [19]. In these fragile settings, rural tourism and agritourism directly strengthen local economic systems while also valorizing agricultural resources, traditional food systems, and indigenous cultural practices. To mitigate the immense travel costs associated with the region's remoteness, Oceania has successfully pioneered a high-value, low-volume strategy, manifested in the rapid expansion of luxury glamping on remote farms and vineyards, alongside aggressively branded, export-oriented food and wine trails [20].

The translation of these macro-regional development trajectories into operational business realities is entirely mediated by specific forms of entrepreneurship that reflect their respective territorial environments. Rural entrepreneurship demands a highly hybridized competency profile where operators must seamlessly fuse traditional agricultural production know-how with specialized strategic business capabilities [6]. Globally, this form of entrepreneurship functions as a cross-sectoral practice in which primary-sector resources are actively leveraged to create tertiary-sector value, requiring individuals to balance five overlapping activity domains: education, hospitality, recreation, entertainment, and direct product sales [21]. This dual economic identity complicates capital asset management, risk allocation, and marketing strategies, forcing entrepreneurs to diversify their business models in response to localized constraints. Remaining viable within this modern experience economy presents operators with complex challenges, such as navigating a strict digital imperative to bypass global intermediaries and secure visibility in a smartphone-dominated world [22]. Concurrently, environmental sustainability has transitioned into a highly technical competency termed "eco-effectiveness," demanding that operators move beyond cosmetic green claims toward demonstrable ecological stewardship that actively restores local biodiversity and soil health through active visitor engagement [23,24]. The entrepreneurial landscape reflects this divergence. European operators manage highly diversified portfolios de-risked by public structural matching funds, subject to strict institutional quality standards, certification protocols, and regional architectural constraints that align individual innovation with collective territorial branding [25,26]. Conversely,

Oceanian practitioners demonstrate specialized professional capabilities in high-value luxury glamping, risk management, and export-oriented branding, operating completely independent of centralized policy safety nets and leaning heavily into advanced brand positioning and data analytics to capture high-spending international demographics [27]. Moreover, across both global contexts, this entrepreneurial field is deeply gendered; while women face disproportionate structural barriers regarding asset ownership and structural financing, agritourism serves as a strategic site where traditional rural gender roles are actively renegotiated, allowing female practitioners to establish recognized business identities, alter intra-household decision-making dynamics, and capture a larger share of the tourism revenue [28–31].

These diverse entrepreneurial structures directly shape the micro-level professional profiles of those involved in the field, revealing a critical turn in global scholarship. Globally, the professional profile of the rural tourism entrepreneur, and specifically the entrepreneur involved in agritourism activities, is characterized by a distinctive hybridization, creating a complex professionalization continuum that ranges from part-time or seasonal "hobbyists", who view tourism as a minor, supplementary revenue stream to cushion core agricultural volatility, to formalized, full-time "professionals" who operate sophisticated hospitality assets [21,32]. Within the European context, operators exhibit significant structural heterogeneity: while a notable proportion hold university degrees, they often lack specialized, sector-specific vocational training in hospitality, and the profile is heavily constrained by an advanced average age, creating an urgent demand for generational renewal and digital upskilling [25,33,34]. In sharp contrast, the practitioner in Oceania possesses an explicit professional identity anchored in strategic experience design, customer service metrics, and rigid market compliance within fragile geographic settings [35,36].

The current state of academic tourism scholarship, however, reveals a profound limitation: the existing body of literature offers only fragmented, highly context-dependent data on these professional profiles, underscoring an urgent need for comprehensive research [21,37]. Because current scientific data remain scattered across isolated, single-country descriptive case studies and highly specific regional evaluations, they fail to provide a cohesive macro-regional overview of how these professional identities develop, mature, and transition over time, leaving the underlying cognitive, managerial, and sociological profiles of the practitioners largely unmapped. Crucially, this fragmentation obscures a clear understanding of the precise educational and training needs operators require to improve their business operations and survive market volatility. Standard educational offerings frequently misjudge practitioners' true capability gaps, either overemphasizing basic front-of-house hospitality habits or presenting overly abstract agricultural management theories that fail to address the highly practical, hybridized needs of modern agritourism operators [21,38].

While the academic debate has placed an overemphasis on demand-side dynamics at the expense of operator agency, the primary questions of our research were aimed at unveiling these hidden needs of the operators along the following main vectors of inquiry:

- RQ1: What are the exact biographical, operational, and sociodemographic profiles of rural tourism entrepreneurs across distinct regional contexts, and how do these parameters illuminate the complex spectrum separating transient hobbyists from formalized professionals?
- RQ2: How do localized structural constraints (such as geographical isolation, climate vulnerability, seasonal demand, and capital investment boundaries) interact with individual motivations and cultural frameworks to shape contemporary business strategies and service innovations?

- RQ3: What are the precise, unmapped educational, cultural, and technical capacity-building needs that these practitioners require to improve their immediate business operations, maximize land-use efficiency, and withstand market shocks?

This paper aims to answer these questions based on empirical research conducted in Europe and Oceania in 2025. It presents the research and its data, then delves into the discussion, indicating what the study suggests, and closes with guidelines for policymakers to revise the present educational offer for the sector in the two geographical areas.

2. Materials and Methods

This study was intended to provide an indicative, exploratory, rather than exhaustive, picture of contemporary rural tourism realities, with a particular focus on agritourism. In so doing, the research employed a multi-sited, sequential mixed-methods research design to evaluate cross-sectoral supply-side specificities in rural tourism within peripheral economies [39]. Grounded in the comparative evaluation of diverse territorial realities, the empirical framework identifies the operational mechanisms of the supply side and traces how local practitioners adapt their business portfolios to changing market environments. Shifting the analytical focus from consumer metrics to the internal agency and long-term adaptive visions of small-scale business owners, the study linked directly with field practice to map regional resilience strategies [35,40].

The study is structured around three primary lines of inquiry. First, it establishes the precise biographical, operational, and sociodemographic profiles of rural tourism entrepreneurs. Second, it evaluates how localized structural constraints (such as, geographic isolation, acute climate variability, seasonal demand shifts, and limited initial capital) interact with internal operator motivations and cultural frameworks to dictate service innovations. Third, it diagnoses the specific, unmapped educational, cultural, and technical capacity-building needs that practitioners require to optimize land-use efficiency and withstand macroeconomic shocks.

Within the framework of the Agritour European Project, the study focused on five specific target areas that cover the global spectrum for profile-aligned capacity-building: Italy and Slovakia on the European side, and Fiji, Samoa, and Vanuatu on the Oceanian side (Figure 1 and Table 1). Within the European cohort, Italy serves as the benchmark for institutionalized multifunctionality, where destination design is market-responsive and insulated by top-down public policy networks such as the European Union's LEADER program [14,41]. Conversely, Slovakia represents a post-socialist transition path defined by organic, demand-led scaling bottlenecked by an aging operator demographic and severe family succession grids [42]. This policy-shielded paradigm contrasts sharply with the Oceanian Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which navigate absolute macro-policy vacuums and acute climate vulnerability [6]. Within this decentralized frontier, Fiji isolates cross-sectoral smallholder integration within a high-density, resort-dominated market prone to corporate leakage [3]. Meanwhile, Vanuatu tests community-based agritourism embedded in a subsistence-based custom economy amid severe digital isolation [43]. Finally, Samoa demonstrates how frontier experiences navigate collective indigenous land frameworks using traditional narratives like Fa'a Samoa to safeguard socio-cultural integrity [44,45] (Table 2).



Figure 1. Localization of the Agritour EU project partners (Source: M.F. Fontefrancesco's elaboration).

Field execution followed a two-phase sequential data-collection protocol, implemented concurrently across all participating international partner nodes, using standardized instruments translated into regional vernaculars to ensure structural equivalence and construct validity. Phase one deployed a standardized, semi-structured questionnaire targeting a total sample of $N = 128$ operators, distributed to ensure equal statistical weight during comparative macro-regional analysis. The instrument was partitioned into two thematic modules: the first evaluated shared value configurations regarding authenticity, ecological sustainability, and heritage preservation; the second inventoried currently available services, planned three-year portfolio implementations (such as glamping formats, eco-friendly accommodations, or community tours), service expansion motivations, and primary operational bottlenecks [46]. A total of 71 responses were collected for the European sample and 57 for the Pacific sample. Four responses were excluded from the analysis (three from the Pacific group and one from the European group) due to missing age information. The final analytical sample therefore consisted of 124 valid responses: 70 from the European group and 54 from the Pacific group.

To enrich these statistical metrics with narrative depth, phase two transitioned into an intensive qualitative inquiry using an interpretive biographical framework [47]. A nested subsample of $N = 41$ operators, comprising three extensive qualitative narratives per partner node, was purposively selected from the initial survey pool using maximum-variation criteria based on gender, tenure, and structural multifunctionality. The interview protocol engaged participants in long-form, retrospective reconstructions of their firm's complete lifecycle, capturing individual motivations, localized cultural or gendered friction within the community, and the adaptive tactics utilized to survive macroclimatic and market shocks.

Data from the two phases were integrated to address the research questions. Quantitative survey metrics underwent descriptive statistical processing to expose operational gaps and supply-side portfolio capacities. Concurrently, textual outputs from open-ended survey entries and verbatim interview transcripts were processed using systematic thematic coding and matrix display techniques [48] to isolate cross-cutting operational typologies, resource deployment strategies, and coping mechanisms.

Table 1. Summary of the main characteristics of rural agritourism and rural tourism in the different countries investigated in the research.

EUROPE	
Italy	Model and Status: Mature institutional benchmark; strict top-down regulatory framework protected by EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and LEADER programs. Multifunctional farm laws recognize farms as custodians of biodiversity and terroir.
	Operator Profile: Mid-career age distribution (mean: 44 years; range: 35–51); balanced gender participation with strong operational female management; 100% long-term rural residence; non-specialized backgrounds.
	Key Resources: Stratified agrarian landscapes, viticulture, olive groves, historical farmhouses, and Protected Geographical Indications (PGI).
	Primary Bottlenecks: Generational succession grids, risk aversion, advanced capacity shortfalls in social agriculture, carbon/green stewardship metrics, and accessible design.
Slovakia	Model and Status: Post-socialist transition pathway; organic, demand-led diversification shielded by EU rural development mechanisms.
	Operator Profile: Pronounced generational stretching and aging demographic (mean: 53.5 years; range: 32–80); male majority in formal titling; high general secondary/tertiary education but low sector-specific credentials.
	Key Resources: Traditional mixed arable and pastoral systems, mountain landscapes, vernacular rural heritage.
	Primary Bottlenecks: Acute succession crisis, digital upskilling deficits among older operators, and bureaucratic fatigue.
OCEANIA	
Fiji	Model and Status: Decentralized smallholder integration within an enclave, resort-dominated mass tourism economy; complete public policy and subsidy vacuum.
	Operator Profile: Younger demographic (mean: 41.5 years; range: 27–61); female majority (57% in qualitative cohort, 67% regional baseline); non-formal, experiential learning pathways.
	Key Resources: Tropical river valleys, artisanal sugar/cocoa/coffee plantations, traditional agroforestry, and indigenous communal food production.
	Primary Bottlenecks: Corporate revenue leakage to foreign travel intermediaries, acute tropical weather disruptions, and lack of direct-to-consumer digital booking systems.
Samoa	Model and Status: Community-based frontier agritourism governed by customary land frameworks (*Fa'a Samoa* and *Fa'amatai*) to safeguard socio-cultural integrity; absolute absence of state subsidies.
	Operator Profile: Multi-generational operational spread (mean: 47.0 years; range: 22–72); strong female leadership (58% of sample); 93% spatial continuity.
	Key Resources: Taro and banana plantations, artisanal cocoa/coffee processing, volcanic soils, village-integrated communal layouts.
	Primary Bottlenecks: Geographic isolation, high transport overheads, customary land capital constraints, and lack of dynamic pricing or corporate risk-hedging capabilities.
Vanuatu	Model and Status: Custom-economy community agritourism; extreme insular remoteness operating without centralized extension networks or safety nets.
	Operator Profile: Youth-centric necessity entrepreneurship; self-taught operators adapting subsistence farming to experiential tours.
	Key Resources: Subsistence polyculture, organic root crops, dense tropical biodiversity, and customary culinary rituals.
	Primary Bottlenecks: Severe digital isolation, extreme vulnerability to microclimatic shocks and cyclones, and complete scarcity of formal vocational training.

Table 2. Contextual characteristics of the study countries.

Country	Institutional and Policy Context	Agritourism/Rural Tourism Sector	Key Rural Resources
Italy (IT)	Established institutional framework supported by the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), LEADER and national rural-development measures.	26,360 agritourism farms in 2024, according to official national statistics.	Agricultural landscapes, protected areas and biodiversity; diversified farming systems; extensive cultural and gastronomic heritage.
Slovakia (SK)	EU CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027, including rural-development measures and LEADER/community-led local development.	Official agricultural statistics identify 101 farms reporting agritourism/rural tourism as an additional gainful activity.	Forests and mountain landscapes, protected areas and thermal resources; agricultural production; rural architecture, folklore and traditional crafts.
Fiji (FJ)	National Sustainable Tourism Framework 2024–2034 promotes sustainable tourism and stronger integration of environmental, cultural and community dimensions; dedicated public initiatives support agritourism development.	No comprehensive national register of agritourism operators was identified; the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation operates a dedicated Agri-Tourism Portal connecting farmers, agritourism operators and visitors.	Tropical forests, coral reefs and coastal environments; diverse tropical agriculture; indigenous cultural traditions and village-based experiences.
Samoa (WS)	Tourism policy emphasizes sustainable and community-based development, environmental protection and the valorization of local and cultural heritage.	No comprehensive national register of agritourism operators was identified; rural and community-based tourism initiatives link agricultural production, local livelihoods and tourism.	Volcanic and coastal landscapes, forests and marine ecosystems; tropical agriculture; *Fa'a Samoa*, traditional practices and cultural heritage.
Vanuatu (VU)	Sustainable Tourism Policy 2019–2030 provides the national policy framework, with tourism diversification explicitly including agritourism and stronger linkages between primary producers and tourism.	No comprehensive national register of agritourism operators was identified; agritourism is explicitly included within national tourism diversification programs.	Volcanic landscapes, forests, coral reefs and coastal environments; local agricultural production; *kastom*, traditional practices and cultural heritage.

3. Results

3.1. The Survey

The empirical findings from the field questionnaires provide a rigorous, multidimensional characterization of the supply side, directly addressing the context-dependent informational fragmentation that has historically obscured the profile of rural tourism practitioners. A fundamental baseline result emerging across both regional cohorts is the profound territorial embedding of the operators; specifically, 86% of European respondents and 84% of Pacific operators report having resided in a rural area for at least one consecutive year. This high spatial continuity strongly suggests that agritourism ventures are

predominantly an organic expression of a pre-existing, deeply rooted personal or familial connection to the land and agricultural lifeways, rather than being driven by detached external real estate capital or exogenous investments. Sociodemographically, however, the age configurations of the two cohorts diverge significantly. The European operator profile is heavily concentrated within mature, mid-career cohorts aged between 31 and 60 years. Conversely, the Pacific sample reveals a markedly younger entrepreneurial demographic, with 26% of respondents aged 18–30 and 32% aged 31–45. This youthful distribution underscores how rural tourism serves as an essential channel for emerging youth entrepreneurship in island contexts where alternative domestic employment opportunities are structurally constrained and tourism operates as the primary macroeconomic engine.

The empirical data also reveal striking geographical contrasts regarding gender composition and intra-household division of labor. While the European sample exhibits a slight male majority among registered business owners at 56%, the Pacific cohort shows a clear female majority, with women comprising 67% of operating entrepreneurs: this finding validates contemporary gender empowerment literature, which frames rural hospitality as a strategic economic vehicle that allows women to circumvent restricted localized labor markets by seamlessly combining commercial revenue-generating operations with domestic and familial care roles.

Educational qualifications and background training also manifest substantial heterogeneity across both geosystems. In the European cohort, 68% of operators hold an upper secondary school diploma, 15% hold a bachelor's degree, and 17% have completed a master's program. The Pacific profile displays an even more fragmented educational distribution, with 25% completing secondary school, 25% holding a bachelor's degree, and 21% attaining postgraduate qualifications.

Crucially, the empirical data reveal a profound lack of sector-specific formal education among operators, which helps explain why the literature has historically depicted these practitioners as hybrid figures. In Europe, only 24% of entrepreneurs possess formal agricultural qualifications, and a mere 11% hold a specialized degree in tourism; similarly, in the Pacific, 56% of respondents originate from educational pathways entirely disconnected from both agriculture and hospitality. This lack of specialized credentials confirms that most agritourism firms develop organically as an extension of multi-generational family farms without formal hospitality training. In Oceania, this lack of structural qualification is exacerbated by an acute scarcity of formal training infrastructure; only 40% of Pacific operators have ever participated in a dedicated rural tourism training workshop, and, among those who did, a substantial portion reported that the programming lacked practical utility. This dynamic points at a critical educational deficit, proving that current vocational curricula remain misaligned with the cross-sectoral strategic needs of rural operators.

Further analysis of operator psychology demonstrates that while initial business startup is driven by a fluid mix of economic and lifestyle motivations, daily operational strategies are guided by distinct cross-continental mindsets (Figure 2). European entrepreneurs operate within a highly market-driven framework, identifying client requests as their dominant operational factor (Likert mean of 4.30), closely paired with personal passion (4.10) and environmental consciousness (3.97), signifying a model in which economic responsiveness and personal values converge to shape destination design. In contrast, the operational strategies of Pacific operators are intensely anchored in identity construction and cultural expression. Personal passion and individual interests emerge as the primary driver for Oceanian entrepreneurs (3.81), closely followed by a distinct desire for localized innovation (3.63) and a commitment to sustainability awareness (3.46), while direct market forces (such as consumer demand or localized business competition) assert a significantly weaker influence (3.09).

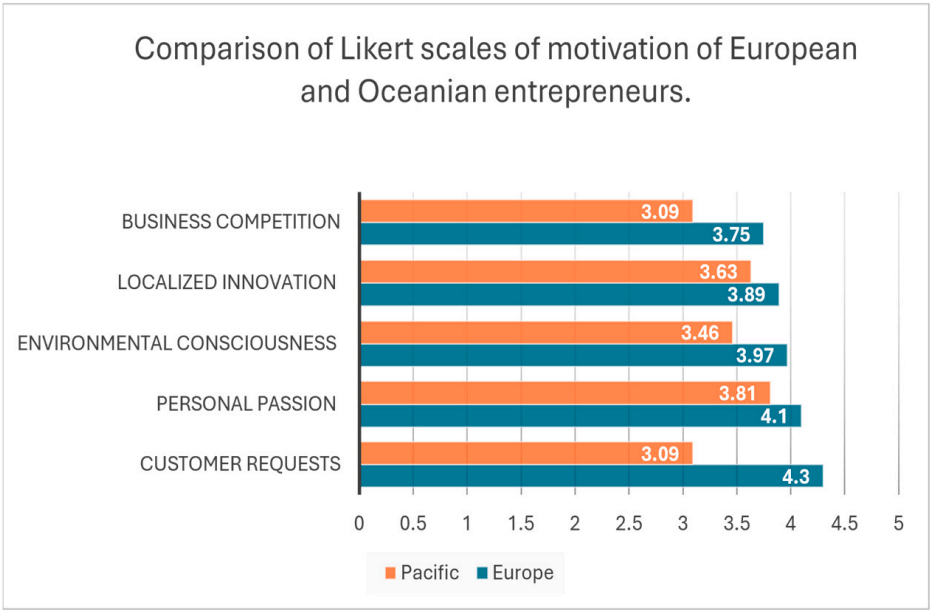


Figure 2. Comparison of Likert scales among the respondents (Source: Martina Pili's elaboration).

This motivational divergence is deeply institutionalized by the contrasting roles that public policy frameworks play across the two macro-regions. European operators view public funding and structural policy incentives as moderately relevant to their long-term operational viability (3.46), an effect directly attributable to the historical availability of rural development programs and community funding schemes such as the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy and the LEADER framework. Conversely, public subsidies and institutional incentives are reported to be significantly less relevant by Pacific practitioners (2.67), revealing a highly fragmented, underdeveloped institutional landscape. This empirical lack of regulatory clarity and integrated macro-policy support structures constitutes an ongoing, structural barrier that forces Oceanian entrepreneurs to rely strictly on localized community consensus and market-driven resilience. Taken together, these survey results reveal that while global agritourism practitioners share baseline characteristics (including intense territorial roots, a micro-scale family structure, and a pervasive lack of sector-specific credentials) their operational models remain highly contextualized. The mature European sector is explicitly market-responsive and embedded within a consolidated public policy safety net, whereas the emerging Oceanian sector operates as a decentralized frontier driven by the personal cultural passion of its operators and constrained by a lack of structured institutional support.

3.2. The Interviews

To complement and deepen these statistical survey findings, the qualitative analysis of interview data provides narrative insights into practitioners' biographical trajectories and adaptive management strategies.

On the European side, demographically, the interview cohort mirrors the broader regional variations observed in the quantitative survey. While the Italian operators display a tighter, mid-career age distribution ranging from 35 to 51 years, with a mean age of 44, the Slovak practitioners exhibit far greater demographic heterogeneity, spanning from 32 to 80 years, with a significantly higher mean age of 53.5 years. This generational stretching in Slovakia underscores a more pronounced structural concentration of older operators, a factor that qualitatively influences long-term strategic planning, heightened risk aversion, and a varied propensity to adopt digitized or highly innovative business practices. In terms

of gender distribution among the interviewees, the Italian subset comprises three men and two women, while the Slovak cohort comprises five men and three women.

Consistent with the questionnaire database, all the practitioners report having resided in a rural context for at least one year. This reinforces the sociological thesis that agritourism entrepreneurship in Europe is deeply rooted in personal biographies and a lifetime engagement with the agrarian fabric, rather than emerging from external, opportunistic real estate investments. Furthermore, the educational paths documented in the narratives corroborate the non-specialized, organic entry pathways highlighted in the survey: all five Italian operators have educational backgrounds classified as entirely unrelated to agriculture or hospitality, whereas, in Slovakia, only three practitioners hold formal agricultural credentials and a single individual holds a specialized tourism degree. This qualitative confirmation demonstrates that professional acumen in this sector is often acquired through experiential, adaptive, and trial-and-error mechanisms rather than formal pedagogical pipelines.

Then the interviews reveal more details about the professionals' approach to their business. Rather than treating authenticity as a shallow marketing device, operators conceptualize it as an existential imperative, dedicating their efforts to valorizing local ecosystems through raw, direct on-farm food production, strict respect for seasonality, and the preservation of inherited familial traditions. Inseparably linked to this pursuit of authenticity is a widespread, conscious desire to maintain a strictly small-scale operation. Practitioners explicitly reject expansionist corporate growth models, fearing that oversized operations would irreparably compromise the relational intimacy, close guest–host dynamics, and familial atmosphere that define their competitive value proposition relative to standardized mass tourism. This relational logic directly feeds into the continuous, organic adaptation of services, which operators describe as a gradual, iterative evolutionary process fueled by actively listening to guest feedback, past organizational experiences, and digital review analytics. This active co-creation of the hospitality space perfectly confirms the questionnaire results, which positioned customer requests as the single most powerful motivational factor driving European service modification [41]. Moreover, the interviews shed critical light on operator perceptions regarding the emerging cohort of younger tourists, revealing a highly synchronized understanding of contemporary consumer transitions. Practitioners overwhelmingly observe that younger demographics consciously reject passive sightseeing, seeking participatory, immersive, and hands-on encounters that allow them to experience the true socio-cultural fabric of the countryside. In direct response to this generational wave, operators have restructured their service portfolios to introduce highly engaging, interactive workshops, including direct participation in seasonal harvesting, animal care, traditional cooking modules, and shared everyday farm routines. However, alongside these positive narratives of multi-generational continuity and family agricultural heritage, the qualitative profiles reveal profound anxieties about structural vulnerabilities and systemic risks. Entrepreneurs express a pervasive fear of cultural commodification, noting that chasing hyper-commercialized mass-tourism trends risks standardizing and erasing the very local specificities that give the countryside its therapeutic value. Furthermore, acute concerns about climate change constitute a concrete, non-negotiable threat to the firm's operational stability. Operators report that unpredictable microclimatic shocks directly degrade crop yields, disrupt strict seasonal schedules, and induce structural financial volatility, thereby threatening the fragile agricultural baseline on which the entire agritourism model relies.

On the Pacific side, the sample (encompassing entrepreneurs working in Fiji, $N = 15$; Samoa, $N = 12$; and Vanuatu, $N = 1$) closely mirrors the macro-regional variations documented in the broader quantitative investigation. The age configurations within

this group demonstrate significant cross-island variations that mirror the broader quantitative trends. Fijian operators reflect a more compressed, mid-career lifecycle spanning 27 to 61 years, with a mean age of 41.5, whereas the Samoan subset displays a wider generational span ranging from 22 to 72 years, with a mean age of 47.0 years. This broader generational dispersion in Samoa highlights an operational environment in which youth entrepreneurs work alongside senior traditional custodians, directly influencing legacy planning and asset transmission within customary land networks. Furthermore, the gender distribution underscores a strong female operational core, with women accounting for 8 of 15 respondents in Fiji and 7 of 12 in Samoa. Spatial continuity emerges as a primary structural baseline within this cohort, with 93% (26 out of 28) of Pacific practitioners having resided in a rural zone for at least one consecutive year. This high percentage suggests that Oceanian hospitality ventures function as an intimate biographical extension of customary land tenure and lifestyle traditions, rather than a byproduct of opportunistic external real estate ventures. Narrative accounts regarding formal training paths further expose the cross-sectoral hybridization of these actors. Most operators entered the sector from alternative, non-specialized backgrounds, with 12 citing fields of study completely unrelated to hospitality or agronomy, while only six held formal credentials in agriculture and seven in tourism. Professional acumen is therefore predominantly accumulated through trial-and-error field adaptation and experiential learning directly on the farm. When interrogating the core operational philosophies of these island practitioners, the narrative material reveals that enterprise logic is anchored in the dual imperatives of cultural preservation and ancestral land legacies. Rather than treating hospitality as a purely commercial tool, operators conceptualize their ventures as a strategic means of safeguarding indigenous history and honoring multi-generational family values, focusing on reviving traditional crops and defending local ecosystems. This socio-cultural focus explains the widespread resistance toward corporate growth models. Operators intentionally maintain small-scale, village-integrated layouts, prioritizing community consensus, localized relationships, and the integrity of traditional production techniques (such as artisanal coffee roasting or communal crop systems) over high-density mass tourism. This community-centric ethos strongly shapes the structural evolution of farm offerings, which typically transition from pure subsistence or export-driven agriculture towards experiential agritourism. Driven by structural market failures (including volatile government export routes, high transport costs, and unstable domestic produce markets) practitioners have incrementally diversified their holdings. Holdings that originally focused solely on raw crop cultivation (such as taro, cocoa, or bananas) have been restructured to integrate educational tours and host–guest interaction. This operational shift aligns with the quantitative metrics, showing that Pacific business design is guided by personal passion, cultural expression, and localized innovation rather than external market competition or institutional policy incentives. Host reflections on contemporary consumer shifts also indicate an acute awareness of changing traveler profiles, particularly regarding younger demographics. Operators observe that incoming tourists and student cohorts increasingly reject conventional resort-based enclaves, showing a marked preference for immersive, hands-on activities over material luxury. According to host observations, young travelers demonstrate intense curiosity regarding traditional processes and the socio-cultural narratives behind local food production. In response, Pacific practitioners have actively re-engineered their portfolios to incorporate highly interactive formats, including guided plantation walks, hands-on traditional harvesting modules, coffee processing demonstrations, and direct engagement in village everyday routines. These models of cultural resilience are, however, counterbalanced by acute anxieties about systemic, structural, and environmental risks. Operators express deep vulnerability concerning localized agricultural labor shortages, severe geographic

isolation, and the escalating financial overheads of remote island operations. The most prominent structural threat stems from accelerating climate change and severe meteorological anomalies. Practitioners detail how unpredictable microclimatic shocks and extreme weather events directly destabilize crop yields, disrupt fragile seasonal cultivation cycles, and induce severe cash-flow volatility, threatening the very agrarian foundation upon which the Oceanian decentralized identity frontier relies.

4. Discussion

The comparative analysis of the collected data illustrates how global consumer imperatives materialize into localized, cross-sectoral supply structures. The overarching patterns of profound territorial embedding and small family scale documented across both cohorts validate the theoretical framework of "constructive tourism" [3,4]. Rather than acting as detached, opportunistic real estate developments driven by exogenous capital, overall rural tourism ventures function as an organic, biographical extension of multi-generational family heritage. This deep structural integration provides the necessary foundation for operators to successfully facilitate the postmodern transition from a superficial "surfing" modality of travel to an immersive, participatory "diving" modality [2]. Entrepreneurs actively reject mass-produced, standardized packages to co-create therapeutic rural spaces centered on identity preservation, direct engagement with local community life, and interactive, hands-on experiences [49,50]. To systematically contextualize these dynamics, the following sections address the three core research questions driving this investigation.

To address the systemic empirical deficit regarding operator agency, the research mapped a professionalization continuum ranging from part-time lifestyle hobbyists to formalized full-time professionals [21,32] (Figure 3).

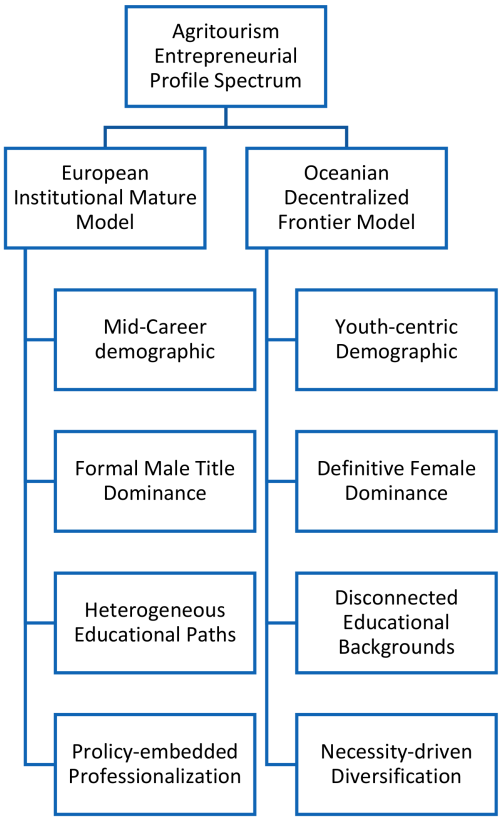


Figure 3. Professionalization spectrum between Europe and Oceania (credits: M.F. Fontefrancesco).

The European operator profile reflects an institutionalized, path-dependent structure matching the traditional agrarian lineage systems of Europe [12,13]. Characterized by a concentrated mid-career demographic and a slight male dominance in formal business ownership, this model represents a highly stable, mature configuration. However, as noted in the qualitative narratives, formal male titling is frequently offset by central female leadership in hospitality curation and operational diversification, validating sociological assertions that agritourism serves as a primary site for renegotiating traditional agrarian gender roles [28,30].

At an educational level, this profile exhibits significant structural heterogeneity, consistent with what the literature describes as an adaptive entry [34]. The vast majority of European operators enter the sector via heterogeneous educational pathways unrelated to agriculture or hospitality, meaning their professional acumen is developed through experiential, trial-and-error learning rather than pre-planned vocational tracks [51]. In sharp contrast to the dense, historically stratified spaces of Europe, the Oceanian profile represents an emergent frontier structure born out of geographical isolation and necessity-driven entrepreneurship within Small Island Developing States (SIDS) [17]. This model reveals a markedly younger practitioner demographic and a marked female dominance. Because alternative domestic employment opportunities are structurally constrained in remote and insular regions, youth and women actively seize agritourism as a strategic economic vehicle to circumvent restricted labor markets and assert economic self-efficacy [31]. While validating contemporary gender empowerment literature, this configuration creates a cumulative workload, as commercial hospitality management and intra-household domestic care heavily overlap in the same remote domestic space [10]. Like their European peers, Oceanian operators exhibit a fragmented educational distribution largely disconnected from formal sector credentials, operating on a raw, self-taught baseline [3].

The research establishes a complex conceptual model that shows how localized structural constraints interact with individual motivations and cultural frameworks to shape distinct cross-continental business strategies and service innovations [21]. European entrepreneurs operate within a highly market-driven framework in which economic responsiveness and personal values converge to shape destination design [41]. Driven primarily by customer requests and closely aligned with intrinsic passion, the evolution of services is a gradual, demand-led process [52]. This is directly documented in the interviews, where operators describe using visitor feedback and online review analytics as a vital mirror to correct organizational blind spots, systematically expanding their portfolios from basic raw commodity sales into complex experiential stays solely because tourists requested greater options. This market alignment is fundamentally supported by a consolidated public policy safety net; instruments such as the European Union's LEADER program and the Common Agricultural Policy are viewed as highly relevant structural tools that de-risk private capital investments and bind individual innovation to collective territorial branding [41]. However, this model is bottlenecked by a critical demographic crisis and a lack of motivation for generational renewal [24]. Qualitative accounts reveal profound structural anxieties about family business succession, driven by widespread doubts about whether the next generation will be willing to assume a highly demanding workload [10]. This generational stretching introduces risk aversion, fatigue from complex bureaucratic paperwork, and operational friction in digital transformation. Conversely, a minor segment of operators pushes back entirely against demand analytics to assert radical personal autonomy, crafting products strictly according to individual esthetic preferences without interpreting or accommodating client expectations [53].

Operating within a macro-policy and infrastructural vacuum, Pacific island practitioners operate completely independent of centralized policy safety nets or public subsidies, exposing a highly fragmented regulatory landscape [43]. This complete lack of integrated macro-policy support structures constitutes an ongoing structural barrier that forces Oceanian entrepreneurs to rely strictly on localized community consensus, market-driven resourcefulness, and cultural passion [18]. Concurrently, their operational strategies are driven almost exclusively by intrinsic, identity-based parameters (such as personal passion, cultural pride, and a desire for localized innovation), while direct market forces like consumer demand or business competition exert only a significantly weaker baseline influence. The Oceanian entrepreneur operates as an experience designer, successfully converting the physical "tyranny of distance" into a high-value, low-volume luxury commodity through premium station stays and remote glamping layouts [19]. This approach anchors their business legitimacy in local community consensus and traditional food networks to secure their social license to operate [44]. Their strategy is a direct response to acute climate change shocks and severe weather anomalies, which directly destabilize the fragile agricultural foundations supporting their hospitality assets, forcing them to remain highly adaptive and resilient independent of state safety nets [54].

The empirical and narrative datasets expose precise, unmapped educational and technical capacity-building needs that currently restrict business development, compromise land-use efficiency, and expose operators to severe market shocks [21,38]. Because both cohorts manage complex cross-sectoral practices through trial-and-error experiential knowledge due to their lack of formal sector credentials, their educational deficiencies are tightly dictated by their regional operational models. The European model's training gap centers on a deficit in advanced, technical sub-competencies [55]. Despite high general education levels and strong participation in general rural tourism workshops, operator involvement plummets in advanced sustainability practices, social agriculture, and inclusive or accessible hospitality models. This leaves them ill-equipped to translate strategic eco-effective awareness into verifiable green stewardship metrics or to optimize land-use efficiency through multifunctional farm formats [24]. In Oceania, the educational gap is characterized by a fundamental scarcity of formal training infrastructure and low practical utility [3]. A vast majority of operators have never accessed a sector-specific training program, and the available programs are widely criticized by practitioners as disconnected from the operational realities of remote island commerce. Pacific operators are severely underskilled in basic strategic corporate capabilities, including multi-layer financial risk hedging, dynamic pricing architectures, legal compliance, and the advanced digital marketing interfaces necessary to bypass global intermediaries, control their social narratives, and retain revenue locally.

This macro-regional education gap is further complicated by a profound labor market and cultural mismatch regarding incoming youth, explicitly detailed in the qualitative interviews. Entrepreneurs express deep anxiety over younger workers, noting a problematic tendency among the emerging generation to chase "easy earnings" through digital platforms while avoiding the underlying physical labor and demanding land stewardship required to sustain a working farm. This digital–physical divide demonstrates that current vocational and academic curricula remain severely misaligned with the sector's real needs [56,57]. Training frameworks must be systematically redesigned to educate incoming youth on the material realities of agriculture (reinforcing that high-quality regional heritages must be experienced through physical human contact, not just sold online) while simultaneously upskilling older, risk-averse cohorts in digital literacy and database management [22,25]. Furthermore, while European operators build structural resilience and economic safety valves through cooperative local networks, Oceanian operators require

tailored training in community-based entrepreneurship to secure social cohesion [26,58]. Resolving this informational fragmentation within contemporary tourism scholarship is therefore a vital prerequisite for designing integrated, profile-aligned university and vocational curricula that bridge these technical, cultural, and environmental capability gaps, ensuring the long-term regenerative survival of global rural geosystems [37].

Overall, this comparative analysis suggests the operational realities of the host can be distilled into two structurally polarized, ideal–typical configurations (Table 3). Rather than viewing rural hospitality as a uniform global phenomenon, this typological consolidation demonstrates that the translation of primary-sector assets into tertiary experience economies is heavily mediated by regional institutional frameworks, demographic pressures, and environmental vulnerabilities.

Table 3. Summary of the main differences emerging from the research.

Structural Dimension	The European Institutionalized Mature Model	The Oceanian Decentralized Identity Frontier Model
Demographic Core	Concentrated mid-career to senior cohorts (31–60+ years) with formal male title dominance counterbalanced by operational female management.	Youth-centric (18–45 years) with a definitive female entrepreneurial core (67%) leveraging hospitality for economic self-efficacy.
Operational Logic	Market-driven and demand-responsive; service scaling is dictated by visitor feedback and digital review analytics.	Intrinsic and identity-centered; enterprise design is driven by personal passion, cultural pride, and ancestral legacy.
Institutional Shielding	Saturated; dense top-down public subsidy frameworks (EU CAP, LEADER program) that significantly de-risk private capital.	Complete vacuum; absolute scarcity of centralized state subsidies, public safety nets, or formal training infrastructure.
Strategic Innovation	Multi-functional agricultural integration, collective territorial branding, and terroir-driven gastronomic deposition.	Wilderness-centric experience design, premium remote station stays, and high-value, low-volume luxury glamping layouts.
Systemic Vulnerability	Acute family business succession crises, generational stretching, risk aversion, and digital–physical labor mismatches.	Severe climate change volatility, geographic isolation, resource scarcity, and corporate revenue leakage to intermediaries.
Primary Capacity Gap	Advanced sub-competencies including carbon stewardship metrics, social agriculture formats, and accessible design.	Foundational strategic corporate units including multi-layer financial risk hedging, dynamic pricing, and autonomous digital interfaces.

The European Institutionalized Mature Model operates as a path-dependent, highly integrated configuration deeply embedded within historically stratified rural spaces. Sociodemographically, this paradigm represents a stable yet aging operational baseline, where formal ownership titles lean slightly male, but everyday hospitality curation and cross-sectoral diversification are led by women. Entrepreneurs in this model operate primarily within a market-responsive framework, using consumer feedback and digital review metrics as a constant mirror to scale their services from raw agricultural commodity production to multifunctional experiential stays. This continuous adaptation is heavily protected and de-risked by a consolidated public policy safety net, explicitly anchored in structural frameworks such as the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy and regional

LEADER initiatives, which align individual on-farm innovation with collective territorial branding and regional gastronomic heritage. However, this high degree of institutionalization introduces critical systemic friction. The model is currently bottlenecked by an acute demographic crisis, characterized by a geographically dispersed operator profile and profound anxieties about intra-household succession. This generational stretching induces risk aversion and resistance to digital transformation. This resistance is further complicated by a distinct labor market mismatch, in which incoming youth exhibit a problematic preference for superficial, digital-only promotional management while avoiding the rigorous physical labor and land stewardship required to sustain a working farm. Furthermore, while access to generic hospitality training remains high, European operators suffer from an advanced sub-specialization gap, demonstrating a stark deficit in translating strategic eco-effective awareness into verifiable green stewardship metrics, social agriculture formats, or inclusive, accessible destination designs.

In sharp contrast, the Oceanian Decentralized Identity Frontier Model represents an emergent, bottom-up architecture born out of geographic isolation and necessity entrepreneurship within Small Island Developing States. Characterized by a significantly younger practitioner demographic and a definitive female dominance, this model serves as a vital economic vehicle for marginalized rural actors to circumvent restricted domestic labor markets and assert financial self-efficacy. Operating within a total macro-policy and institutional vacuum, Pacific island practitioners receive virtually no centralized public subsidies or state safety nets. Consequently, their operational strategies are guided almost exclusively by intrinsic, identity-based parameters (including personal passion, cultural pride, and a desire for localized innovation), allowing them to function as aggressive frontier experience designers who deliberately transform the physical "tyranny of distance" into a high-value, low-volume luxury commodity centered around remote station stays, eco-effectiveness, and indigenous narratives. The legitimacy and survival of the Oceanian model rely entirely on localized community consensus and traditional food networks to secure an informal social license to operate. This decentralized independence makes the frontier model highly resilient at the sociocultural level, yet it leaves practitioners acutely exposed to external macroeconomic and environmental shocks. Operators must continuously manage severe resource scarcity and digital isolation while navigating immediate climate-change disruptions and weather anomalies that directly threaten the fragile agricultural production that supports their hospitality assets. This structural vulnerability is exacerbated by a profound scarcity of formal training infrastructure, leaving the younger, female-dominated cohort severely underskilled in foundational corporate capabilities. Without access to contextualized programming, frontier operators face intense shortfalls in multi-layer financial risk hedging, dynamic pricing architectures, legal compliance, and autonomous direct-to-consumer digital booking platforms, exposing their communities to severe revenue leakage driven by global corporate travel intermediaries.

5. Conclusions

This study aimed to unpack the operational reality of agritourism by shifting the analytical focus from consumer demand to the agency and lived experiences of the operators themselves. By comparing five distinct rural settings across Europe (Italy and Slovakia) and the Pacific (Fiji, Samoa, and Vanuatu), our findings challenge the assumption that rural tourism is a uniform global phenomenon. While practitioners in both hemispheres are deeply rooted in their land and share an explicit commitment to small-scale, authentic hospitality, their everyday management strategies diverge sharply, crystallizing into two distinct configurations we defined as the European Institutionalized Mature Model and the Oceanian Decentralized Identity Frontier Model.

These two configurations offer direct answers to the core questions that framed this investigation. First, regarding the profiles of the entrepreneurs (RQ1), our data show that agritourism is rarely the result of external speculative investment. Instead, it is an organic outgrowth of pre-existing family ties to agriculture and long-term rural residence. Yet, the demographic makeup differs substantially between the two regions. The European sample is predominantly mid-career or older, with business titles formally held mostly by men, though women play a central and indispensable role in running the hospitality and service side of the enterprise. In the Pacific, by contrast, we found a noticeably younger, female-led cohort where rural tourism serves as an essential channel for economic independence within restricted domestic labor markets. Importantly, operators across both regions share an adaptive, hybrid professional identity: very few hold formal degrees in agronomy or hospitality, having instead built their competencies on the job through trial, error, and gradual adjustment.

Second, the way localized constraints shape business innovation (RQ2) reflects the institutional landscape in which these farms operate. European entrepreneurs are largely market-driven and reactive to consumer expectations, using guest reviews and direct feedback to gradually broaden their offerings. This experimentation is buffered by established public policy mechanisms which help absorb financial risk, even as businesses struggle with demographic aging, bureaucratic drag, and uncertainties surrounding family succession. In the Pacific, operators face the opposite reality: an almost total vacuum of formal policy support and state subsidies. Guided primarily by cultural pride, personal passion, and customary responsibilities toward family land, Pacific hosts act as autonomous experience designers. They have learned to turn geographical isolation into an asset through high-value, low-volume offerings such as remote farm stays and plantation tours, even as they remain acutely exposed to extreme weather events, climate volatility, and profit extraction by overseas travel platforms.

Third, our analysis identifies a clear gap between available training programs and the real, everyday needs of hosts (RQ3), further complicated by generational friction, with younger entrants often gravitating toward digital marketing while avoiding the physical, demanding realities of agricultural labor. In Europe, where general schooling and basic hospitality training are already high, the bottleneck lies in specialized, practical know-how: operators lack the tools to measure verifiable environmental metrics, run social agriculture initiatives, or build fully accessible rural destinations. In Oceania, the problem is more fundamental: formal training infrastructure is virtually non-existent, leaving hosts in urgent need of basic business skills, from cost–benefit analysis and dynamic pricing to legal compliance and independent, direct digital booking tools. Closing these gaps requires moving away from generic hospitality courses toward grounded, context-sensitive curricula that pair digital literacy with real farm work in Europe and provide foundational business toolkits across the Pacific.

Beyond these operational profiles, the study speaks to broader questions about the future of rural areas and the shift toward regenerative tourism. When grounded in local livelihoods and working farms, agritourism offers a viable alternative to the extractive mechanics of mass overtourism. It invites visitors to move beyond superficial consumption into immersive, place-based experiences, while keeping economic returns directly within rural households. However, this potential cannot be realized if policy and educational frameworks continue to treat farms as passive backdrops for tourism. Strengthening the specific capabilities of hosts (whether by helping European farmers implement verifiable agro-ecological practices or supporting Pacific communities in defending their food systems and customary lands) is essential. Higher education institutions, extension services, and regional planners have a vital role to play here: by aligning training with the practical

realities of local operators, they can help ensure that agritourism actively sustains, rather than depletes, the social, cultural, and ecological resources of rural communities.

Naturally, this study is not without limitations. Given its exploratory, multi-sited qualitative-quantitative design and the relatively small, purposively sampled cohorts across the five target countries, the findings cannot capture the full institutional and environmental diversity of rural regions globally, nor do they account for long-term longitudinal shifts in post-succession farm survival. Future research should therefore expand this comparative lens across broader regional contexts, particularly in the Global South and across differing land tenure regimes, while employing longitudinal tracking to evaluate how targeted training interventions directly impact farm resilience and household income over time. In doing so, scholarly inquiry can move beyond documenting vulnerabilities and actively contribute to reimagining rural areas not as fragile peripheries left behind by modernity, but as living, generative landscapes where local agency, ecological stewardship, and hospitality converge to shape resilient and meaningful futures.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/soc16100311/s1, Table S1. Detailed contextual profile of the study countries. Table S2. Summary of the interviews; Table S3. Summary of the survey answer.

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