



## Unveiling the Drive to Create: Exploring the Motivation of Lifestyle Entrepreneurs in Iran

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### ARTICLE INFO

**Article type:**  
Research Article

**Article History:**

Received 06 November 2022  
Revised 17 June 2023  
Accepted 02 July 2023  
Published Online 09 March 2024

**Keywords:**

*Entrepreneurship,*  
*Lifestyle entrepreneurship,*  
*Lifestyle Entrepreneur,*  
*Entrepreneurs Motivation,*  
*Iran.*

### ABSTRACT

This research aims to identify the motivation of lifestyle entrepreneurs in Iran due to the fact that many opportunities in these areas have been used and exploited by entrepreneurs in Iran. This research has been done based on these opportunities and hopes for the prosperity of this type of entrepreneurship in Iran. This qualitative research was conducted in 2022. Due to the nature of qualitative research, this research used a purposeful sampling strategy and continued until reaching data saturation (13 individuals). Data were collected through in-depth interviews, and the motivations for starting a business were discussed indirectly. The main result of this research is to identify the motivation of lifestyle entrepreneurs in Iran. Based on the theory of Ryan and Deci (2000), the motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurs were divided into two categories: Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivations: creating a business activity aligned with interests, following a dream, needing independence, gaining social status, and using individual capacities. Extrinsic motivations: social orientation, work-life balance, dissatisfaction with the previous job, and financial concerns. It should be noted that no such research has been conducted in Iran.

**Cite this article:** Irani, S.; Modarresi, M. & Moghaddam, A. (2024). Unveiling the Drive to Create: Exploring the Motivation of Lifestyle Entrepreneurs in Iran. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Management Studies (IJMS)*, 17 (2), 669-684. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22059/ijms.2023.350858.675491>



© Sara Irani, Meisam Modarresi, Alireza Moghaddam  
DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22059/ijms.2023.350858.675491>

**Publisher:** University of Tehran Press.

## 1. Introduction

Although some lifestyle entrepreneurs are not interested in creating large businesses, their view of business and their activities essential impact the economy and concept of entrepreneurship. Lifestyle entrepreneurship businesses are defined as businesses that provide sufficient income and allow business owners to work in an area of their interests. This type of entrepreneurship is embedded in consumer interests or hobbies. Such conceptualization, far from expressing an individual heroic effort, is influenced by personal factors and behaviors and is therefore essential because many lifestyle entrepreneurs seek to play a role beyond just commercial and economic goals in business and help society more comprehensively. This has led them to be referred to as non-entrepreneurs due to their focus on social, cultural, or artistic aspects simply because they have fewer commercial goals broader, while in terms of lifestyle entrepreneurs, these goals and motivations can be more comprehensive and different.

A lifestyle entrepreneur is an individual who creates a new business activity that aligns with his values, interests, and motivations (Wright & Wiersma, 2020). According to Discua Cruz & Halliday (2020), The characteristics of entrepreneurs (Tajeddini & Mueller, 2009). please enable them to follow specific paths to start or pursue a business (Kalantaridis & Bika, 2006). Entrepreneurship is the engine that drives any booming industry or economy (Shepherd & Gruber, 2021). The characteristic of lifestyle entrepreneurs is that they tend to fit their businesses with their lifestyle values. This means they emphasize non-economic goals more than financial benefits (Ratten, 2020). In other words, "lifestyle entrepreneurship" was created to describe business owners who seek to balance work and life (Bredvold & Skalen, 2016). Although several studies have been conducted in recent years in the field of lifestyle entrepreneurship (Ghafar et al., 2021; Dias et al., 2021; Abascal Gamarra, 2021; Dias & Azambuja, 2022; Wright & Mitchell (2022) ,the motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurs, have not been studied deeply enough.

Understanding the motivations and desires of lifestyle entrepreneurs according to the literature review is vital essential entrepreneur; investigating the motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurs helps to explore this type of entrepreneurship, and it is essential because it increases our understanding of academics and policymakers about this type of entrepreneur (Marchant & Mottiar, 2011). Thus, this research examines the factors influencing lifestyle entrepreneurship in Iran. Lifestyle entrepreneurship in Iran is of particular interest because, because many young businesses have embarked on the path of entrepreneurship with this mindset and a large number of them have been able to achieve significant growth in their professional course in a short time. It should be noted that no such research has been conducted in Iran so far. Therefore, since lifestyle entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs among other types of entrepreneurs and many entrepreneurs have focused a smaller share of research in this field, the necessity of this research has become increasingly apparent.

Iranian entrepreneurs are motivated in different ways, but there is no doubt that the new business generation will have a more personal motivation to start their own business (Zahi et al., 2021). According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report for Iran in 2019-2020, one of the primary motivations for individuals to start a business is the desire for independence and autonomy. Many aspiring entrepreneurs see starting a business as a way to be their boss, control their destiny, and create something of their own. Other motivations cited in the report include the potential for financial gain and the opportunity to pursue a passion or interest. Additionally, the report highlights that some individuals may start a business out of necessity due to a lack of other employment opportunities or to supplement their income. Overall, the motivations for entrepreneurship are complex and multifaceted, varying depending on personal circumstances, aspirations, and external factors (GEM, 2019/2020).

In recent decades, the number of established family businesses and small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) has increased dramatically compared to previous decades (Rezaei et al., 2019). This article is going to examine the motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurs who work in different fields in Iran. Businesses that were established in various fields, such as tourism, sports, art, and culture for at least three years were explored in this research. In this way, this article will specifically consider the motives of their actions to create their business. To discover the factors affecting the motivations of entrepreneurs, the researchers, with a qualitative method and through in-depth semi-structured interviews with 13 people and after two stages of coding, the motivations affecting the establishment

of lifestyle businesses in Iran. Divided into two categories of Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivations, and these categories were divided into sub-components.

Thus, after reviewing the literature, the researchers, taking into account the qualitative method to discover the factors affecting the motivation to start a business among Iranian craft entrepreneurs, selected a number of these entrepreneurs who were working in different fields with the method of Purposive selection was chosen and after interviewing for at least 1 hour with each of them, 13 businesses were included in the current research. After coding, the components extracted from the interviews' texts revealed the motivations for creating a business. Using the theory of Ryan and Deci (2000), these motivations were divided into two categories, Intrinsic and Extrinsic, and were examined more closely in the results section.

The article's structure follows a logical progression, starting with an introduction to lifestyle entrepreneurship, its significance in the economy, and the concept of entrepreneurship. It highlights the characteristics of lifestyle entrepreneurs and their emphasis on non-economic goals. The article then establishes the importance of understanding the motivations and desires of lifestyle entrepreneurs, both for academic understanding and for policymakers.

The motivations of Iranian entrepreneurs, in general, are briefly discussed, highlighting the desire for independence and autonomy as primary motivations. The research follows a qualitative approach and is explored through in-depth semi-structured interviews with 13 participants. The article then describes the data collection and analysis process, including selecting participants through purposeful sampling, conducting interviews, and coding the interview transcripts. The motivations influencing the establishment of lifestyle businesses in Iran are categorized into two main categories: intrinsic and extrinsic. These categories are further examined and discussed in the results section. The article concludes with the promise of presenting the detailed findings in the results section.

## **2. Theoretical background**

### **2.1. Lifestyle Entrepreneurship**

Lifestyle entrepreneurs play an essential role in the economic growth of a region due to the way they encourage business activities (Ateljevik & Dorn, 2001). Many entrepreneurs use job opportunities mainly for personal reasons, such as enjoying a good lifestyle, creating an attractive natural living environment, and seeking autonomy in work (Fadda, 2020). They found that the love of a hobby drives business and commerce and causes it to grow. (Discua Cruz & Halliday, 2020). Their goals are not only to establish companies that can grow but also to develop ones that are enjoyable to own and operate, among other goals (Wright et al., 2021). What mainly motivates lifestyle entrepreneurs is the ability to provide for their lives. In other words, lifestyle rather than profit is their primary goal by pursuing a dream (Mottiar, 2007). They point out that, in some cases, the Extrinsic environment creates opportunities that the lifestyle entrepreneur cannot ignore. These opportunities can ultimately lead to business development (Marchant & Mottiar, 2011). Background conditions can motivate lifestyle entrepreneurs. For example, the emergence of technology and the expansion of the use of the Internet and social networks in recent years has created and prosper emerging businesses. The motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurs can be very broad (Morrison et al., 2009) because they have different motivations for starting their businesses. Depending on the entrepreneur's cultural, social, political and other life conditions, these motivations can be colorful or dim. Some lifestyle entrepreneurs are engaged in handicrafts and art (Getz & Petersen, 2005), while others are more interested in starting a business for social reasons rather than just business growth. This means that lifestyle entrepreneurs want to contribute to society while maintaining a particular lifestyle. Lifestyle business owners are individuals who "have multiple goals related to their businesses" (Morrison et al., 2009).

Among all these motivations, lifestyle entrepreneurs in all parts of the world show personal, individual, and family motivations that are more colorful than other motivations. Entrepreneurs pay more attention to their interests in life because they want to increase their quality of life (Jones et al., 2020). Their ventures are so attractive to them that the border between work and leisure is practically non-existent (Stebbins, 2004). Lifestyle entrepreneurs are known for having dual motivations, such as leisure and work (Sun & Hu, 2017). They want a better work-life balance than regular entrepreneurs (Ratten, 2020). Their motivations revolve around their desire to "work in a pleasant environment" and "establish their own business" (Shaw & Williams, 1998). Some researchers believe those who

experience such intense positive attachment and a high sense of achievement can effectively bridge the line between work and leisure (Wright et al., 2020).

By examining the role and impact of lifestyle entrepreneurship on the quality of life for small business owners and their families, the researchers concluded that lifestyle entrepreneurship is an interactive activity dependent on other areas (Kerr et al., 2017). These salient advantages represent fundamental differences between lifestyle entrepreneurs and other small business owners (Marchetti et al., 2006). Lifestyle entrepreneurs do not just follow the path. Instead, growth-oriented or Schumpeter's entrepreneurs also welcome profit maximization (Peters et al., 2009). While in economic theories, the entrepreneur must have some traits such as uncertainty to perform economically; psychological theories explain why entrepreneurs are more willing to tolerate this uncertainty than their peers (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006). However, some lifestyle entrepreneurs are unwilling to put more effort into growth and do not want to sacrifice the quality of life for profit maximization (Peters et al., 2009). In line with these researches, Marchant & Mottiar (2011) identified some common characteristics of lifestyle entrepreneurs, such as a high level of education, travel experience, good communication skills, interaction with people, and participation in social and economic relations in the destination in their research (Fadda, 2020).

## **2.2. Lifestyle Entrepreneurship Motivations**

While in economic theories, the entrepreneur is required to have specific attributes in order to be able to perform economically, psychological theories try to explain why entrepreneurs are more willing to tolerate this uncertainty than their counterparts. Since these psychologists share the opinion of economists primary that entrepreneurship brings about economic growth, they try to identify the primary motivations for entrepreneurial activity to develop these motivations in their people (McMullen and Shepherd, 2006). Intrinsic motivations involve doing a task for Intrinsic satisfaction regardless of Extrinsic rewards or pressures. In contrast, extrinsic motivations rely on receiving rewards or avoiding punishment and Extrinsic controls (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Knowledge of the origin of Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivations in lifestyle entrepreneurs plays a decisive role in developing this type of entrepreneurship and areas close to it. By knowing the dimensions and components that influence the Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivations of entrepreneurs, a clearer understanding of the factors that create businesses can be obtained, which can lead to the growth of entrepreneurship and the economy. The researchers also found that lifestyle entrepreneurs are driven by a specific mindset that values the quality of life for their families, communities, and individuals. This mindset, in turn, influences business decisions and behaviors regarding creating and delivering products, services, or processes and operational efficiency (Marcketti et al., 2006). Knowing the realities and motivations of entrepreneurship, as well as designing policy measures that address the balance of quality of life, is very important for the effectiveness of these motivations (Peters et al., 2009). The factors influencing lifestyle entrepreneurship in their research on lifestyle entrepreneurs entailing "receiving personal, family and other intangible rewards" (Marcketti et al., 2006). Peters et al. found that improving the quality of life can motivate entrepreneurs and help them increase their interest in business and competition (Peters et al., 2009). Most entrepreneurs consider motivations such as "being one's boss," "independence," "creativity," and "having an interesting job" as the most important motivations for becoming an entrepreneur, regardless of the industry (Bredvold & Skalen, 2016). This research tries to identify the Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivations of creating these businesses among Iranian entrepreneurs by looking at the research conducted in the field of lifestyle entrepreneurship. In the continuation of the explanation about the factors influencing establishing a business, some entrepreneurs state that the environmental factors and the quality of their geographical location played a role in their desire to develop a business. Many people in big cities face work-life conflicts or other challenging conditions. In an urban society with fast and stressful working conditions and long working hours that conduce to less free time, lower quality of life, and unhealthy physical and mental states, some people tend to have an alternative lifestyle elsewhere due to dissatisfaction with their work and stressful life (Sun & Hu, 2017). Lifestyle entrepreneurs create businesses that enable them to realize their desired lifestyles, which allow a balance between family, economic, and social needs (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000). Although lifestyle entrepreneurs have a highly flexible pattern, they sometimes act based on motivation (Sun & Hu, 2017).

Lifestyle entrepreneurship has a close conceptual relationship with social entrepreneurship (Shahvand et al., 2021) because, like social entrepreneurship, traditional economic motives are rejected as essential aspects of lifestyle entrepreneurship (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000). They give priority to lifestyle goals rather than financial goals. The entrepreneurship process is not just an economic activity but is driven by the motivations of individuals as they want to meet their personal, social, and economic goals (Dawson et al., (2011); Getz et al., (2004). Even though lifestyle entrepreneurs do not follow economic motives, their contribution to economic well-being and customer satisfaction should not be underestimated (Bredvold & Skalen, 2016). The research results show that people often start their businesses for lifestyle reasons and continue to operate even when they are financially marginal. (Wang et al., 2019). Marchant & Mottiar (2011) argue that “lifestyle entrepreneurs are primarily motivated by the need to succeed in life by maintaining a certain quality of life, as well as maintaining an income that allows them to survive (Marchant & Mottiar, 2011). It has been said that many of these local actors are “lifestyle entrepreneurs” who engage in tourism activities not for economic reasons but to support certain lifestyles (Bredvold & Skalen, 2016). Nevertheless, the main premise of economic theories of entrepreneurship is that economic incentives (availability of profitable opportunities) lay the ground for entrepreneurial activities (Kirzner, 1985). Be that as it may, Schumpeter and Kirzner have argued that social realism and "discovery" play an essential role in their theories. At the same time, a lifestyle entrepreneur must also exploit the available opportunities (Krishnan et al., 2022).

Although most lifestyle entrepreneurs have no experience in entrepreneurship, many believe that running a small business is not difficult (Sun & Hu, 2017). Lifestyle entrepreneurs create companies that enable them to realize their chosen lifestyles and allow for a balance between family, economic, and social needs (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000). They also found out that the motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurs (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011; Cunha et al., 2020) are analyzed using the push-pull theory: the push factors lead to escaping their sedentary lifestyle, and the pull factors lead to a superior lifestyle consisting of a self-controlled life.

However, a picture is emerging about entrepreneurs who do not wish to "maximize their economic profits" instead but rather run businesses with deficient levels of employment, where managerial decisions are usually made based on highly personalized criteria. They argue that in the business world, there is a need to move beyond purely economic definitions to define entrepreneur and entrepreneurship in broader terms (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000). In this regard, knowing the motivations for establishing lifestyle businesses in countries that have special economic conditions can be a window for the growth of businesses and the economy, and also by mobilizing the youth of the society to create a business according to personal interests, family and environment, to cause social and cultural growth.

### **3. Research practices**

In this study, the researcher employed a qualitative approach to explore a situation where necessary information was unavailable. Qualitative research focuses on understanding and interpreting individuals' meanings, experiences, and perspectives within their natural contexts. It seeks in-depth insights and a comprehensive understanding of the subject being studied. In qualitative research, researchers often engage with flexible realities where the subjective views of respondents may shape the research frame and the whole process of an inquiry (Chowdhury, 2015).

The main goal of exploratory research is to study the situation where necessary information is unavailable. In other words, in this type of research, the researcher seeks to obtain information that will allow them to study adequately understand the subject of the study. A purposive sampling technique was used to select individuals who could provide essential and accurate information related to the research purpose (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

First, the interview questions were formulated based on the research questions. These questions were modified in the team during the interview process if needed. Questions like "What made you start this business?" were asked to the interviewees, and among their explanations, they were asked to explain the steps they went through in more detail. Interviewees were selected based on their business. In this way, the lifestyle businesses in previous research were investigated, and some were invited for an interview after the search. Diversity in businesses was one of the determining factors in searches. At least three years have passed since the age of the companies, and geographical diversity was

considered. A non-random sampling method was used to find some of them in qualitative research. In "snowballing," samples are first selected through people related to the study and then used as sources of information to find other samples. This way, the samples are introduced through a descriptive and cross-sectional process to receive as many new and suitable samples as possible (Goodman, 1961).

#### **4. Data collection and Data analysis practices**

The following logical sequence was followed to collect the data. The primary data collection method was through interviews. The interviews were conducted until the process of analysis and exploration reached theoretical saturation, which means that new interviews no longer provided significant new insights. First, the samples were purposefully selected for the proper selection of the individuals who could provide essential and accurate information about the purpose of the research. The interviews continued until the analysis and exploration reached theoretical saturation. 13 interviews were coded and included in the research process (Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Whitehead & Whitehead, 2016).

These processes have been carried out to achieve reliability and validity in the research. A structured process was used in the interviews. The meeting's questions and topics were shared with the interviewees beforehand. Before recording the audio, permission was obtained from them, and an atmosphere was established in the meeting so that intimacy between the interviewee and the researcher would facilitate the sharing of experiences. The back-and-forth of coding and reviewing categories was shared with the researchers in the group and proceeded with an integrated approach (Knott et al., 2022). Sound recording devices were used during the interviews to ensure the accuracy of the participant's responses. The selection of interviews was based on emphasizing the life stories of entrepreneurs and allowing them to express and explain their experiences. The interview text was transcribed verbatim, capturing rich data and providing a more profound and transparent representation of the interviews. Sound recording devices and the accurate implementation of the recorded sounds can make the researcher's notes reliable. The interview text was produced verbatim instead of using the interviewer's selected notes, which is called rich data. This method presents the image deeper and more clearly (Dominici, 2019).

A systematic method of content analysis was used to analyze the findings in detail (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this way, the data collection and analysis were performed simultaneously, and each new interview was compared with the previous interviews. After rewriting each interview, open coding was done through a back-and-forth process between the data and the literature (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Then, by comparing the interviews, the revised codes were reviewed, the repeated categories were removed, and the smaller categories were merged into significant categories (axial coding). Finally, the final themes were determined by combining these categories of codes, and a structured process was used to write and interpret the data. The recorded voices after each interview were carefully converted into written text, and after several steps of reading the texts, the implementation of the interviews was completed. The final codes were obtained by revisiting the coded texts and merging or removing duplicate and similar concepts. The border between economic and non-economic areas was determined in this research. In line with this method, the interviews were selected by emphasizing the life stories of entrepreneurs in their voices. This allowed them to express and explain who they were (Burns, 2001). The data were coded in 2 stages (Open and axial coding). Each new interview was compared with previous interviews. After transcribing each interview, open coding was done through a back-and-forth process between data and literature (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This method expresses certain concepts or words in a text or a set of texts.

Overall, this methodology employed qualitative research techniques such as purposive sampling, in-depth interviews, verbatim transcription, content analysis, and iterative coding processes to explore and analyze the research subject thoroughly.

#### **5. Results**

The participants in this research are 13 lifestyle entrepreneurs who work in the field of tourism. The average age of the participants in the study was 34 years old, with a gender distribution of 65% male and 35% female. More than 80% of the participants were married, and the rest were single. Only half of the married participants had children, and except for two ecotourism lodges in villages, all the

businesses were located in urban areas. More than 70% of them had a university education, and among them, more than 80% had a university education unrelated to their work.

Most interviewees have established businesses in large cities, such as Tabriz, Khorasan, Isfahan, Rasht, and Shiraz. Still, other small towns and rural areas have also contributed to this population.

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), motivations can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivations involve doing a task for the pure purpose of Intrinsic satisfaction regardless of Extrinsic rewards or pressures. In contrast, extrinsic motivations rely on receiving rewards or avoiding punishment and Extrinsic controls. Motivations are the behavioral "whys" that guide the initiation or continuation of an activity and determine the overall direction of a person's behavior (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993). Based on this, the motivations of the interviewed entrepreneurs were classified into two categories: Intrinsic and Extrinsic.

**Table 1.** Final coding table from results of interviews

Intrinsic motivations	Creating a business activity aligned with interests	Pursuing the dream	The need for independence	Gaining social status	Tapping individual capacities
Interviewee code	11	10	11	10	11
Extrinsic motivations	social orientation	work-life balance	dissatisfaction with the previous job	financial concerns	-
Interviewee code	9	10	11	10	-

## 5.1. Intrinsic Motivations

Intrinsic motivations include creating a business activity aligned with interests, pursuit of a dream, need for independence, gaining social status, and utilizing individual capacities, which are discussed in detail below:

### 5.1.1. Creating a Business Activity Aligned with Interests

One of the motivations of all the lifestyle entrepreneurs participating in this research was to get involved in a business activity to realize their values by creating and growing them. The passion for starting and owning a business and eliminating the border between work and leisure was recognized as one of the most important motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurs.

For example, one of the research participants stated:

"I was very interested in this field because I used to go hiking and mountain climbing...but I looked at it as a professional hobby until I got out of my main job. since I had about three years of experience in it, I practically focused on it, and it became my main job. (Respondent No. 7)"

The youngest participant in this research said about the motivation that:

"Many people are doing something they don't like and have to do to make money. I am thrilled that my job is what I love. This is the most important thing I have. To have your job and love it, too. (Respondent No. 1)"

A participant who was the owner of an ecotourism resort in eastern Iran admitted:

"Since I was younger, I wanted my job to be related to nature because you don't feel like you are working, and being in nature can be great fun and pleasure. (Respondent No. 8)"

### 5.1.2. Pursuing the Dream

For many of these entrepreneurs, following their dreams and making them come true was an important motivation in creating and growing their businesses. This was a different and a powerful very strong motivation for creating a business activity aligned with interests, and for 80% of them, "starting an entrepreneurial activity" was not just a "business activity" but "pursuing a dream."

One of the entrepreneurs who owned a tourist accommodation in Rasht province, located in the north of Iran, said about the motivation that:

"I bought the house of my dreams. I always saw the smoke coming out of the chimney, and I wanted to come and see the inside of it, and I promised myself that I would not see the inside of it until I bought it. And here I am with that house. And the day we wrote the

contract, I was so happy I wanted to fly. And that first day when I entered this house, I felt unforgettably good. (Respondent No. 5)"

Another participant in this study, who was a traveler, described their motivation as follows:

"One of my dreams was to reach the top of Kilimanjaro, which was just a picture on the wall of my room. So, I set off on that journey and conquered it with a group of mountaineers. The moment I reached the peak, I had an extraordinary could strange feeling that I could also make my other dreams come true. (Respondent No. 7)"

One of them said:

"I wanted to be able to start a business and work for myself. It was one of my childhood dreams. Even though my family and people around me want me to have another job and work for an organization or organization that has a fixed income, I always wished to work for myself and have my favorite business. (Respondent No. 3)"

### **5.1.3. The Need for Independence**

Many lifestyle entrepreneurs are interested in owning their own business, working for themselves, having autonomy in decision-making, and standing on their own feet, among other motivations, as mentioned by all the participants in the research.

"My motivation was that I wanted to have an independent career and work for myself. (Respondent No. 13)"

Some of them pursued entrepreneurship to gain job independence:

"I had ten years of experience as an employee in a government organization, which I had no interest in. So, I quit because I wanted to work for myself (Respondent No. 9)"

One of the interviewees said:

"My desire to maintain independence in making decisions when starting my business is one of the most important features of my business. The most obvious feature is that I am willing to dedicate much energy and time to maintain and grow it. (Respondent No. 4)"

### **5.1.4. Gaining Social Status**

By gaining respect from society and receiving positive feedback from others about their work, entrepreneurs can feel helpful by contributing to their communities. This is considered a factor that can help entrepreneurs gain self-confidence by pursuing such entrepreneurial efforts. All of the entrepreneurs mentioned this as a motivation.

For instance, a female entrepreneur said the following about her motivation:

"I attempted to reach that peak in Maslow's pyramid and flourish. I would like to have several people working with me. Unfortunately, many do not value a woman as a business owner in Iran. But my motivation was to show women's position to others by starting my business. (Respondent No. 6)"

Or a young girl who worked in the field of local products cheerfully stated:

"I felt something in my work that was very interesting to me. It gave me a social status. Now, I have reached a place where they respect me a lot., which has given me self-esteem. When I was a teenager, I didn't do many things because of my lack of self-confidence, but now my work has helped me increase my self-confidence, and at the height of the sad events and financial crises we had, it helped me carry on. My work gives me hope and inspiration. (Respondent No. 3)"

One of them stated:

"Sports are essential in all societies. In my opinion, the role of the activity that I do is important, especially among the young people present, because these days, in addition to older people depending on their health with sports, younger people and teenagers also enthusiastically participate in these activities. (Respondent No. 8)"

### **5.1.5. Tapping Individual Capacities**

All the participants in the research stated that they pursued entrepreneurial ventures or were motivated to develop their work because they wanted to use their skills at work and rely on their capabilities. With many of them, it was evident that part of their motivation was directly related to their personal



growth and development. It was a two-way relationship. Their motivation to act based on their capabilities is pertaining to the actions that motivated them to improve their abilities.

One of the participants said:

"By creating this business, I wanted to share with others what I had learned. I imagine that I have experiences in my work and life that can be useful to others. Therefore, it will make me happy if I can use these experiences and my capabilities to create a business. (Respondent No. 8)"

One of the participants who was the owner of "Ana" tourist accommodation in "Shiraz" said:

"We do the gardening and catering ourselves, and if no one is around, I am always ready to help. I always have a job to do. A good manager should know how to clean, cook, entertain guests, and manage. (Respondent No. 10)"

One of them said:

"I knew I could use the things I learned and the experiences I gained in my work and do this. I wanted to teach others while using my knowledge and experiences. (Respondent No. 1)"

## **5.2. Extrinsic motivations**

Extrinsic motivations were divided into these categories: Social tendencies, work-life balance, dissatisfaction with previous job(s), and financial concerns.

### **5.2.1. Social Tendencies**

This motivation refers to social goals. Some of the participants in the research stated that they engaged in entrepreneurship to create enterprises to for others, or they wanted to build their business because they could pay their employees' wages. Among other reasons mentioned by the participants as social motivations are contribution to the community, improving the procedure and principles in the community, promoting the culture of the city, region, village, or country to visitors and foreigners, and sharing the specific customs and traditions of their area with non-native people.

One of the owners of an ecotourism accommodation said about the motivation for establishing their business:

"I decided to use that property for myself until one of the villagers had an accident with his motorcycle. He was severely injured. He had to pay several million rials as a penalty because he had been found guilty; otherwise, they would have put him behind bars. I asked him why he didn't take a loan and pay the debt so he wouldn't go to jail. He explained that his application was declined on account of his being unemployed. Then I asked around and found out that many young people were unemployed in this village, and I thought of starting a business here so that even divorced women or the youth from the village could come and work here and they would not be forced to migrate to big cities and have to spend their income on commuting between the village and the city. (Respondent No. 5)"

Another tourist accommodation owner said:

"My idea was to host foreign visitors and have a good relationship with them because I wanted to change their mentality toward Iran and the culture of the Iranian people. It was essential for me to have this impact on foreign visitors and make them aware of the negative and false beliefs western media disseminate about my country. So, my motivation was to create fond and positive memories for foreign visitors about their trips to Iran. (Respondent No. 11)"

Another participant said:

"If I can bring my business to the point where I can export my products to other countries, I have greatly helped its growth. One of my motives for creating this business was to transfer organic food products to other cities in Iran so that they could also use these quality products. (Respondent No. 3)"

### **5.2.2. Work-Life Balance**

With 70% of the research participants, balancing their lives and work was considered one of the most important motivations. In particular, all the women participating in this research noted that a motivating factor for them was having a job, which gave them enough time to focus on their personal lives and helped them support their families.

For example, one of the women who participated in the research said:

"In the beginning, it was tough for me to maintain a balance between my life and my work. That's why I moved my job to my home to look after my daughter and serve my clients. Little by little, I could move my work in a direction where I could spend more time with my family. (Respondent No. 4)"

This motivation for the male participants is also worth mentioning:

"Because of my job, I am constantly traveling, and I have an on-the-go lifestyle. My work and life became one, and my job is considered a part of my life. (Respondent No. 12)"

Another participant said:

"One of my partners is a mother with different responsibilities, but we help each other in the current affairs of the business, and we have tried to accept other roles by creating this business alongside the family. It isn't easy to balance working hours and motherhood duties. Still, this business has allowed us to be more flexible in fulfilling our different roles in the family and society. (Respondent No. 3)"

### **5.2.3. Dissatisfaction with previous job(s)**

The desire to create change due to dissatisfaction with the previous job(s) is another motivation with lifestyle entrepreneurs. One of them, who had worked in a government organization for over ten years and now had her own business, said:

"I had ten years of experience as an employee in a government organization, but I had no interest in it. So, I quit because I wanted to work for myself. I wanted to do more, and I knew that my capabilities were much more than enough to keep me in a routine and soulless job. When I decided to open a hospitality center, I resigned and started my new job. (Respondent No. 9)"

Another participant pointed out:

"I wasn't satisfied with my previous work because I had no interest in it and because the cost of raw materials was high and required a lot of capital. I left it and started this job that I was interested in. (Respondent No. 2)"

Another participant said:

"My education is in the field of education, and I really like to work with the new generation. I had experiences in this field that were not very pleasant. I worked intensively for several institutions for several years, but I did not have sufficient and satisfactory salaries and benefits, nor was I satisfied with my future career. When I chose this business, I knew I could handle it, and my previous experiences helped me cooperate and accompany the team. (Respondent No. 3)"

### **5.2.4. Financial Concerns**

The motivation to earn money is one of the most important motivations for creating any business and has its roots in the entrepreneurship literature. It should not be forgotten that lifestyle entrepreneurs are also entrepreneurs, and the motivation to earn money in this type of entrepreneurship is still considered to be one of the critical drivers for creating a business. All the participants in this research, regardless of their gender and type of business, showed this motivation and additionally recognized more significant profit and the desire to grow and develop over time as other important drivers for their business growth. The tourist participant described his financial concerns while starting a business as follows:

"After graduating from university, I didn't know what to do. I needed a job to make ends meet. I knew I had to look for a job to earn me money...I decided to start my business with very little savings and see if I could profit from it. Moreover, I had set down a principle that I should not pay for the tours I go on. It got to the point where I didn't have any money. For

example, I like fruit very much. Sometimes, I used to pass by the fruit shop but couldn't afford it. I could have borrowed money from my family, but I decided to stand on my own feet and carry on. I thought of traveling alone by bicycle... We always think that traveling requires money. It does, but I decided to travel when strapped for cash. I wanted to rise to a challenge and see what decision I would make for my life. I said to myself that if I came back from this trip, I could do this as a job. (Respondent No. 7)"

Another participant pointed out:

" We have many financial problems, many of which helped me choose the best marketing and advertising strategies. Unfortunately, the epidemic crisis caused a lot of damage to my business because it is directly related to food and health. I am afraid of the financial future of my business, but with hope and motivation, I am trying to maintain the motivation for growth. (Respondent No. 3)"

Another participant said:

" I had no savings when I first decided to do this. I was a housewife with a small child, no income source, and even guidance and support. Even my wife was against it. First, I went to buy fabric with the cash gift I got for my birthday. I was able to buy a minimal amount of fabric, but I knew I could do it. Even now, there are many financial problems, especially since my business has increased, but I am trying to find a solution to them. I have to raise the price of the products due to my high costs, which reduces the sales. (Respondent No. 4)"

## **6. Discussion**

The current research has investigated the motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurship in Iran, a developing country with many cultural, social, and economic limitations. Therefore, knowing the motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurs in Iran can help the growth of this sector of the economy and provide a clearer picture of investment in this sector to governments and individuals. Additionally, it is hoped that this field of entrepreneurship can be paid more attention to researchers in this field in the future, as so far, such research has yet to be done in Iran.

The article highlights that lifestyle entrepreneurship in Iran is particularly interesting since many businesses have achieved significant growth in their professional course in a short period. The researchers conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 13 lifestyle entrepreneurs who had established companies in various fields such as tourism, sports, art, and culture for at least three years. The study highlights that the motivations for entrepreneurship are complex and multifaceted, varying depending on personal circumstances, aspirations, and external factors. Therefore, understanding lifestyle entrepreneurs' motivations and desires is vital to exploring this type of entrepreneurship and increasing the understanding of academics and policymakers about this type of entrepreneur. The article emphasizes the importance of lifestyle entrepreneurship in the economy and society and the need for further research in this field, particularly in countries like Iran, where lifestyle entrepreneurship is gaining momentum. By understanding the motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurs, policymakers can design policies that support this type of entrepreneurship and promote economic growth and social well-being.

Lifestyle entrepreneurship has gained increasing attention recently (Krishnan et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022; O'Neill et al., 2022), as many individuals seek to create a business that aligns with their values and interests. While some lifestyle entrepreneurs may not be interested in building large businesses, their activities and views of the business significantly impact the economy and the concept of entrepreneurship. In this context, this article discusses the motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurs in Iran, a country where many young businesses have embarked on the path of entrepreneurship with this mindset. Previous studies in this field did not pay attention to this context (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011). This type of entrepreneurship cannot only be limited to one business category, tourism (Cunha et al., 2018; Sun & Hu, 2017; Peters et al., 2009) but also lifestyle entrepreneurship is a way of thinking and attitude toward creating a business that could be seen in many businesses and entrepreneurs, which has been paid attention to in recent research (Ratten, 2021; Wright & Mitchell, 2022; Stebbins, 2004).

After analyzing the obtained results, it is now clear that lifestyle entrepreneurs in Iran, like other entrepreneurs in this field, have motivations such as creating their favorite business and following their dreams (Baldegger et al., 2017; Carson et al., 2018) and the "work-life balance" was one of the important intrinsic among entrepreneurs (Balven et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2020).

However, the economic conditions and other factors affecting business establishment in Iran are more colorful than in other countries known for lifestyle entrepreneurship. In this study, the researchers found that interest in work and intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for starting a business are always considered integral to entrepreneurship, which requires many infrastructure investments. Unlike previous business generations, purely economic jobs and activities have given way to personal motives and goals, social desires, and the pursuit of individual dreams and interests. Entrepreneurs are not motivated solely by financial incentives (O'Neill et al., 2022) and job creation to earn income. In the coming years, even in developing countries, it will be rare to find people with only financial motivation to do their business. Motives such as creating an independent job (Bredvold & Skalen, 2016) and gaining independence in decision-making (Marchetti et al., 2006) and other aspects of business are considered factors influencing the establishment of companies. This research identified this motivation in lifestyle entrepreneurs (Dawson et al., 2011).

One of the motivations identified in this research is "financial concerns," which were addressed in previous research on lifestyle entrepreneurship (O'Neill et al., 2022). Determining this new factor, in turn, increases the amount of theoretical participation in the study and shows the context of Iran with the concerns of a developing country facing many economic problems with other fields in which such study has been conducted. This finding can reveal new aspects of the motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurs in the entrepreneurship literature and help to expand and deepen theories in entrepreneurship. Also, the research sheds light on aspects of the motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurs, particularly the close relationship between financial concerns (Krishnan et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022) and colorful intrinsic motivations like pursuing a dream (Wright et al., 2021).

Before the analysis, it might have been expected that entrepreneurs associating their motivations with following their dreams would have fewer financial concerns. However, many entrepreneurs in this study shared that they faced significant economic challenges in pursuing their personal and business goals. Despite the obstacles, they persevered and overcame difficulties to achieve small successes. Over time, the intensity of financial concerns either diminished or became less prominent. This demonstrates that the motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurs, both intrinsic and extrinsic, cannot be neatly separated from one another. They are deeply intertwined, and these entrepreneurs demonstrate clear and passionate motives at every step of their business creation and growth (Tregear, 2005).

In summary, this research sheds light on the motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurs in Iran. It highlights the importance of considering a country's cultural, social, and economic context when researching entrepreneurship. The findings of this study can help policymakers and investors in Iran understand lifestyle entrepreneurs' motivations better and develop strategies to support and grow this sector of the economy.

## **7. Conclusion**

Lifestyle entrepreneurship is a relatively unexplored area within the field of entrepreneurship, particularly in the context of Iran, with its unique cultural, economic, and social conditions. Recognizing this research gap, the present study aims to investigate the topic of lifestyle entrepreneurship, focusing specifically on its motivations.

To guide the analysis and presentation of the research results, the study adopts the behavioral theory of motivation, emphasizing intrinsic and extrinsic motivations as proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000). The framework helps understand the underlying factors that drive individuals to engage in lifestyle entrepreneurship. Based on the findings, intrinsic motivations are categorized into several themes. These include aligning business activities with personal interests, pursuing a dream or passion, seeking independence, gaining social status, and tapping into individual capacities. On the other hand, extrinsic motivations include social trends, work-life balance considerations, dissatisfaction with the previous job(s), and financial concerns.

Drawing from the research findings on motivations for lifestyle entrepreneurship, it is recommended that future studies delve further into the motivations for growth, specifically within

different domains of this entrepreneurial type. By exploring the various aspects and drivers of growth among lifestyle entrepreneurs, valuable insights can be gained to strengthen and expand existing theories. Such investigations can contribute to developing a comprehensive understanding of lifestyle entrepreneurship and its dynamics (Ateljevic & Dorn, 2001), offering practical implications for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and researchers.

## 8. Policy Suggestions and Implications for Future Research

By restricting the "financial concerns" of these entrepreneurs, policymakers can make a significant contribution to economic growth due to this field of entrepreneurship in Iran and its neighboring countries (Krishnan et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022) by focusing on other motivations and helping the growth of this type of entrepreneurial thinking. Actions such as providing loans and financial assistance to lifestyle entrepreneurs or improving startup and legal conditions entrepreneurs face at the beginning of their business journey can boost their motivation.

As a practical suggestion, lifestyle businesses can be introduced in the media because these entrepreneurs and their companies need to be seen. The development of lifestyle, business, culture, and discourse can realize their intrinsic stimulant, such as "gaining social status."

In addition, it can give them a sense of confidence and make them feel supported. For example, some of the participants in this research stated that they did not receive financial or intellectual support from any organization, which was critical for starting their business. They mentioned that if they had received financial support, they could have started their entrepreneurship much earlier, with more confidence and in a better way. This field of entrepreneurship in Iran and its neighboring countries focuses on other motivations and helps the growth of this type of entrepreneurial thinking.

Future research can identify these areas:

They conducted a comparative study between lifestyle and mobile entrepreneurs and explored their motivations. Investigate how economic, cultural (Ratten, 2021), environmental, and geographical factors influence entrepreneurial decisions. This could be done by comparing regions or countries, such as Middle Eastern countries (Krishnan et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022) or developed nations.

They explored the motivations for action and growth in lifestyle businesses between women-owned and men-owned businesses. Investigate the factors that contribute to the development and success of these businesses, taking into account the unique experiences and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs compared to their male counterparts.

Investigate the influence of socio-cultural factors on the motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurs. Explore how societal norms, values, and beliefs shape entrepreneurship.

Assess the broader impact of lifestyle businesses on local communities, the environment, and sustainable development. Investigate how the motivations and practices of lifestyle entrepreneurs align with environmental and social responsibility and explore opportunities for promoting sustainable entrepreneurship within this sector.

## 9. Limitations

One of the limitations of this research is the limited number of people and businesses active in the field of lifestyle entrepreneurship in Iran. Due to the specific economic conditions in Iran, in general, many companies are set up to take advantage of a business opportunity, and the number of businesses whose founders have other motivations to create a business, compared to businesses created by entrepreneurs without financial constraints, is reduced. Another limitation of this research is the concentration of companies in the bigger cities of Iran, while many businesses in this field can be seen in small villages of Iran. Future researchers can estimate the role of motivations for creating lifestyle businesses on a macro scale in Iran's economic growth in the last few years. To achieve this result, the researchers suggest that this type of entrepreneurship should first be identified. Its dimensions were extracted, and after conducting quantitative research to determine the role of motivations in the action and growth of these businesses, measure these effects by placing the background components that can be effective in enhancing or diminishing motivations and also, knowing that lifestyle entrepreneurs have multiple motivations (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000). for their business, these motivations can be measured in future research to reveal which of the motivations identified in this research among lifestyle entrepreneurs in Iran is more colorful.

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