

Agritourism in Crete: a cultural approach

Representation and preservation of the island's cultural heritage by the local providers

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze how the local agritourism providers in Crete, Greece, represent the island's culture and to what extent they engage in cultural preservation. Agritourism providers are hence conceptualised as cultural intermediaries and an emic approach is adopted in studying the services of their B&B establishments as well as their perception of themselves. In Greece, agritourism has been developing since the 1980s, but in an arguably fragmented manner that contradicts the theoretical definitions of agritourism proposed by scholars in the field. Consequently, most academic papers by Greek scholars touch upon the obstacles that have hindered this tourism niche to grow coherently. In a novel way, this study employs a concept of the cultural studies to develop a holistic understanding of agritourism providers, upholding the claim that such an approach could reveal a common pattern in agritourism practices. The key concepts of commodification, authenticity and terroir inform the theoretical framework of this research. The concept of cultural heritage is viewed from a dialogical perspective, since the providers' agency as cultural workers is emphasized. Using a qualitative research design, 8 providers in Crete were interviewed. These were owners or managers of agritourism B&B establishments located in different regions across the island. Interviews were conducted online and they covered four topics deriving from the key theoretical concepts of the research. These concepts touched upon key points of the providers' function as cultural intermediaries and accordingly guided the analysis of the semi-structured interviews. The analysis revealed that the selected agritourism providers decisively shape the ways in which Cretan culture is represented and they engage directly or indirectly in the preservation of local cultural practices. The representations of Cretan culture are particularly linked to the Cretan territorial identity and they might be complex in terms of their authentic quality. Through a process of creative commodification agritourism providers preserve both intangible and tangible cultural elements often intuitively or for emotional reasons. Overall, they are reflexive of their role as cultural intermediaries that introduce guests to Cretan life and culture in a personal and unique way.

Keywords: agritourism, Greece, cultural heritage, representation, preservation

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1. Introduction

Tourism in Crete has been the dominant economic activity since the 1970s. Mass tourism, in particular, has been developing to a great extent, as more and more all-inclusive holiday resorts are built across the island and tour operators keep promoting Crete as the ultimate sea-sand-sun destination. However, this island in the south of Greece has more to offer than mainstream all-inclusive holiday packages.

“You know, not all is standardized [...] nor are there tourist signs everywhere...

It is all like a village, the way locals live. This is the ‘other Crete’.”¹

(R1, 42 y/o, male)

As an agritourism business owner in the last fifteen years, this man describes the experience at his establishment as a contact with the “other Crete”. For him, this image of Crete is devoid of mass tourism’s degrading touch, it is not pre-packaged or uniform, but it derives from and represents the way locals live. The guests at his B&B establishment will get to know this aspect of Crete. It is not a coincidence that these are the words of an agritourism provider in Crete. Drawing on such empirical evidence, this study investigates how the “other Crete” is communicated to guests staying at agritourism B&B establishments across the island. The local agritourism providers like this man are in the spotlight.

Despite being widely known as a sea-sand-sun holiday destination in Greece, the island of Crete offers a unique blend of agricultural production, rich culinary traditions and vibrant cultural life, which make it “an agrotourism natural” (Butler, 2020). Currently, the development of agritourism in the island has been vividly encouraged by local stakeholders involved in agritourism unions (Aristeidou, 2019; Joyce, 2020), who regard agritourism as a viable response to the mass tourism “plague” and its impacts on the island, a point made by Greek scholars as well (Terkenli, 2005). Parallel to these developments, travel trends are moving away from mass tourism towards alternative tourism niches that will combine an eco-conscious attitude with authentic and natural experiences in the great outdoors (Palmer, 2020). Furthermore, scholars in the agritourism field observe how agritourism “has steadily grown over the years as more people seek rural experiences” (Barbieri & Streifeneder, 2019, p. 712). Since agritourism resources are available in Crete and the market’s orientation is pointing towards the rise of this tourism niche, it would be relevant to study its key actors.

¹ Δεν είναι όλα έτσι τυποποιημένα, ούτε όλα... ούτε τουριστικές νταμπέλες παντού... είναι όλα όπως είναι ένα χωριό, όπως ζούνε οι local. Αυτό είναι το η "άλλη Κρήτη".

On the official website of the Greek National Tourism Organisation one can get a general sense of what agritourism in Greece looks like. Guests are invited to take part in farm life, either by “working with the land” or “working with the cattle” (GNTO, 2021). They can also take cooking lessons, try their hand at preparing homemade bread and learn local recipes of the place they are visiting. Gastronomy is part and parcel of agritourism services. Educational and participatory activities hold a central role, while, as the website highlights, the guests develop personal relationships with the hosts. The notions of tradition and authenticity as well as the bond with the natural environment are important characteristics of agritourism in Greece. Specifically in Crete, the study’s research area, there are numerous agritourism establishments that leverage the local natural and cultural resources to showcase the distinct character of the island and introduce the guests to the Cretan way of living (Aristeidou, 2019). It is, thus, not surprising that on the website of the Greek Ministry of Rural Development and Food, agritourism is presented as a means of promotion of the cultural heritage and the unique character of each region (*Agrotourism*, 2019).

Academic research drawing on empirical examples has in fact demonstrated the link of agritourism to cultural representation and preservation (e.g. LaPan & Barbieri, 2013; Wiśniewska & Szymańska, 2020). In European studies on rural tourism or farm tourism (Võsu & Sooväli-Sepping, 2012; Bardone et al., 2013; Wright and Annes, 2014), the local providers are specifically in the spotlight and their individual perspective is highlighted. The providers are considered as key actors in representing the rural way of life and the local cultural heritage. Such empirical research from European scholars illustrates that agritourism indeed acts as a means of promotion of the local cultural heritage. This mission is mainly accomplished by the agritourism providers of each specific region, who adopt the role of “cultural agents” (Võsu & Sooväli-Sepping, 2012, p. 80) and create meaningful tourism products that draw on local culture.

In Greece, agritourism firstly appeared in the 1980s (Kizos & Iosifides, 2007), but inherent contradictions have ever since dominated this tourism niche at a national level. As a result, the agritourism market is largely fragmented. Most probably due to this condition, the phenomenon of agritourism in Greece has been mainly researched either with a focus on regional development (e.g. Kizos & Iosifides, 2007) or with a focus on the shortcomings of related policies and frameworks (e.g. Mylonopoulos et al., 2017) that hinder its potential growth in a cohesive manner. There is no academic work conducted by Greek scholars that studies agritourism from a cultural approach as the one adopted in this study. Specifically, although previous papers on agritourism in Greece draw evidence from providers in the

specific research areas, these providers are not conceptualised as “cultural agents” (Võsu & Sooväli-Sepping, 2012, p. 80), because the scope of analysis is limited to business matters. The academic relevance of the present study derives specifically from the fact that there is a lack of papers that examine agritourism in Greece from a cultural approach. Taking this fact into consideration, the present study aspires to fill in this gap in agritourism research in Greece by attempting to answer the research question: *How do agritourism providers represent the cultural heritage of Crete in their B&B establishments and to what extent is the preservation of Cretan culture actively pursued by them?*

Drawing inspiration from the above-mentioned studies of a similar approach, it is deemed relevant to explore agritourism practices in Crete from a cultural aspect. To do that, agritourism providers are hence conceptualised as cultural intermediaries, a concept that stems from the cultural studies (Negus, 2002). This research upholds that their choices and perceptions shape the services provided in their B&B establishments and consequentially the ways Cretan culture is represented. Furthermore, since these providers are viewed as key actors in representing the local cultural heritage, their possible engagement in preservation efforts is also considered. The present study holds significant societal relevance. A holistic understanding of these key actors as cultural intermediaries could gradually unearth a common underlying pattern in their practices. This would be very important in a fragmented market as the Greek one, as the promotion of agritourism could then develop under a common orientation, which would clearly pronounce the links between agritourism and cultural heritage. Since individual agency is emphasized, cultural heritage is perceived as a dynamic and contingent entity that is impacted and shaped by a constant dialogue between the past and the present, the humans and the objects (Harrison, 2012).

The thesis employs a qualitative research approach. In order to answer the twofold research question, owners and/or managers of agritourism B&B establishments in Crete are asked to describe their reality during in-depth interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Relying on an emic perspective, agritourism services, such as edutainment activities for guests, are analysed through the lens of the providers themselves. The interviewees are invited to reflect on how they see themselves and their tourism products and based on that evidence an understanding of how they represent and possibly preserve the Cretan culture is constructed. Their involvement in cultural commodification, their perception of authenticity and their connection to the Cretan land are taken into account with the aim to fully explore their role as cultural intermediaries in the agritourism context.

The overall structure of this paper is as follows. Chapter two provides a general understanding of the agritourism concept along with a brief overview of academic studies that touch upon the connection between agritourism and cultural heritage. Following this, a dialogical viewpoint on cultural heritage is shortly elaborated. The key theoretical concepts of the research, that is commodification, authenticity and terroir are then thoroughly described and discussed drawing on relevant agritourism and cultural studies. In the final section of Chapter two, the discussion of the main concepts culminates in the conceptualisation of agritourism providers as cultural intermediaries, who negotiate these key notions in the ways they represent the Cretan cultural heritage. In Chapter three, the methodological choices are described and justified in detail. Following this, in Chapter four, a comprehensive analysis of the research findings is presented by delving into a comparison of empirical reality to the existing literature. Hence, the outline of the analytical themes develops in relation to the key theoretical concepts of the study. Lastly, Chapter five provides the reader with answers to the research question while also acknowledging the research limitations and suggesting future research directions.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, relevant studies are discussed in order to develop a solid theoretical framework for this research. First, there is a brief overview of agritourism definitions and how they compare to the reality in Greece, as well as a remark about the link between cultural heritage and agritourism. Following this, the key theoretical concepts are discussed. It is argued that commodification of cultural heritage is not emically perceived as negative, but it helps local tourism providers to feel creative and empowered. Existential authenticity is then established as the most suitable approach to agritourism services, as this is an activity-based tourism type with much social interaction between hosts and guests. Drawing mainly on culinary heritage, the impact of territorial specificities on agritourism products and their providers is illustrated. To conclude this chapter, a pertinent conceptualization of the research units is established based on the term of cultural intermediaries, who in their role decisively shape the representation of the local cultural heritage.

2.1. Agritourism definitions and reality in Greece

Agritourism has been classified under and linked to various categories or types of tourism (Phillip et al., 2010) such as alternative tourism, rural tourism or even special interest tourism. Despite the rising academic interest in this tourism niche, agritourism remains a rather elusive concept in tourism studies. European scholars observe that “agritourism is a muddled concept between realities and stakeholder expectations” (Dubois et al., 2017, p. 298). In 2010, Phillip, Hunter and Blackstock proposed an original typology that identifies five types of agritourism based on three key terms frequently used in literature: the working farm (widely thought of as the place where agritourism unfolds), the level of contact guests have with agricultural activity (ranging from direct to passive contact), as well as the degree of authenticity that characterises the tourist experiences. These three frequently used terms were considered as “three typological discriminators” (Flanigan et al., 2014, p. 403) to define agritourism. In this attempt to demarcate “a mosaic of offerings” (Barbieri, 2019, p. 151) in the agritourism sector, the authors acknowledge that there is “a fluidity of characteristics” (Phillip et al., 2010, p. 755). In 2014, Flanigan, Blackstock and Hunter revised this original

typology integrating this time both providers and visitors perspectives on agritourism in Scotland. In doing so, they endeavoured to bridge empirical understandings of agritourism with the academic literature on the subject. Their findings supported their original typology (Phillip et al., 2010) but also demonstrated that there is “variation in how agritourism is perceived” (Flanigan et al., 2014, p. 403). Conceptualizing agritourism in this manner could certainly bring academic research closer to empirical reality as a shared understanding of the concept is developed, but in an ever-expanding and dynamic industry, empirical reality could vary greatly from one country to another.

In Greece, where this study is geographically located, the agritourism reality reveals controversies and a generally fragmented market. Unfortunately, due to shortcomings of related policies and national strategies (e.g. Mylonopoulos et al., 2017) and the lack of a clear institutional framework, the incorporation of agriculture and tourism remains in an underdeveloped stage. As Greek scholars rightfully observe, “the trajectory of agrotourism in Greece does not comply with the theoretical framework of contemporary rural development practices” (Kizos & Iosifides, 2007, p. 60) posing questions as to whether this can be regarded as “real” agritourism. A recent study on agritourism and local development testifies to the complexity of the issue. Karampela and Kizos (2018) analysed two case studies in Greece by drawing on the typology of Flanigan et al. (2014). The respondents’ answers about the agritourism definition indicated that this term is indeed a muddled concept in the mind of providers. Despite the contradictions and the vague definition of this tourism niche at a national level, this research will employ the term agritourism, since it is already widely used by the actors of the supply side, which are the research units of this study.

However elusive the concept’s definition might be, it would be useful to have an overview of the services and products of this tourism niche in Greece. According to Papakonstandinidis (1993) and Iakovidou (1997), these are the most common agritourism services and activities:

- accommodation in small-size establishments, such as hotels or hostels, available rooms in one’s farmhouse or independent guesthouses that could be located in a farm’s open areas,
- meal preparation and serving either in taverns or small restaurant(s) possibly within the establishment or in the open air, with the use of farm or local products,
- recreational activities such as farm visits or demonstrations, engagement in ongoing farming activities, visits to nearby enterprises producing local

products, guided walking tours on trekking paths of the area, demonstrations of local cuisine and recipes, participation in local cultural events.

2.2. Agritourism and cultural heritage

Links between agritourism and cultural heritage are illustrated in academic papers. LaPan and Barbieri (2013) focus on the connection between agritourism and heritage preservation in a North American context. This is a relevant study as it indicates that farmers, who diversified their activities into farm tourism, contribute to the preservation of tangible cultural heritage twice as often than those not engaged in agritourism. For them, tangible heritage is “a component of the rural landscape and the agritourism appeal” (LaPan & Barbieri, 2013, p. 667) and they are motivated to safeguard it for its cultural and personal meanings. They do so by preserving “historic buildings and antique equipment” that relate to “the rural American legacy” (p. 670). Either by passing on knowledge about agricultural heritage and activities or by showcasing cultural practices and local traditions, agritourism providers give prominence to the local cultural heritage. A relevant European example of Pomeranian farmers in Poland demonstrates how educational activities in farms help in familiarizing visitors with the region’s culture, as “visitors learn about the local customs, rituals and folk traditions” (Wiśniewska & Szymańska, 2020, p. 145). This recent study illustrates how farmers’ initiatives can transform the countryside into a place of education about food, culture and ecology. Therefore, in direct or indirect ways, agritourism providers can indeed strengthen the preservation and promotion of the local cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible.

Further examples in the literature underpin the agritourism – cultural heritage link. In Cyprus, a neighbouring to Greece sea-sand-sun holiday destination, agritourism is shown to reinforce the connection between tourism and local culture. As Papamichael (2003) notes, the main objectives of agritourism development in the island include boosting the traditional culture and way of life and showcasing the uniqueness of Cypriot rural culture and hospitality. The research participants agree that “the highest positive impact that agrotourism development will have on host areas [...] concerns the revival of culture and traditions of Cypriot village life” (Papamichael, 2003, p. 40). In a different geographical context, Yang (2012) discusses agritourism development in Yunnan, China, attempting to draw attention to challenges faced by residents in rural environments of developing countries. The study demonstrates how *nongjiale*, the Chinese version of rural tourism, has also a positive effect

on the preservation of regional cultural heritage, thanks to the renewed interest in it from the outer world. Namely, many research participants have “reported pride in seeing tourists enjoy their culture and they pointed out that local culture, especially minority traditions, has been rejuvenated” (Yang, 2012, p. 376) thanks to rural tourism.

Through host-guest social interactions, the local gastronomy, the place's identity and history, the customs and the way of life could be communicated to the latter. In Greece, social interaction with the guests staying in agritourism establishments is an essential component of agritourism, as it has been developed and practised so far. This component differentiates agritourism “made in Greece” and it could actually be considered as its comparative advantage (Moirá, 2004, our translation). The above-presented papers provide evidence of how agritourism practices boost the representation and preservation of local heritage. Such insights from the literature support the study’s research aim and the assumption that agritourism providers hold a key role in representing and preserving the cultural heritage of Crete. However, with the exception of LaPan & Barbieri (2013), agritourism providers are not at centre stage in the above-mentioned research. On the contrary, this study focuses predominantly on the local agritourism providers, who are viewed as central players in the representation and preservation of Cretan cultural heritage. The selected providers that were interviewed are regarded as cultural workers and not simply business owners.

2.3. A dialogical understanding of cultural heritage

In the previous section, relevant studies from the field of agritourism were briefly presented as evidence of the links between agritourism and cultural heritage. In this section, pertinent definitions and understandings of cultural heritage are discussed with the aim to mould a fitting conceptual framework for this concept in the study.

In the heritage field, UNESCO constitutes a Canon on defining the notion of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. According to the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 1972, p. 2), the following three categories are considered as tangible cultural heritage: “monuments [...] of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science [...]; groups of buildings [...] because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape [...]; sites: works of man or [...] of nature and man”. It should be

noted that the Convention considers separately the cultural and the natural heritage. Following some modifications, the notion of tangible cultural heritage was revised and a definition of intangible heritage was provided in 2003 by the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. This type of heritage is described as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage” (UNESCO, 2003).

Contradicting the Canonical definition and perception of cultural heritage by UNESCO, Harrison (2012) in his book *Heritage: Critical Approaches* calls for a radical rethinking of the notion of heritage. He openly criticizes the binary oppositions upheld by UNESCO Conventions, which separate cultural heritage into different types, thus sustaining Cartesian dualisms in terms of heritage management. Instead, inspired by indigenous lifeworlds, he proposes a new dialogical approach to heritage, one that is based on “connectivity ontology” (Harrison, 2012, p. 215). This new dialogical perspective views heritage as “a contingent and creative endeavour” (Harrison, 2012, p. 222) and as a complex process not limited to the past or the present nor to humans or objects, but instead resulting from a constant dialogue of all the agents involved.

Contextualising these insights in the study of agritourism, it is fitting to refer to a paper by Bessière (1998) in which food and gastronomy are regarded as heritage elements that can promote rural tourism development. Heritage, expressed through traditional cuisine and culinary products, “is directly related to a collective social memory” (Bessière, 1998, p. 26), in other words, to a common past. Heritage builds a common identity, as it does not only relate the past to the present but also acts as a meaning-making tool to understand the world. Resonating Harrison’s (2012) view, Bessière (1998, p. 27) questions fundamental binary oppositions such as “tradition/modernity, continuity/schism, stability/dynamism” and remarks that “we may view heritage more as a social construction than something fossilized and unchanging that gets handed down as such”. In the context of rural tourism, which closely resembles that of agritourism, tourists can engage in the consumption of regional gastronomy, which Bessière regards as a local cultural code. In this way, rural tourists can shortly participate into the local community. For this process to occur, local providers act as “both archaeologists and innovators at the same time” (Bessière, 1998, p. 27), meaning that they creatively utilize and re-interpret heritage, proving its contingent nature. Employing these theoretical insights, cultural heritage in this study is viewed as a dynamic, contingent

notion, which is expressed in intangible or tangible cultural codes that are consumed by tourists.

A closely related notion to that of heritage is tradition. It is relevant to make a concluding note to this section on cultural heritage with some reflections on tradition, as this concept was shortly discussed with research participants. According to Bessière (1998, p. 26), heritage, “as a temporal link, [...] is indistinguishable from tradition”. The author remarks that the notion’s etymology in Latin translates in English as the verbs ‘deliver’ or ‘transmit’. Thus, tradition can be regarded as a thread that connects the past to the present through the collective memory and the effort to preserve what is considered valuable from the past. This is a dynamic process that might involve a remoulding of past customs. As Vösu and Sooväli-Sepping (2012, p. 77) describe it “tradition refers more to the continuity and change of cultural knowledge or material objects in time”.

2.4. An emic perspective on the commodification of culture

The commodification of traditional cultural practices, such as gastronomy, through agritourism, could possibly encourage their revitalization, as cultural codes are consumed by tourists (Bessière, 1998). For this to take place, providers have to create tourism products, which as Smith (1994, p. 582) explains, “meet marketplace demands, are produced cost-efficiently, and are based on the wise use of the cultural and natural resources of the destination”. He specifically notes that tourism products are essentially human experiences. Based on the overview of agritourism services in Greece by Papakonstandinidis (1993) and Iakovidou (1997), tourism products in this sector include meal preparation and recreational activities drawing on the local rural life and culture. Therefore, for local cultural heritage to be communicated to the guests of agritourism establishments, a process of commodification needs to take place.

The process of commodification of cultural practices has been to a large extent criticized by numerous scholars. A common view in the literature is that tourist demands convert the Other or the exotic into mere commodities available to be consumed. As local customs and rituals, ethnic arts and folklore traditions turn into products for touristic consumption, their meaning is altered to such an extent that they eventually become meaningless. In other words, commodification inevitably leads to “reductions in the aesthetic quality of cultural products and traditions due to tourist demands” (Shepherd, 2002, p. 185).

A widely cited example of this negative stance is provided by Greenwood (1978), who writes about the commoditization of a local festival in the Basque Country, Spain and describes how a cultural ritual lost all its meaning as it turned into a performance staged for the tourists. A similar approach is employed by Graburn (1984), according to whom, in the process of commodification, traditional ethnic art becomes an objectified memento in the form of a tourist souvenir. Furthermore, as Taylor (2001) notes, commodifying culture sustains essentializing perceptions of the Other, which is especially detrimental for ethnic communities in Third World countries. Overall, the transformation of cultural practices into tourism products has been viewed as a root cause for cultural erosion in areas where there is tourism development.

Although it cannot be denied that the rise of tourism can in fact bring harmful effects on culture, it should be noted that social phenomena are open to interpretations from several different perspectives. A study by Cole (2007) is particularly relevant here, as it provides an emic perspective on cultural commodification and presents the local viewpoint on the matter. Using as a basis her longitudinal ethnographic research in two disadvantaged villages in southwest Indonesia which largely depend on tourism, Cole (2007) demonstrates that cultural commodification should not be solely regarded negatively. On the contrary, it can contribute to strengthening a sense of pride and identity in the community, thus it can be seen as part of a process of community empowerment. Evidence of that is her interviews with the villagers which reveal that the presence of tourists makes them feel proud of their cultural heritage. In addition, she suggests that residents are not passive observers in the process of cultural commodification, but they rather use it “as a way of affirming their identity, of telling their own story, and of establishing the significance of local experiences” (Cole, 2007, p. 956).

Research of such an emic approach further testifies to observations made by Cole (2007). Writing about the commodification of Maori culture in New Zealand, Taylor (2001, p. 16) makes a similar point when he underlines that “in taking hold of themselves as touristic commodities”, Maori could provide their own meanings to cultural tourism products. Indeed, as Võsu and Sooväli-Sepping (2012, p. 78) note, “commodification may lead to the realisation of cultural creativity by tourism entrepreneurs”. Their study of rural tourism entrepreneurs in Estonia examines how these people interpret the heritage dimensions of smoke sauna and integrate their personalized understandings in this service offer in their establishments. By extension, commodification can help locals “to maintain a meaningful local or ethnic identity, which they might have otherwise lost” (Cohen, 1988, p. 382).

Contextualizing cultural commodification in such a manner upholds a more positive approach towards this process and more importantly, it brings the locals' perspective to the fore.

If we draw on the locals' perspective, should we then regard tourism as bringing unavoidable cultural costs in return for economic benefits? This is a relevant question posed by Shepherd (2002), to which he answers by stating that cultural value and economic value are intertwined, they are not in opposition. He underpins this argument by noting that the existing critique on commodification relies upon the basic dichotomy of nature versus culture, the same dichotomy criticized by Harrison (2012) in the context of dialogical heritage. Shepherd (2002, p. 189) extends this argument touching upon the authenticity of a cultural practice, which in his view, should not be judged based on a framework of "original-as-natural and a copy-as-degrading". Cohen (1988, p. 382) endorses this opinion pointing out that "just as a new cultural product can become with time widely accepted as 'authentic', so it can, although changed through commoditization, acquire a new meaning for its producers". Given these theoretical insights, cultural commodification may not be emically perceived as a negative change, especially when the focus is not placed only on the fact of commodification but is instead enlarged to the quality of exchanges between hosts and guests. A commodified cultural practice may actually acquire new meanings and it can be regarded as authentic if it is not assessed based on dichotomies.

2.5. An existential approach to authenticity

Linking back to the original typology of agritourism by Phillip et al. (2010), a key factor to address the confusion of the concept's definition and a frequently used term in this field is the concept of authenticity. This widely debated concept in tourism studies is relevant in the study of agritourism, as it is for related types of tourism, such as cultural, history or ethnic tourism "which involve the representation of the Other or of the past" (Wang, 1999, p. 350). Furthermore, as Daugstad & Kirchengast (2013) note, in contrast to mass tourism, agritourism is viewed as less harmful to what is deemed as authentic or traditional. It is, therefore, important to address this concept in the theoretical framework.

Being a highly contested concept, authenticity is approached and employed in various distinct ways in the literature. It is linked to pre-modern life and its opposition to modernity (Cole, 2007). It is often related to notions of nostalgia or romanticism, in other words to an

idealized way of life (Wang, 1999). It has been conceived as a negotiable concept (Cohen, 1988) and a socially constructed idea (Cole, 2007). Its usefulness and validity in tourism studies have been widely questioned or even rejected (Wang, 1999). Last, it has entirely been replaced with other alternative concepts, such as sincerity (Taylor, 2001).

Undoubtedly, a foundational and broadly influential study on this concept has been realized by Dean MacCannell. In his 1973 paper on staged authenticity, he explicitly states that in modern tourist settings the quest for authenticity is hopeless. Employing the notions of front (staged, polished) region and back (rough, unpolished) region, he explains that, however hard they try, tourists never get to access the actual back region of the hosts' community or life. Even if tourists are steadily attracted by the sense of intimacy and secrecy that characterize this hidden back region, they are only permitted to experience a staged display. Following this logic, MacCannell (1973) even argues that for locals employed in tourism the presence of tourists is nothing special as if tourists are only part of the scenery. Locals will execute their daily routine, as they know that tourists will either never intrude in their "back region", meaning their real everyday life, or they are not even interested in getting a taste of it. The staged display MacCannell (1973) describes is what tourists are offered in summer farms in Austria and Norway, as the study by Daugstad & Kirchengast (2013) shows. In order to meet tourists' expectations and balance their double role as farmers and tourism providers, farmers engaged in agritourism "construct a pseudo-backstage: a temporal frontstage that is presented as an 'actual' backstage and through which virtues such as intimacy, rareness, and privacy are transmitted" (Daugstad & Kirchengast, 2013, p. 187). Since its introduction, the concept of staged authenticity has been increasingly debated in academic circles. Indeed, MacCannell's conceptualisation of authenticity has been considered inadequate to describe all types of experiences in a tourism context and it actually implied that the modern tourist is condemned to inauthenticity.

After MacCannell, scholars attempted to rethink authenticity so that a wider spectrum of tourist experiences could be explained. Wang (1999) did so drawing on existential philosophers and adopting an emic perspective to the tourist experience. He illustrated that in postmodern times, authenticity relating to objects cannot adequately explain the variety of tourist experiences. Hence, he endorsed the concept of existential authenticity, which "as activity-related situation, is germane to the explanation of a greater variety of tourist experiences" (Wang, 1999, p. 350). The concept indicates a state of being in which a person is true to his or her "real" self and also in touch with the "real" world. According to Heidegger, someone is their authentic self when they are themselves existentially, that is they

“exist according to one’s nature or essence”, as Steiner & Reisinger (2006, p. 303) note in their paper on understanding existential authenticity. However, “because existential authenticity is experience-oriented, the existential self is transient, not enduring, and not conforming to a type” (p. 303) meaning that there is not one authentic self. Wang (1999) claims that existential authenticity provides an amelioration on objective authenticity proposed by MacCannell by shifting the focus away from the toured object and its labelling as authentic or inauthentic. Instead, it explicitly focuses on the experience which is perceived as existentially authentic, a state that is achieved in participatory activities and during host-guest encounters.

A recent study in the field of agritourism in Greece draws on existential authenticity (Wang, 1999) specifically in the context of agritourism experiences. Andéhn & L’Espoir Decosta (2020) study agritourism development in Messinia, which is an olive producing region in Greece. They note that “an agricultural operation, which comes prepackaged with historical and cultural content repurposed for tourism” (Andéhn & L’Espoir Decosta, 2020, p. 1) can convey authenticity to visitors through experiences (e.g. educational activities). Their empirical research is particularly relevant, as they point out that for existential authenticity to be conveyed successfully, the preservation of agricultural activities, local culture and history is of the essence. Hence, the place identity is safeguarded. Overall, if we take into account that social interaction with the guests is an essential component of agritourism in Greece (Moira, 2004), then existential authenticity might be the most suitable approach to studying this tourism type, as it focuses on the emic state of being in host-guest interactions.

As Cole (2007) suggests, existential authenticity is applicable to studying both tourist and host reality. In her above-mentioned research, she looks into the locals’ perspective of authenticity, drawing on her contacts with villagers who belong to an ethnic minority. However, such studies are rare, a fact remarked on by Zhou et al. (2015, p. 29) who mention that “how hosts experience authenticity has been neglected” in academic research. In their study, they delve into the host perception of authenticity, which they examine based on a pioneering measurement model tested out in Jiuzhai Valley, China. What their study reveals is that “personal emotional benefits are the key factor to mediate the conflict between economic benefits and authenticity” (Zhou et al., 2015, p. 42). Authenticity is important for the local hosts, but their interpretations of it can be subjective, contextual and influenced by the commercialised tourism environment. Their judgement might be influenced by personal beliefs, preferences, knowledge but it can also be marked by their generation’s cognition. In fact, “very few people can strictly and absolutely discuss the clear details of traditional

culture in both material and non-material forms” (Zhou et al., 2015, p. 30). Consequently, object-related authenticity provides a rather narrow framework when considering cultural experiences and focusing on it might actually make cultural tourism superficial. The paper of Zhou et al. (2015) demonstrates that for hosts the authentic self is indeed “transient, not enduring, and not conforming to a type” (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006, p. 303), as Heidegger claims writing about existential authenticity. The fluid understanding of authenticity by hosts shows that there is not one authentic self and by extension not one authentic cultural experience. Hence, the main criterion for authentication of experiences is ultimately the “personal emotional benefits” (Zhou et al., 2015, p. 42).

A relevant note to make before concluding this section on the authenticity concept concerns the alternative notion of sincerity proposed by Taylor (2001). His study has already been mentioned in the previous section on commodification, as it provides an empirical counter-argument on that concept’s negative connotations. Taylor (2001) writes that theorizing about authenticity usually leads to a harsh judgement of the ways that local identity is being expressed through tourism products. To overcome this, he suggests applying the notion of sincerity instead. This notion shifts the focus away from an attempt to “locate touristic value in the successful re-production of "objective truths" towards a view of tourism as embodying communicative events involving values important both to the social actors involved, and in themselves” (Taylor, 2001, p. 8). In other words, authenticity is not viewed as an inherent quality of an object or cultural practice, but it is rather being redefined “in terms of local values” (Taylor, 2001, p. 24) through moments of host-guest interaction. When sincere cultural experiences take place, existential authenticity is conveyed, as tourists and locals come closer in activity-based situations. Since experience, mostly in form of activities, is central in agritourism, the approach of existential authenticity is most fitting, because it is experience-oriented. Existential authenticity allows for the actors, whether hosts or guests, to be in tune with their real self when partaking in communicative events such as the ones Taylor (2001) suggests.

2.6. An expression of territorial identity

Agritourism alludes to specific places, its activities relate to certain local traditions and landscapes and production as well as consumption are kept local (Marsden, 1999). Indeed, as Papakonstandinidis (1993) and Iakovidou (1997) demonstrate, agritourism in

Greece follows the same principles. Meal ingredients are either farm-grown or locally-grown and a main part of the activities revolve around traditional cuisine and recipes. This is also the case in the B&B establishments selected for this study. As it has been recognised, cooking traditions are deeply connected to a specific place and they reveal characteristics, beliefs and habits of the local community members (Bessière, 1998). In other words, local food links to local identity and local culture (Sims, 2009). Therefore, this means that a trip to a specific agritourism destination “presents the visitor with an opportunity to absorb the local culture and traditions through food consumption” (Alonso & Krajsic, 2013, p. 158).

Bessière (1998) highlights the linkage of culinary heritage to territorial identity. This is a point she further examines in a more recent study on the heritagisation of food traditions in France. As she writes, there is “a system of shared representations linked to gastronomic heritage” (Bessière, 2013, p. 276). These shared representations refer to specific images, memories, senses that can be both expressed and evoked by a region’s traditional food. These shared representations form the basis of a territorial identity, as they create a sense of continuity between the past and the present of a community. A very relevant concept that describes this reality is *terroir*. Bessière (1998, p. 31) defines it in a comprehensive way: “the term *terroir* refers to a specific area with an outspoken cultural and historical identity. It includes the accumulation and transmission of local know-how. This is how we come to speak of local cultural produce and local cuisine.” *Terroir*, hence, refers to the ‘essence’ of a place, to its unique identity, which is moulded over time and can be conveyed in the local culinary heritage. It is relevant to incorporate this concept in the theoretical framework, as it shapes the local character of agritourism offerings in the establishments included in this research, specifically the use of local produce and traditional recipes.

There are two approaches in the understanding of *terroir*: the first one pertains to the exclusive geographical characteristics of a certain physical place, where a certain way of life unfolds. This understanding “corresponds to differentiated and specific agricultural offers” (Bessière, 2013, p. 281). The second approach, which does not exclude the first one, refers to the sociohistorical identity of a place and its continuity in time. “As it is connected to the past and to the memories of the community, *terroir* makes up a space constructed in time and thus becomes an argument for regional unity” (Bessière, 2013, p. 281). In simple terms, *terroir* is about the sense of belonging to a specific community. When the two approaches are integrated, the natural resources become a component of a distinct cultural system (Bessière, 2013). In an agritourism context, meal preparation with exclusively local produce is an example of how the land and the culture become one.

What the term terroir expresses is the profound bond with the land, usually the homeland, and all its natural, cultural and historical specificities. This deeply rooted bond is best conveyed through food traditions. Considering that in agritourism, “the link between place and product reaches its most palpable synergic potential” (Andéhn & L’Espoir Decosta, 2020, p. 2), then terroir is an essential concept to take into account. Alonso & Krajsic (2013) present interesting empirical research on the influence of terroir on migrants’ identity. Their case study focuses on “Mediterranean food ambassadors” who engage in olive-based agritourism in Australia. These entrepreneurs remain loyal to their Mediterranean food traditions “as a symbol of their ethnic identity” (Alonso & Krajsic, 2013, p. 168), but they take this attitude one step further by developing business ideas that promote these food traditions. The authors delve into the reality of this group of migrants, “most of whom are involved with production, marketing, consumption, and education (to the visiting public consumers) of their heritage foods” (Alonso & Krajsic, 2013, p. 168). Undeniably, there are economic benefits related to olive-based agritourism, but the researchers note that these food ambassadors are deeply involved in a traditional way of living at a personal level. This empirical example demonstrates the enduring emotional impact of a specific terroir, which finds its expression in culinary heritage, and how this impact decisively shapes any agritourism product and the business choices behind it.

“Territories with a re-activated and re-appropriated memory are places of meaning” (Bessière, 2013, p. 290). As Sims (2009) points out, meaning is crucial for tourists in search of existential authenticity, as this type of authenticity is also viewed as a quest for meaning. This precious meaning can be found in local products that have a certain history behind them. By consuming them, the visitors’ need for authenticity is met. Consuming not solely a product, but a “product mythology” (Andéhn & L’Espoir Decosta, 2020, p. 14) tourists are allowed to make contact with the regional culture and create a link to its past, to its distinct terroir elements (Kyriakaki et al., 2013). Drawing on these ideas, the project “Greek breakfast” has the aim to unite accommodation establishments with local producers. Currently, the largest number of participating hotels is located in Crete, the research area of this study. As Kyriakaki et al. (2013, p. 3) explain, this project draws on the link between food, place and local community in order to enrich the tourist experience and create a “cultural connection between hosts and guests”. What this means in terms of the terroir concept is that the “Greek breakfast” project leverages the local products in order to give prominence to the distinct geographical and cultural characteristics of the respective region.

“Eating and drinking thus becomes a three-dimensional experience that enables the visitor to connect with the place and culture of their destination” (Sims, 2009, p. 333).

2.7. A cultural conceptualisation of agritourism providers

Already in the first sections of this chapter, it has been stated that in this study agritourism providers are regarded as key players in the representation of Cretan cultural heritage. Throughout this research, the selected providers have been in the spotlight. In line with this choice, the academic studies so far presented in this chapter uphold an emic approach to social phenomena and include examples of locals that showcase their cultural heritage in tourism settings (e.g. Cole, 2007). In this process, local tourism suppliers, such as the agritourism providers, act as “both archaeologists and innovators at the same time” (Bessi re, 1998, p. 27). As cultural practices convert into tourism products, agritourism providers re-interpret their cultural heritage and use it in creative ways to convey existential authenticity to rural tourists. In doing so, they engage in a process of creative commodification (Bardone et al., 2013) drawing on terroir elements of Crete. This section attempts to conceptualize their role and the impact of their actions on the representation and preservation of local cultural heritage.

Edensor (2006) views rural spaces as a kind of theatre with its respective actors and stage, on which cultural performances are enacted. He writes that in the tourism context, the goal is to ‘produce affective, sensual and mediatized experience – within a format of “edutainment” ’ (Edensor, 2006, p. 488). Edutainment and more generally recreational activities are an essential component of agritourism experiences. Research by European scholars has showed that the leading role in these experiences is taken by agritourism providers or entrepreneurs. Wright and Annes (2014) illustrate how French farm women in Roquefort-producing farms are key agents in representing agricultural life and local culture in a reflexive and uniquely personal manner. Similarly, V su & Soov li-Sepping (2012) and Bardone et al. (2013) analyze how Estonian rural tourism entrepreneurs become key performers in the representation of local culture. Merging the local collective memory with their individual understandings of cultural heritage, they communicate regional culture to the guests in a unique way. A suitable way to conceptualize these people is the concept of cultural intermediaries. This concept expresses their pivotal function as mediators or “stage

managers” (Võsu & Sooväli-Sepping, 2012, p. 101). It incorporates their changing between roles, a task that involves a good “translation of cultural meanings” (Edensor, 2001, p. 70). Moreover, it touches upon perceptions of themselves and of their services, which sometimes are an extension of their own lifestyle (Bardone et al., 2013). Seen as cultural intermediaries, agritourism providers are hence regarded as more than business owners. They are regarded as cultural workers that introduce their guests to the local cultural heritage and decisively shape the ways this is done.

“The term ‘cultural intermediaries’ – or, more precisely, ‘new cultural intermediaries’ – is most associated with Pierre Bourdieu and is used by him to describe groups of workers involved in the provision of symbolic goods and services” (Nixon & Gay, 2002, p. 496). In cultural studies, these people have been also described “as intermediaries continually engaged in forming a point of connection or articulation between production and consumption” (Negus, 2002, p. 503). In tourism, Edensor (2001) broadly defines them as tourist workers who facilitate the interaction and exchange between tourists and locals. Alternatively, they can be thought of as “a category of professionals involved in the production, mediation and regulation of discourses of destination’s authenticity and uniqueness” (Azara, 2013, p. 187). Cultural intermediaries’ role is crucial and mostly pronounced in moments of social interaction, which characterise agritourism especially in Greece (Moirá, 2004). During host-guest encounters, cultural intermediaries provide both a representation and an embodiment of the local cultural heritage. Such host-guest encounters can be pre-arranged, like a visit to a farm, activity-related, like a cooking class, or even spontaneous, like sharing the same food at dinner.

The fact that local cultural intermediaries display agency and reflexivity of their role in tourist-host encounters is a point that both Edensor (2001) and Azara (2013) agree upon. The above-mentioned relevant studies in France and Estonia point towards that, as well. To illustrate this argument, Azara (2013) draws on research on local tour guides in Sardinia. The author remarks how local tour guides include their own stories in their narratives of the place and share their experiences so as to build relationships with the tourists. Their personal and meaningful behaviours reshape the meaning of the toured site. Similarly, Wynn (2011) studies walking tour guides in New York City. He considers these people “pivotal cultural workers” (Wynn, 2011, p. 336) and also conceptualizes them as cultural intermediaries. Through narratives, the guides teach tour participants about the different layers of the city. In a similar fashion, farm women use narrative and farm props to reveal the different layers of rural life in France (Wright and Annes, 2014). The notion of cultural intermediaries proves

useful, as it can encompass all the ways in which culture is communicated from hosts to guests. Last, “the concept of the intermediary provides the opportunity to be more attentive to how these practices create a connection amongst actors” (Wynn, 2011, p. 348). This additional point makes the concept relevant in understanding how the selected agritourism providers connect with guests on a personal level. Overall, conceptualizing the study’s research units as cultural intermediaries allows for a better analysis of their role, as it demonstrates their agency and how significant their function is in representing and preserving the local culture within the agritourism establishment.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research approach and method

The thesis aim was to answer the following research question: *How do agritourism providers represent the cultural heritage of Crete in their B&B establishments and to what extent is the preservation of Cretan culture actively pursued by them?* Namely, these sub-questions derived from the main research question: How are the living traditions of Crete intertwined with the services of agritourism B&B establishments? What is the participants' understanding of authenticity and how does this transpire into their tourism products? In which ways does their sense of territorial identity influence their tourism products? To what extent is it an explicit goal of agritourism providers to represent Cretan culture through their tourism products? Would these people regard themselves as cultural intermediaries? In order to address these questions, this research attempted to portray the niche of agritourism in Crete from an emic perspective. Towards this aim, it obtained insight from the local providers, that is the owners and managers of agritourism establishments, who are actively shaping this type of tourism through their offerings and services. The approach adopted to serve the thesis aim was qualitative research, as it focuses "on the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants" (Bryman, 2012, p. 380). In particular, qualitative interviewing with an open phenomenological approach was the research method chosen for this study. Phenomenology directs attention to "understanding social phenomena from the actors' own perspectives" (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 26) giving value to how reality is perceived by the research participants. Driven by this approach, the investigation of the research question was based on the personal descriptions of the respondents' lived world.

In order to meet the research objectives and given the current circumstances, semi-structured in-depth interviews were deemed as the most appropriate method. Participant observation was practically not feasible, because a trip to Crete could not take place, and surveys would not provide the same depth of information. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) point out, interviews are a suitable tool to study how people perceive and give meaning to their lived world, but also to interpret these personal perspectives. In other words, interviews were the appropriate method to approach a phenomenon through the lens of the research

participants. Indeed, attention was paid to “seeing through the eyes of the people being studied” (Bryman, 2012, p. 399), a common perspective in qualitative research. Through interviews, participants were invited to portray their own reality as agritourism providers and describe how and to what extent they represent but also preserve the Cretan culture in their respective businesses.

Semi-structured interviews resemble an everyday conversation, but they do have a clear purpose and technique (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). They were indeed a suitable research method because they allowed focusing on specific topics pertaining to the research question, while also remaining flexible during the conversation. It should, however, be noted that knowledge produced through in-depth interviews is limited to the interpretations of reality given by the interviewees and prompted by the interviewer (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Consequently, the generalizability of the research could be affected, but overall, semi-structured interviews served the research objectives and helped overcome the obstacles posed by Covid-19.

3.2. Sample and sampling strategy

In line with the research aim outlined in the previous section, the researcher established two criteria regarding the selection of research units: interviewees had to be located in Crete, Greece, and they had to be agritourism providers, either in the role of general manager or owner of a B&B establishment. To identify these B&B establishments and make a selection, the researcher consulted a self-assessment form of Agroxenia², a non-profit that supports agritourism in Greece. According to Agroxenia, for a B&B establishment to be regarded as an agritourism settlement, it has to adhere to the following:

- it is a small traditional lodging in a renovated or historic building or set of buildings constructed according to the local architectural style
- it is a family business (employment/presence of family members in the business)
- it promotes the local culture, informs guests about traditions and customs, but also about the flora and fauna of the location
- it should strive to operate in a sustainable way (e.g. using renewable energy sources).

With regards to activities organised for guests at the establishments (or in the proximity), these can be of two types:

² <https://agroxenia.org/about-us>

- guided tours or outdoor activities such as horse-riding, trekking, kayaking, cooking lessons etc
- activities related to agricultural work, like grape harvesting, winemaking, olive picking etc.

The outlined characteristics facilitated the selection but mainly the elimination of possible research participants, whose business was not of this nature. At all times, the agritourism concept, as is currently understood and practised in Greece, was the umbrella criterion in determining the appropriate research units.

The sampling strategy followed the principles of purposive sampling, the goal of which is to strategically sample participants based on their relevance to the research questions posed (Bryman, 2012). Additionally, maximum variation sampling “to ensure as wide a variation as possible in terms of the dimension of interest” (Bryman, 2012, p. 419) guaranteed that the research population was as wide-ranging as possible. Therefore, agritourism establishments from all four regional departments of Crete were selected and their owners/managers were contacted, so as to observe the phenomenon from a variety of geographical places. Hence, the whole of the island is represented in the study. In detail, finding research participants was accomplished through snowball sampling and online research. Having already established some connections with Cretan agritourism providers through a previous research project, I contacted them by phone and asked them to refer me to other providers in their network, who also run agritourism B&B establishments. With regards to snowball sampling, Bryman (2012, p. 424) citing Noy (2008) notes that “one advantage the technique offers is that it is able simultaneously to capitalize on and to reveal the connectedness of individuals in networks”. In addition to that, agritourism establishments were found through online research on search engines and on the following websites: <https://agrozenia.org/>, <https://www.agrotourismos.gr/katalumata/>, http://hellasagrotourism.org/hotels_view. Their owners/managers were identified based on the information presented on the establishments’ websites. It should be noted, however, that purposive sampling does affect the generalizability of the research, so this study’s sample is not representative of the whole population (Bryman, 2012).

Respondents were contacted via email and by phone, when that was necessary. The research purpose was described to them, along with their rights regarding their voluntary participation and the ways to contact the researcher. All in all, the sample consisted of eight agritourism providers, of which five were men and three women. The participants own or manage B&B establishments in different locations all over Crete. In particular, there are two

participants from every one of the four prefectures of the island. Further information on the participants' profile and data is listed in Table A1 (See Appendix A for the interviewees' overview).

3.3. Data collection and operationalization

Given the limitations posed by the pandemic, on-site research was not feasible, as a trip to Crete was not possible. Therefore, the interviews were carried out online. Five interviews were conducted via Zoom, one via Skype and two via the mobile application of WhatsApp. The interviews lasted from one hour to one hour and fifteen minutes, except for the last interview that lasted two hours and fifteen minutes. In total, ten hours and fifteen minutes of interview were conducted. Conversations took place in Greek, so a two-hundred-word English summary is provided for each interview transcript (see the attached file for the transcriptions).

Ethical concerns were at all times carefully addressed. All interviews were recorded with permission. In the beginning of each conversation, the research aim was presented and explained to the interviewees, along with important information about confidentiality (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Respondents were informed about their right to withdraw their participation at any time, as well as their right to remain anonymous. However, none of the respondents wished to be mentioned anonymously in the research. Their consent was recorded orally before any interview questions were posed. Since the participants work in the same industry in Crete, they occasionally posed questions about the other agritourism providers that were interviewed for the research. Responding to such questions, the researched always tried to keep information about the businesses private from each other.

It should be noted that, like any method of data collection, online interviews come with certain limitations pertaining mostly to the “nonlinguistic information expressed in gestures and facial expressions” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp. 148-149). Taking these limitations into consideration, the researcher strove to closely replicate a face to face interview environment, so that the respondents could open up and express themselves. This was achieved by disclosing some personal information on previous work experiences in tourism on the island of Crete, so that a sense of intimacy could be created. Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) highlight the need to create a safe space for interviews, as the knowledge produced is highly dependent on the social relationship of interviewer and interviewee.

Throughout the interview process, respondents were regarded as conversational partners (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

3.3.1. Operationalization

Taking into account the seven stages of an interview inquiry proposed by Kvale & Brinkmann (2009), an interview topic list was constructed to act as a guide during the interviews. Drawing insight from relevant studies on agritourism and cultural heritage and focusing on the theoretical concepts outlined in the previous chapter, the interview guide (see Appendix B) was built on the following four thematic pillars:

1. the commodification of local cultural heritage. Questions under this theme aimed to unveil how the living traditions of Crete are infiltrated into the offerings of agritourism B&B establishments, in other words, how the local heritage is transformed into a tourism product. Additionally, respondents were asked to freely elaborate on their thoughts on the word ‘traditional’, which is very often (mis)used to label any type of tourist services. Drawing on Bessière (1998, p. 26) pointing out that the etymology of the word ‘tradition’ refers to “the verb tradere, meaning ‘to transmit,’ or ‘to deliver’”, it was relevant to see whether the participants’ personal views on tradition aligned with their business decisions as heads of agritourism B&B establishments.
2. the representation of Cretan culture. Questions under this theme aimed to explore if and to what extent it is an explicit goal of agritourism providers to represent Cretan culture through their offerings and possibly engage in preservation efforts. Special attention was paid to inciting the participants to think about their role and whether they could regard themselves as cultural intermediaries, in other words, as key actors “involved in the production, mediation and regulation of discourses of destination’s authenticity and uniqueness” (Azara, 2013, p. 187).
3. the meaning and value of authenticity for agritourism providers. For this theme, the researcher drew on specific phrases from the establishments’ websites that contained the word authenticity or authentic. The goal was to prompt interviewees to reflect on their personal understanding of the notion of authenticity, but also the value they attribute to it in the context of agritourism. Andéhn & L’Espoir Decosta (2020) note that an important task of agritourism

providers is to successfully convey experiential authenticity, but it is crucial to obtain an understanding of this notion from the providers' perspective.

4. the influence of territorial identity on the services. The fourth theme touched upon the ways in which the participants' connection to their land influences their tourism products. The concept of terroir (Bessi re, 1998) was useful to approach feelings about Crete and Cretan gastronomy and how these affect the offerings of each agritourism establishment.

In addition to questions under the above-mentioned themes, in the beginning of each interview, participants were invited to answer to few warm-up questions to get the conversation started. For example, they were asked to describe their average day as owners/managers of agritourism B&B establishments. Drawing on this introductory information, the researcher then directed accordingly the interview into one of the above-mentioned themes. Last, the participants answered to a few biographical questions at the end of the interview. In total, the interview guide included about twenty open-ended questions.

During the interview, the above-mentioned topics were by and large covered, but the interviewees were also given "plenty of room to portray what is important to them" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 10). This was achieved by the use of open-ended questions, which allowed for flexibility in the process of interviewing (Bryman, 2012). Also, follow-up questions and probing questions enabled clarification and further elaboration of the respondents' answers. Furthermore, prior online research on the establishments allowed for possible particularization of questions for each interviewee. Attention was paid to engage in active listening, which is about "the interviewer upholding an attitude of maximum openness to what appears" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 138). Doing so, there were opportunities to ask second questions, depending on which aspect of the participant's answer appeared as more fruitful to focus on (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Overall, semi-structured interviewing helped in exploring the main topics that had to be addressed, while also enabling "aspects of people's social world that are particularly important to them" (Bryman, 2012, p. 403) to be forthcoming.

3.4. Data analysis

All the interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Then, the empirical data were coded and analysed in a qualitative manner, first by several readings of

the transcripts, followed by manual coding. For the procedure of data analysis, the researcher relied on a combination of the analytical process of grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) and the principles of thematic analysis (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). In the initial phase of open coding, comments were manually added on the transcripts in order to label the most instructive passages with regards to the research questions posed. This process aimed at breaking down the data to give them conceptual labels. These open codes were collected in an Excel file and categorized in separate tabs that corresponded to the key concepts of this study. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that one way to develop categories in coding is to draw on theory. As they further explain, “categorizing the interviews of an investigation can provide an overview of large amounts of transcripts, and facilitate comparisons and hypothesis testing” (p. 203). Following this stage, axial coding was conducted in an attempt to reveal the dominant topics and their interrelations but also test these against the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). As Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggest for less experienced researchers, the aim was to search for repetitions, similarities and striking differences in the empirical data, in order to reveal the dominant analytical themes. These analytical themes were finally integrated into the overarching etic categories of the theoretical key concepts.

4. Analysis

Based on the qualitative analysis of the empirical data and drawing on the core theoretical concepts of this research, this chapter analyzes the following:

- how the Cretan culture is represented by the providers included in this study
- to what extent the preservation of cultural practices is set as their objective.

Before presenting and elaborating on the results of the undertaken analysis, some important information on the research participants and their respective businesses will be mentioned, as it bears significance for the findings. Out of the eight respondents, six are born and raised in Crete, while the other two have been living in Crete for over twenty years. Moreover, for the majority, their personal residence is located on the same grounds of the agritourism B&B establishment they operate. These facts denote an emotional bond both with the place of origin and the business as an entity. Furthermore, an overarching common characteristic is that the selected B&B establishments largely operate as family businesses. If they do employ other people, these are locals and few in number. Therefore, there is a strong degree of community involvement. Last, except for one establishment, which does not provide any meal preparation at all, the rest do have food-related services, either serving local dishes at their in-house restaurant or local products at breakfast.

The main analytical themes are illustrated in the following sections of this chapter. These analytical themes are presented in direct relation to the theoretical concepts that inform the study's theoretical framework as well as the interview guide (see Appendix B). In doing so, a dialogue between the theory and the empirical research will unfold. The ultimate goal is to explore the broader implications of the emerged data for the relevant academic debates in the agritourism field.

4.1. Commodification of Cretan culture

Tourism products are essentially human experiences, as Smith (1994) notes. This is especially true in agritourism, which involves several participatory activities, as the research shows both in Greece (Papakonstandinidis, 1993; Iakovidou, 1997) and abroad (e.g.

Wiśniewska & Szymańska, 2020). Drawing on an emic approach to the process of cultural commodification, this section analyzes how the Cretan living traditions are infiltrated into the services of the selected agritourism establishments. In other words, it presents how the selected providers turn the local cultural heritage into tourism products and how they negotiate tradition through these products. Additionally, it touches upon related market challenges these providers have to face as business owners, who need to ensure the financial viability of their establishments. The services analyzed in this section are only the recreational activities or experiences that are suggested to the guests. The meals offered in the establishments will be discussed in relation to the terroir concept, which explains how the culinary heritage of a place is an expression of its territorial identity.

During the interviews, the respondents were asked to present and describe any activities available to guests during their stay. Confirming the overview of services by Papakonstandinidis (1993) and Iakovidou (1997) and broadly in line with Agroxenia's guidelines³, the participating establishments offer a range of recreational activities for the guests. These activities predominantly concern local food traditions and local products, but they can also revolve around other aspects of Cretan rural life and culture, such as the traditional musical instruments of Crete. In designing these activities, the respondents are certainly involved in cultural commodification. They are motivated by a desire to revive the past but also project their individual understandings of the Cretan cultural heritage. Their viewpoint on tradition might affect the proposed activities, as well. Overall, the providers aim at showcasing what their region or the Cretan land has to offer, but financial challenges have to be considered at all times and business decisions have to be made carefully.

4.1.1. Animate the past

Discussing the concept of cultural commodification, Cohen (1988) points out that this process can enable the locals to maintain their identity and preserve the cultural elements that they would otherwise lose. The analysis revealed that some of the providers were motivated by the idea of reviving the past through the experiences proposed to their guests. An activity that points towards that is the special cooking classes two of the respondents design based on ancient food traditions of Crete. R4⁴ (47 y/o, female) and R6 (54 y/o, female) organize a

³ see p. 22 of Methodology chapter

⁴ R1, R2, R3 correspond to the numbers in Table A1 - Research Participants Overview (see Appendix A) and are used to ensure anonymity of the respondents

“Minoan cooking class”, which showcases an ancient type of meal preparation originating in the Minoan civilization⁵. For this particular way of cooking, all the ingredients are added into a big clay vessel with a lid, which is then placed over an open fire. R6 talks about the archaeological research behind this activity and describes how it takes place:

“[It was] an American archaeology professor who through her research (...) on (...) ceramics found [that] in Minoan settlements (...) the Minoans cooked like that, ate these [things]. (...) It is slow cooking, meaning that it is a process that takes [time], because they have to light the fire... You know, the clients take part in that, from the beginning (...). This can take up to three-four hours...until they eat. Yes, as she also explains to them (...) from where this Minoan cooking started (...) They cook lentils, which were among the basic [meals].”⁶ (R6, 54 y/o, female)

In this participatory cooking activity, the past comes alive through creative commodification (Bardone et al., 2013) of the ancient food heritage of Crete. This heritage is turned into a commodity in the form of experience, so that guests can consume a part of Cretan culture. Every “Minoan cooking class” is a tourism product with specific features and specific cost. Through cultural commodification, this ancient tradition, as another “temporal link” (Bessière, 1998, p. 26), is repurposed to educate and entertain the guests. Thus, it is also being preserved.

Not surprisingly, the respondents mainly linked tradition to the past, to what was handed over from the ancestors and to the memories that transmit and sustain this knowledge. This slightly romanticized viewpoint aligns with the belief of some participants that authenticity is about the old times of rural life. However, many of them admitted that there are several misunderstandings of the notion “tradition”, especially in the tourism industry, which has largely misused the word “traditional”. Resonating the ideas of Bessière (1998) and Vösu and Sooväli-Sepping (2012) an opinion that was shared by many was that tradition is dynamic and contingent, while continuity and cultural change were also linked to the

⁵ the Bronze Age civilization of Crete, considered as the oldest civilization in Europe
⁶ μία καθηγήτρια αρχαιολόγος Αμερικάνα, που... που μέσα από τη μελέτη της... εεε... για το πώς απ' τα... απ' τα κεραμικά, ουσιαστικά, που βρήκανε... στους Μινωικούς οικισμούς, κατέληξαν ότι οι Μινωίτες μαγειρεύαν έτσι, έτρωγαν αυτά... και κάνει μια κουζίνα...πολύ απλή...Θεωρούν ήδη ότι αυτό ήταν που έτρωγαν οι παλιοί Κρητικοί Μινωίτες... και υπάρχει ολόκληρος... ε, είναι slow cooking, δηλαδή είναι μία διαδικασία που παίρνει..., γιατί πρέπει ν' ανάψουν τα κάρβουνα, εεε...Ξέρεις οι... οι πελάτες συμμετέχουν σ' όλ' αυτά, απ' την αρχή, δηλαδή, μπορεί να πάρει και τρεις-τέσσερις ώρες όλο αυτό...μέχρι να φάνε. Ναι, γιατί τους εξηγεί επίσης...από πού ξεκί... εεε... από πού ορμώμενη δημιούργησε αυτό το... Minoan cooking, και τα λοιπά. Δοκιμάζουν, τους κάνει φακές που... που ήταν απ' τα βασικά.

notion. This opinion corresponds to the dialogical perspective of Harrison (2012) towards cultural heritage, which he regards as being continually moulded by a number of different agents. R5 (55 y/o, male) expresses exactly that in this quote:

“(...) tradition is something that is dynamic, meaning that it continues, it is imparted and those to whom it is handed over do something else with it and create a new tradition, right?”⁷ (R5, 55 y/o, male)

The same respondent stresses that he approaches tradition critically, while R3 (38 y/o, female) takes this stance one step further. She states that she consciously avoids any relation to tradition, which, to her mind, has the negative connotations of folklore, that is of a degrading and essentialized representation of customs.

Along the lines of reviving the past, but with a critical stance to tradition, R3 (38 y/o, female) proposes to her guests a food-related activity that, according to her, is beyond the mainstream cooking classes:

“So I found a food historian, we collaborated and we prepared some programmes of historic gastronomy. (...) Through this programme, one way or another, the island’s history was narrated. Starting from Paleolithic times and what they ate back then through, let’s say, the last century in villages of Crete, [showing] how the Venetian and the Turkish traditions were integrated to give the cuisine we have nowadays.”⁸ (R3, 38 y/o, female)

This respondent designed a tourism product that is beyond her perceived standardized activities of this kind. She views the “traditional” cooking classes as superficial and she is personally interested in “digging deeper” into local gastronomy which relates to local history. Doing so, she attempts to project her individual understandings of Cretan gastronomy on the tourism product or as the farm women in Wright and Annes’ (2014, p. 494) study, she wants to have an “imprint on the tourist experience”. Once more, food heritage is commodified, as the provider puts a price tag on a human experience (Smith, 1994). This fact, however, does

7 η παράδοση είναι κάτι το οποίο είναι δυναμικό, δηλαδή συνεχίζει εεε μεταλαμπαδεύεται και αυτοί που το παίρνουν στα χέρια τους κάνουν κάτι άλλο με αυτό και δημιουργούν μία καινούρια παράδοση, έτσι;

8 Εγώ λοιπόν βρήκα μία ιστορικό φαγητού, που συνεργαστήκαμε και φτιάξαμε κάποια προγράμματα εεεμ ιστορικής γαστρονομίας που...τρία, τέσσερα διαφορετικά, που μέσα από τη- από το πρόγραμμα αυτό με τον έναν ή τον άλλον τρόπο αφηγούνταν κάπως και η ιστορία του νησιού δηλαδή. Ξεκινώντας ειδικά το ένα από την παλαιολιθική εποχή και το τι έτρωγαν τότε, έφτανε μέχρι και, ας πούμε τον προηγούμενο αιώνα στα χωριά της Κρήτης, πώς εεε πώς ενσωματώθηκαν κάπως και η Ενετική και η Τουρκική παράδοση, για να δώσουν την κουζίνα που έχουμε σήμερα.

not reduce the experiential and educational value of this cooking class nor does it restrain the provider from communicating her personal interests to the guests.

4.1.2. Showcase the land and the region

In agritourism, the bond with the land is an element of great importance (Andéhn & L'Espoir Decosta, 2020). As Bessière (2013) explains, in regions with a pronounced territorial identity, the natural resources can be a component of a distinct cultural system. Drawing on this idea, the providers of this study creatively utilise the local resources to arrange cultural experiences for their guests along the lines of edutainment. These cultural-educational experiences are essentially bought and consumed by tourists, who are hence introduced to the region and its offerings. Therefore, commodification becomes for the providers a way “of telling their own story, and of establishing the significance of local experiences” (Cole, 2007, p. 956). Apart from cooking classes such as the ones presented above, there are several other activities like olive oil or wine tasting, grape picking, soap making but also farm demonstrations or walks. One of the respondents also organizes demonstrations of the traditional Cretan musical instruments.

The providers mainly choose to develop these activities in their own land, which either surrounds the establishment or is located in close proximity. R8 (51 y/o, male), whose guesthouses are spread in the family's olive grove, describes how the farm tour unfolds:

“We follow a route through the crops...of that season, most often the summer season, and people come in contact with the things they will see in their plate afterwards, we pick them freely, we gather here, we taste them, we drink...an infusion and we discuss about this whole idea.”⁹ (R8, 51 y/o, male)

This farm tour is a highly participatory and sensorial experience, which showcases the local produce and connects the visitor to this specific place in a specific time of the year.

A few other participants do not host activities on-site, but instead collaborate on that with local enterprises in the field of agriculture. For example, both R6 (54 y/o, female) and R1 (42 y/o, male) suggest an educational visit to a local farm, during which guests can watch and partake in the production process. Likewise, R2 (45 y/o, male) takes guests to a local olive oil press for a demonstration by the owner. Bardone et al. (2013, p. 206) note that “to

⁹ γίνεται μία...εεε πορεία μέσα στις καλλιέργειες...εκείνης της εποχής, συνήθως της καλοκαιρινής δηλαδή και οι άνθρωποι που έρχονται σε επαφή με αυτά που λίγο αργότερα μπορούν να δούνε στο πιάτο τους εεε, τα μαζεύουμε ελεύθερα, ερχόμαστε εδώ, τα δοκιμάζουμε, πίνουμε ένα...αφέψημα και συζητάμε για όλη αυτήν την εεε ιδέα

create a sustainable business, a farm tourism entrepreneur needs to cooperate to some degree with other local entrepreneurs and inhabitants”. This is indeed true judging on these empirical examples. With regards to the importance of local collaborations, R1 (42 y/o, male) states:

“[to have] collaborations is...the number one! That is, right now I couldn’t do the farm [activity], although I had started a farm, I had goats...You can't control everything...because we are small establishments and we think that when you book an activity, a 20% [of the clients] will partake in the activity, which is not always enough for this activity to survive.”¹⁰ (R1, 42 y/o, male)

For this respondent it is imperative for an agritourism business to have collaborations at a local level, because this is financially sustainable. The same provider further adds that it is through a regional network of collaborations that one succeeds in creating a complete and all-embracing “destination”, where guests will have a range of activities at their disposal. He explains that the local community can greatly benefit from the promotion of such edutainment activities in the region, which are actually very successful with the visitors.

4.1.3. Make careful business choices

Market challenges and financial obstacles were a subject the respondents often touched upon during the interviews. With regards to the activities, the main risk is to maintain a steady demand flow, so that the activity is viable, as the above-mentioned quote by R1 (42 y/o, male) explains. In most of the cases, activities have to be booked in advance by guests and there should be a minimum number of participants for them to take place. For some respondents, it is truly challenging to design tourism products that “meet marketplace demands, [and] are produced cost-efficiently” (Smith, 1994, p. 582). R3 (38 y/o, female) expresses her concerns on the matter discussing the programmes of historic gastronomy she organises in an attempt to propose something unique:

“For me they were very interesting, [but] unfortunately for many clients, they were too dense in content [laughs], because each programme lasted five hours, it had a cost of 100 euros per person minimum (...) [the programmes]

10 οι συνεργασίες είναι το... είναι το νούμερο ένα! Δηλαδή, αυτή τη στιγμή εγώ δε θα μπορούσα να κάνω τη φάρμα, ενώ είχα ξεκινήσει κάπου να 'χω φάρμα, να 'χω κατσίκια... Δε μπορείς να ελέγξεις όλα... γιατί είμαστε μικρά καταλύματα και θα σκεφτόμαστε ότι όταν κλείνεις μια δραστηριότητα, ένα 20% θα ασχοληθεί με τη δραστηριότητα, το οποίο πάντα δεν είναι αρκετό, ώστε να επιβιώσει η δραστηριότητα.

couldn't take place for less than two people (...) but even then, the profit was marginal.”¹¹ (R3, 38 y/o, female)

This quote clearly illustrates the conflict between the provider's creative vision and the market reality, which proves that this activity was a risk without any gain at the end. On the contrary, the “Minoan cooking class” by R4 (47 y/o, female) and R6 (54 y/o, female) is very popular with guests, according to the providers. It should be noted, however, that the “Minoan cooking class” has half the price of the historic gastronomy programme by R3. Such examples depict the complex task of commodification by local tourism providers, who strive to have a balance between cultural value and economic value of their products (Shepherd, 2002).

With regards to market challenges and business choices the providers need to make, it is interesting to note a contrast between respondents on whether an agritourism establishment should “go with the flow” or not, meaning whether it should adjust its services based on changes in demand. Their opinions range from choosing to “follow the market critically” (R6, 54 y/o, female) to taking market driven decisions, which is the case for R1, who says:

“What led us to where we are today, it was the market that led us.”¹²

(R1, 42 y/o, male)

By paying close attention to market changes, this provider was able to upgrade his services and raise the prices. He explains that, although the establishment was first created with domestic tourists in mind, he gradually understood that he should aim at the small but affluent percentage of foreign tourists that are willing to pay for quality agritourism services.

On the complete opposite side, R5 (55 y/o, male) refuses to make any compromises based on changes in demand and he stresses that clients cannot influence the tourism services of his establishment. For example, he sticks to local herbs and infusions instead of black tea for breakfast. He is adamant when it comes to modernizing his hotel in any way that will disrupt its identity and its vision, which has always been to operate as a sustainable and autonomous mountain retreat. In his view, sticking to a clearly pronounced and stable identity is the way to attract the right clients that will appreciate the tourism services of this B&B establishment. What makes these two cases particularly intriguing is that both of these

11 για μένα ήταν πάρα πολύ ενδιαφέροντα, εε δυστυχώς για πολλούς πελάτες ήτανε λίγο πολύ dense [γέλιο] και σε περιεχόμενο, διότι κάθε πρόγραμμα από αυτά κρατούσε πέντε ώρες, κόστιζε 100 ευρώ το άτομο minimum, κάποια και...100, και νομίζω 100-120, κάπως έτσι, με κάποιες εκπτώσεις, αν ήταν οικογένειες εεεεε..Δεν μπορούσαν να γίνουν για λιγότερο από δύο άτομα, που εντάξει, συνήθως είναι το minimum, αλλά κι εκεί το κέρδος ήταν οριακό..

12 Αυτό που μας πήγε εκεί που είμαστε σήμερα μας πήγε η αγορά

establishments are very successful and they have a large and loyal clientele, according to their managers. Each in their way, they have created a distinct tourism experience, which they have carefully positioned in the market, as the respondents remarked. However, while for R1 listening to the clients' demands was beneficial in shaping his agritourism services, for R5, changes in demand have no direct impact on the business' vision. Seeing commodification in such an emic perspective allows us to unearth these empirical data that demonstrate how dynamic and varied the agritourism market is.

4.2. Authenticity in agritourism experiences

As Zhou et al. (2015) rightfully note, authenticity is important for all people including hosts. In the tourism industry, the word authentic and its synonyms are often used to describe an establishment, a type of service or an experience. During the interviews, such examples were specifically selected from the establishments' websites so as to incite the respondents to reflect on their understanding of the authenticity concept. Meanwhile, their perceptions of the notion were examined in relation to the tourism products they design and provide to their guests. The data analysis revealed that their interpretations of authenticity are influenced by personal views and individual beliefs about themselves and their values, but they are also informed by the commercialised environment in which they operate (Zhou et al., 2015). They can draw on pre-modern times of rural life and they express their emotional bond to their land and its culture. In any case, respondents value conveying authenticity to their guests through social interaction in experience-based situations that feel right to them.

4.2.1. Keep it real

When the respondents were asked to freely elaborate on the meaning of the word authentic, the description that usually came up could be summarized in the words of R7:

“Authentic means (...) to be yourself. To be, to show what you are, to not... Authentic is to have *identity*. Authentic is someone who is themselves, authentic is a place when it is what it is, it does not have any elements of imitation.”¹³ (R7, 72 y/o, male, emphasis by respondent)

13 Αυθεντικός σημαίνει να είσαι, εε να είσαι ο εαυτός σου. Να είσαι, να (βγάζεις) αυτό που είσαι, να μην...εεε να...ααα αυθεντικό είναι να, να έχεις ΤΑΥΤΟΤΗΤΑ. Αυθεντικός είναι κάποιος που είναι ο εαυτός του, αυθεντικός είναι ένας τύπος όταν είναι αυτός που είναι, δεν

As an architect, R7 has dedicated a great part of his life into restoring an old settlement in the most truthful manner possible, avoiding at any cost what he perceives as degrading imitations to the real identity of the place. For him and most of the respondents, authentic is the opposite of fake. It means to behave “according to one’s nature or essence”, as Steiner & Reisinger (2006, p. 303) note. This applies to both human relations and cultural representations.

To be your true self means to be an honest host to and with your guests in any encounters. According to R3 (38 y/o, female), even on a bad day, it is preferable to show one’s true face to the guests rather than put on a fake smile. Since in agritourism there is a high degree of familiarity with the guests (Moiras, 2004), it is more suitable to behave like an honest host. It should be noted that this respondent lives in the same place of the guesthouses she operates, meaning that she has everyday contact with the guests. However, the same belief about honest interaction with the guests is expressed by R5 (55 y/o, male), whose residence is not in or next to the business. For the last twenty-two years, he has been the general manager of one of the first hotels in the alternative tourism market of Crete. Discussing the type of guests he has met and conversed with all these years, he stresses that he is always his true self in these interactions:

“I cannot pretend to these people that I am something different, right?”¹⁴

(R5, 55 y/o, male)

In these views, the authentic is related to being yourself as a host, showing your real face and having honest host-guest interactions. In this sense, it resonates with the principles of existential authenticity, as the “real” self (Wang, 1999) is communicated through social contacts to the guests. The providers show their authentic self (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006), as there is intimacy in host-guest encounters.

The sincerity concept employed by Taylor (2001) relates to hosts being their authentic selves. The reasoning of this concept is the following: “Rather than seeing value as the emanation of an “authentic object”, the moment of interaction may become the site in which value is generated” (Taylor, 2001, p. 9). Two of the respondents expressed very similar views to that. In their mind, authenticity is experienced through the act of sharing. In moments of sincere host-guest encounters, authenticity is conveyed as the host transfers his/her values to the guests. What happens at such moments is that tourists and locals “meet halfway” (Taylor, 2001, p. 24) and authenticity is being redefined existentially without the application of distance, as the author describes it.

έχει στοιχεία απομίμησης

14 εγώ δεν μπορώ να προσποιηθώ σε αυτούς τους ανθρώπους ότι είμαι κάτι άλλο, ε;

To stay true to one's identity is to remain loyal to the core self, keep it real, as one would say in colloquial language. For R1 (42 y/o, male) this principle applies when a host will bring the guest in contact with the local culture, however rough this contact might feel. He gives the example of traditional celebrations and festivities that often take place in villages during the summer and that might seem "primitive" to the visitor's eyes. According to him, an honest host should introduce guests to such regional festivities, so that they come in contact with real local life:

"It should be authentic, it should be original, not staged for them. As much as possible, it should be authentic. Maybe they won't like it, *you don't care about that*, this is how it is."¹⁵ (R1, 42 y/o, male, emphasis by respondent)

By pointing out that a cultural event is "real" because it is not staged for tourists, R1 touches upon the notion of staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1973). He acknowledges that there are staged experiences for tourists, which have negative connotations for him, as they are degrading what he perceives to be the "authentic" Cretan culture. Instead, he insists on bringing guests in contact with the local culture in a straightforward and direct manner, which might even negatively surprise them. To his mind, it is through participation in a local festivity, in which they will dance, drink and eat, that guests will experience authenticity. This shows that activity-related and experience-oriented situations are the best to convey authenticity, as Andéhn & L'Espoir Decosta (2020) point out in their study on agritourism in Messinia, Greece.

Authenticity has value only where there is observed inauthenticity (Taylor, 2001). In the above-mentioned case, the respondent differentiates between the real or "rough" local celebration and the events which are "staged for them", that is the tourists. The latter are thought of as standardised activities or performances, which are devoid of cultural value, whereas the former is what the study's providers strive for. This opinion shows the perceived oppositions in the hosts' minds, which come to the front particularly when mass tourism is discussed. Almost all the respondents consciously tried to make a distinction between themselves and mass tourism operations, which are viewed as detrimental to the "real" Cretan identity, as they have been reproducing inauthentic representations of it. Research participants consciously step away from the typical mass tourism products to showcase what they deem to be the "real" Crete. Hence, agritourism as an "antithesis to mass tourism is regarded as less detrimental to what is traditional or authentic" (Daugstad & Kirchengast, 2013, p. 183).

15 Να 'ναι αυθεντικό, να 'ναι original, να μην είναι στημένο γι' αυτόν. Όσο γίνεται να 'ναι αυθεντικό. Μπορεί να μην τους αρέσει, ΔΕ ΣΕ ΝΟΙΑΖΕΙ, αυτό όμως είναι

4.2.2. Keep it local

Wang (1999) remarks that the ideal of authenticity is oftentimes related to nostalgia. Bygone ways of life are linked to pre-modernity or as Cole (2007, p. 944) describes it to “the past ‘primitive Other’ articulated in opposition to modernity.” Such views are shared by some of the respondents and they influence how they interpret authenticity. In their minds, for something to be authentic, it needs to have a connection to the so-called “old days”. More specifically, it needs to be linked to the old days of rural life. This way of thinking is very similar to what Wright and Annes (2014, p. 493, emphasis in the original) describe as the ideal of “the *vieille France* imagery of agriculture and rural life” for French people. This nostalgic perception of authenticity has a strong local character for the study’s respondents.

The local place identity, the local way of life, the local culture are all related to the notion of authenticity. Namely, according to R5 (55 y/o, male), to be authentic is to stay local. These views reveal the imprint of the strong connection to the Cretan land, which leads them to relate the authentic to the local. Furthermore, they reveal a rather objective-oriented understanding of the notion, as the respondents perceive the old rural life as having an inherently pure or more authentic quality. Certainly, this is no surprise coming from people who have been living and working in Crete for all their life or a very long part of their life. R1 (42 y/o, male) talks about this emotional bond to the Cretan land, which is expressed in the culinary traditions and, according to him is the definition of authentic:

“The authentic [thing] is the pure [thing], without many twists, (...) you know, it is the grandma’s recipes, that you found, you took them, you liked them as a kid, [you liked] what you were eating and you continue that, because you want the guest you have at your hotel to live this same experience.”¹⁶

(R1, 42 y/o, male)

The grandma’s recipes in this quote represent the local know-how, which bears all the territorial specificities (Bessière, 1998). For R1, by keeping this know-how pure, the host can convey an authentic experience to the guests. This idea aligns with Sims’ (2009, p. 333) remark on how local food can convey existential authenticity for tourists: “This is because “local” products have a story – and a meaning – behind them that can be related to place and

¹⁶ Το "αυθεντικό" είναι το γνήσιο, όχι πολλές παραλλαγές, δηλαδή [ανάσα] εεεε... καταλαβαίνεις [ανάσα] τσ εεεε οι συνταγές δηλαδή της γιαγιάς που τις βρήκες, τις πήρες, σου αρέσανε, σαν παιδί αυτό που έτρωγες και 'συ το συνεχίζεις αυτό, γιατί αυτή την εμπειρία θες να τη ζήσει κι ο- κι ο φιλοξενούμενος που έχεις μες το ξενοδοχείο σου.

culture.” Thus, the local food traditions are an important tool and they are preserved in order to convey existential authenticity (Andéhn & L’Espoir Decosta, 2020).

4.2.3. Combine contradicting elements

It is interesting to note here that some respondents seem to contradict themselves, as they approve the combination of luxury services (e.g. hot tub in the room, private pool) with an “authentic” interior and character, inspired by the old times. This is how R1 (42 y/o, male) describes it:

“that is, we have the luxury [element], we have as well...the authentic cuisine...and you live in an environment, which makes you feel at home.”¹⁷

(R1, 42 y/o, male)

To him, luxury elements in the establishment can co-exist with a feeling of coziness and a sense of authenticity conveyed through local gastronomy. Certainly, by upgrading their establishment with such services, providers are able to raise the price per night. Similarly, R4 (47 y/o, female) openly disagrees with the purist attitude of some other agritourism providers that stick to keeping the facilities simple, as, according to her, tradition and luxury could well be blended to upgrade the visitor’s experience:

“What I want to say is that [the establishment] should be attuned to the environment, no doubt, it should not be a box made of concrete in the middle of a very traditional village or in a green area, but the comforts it will have inside can pleasantly surprise the visitor.”¹⁸ (R4, 47 y/o, female)

As Zhou et al. (2015, p. 42) observe, “the conflict between economic benefits and authenticity” is real for Cretan hosts, as well. The examples of these two respondents show that hosts might ultimately choose what feels right to them, what feels more “real”, proving that their perception of authenticity is subjective and contextual (Zhou et al., 2015).

This observation on market realities links back to commodification challenges, which were illustrated as the last theme of the previous section. The respondents, as business owners and managers, need to find the balance in the constant tension between staying competitive

17 δηλαδή, έχουμε και το luxury, έχουμε και το... και το... και την αυθεντική κουζίνα... και ζεις σ' ένα περιβάλλον, το οποίο είναι οικογενειακό

18 Θέλω να πω ότι εεεε το- το πώς εε να είναι εναρμονισμένο στο περιβάλλον, εννοείται, να μην είναι ένα τσιμεντένιο κουτί μέσα σ' ένα πολύ παραδοσιακό χώρο ή μες στο πράσινο αλλά οι ανέσεις που θα 'χει μέσα να μπορεί να εκπλήξουν ευχάριστα τον επισκέπτη

and honouring the Cretan culture. Their business choices reflect their individual views and values and they certainly affect their tourism products.

4.3. Terroir effects on the agritourism product

As a tourism type, agritourism is connected to specific places and it leverages the local resources but is also shaped by them (Marsden, 1999). The local resources are not limited to the physical production of each specific region. They include the cultural and historical specificities of this region that make up a unique identity with continuity in time. This is the terroir, which finds its best tangible expression in the culinary heritage of a place (Bessi re, 1998; 2013). During the interviews, the impact of the Cretan terroir on the research participants was examined both when they were asked to describe their services and when they were invited to express their feelings and understandings of the Cretan identity. From their responses, it became evident that terroir elements are crucial in shaping the tourism products of these agritourism establishments. Indeed, as Bessi re (2013) notes, the natural resources can become a component of a distinct cultural system, which is communicated to guests mainly through local gastronomy. The providers consciously draw distinctions between their place and other locations and between their tourism products and those of mass tourism. In doing so, they give prominence to the terroir and differentiate the regional identity of their place.

4.3.1. Reveal the culture through food

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, all except one of the selected establishments offer some kind of meal preparation. Most of them feature an in-house restaurant, where guests can have breakfast, lunch and dinner, while in few of them there is the provision of breakfast only. One of the establishments participates in the “Greek breakfast” project, the initiative of the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels, “which focuses on the Greek culinary tradition and aims to promote the wealth and authenticity of local agricultural products and gastronomy by uniting hoteliers and local producers” (Kyriakaki et al., 2013, p. 1). All the providers strictly choose local products, which are cultivated either in their own land or they are purchased from producers in the region. If there is farm-grown produce, it is almost entirely organic. Some of them define their approach as a farm-to-fork system:

“Most of the ingredients come from our own cultivation or from cultivations nearby, meaning that it is what the tourism industry calls nowadays zero kilometer or farm to table experience (...) which significantly raises our standards and gives more character to the experience of each guest.”¹⁹

(R5, 55 y/o, male)

R5 sets high standards to the food experience guests are offered at his establishment and these standards are guaranteed by selecting locally produced meal ingredients only. The same principle applies for R8 (51 y/o, male) who covers an impressive 85% of food supplies by homegrown and homemade products, from olive oil to cheese, bread and all types of greens.

This approach of catering for food is not only sustainable but also displays one of the main characteristics of the Cretan identity, according to the respondents: self-sufficiency. To be autonomous and self-sufficient is regarded as the equivalent of being a Cretan. Seen in this perspective, agritourism providers who use homegrown or locally grown products in their cuisine choose to do so not only for financial reasons but as an expression of their regional identity. In the words of R1 (42 y/o, male): “This is what we believe we are, local cuisine.”²⁰

The culinary heritage of a place relates to its core identity, as there is “a system of shared representations linked to gastronomic heritage” (Bessière, 2013, p. 276). In simple terms, local food links to local identity and local culture (Sims, 2009). The respondents draw on this idea and unanimously believe that the local cuisine is an expression of culture. For them, gastronomy is a cultural experience, as R5 (55 y/o, male) clearly states:

“Aside from the fact that gastronomy is something that offers you well-being, it is something that offers you an experience and it offers you a cultural experience because the cuisine does not only mean to eat, drink, feel full and then leave, through the cuisine you can understand how a people thinks.”²¹

(R5, 55 y/o, male)

19 τα περισσότερα υλικά έρχονται από τη δική μας παραγωγή ή από κοντινές παραγωγές, δηλαδή είναι αυτό που λέμε, που, που η η βιομηχανία του τουρισμού εεε ονομάζει σήμερα zero kilometer or farm to table experience εεε είναι επίσης το οποίο εεε βάζει εε ανεβάζει πολύ τα, τα στάνταρ τα δικά μας και δίνει έναν έναν περισσότερο χαρακτήρα στην, στην εμπειρία που αποκομεί ο κάθε επισκέπτης

20 αυτό πιστεύουμε ότι είμαστ' εμείς, τοπική κουζίνα.

21 Πέρα από το ότι η γαστρονομία είναι κάτι το οποίο σου προσφέρει μία εεεε μία καλή διαβίωση, είναι κάτι το οποίο σου προσφέρει μία εμπειρία και σου προσφέρει και μία πολιτιστική εμπειρία, γιατί η κουζίνα δεν είναι μόνο ότι εεε φάγαμε, ήπιαμε, χορτάσαμε εε και πάμε παρακάτω εεε μέσα από την κουζίνα μπορείς να καταλάβεις πώς σκέφτεται ένας λαός

What the respondent means to say is that the regional food heritage bears a certain meaning, which is transmitted to the guests that try the local products and recipes. In this way, tourists are allowed to make contact with the regional culture and thus create a link to its past, to its distinct terroir elements (Kyriakaki et al., 2013).

Extending the idea that gastronomy is a cultural experience, some respondents argue that it can reveal their perceived true place identity or even deconstruct cultural stereotypes:

“...gastronomy is a (...) very good tool (...) to succeed in breaking the stereotypes.”²² (R3, 38 y/o, female)

Such an opinion aligns with the remark by Sims (2009) who points out that the consumption of local food can meet rural tourists’ need for existential authenticity thanks to the valuable cultural meanings local food carries. Therefore, if, according to the providers, gastronomy is believed to deconstruct stereotypes and show the “real” identity of a place, it can consequently convey existential authenticity to visitors. If this is achieved, then “the link between place and product reaches its most palpable synergic potential” (Andéhn & L’Espoir Decosta, 2020, p. 2) in the context of agritourism.

4.3.2. Differentiate the regional identity

Empirical examples from the literature illustrate how agritourism or farm tourism entrepreneurs (Alonso & Krajsic, 2013; Wright and Annes, 2014) attempt to differentiate their origins or their rural characteristics. The emotional bond to the (home)land, the strong connection to their terroir shape their business choices and determine the ways in which they represent their region and its identity. The sense of belonging that derives from a specific terroir (Bessière, 2013) makes the local providers want to differentiate their community’s identity. One of the best ways to achieve that is through food heritage, which encapsulates the particular cultural codes of a place (Bessière, 1998). R2 (45 y/o, male) mentions that while talking about Cretan food:

“by getting to know our cuisine, by getting to know who we are...only in this way [the tourists] will understand how we live and they will see the difference, because this is how the difference becomes evident.”²³

(R2, 45 y/o, male)

22 η γαστρονομία είναι μία...εεε πολύ καλή, εργαλείο, ας πούμε, ένα πολύ καλό εργαλείο, για να... επιτύχουμε και την εεε, το να πέσουν τα στερεότυπα

23 γνωρίζοντας την κουζίνα μας, γνωρίζοντας εμάς τους ίδιους...Έτσι μόνο θα καταλάβουν πώς ζούμε και θα δούνε και τη διαφορά, γιατί η διαφορά, έτσι φαίνεται η διαφορά

The difference here refers to the different way of life, the life in Crete, which is projected in the local cooking traditions. As the respondent explains, these food traditions are the only way for a location to reveal its distinct identity to the visitors.

Most of the providers in this study feel this strong sense of belonging that stems from terroir, as they have been raised and lived in Crete for almost all their life. This land with its unique food and culture has shaped their identity and consequentially their establishment's character. The analysis shows that drawing on territorial specificities and collective memory, agritourism providers strive to highlight the distinctiveness of their place (Wright and Annes, 2014). With regards to that, they believe that mass tourism has been really harmful, as it has mainly presented Crete as a sea-sand-sun destination. According to them, the special way of life in Crete has no place in the uniform representations of mass tourism products. Contrary to that, the research participants remain loyal to the local identity, which they try to preserve and promote in an “unspoilt” manner:

“The thing that we say is that you come here and you know where you have come because you experience things...You show [the tourists] that Crete is not only the sea, [but] it is something else as well, [which] is in the mainland, where you will go to a village, you will see a man sitting at the kafenio²⁴ [and even though] you will be a stranger, he will say ‘treat them’.”²⁵

(R1, 42 y/o, male)

This quote is rich with references to terroir elements that make this island distinct. R1 stresses that through direct experience, visitors can realise that Crete is not solely the sandy beaches one sees in mass tourism brochures. To him, the “real” Crete is to be found in the villages of the inland particularly, where the local everyday life unfolds. Thus, he conceptualises the Cretan terroir as a certain physical place with its geographical characteristics, where a certain way of life unfolds (Bessière, 2013). To illustrate his point he refers to a behavior commonly seen in rural settings of Crete: a man treating another man or even a stranger to a drink or a coffee. By having this direct experience, the visitors can differentiate the place, they can feel its distinct identity, which jointly emerges from the various elements of Cretan terroir.

In order to differentiate their place, the selected providers attempt to preserve its identity and create continuity between the past and the present. As R7 (72 y/o, male)

24 the traditional Greek café usually found in villages

25 Αυτό που λέμε εμείς είναι ότι έρχεσαι και ξέρεις που έρχεσαι γιατί βιώνεις πράγματα... και του δείχνεις ότι Κρήτη δεν είναι μόνο η θάλασσα, είναι και κάτι άλλο, είναι μέσα στην ενδοχώρα, που θα πας στο χωριό, που θα δεις τον άλλο να κάθεται στο καφενείο, που θα πας εκεί θα 'σαι ξένος, αλλά θα πει κέρασέ τονέ.

describes it, identity derives from the history of a place and its course in time. Exactly, as Bessière (2013, p. 281) writes: “As it is connected to the past and to the memories of the community, terroir makes up a space constructed in time and thus becomes an argument for regional unity”. The regional unity needs to be preserved if the location is to stand out. In that preservation attempt, the collective memory becomes a key tool in the hands of agritourism providers, who want to show how distinct their place is. Terroir elements, such as the food traditions, the built heritage and the local way of life are infiltrated into the tourism services provided by these establishments. R7 (72 y/o, male) explains the crucial role of memory in this task:

“If you respect the past, that means that you respect the memory. The memory, though, you should keep it and continue your course in the present (...), that is without memory, there is no identity”²⁶ (R7, 72 y/o, male)

By integrating the memories of the past into the present trajectory of the establishment, the territorial identity is kept alive and this identity differentiates the location to the visitor’s eyes. As Bessière (1998) explains, the territorial identity is reconstructed through the combined efforts of specific actors who leverage collective heritage. In this case, these actors are the agritourism providers who leverage the special terroir elements of their region. Last, a dialogical approach to heritage (Harrison, 2012) is pronounced in the previous quote, as R7 acknowledges the dialogue between past and present which builds and sustains the local territorial identity.

4.4. Roles and functions of cultural intermediaries

The previous three sections of the chapter have illustrated:

1. how the selected agritourism providers creatively use the process of cultural commodification to communicate the Cretan cultural heritage to their guests through edutainment activities,
2. what the providers’ understandings of the authenticity concept are and how these understandings transpire into their agritourism services and
3. in which ways the Cretan terroir shapes their tourism products and is particularly linked to the culinary services of the establishments.

²⁶ Αν σέβεσαι το παρελθόν, σημαίνει ότι σέβεσαι τη μνήμη. Η μνήμη όμως, θα πρέπει να την έχεις σαν μία μνήμη και να πορεύεσαι και να συνεχίζεις και στο παρόν, δε σημαίνει πάλι ότι, δηλαδή χωρίς τη μνήμη, δεν υπάρχει ταυτότητα

All these empirical insights culminate in this final section of the Analysis chapter. Having conceptualised the agritourism providers in this study as cultural intermediaries, this section will thoroughly analyze how their role as cultural agents and mediators materializes. Based on their emic understanding of themselves and their services, this section draws “attention to how identities are created and enacted” (Bardone et al., 2013, p. 207) within this agritourism context, “how these practices create a connection amongst actors” (Wynn, 2011, p. 348), that is providers and guests, and what the implications for the representation and preservation of the Cretan cultural heritage are.

4.4.1. Engage in social interactions

An important part of the interviews was about inciting the respondents to reflect on their role and describe it in their own words. Along these lines, they were also invited to talk about the aspects of their work they enjoy (see Appendix B - Interview guide). Their responses show that social interaction with the guests is not only an essential component of the providers’ tasks but it is indeed something they enjoy. As the literature notes, an element that differentiates Greek agritourism is the social interaction with guests (Moirá, 2004). The providers’ answers confirm this observation, as they all highlight that personal contact with the guests is essential in agritourism. In their role as cultural intermediaries, this personal contact is significant for the communication of local culture to the guests.

For most of the respondents, direct contact with their guests takes place every day. Describing this contact, they talk about human and honest connection at a personal level. Since these are small establishments, usually run by a family, it is only a handful of people the guests will interact with during their stay. Therefore, there is a good degree of familiarity developed. This aligns with the study by Bardone et al. (2013) who note that intimacy in host-guest interactions is a characteristic element of small agritourism enterprises. For the providers in this study, such direct and honest interactions are also an expression of heartfelt hospitality. R2 (45 y/o, male) gives an example of that while describing how his parents, who barely speak English, make the guests feel welcome and at home:

“(…) what they give you, this smile, [the gesture] to sit by you at the table, to treat you to some raki²⁷, to drink with you or what is more essential: at noon, my mother and father and probably me, [we] sit at the table to have lunch. If

27 an alcoholic drink made of grapes

the clients come, we add chairs and invite them to eat with us and maybe the clients will leave and they will tell [my mother], ‘Mrs Vagelio, what do we owe you?’ [laughs] and she will answer, ‘my dear, what are you talking about? We are also eating [at the same table], can I take money from you?’”²⁸
(R2, 45 y/o, male)

Further on in the conversation, R2 draws on this moment to highlight that as hosts they respect their guests and do not regard them only as a source of income. This anecdote of him clearly demonstrates the level of familiarity in host-guest interactions within this context and depicts how “hospitality is an expression of welcome by local residents to tourists arriving in their community” (Smith, 1994, p. 588).

Socializing, meeting people, conversing with old guests and heartily partaking in the educational activities are moments the providers enjoy in their work. For example, R1 says:

“(…) to meet an old guest and to drink wine with them and talk, this is incredible.”²⁹ (R1, 42 y/o, male)

He truly enjoys an honest moment of interaction, during which the developed familiarity between host and guest will bring them closer. In these moments, the providers share their experiences and build relationships with the guests (Azara, 2013). Through their state of being and their behaviour, they act as both a representation and an embodiment of the Cretan culture and way of life. The cultural intermediaries’ role is pronounced in such moments of social interaction, because the living culture of Crete is projected in these people’s manners. In a direct, spontaneous and unprompted fashion, agritourism providers introduce their guests to the local way of living and they preserve intangible cultural elements while engaging in social interactions.

4.4.2. Guide into the ‘real Crete’ experience

Each in his or her own way, all of the respondents commonly view as their aim to introduce their guests to the Cretan culture. As it has been so far described, this goal is

28 αυτό που σου δίνουνε, το χαμόγελο, να, να κάτσει μαζί σου στο τραπέζι, να πιάσει τη ρακή να σε κεράσει, να πει μαζί σου ή το πιο βασικό. Κάθονται το μεσημέρι η μάνα μου να φάνε με τον πατέρα μου κι εγώ π.χ. Εάν έρθουν οι πελάτες, μεγαλώνουμε το τραπέζι και τρώμε και μπορεί να φύγουν οι πελάτες και να του πούνε, "κυρία Βαγγελιώ, τι σας χρωστάμε;" [γέλιο] Και του λέει, "παιδί μου, τι μου λες τώρα, αφού τρώμε κι εμείς, θα σου πάρω λεφτά;"

29 να δω ένα παλιό πελάτη και να πιούμε ένα κρασί και να μιλήσουμε. Αυτό ρε παιδί μου είναι φοβερό

materialized through the activities each establishment proposes on-site or in the region and through the selection of local produce for the meal preparations and the gastronomic experiences in general. Likewise, it is materialized through the providers' approach to the notions of authenticity, tradition and distinctiveness, notions which create the unique character of each agritourism establishment. Furthermore, it can be materialized through the establishment's architecture, a point that will be discussed in this section. Preservation efforts, even unintended ones, are generally present in the attempt to bring the guests in contact with the Cretan culture. The respondents used different phrasing to talk about this attempt, but it became clear that they are all personally "involved in the production, mediation and regulation of discourses of destination's authenticity and uniqueness" (Azara, 2013, p. 187).

Viewing the respondents as cultural intermediaries allows us to understand the reasoning behind their actions. For many of them, it is really important to give careful and well-thought-out recommendations to their guests and to provide them with good directions on what to see, do and eat. It matters greatly to know that the guests had the chance to experience the real Cretan culture, they tasted good quality food and they generally avoided any touristy places:

"We advise them on what to do, where to go, (...) which places to see (...) that are not touristy. (...) I will not recommend to them a restaurant I know is...touristy."³⁰ (R6, 54 y/o, female)

The distinction between themselves and mass tourism and the critique on mass tourism services re-emerges in phrases like this one. The words of R6 summarize the effort these providers put into providing guidance, so that their guests keep the best memories of the place. Namely, they want their guests to create unique memories linked specifically to the region and its natural and cultural specificities, whether this is the food or the music in this part of Crete. Some of them go the extra mile and put together directions on local walking trails that lead to interesting sites nearby, while three of them have contributed in restoration of old paths in the countryside. In doing so, providers function as mediators or "stage managers" (Võsu & Sooväli-Sepping, 2012, p. 101) with the ultimate goal to introduce their guests to what they deem as real and "protect" them from what they view as a degrading representation of Crete and its culture.

30 Τους συμβουλεύουμε τι να κάνουν, πού να πάνε, ας πούμε... εεε... ποια μέρη να δούνε, πού να... βγαίνουν απ' τα τουριστικά. Να μην είναι... δε θα τους... εεε... προτείνω ένα εστιατόριο που ξέρω ότι είναι... τουριστικό.

If they are to introduce their guests to real Crete as effectively as possible, the local providers need to know their region very well and respect their land and their work, as R8 (51 y/o, male) stresses here:

“It is important to show them that this is your land, which you know very very well, which you handle and manage...and...this land is at their disposal [and] they decide how far they will explore [it]. The most important thing is to show them (...) that...you respect your land and what you do.”³¹

(R8, 51 y/o, male)

Additionally, as honest hosts, they have to respect their guests and do not misguide them:

“He [the tourist] trusts you and you have to tell him [what] the reality [is].”³²

(R2, 45 y/o, male)

What these quotes reveal is that respondents are reflexive of their role as “live mediators” (Bardone et al., 2013, p. 222) of their local culture and they take seriously their responsibility to best guide their guests into exploring and experiencing the real Crete.

Guiding guests into experiencing the real Crete entails a certain engagement with cultural preservation. Wright and Annes (2014), in their study on farm women representing rurality in France, note that these women have restored old barns to turn them into the setting of their farm tours. Likewise, LaPan and Barbieri (2013) indicate that farmers involved in farm tourism contribute significantly to the preservation of built cultural heritage, like old barns. In a similar manner, most of the participants in this study have engaged to some extent in restoration works that preserve built heritage. Whether it is an old family property, some village houses or even a whole settlement, many of the B&B establishments in this study are located within restored buildings. In carrying out these often lengthy renovation projects, the providers drew on traditional Cretan architecture and tried to integrate the building’s past into the restored property, as they state. Attempting to reveal the continuity between the past and present state of the building, they strive to create a space that reflects the way of life in Crete and more specifically in their respective region. Therefore, the guesthouse or room, in which the guests step into already shows them a picture of the real Crete, as the hosts perceive it.

Most of the respondents describe the task of guidance to the guests as something they enjoy or even something that comes natural to them and their role in the establishment.

31 είναι... σημαντικό να τους δείξεις ότι... είσαι στο τόπο σου, τον οποίο τον γνωρίζεις πάρα πολύ καλά, τον χειρίζεσαι, τον διαχειρίζεσαι... και... εεε... τους τον διαθέτεις... εεε... όσο βαθιά εκείνοι θέλουν να πάνε. Το πιο σημαντικό πράγμα είναι να δείχνεις στους άλλους το... ότι.....ε, σέβεσαι... τον τόπο σου και αυτό που κάνεις.

32 Αυτός, όμως, σε εμπιστεύεται και πρέπει να του πεις την πραγματικότητα

Through social interaction, activities and storytelling (Bardone et al., 2013) these providers become key agents in representing local life and local culture in a reflexive and personal manner. The following quotes demonstrate that they are aware of that and they enjoy it:

“And this initiation, meaning that (...) I introduce them [the tourists] to Cretan culture or...to the village (...) all that...yes, it gives me as well [a sense of] great exuberance.”³³ (R4, 47 y/o, female),

“this is something I like and I do it quite much, that is I try to communicate to them all this atmosphere [of the place] but also the culture of Crete and [the culture] of the establishment.”³⁴ (R5, 55 y/o, male)

For R4, it is a pleasure to be the one to initiate tourists in the Cretan culture and show them how rural life looks like in a Cretan village. This initiation happens thanks to the fact that the living culture of Crete has been passed on to R4 and she has preserved it in her agritourism services. R5 also happily takes up the role of the key person who will introduce the guests to this specific region but also to the island’s culture. It is interesting to note that he also speaks about the establishment’s culture, denoting in this way the perceived distinctiveness (Wright and Annes, 2014) of the establishment’s character and services.

4.4.3. Communicate personal values

Cultural intermediaries do not simply pave the way for tourists to get to know the local culture. Their individual viewpoints and their personal values merge into their role as cultural mediators (Azara, 2013). Sometimes, as Bardone et al. (2013) note in their study on Estonian rural tourism entrepreneurs, the services of an establishment are an extension of the owners’ lifestyle. This is the case for R3 (38 y/o, female), who tries to communicate the value of sustainability through the farm-to-fork cooking class she holds for families staying at her guesthouses. During this participatory activity, she strives to help guests reconsider their own values while conveying her own views on the importance of choosing local and organic food:

33 Και αυτή η μύηση, δηλαδή... αυτό το ό,τι τους... τους μωύ στη Κρητική κουλτούρα ή στη... στο χωριό ή περνάω, μιλάω με όλους τους ανθρώπους, αυτό... αυτό είναι που... ναι, μου δίνει και μένα πολλή ζωντάνια.

34 αυτό είναι κάτι που μου αρέσει και το κάνω αρκετά, δηλαδή προσπαθώ να τους μεταδώσω και όλη αυτή την ατμόσφαιρα εεε αλλά και την κουλτούρα της Κρήτης εεε και της επιχείρησης

“I could see that all of them participated and they left having (...) learned something that can be applied in their everyday life (...) it can make them rethink their values.”³⁵ (R3, 38 y/o, female)

Similarly, R8 (51 y/o, male) says that it is his way of life that he actually transmits to guests:

“This is a way of life and provided that you follow a way of life yourself, it is easy to convey this to the others. When you yourself want to eat well and drink well, [you want] to sleep well, to have a life full of experiences in arts and culture, [you want to have] an interaction with people who train their intellect, then all that (...) is transferred to all those that visit us.”³⁶

(R8, 51 y/o, male)

The respondent explains that for him it feels almost natural to communicate his values to the guests since it is actually his own way of living that he conveys in any interaction. Thus, both the farm tour he offers in his land and the demonstration of traditional musical instruments are an extension of his personal lifestyle. It must be noted that this communication of personal values can also contribute to cultural preservation in an indirect but still crucial way.

4.4.4. Function as both host and business owner

Framing the providers’ role through the lens of the cultural intermediaries concept incorporates their changing between positions, a task that involves a good “translation of cultural meanings” (Edensor, 2001, p. 70). These people, as business owners and managers, are “a point of connection [...] between production and consumption” (Negus, 2002, p. 503). In addition to that, they both represent and embody the Cretan culture and way of life, they help their guests navigate their experience of real Crete and they probably also convey their personal values during host-guest encounters. Switching between different roles is part of their everyday reality.

When asked to describe their role, a very common answer the respondents gave was that their position in the business is pretty much “everywhere”. Indeed, since these are small to medium-size establishments, the owner/general manager has to take care of all the

35 έβλεπα ότι υπήρχε συμμετοχή πραγματικά όλων και...εεεε φεύγανε έχοντας...αισθανόμουνα τουλάχιστον εγώ, μάθει κάτι το οποίο μπορεί να έχει εφαρμογή και στην καθημερινή ζωή τους ή στ- να τους βάλει να σκεφτούν ξανά τις αξίες τους

36 αυτό είναι ένας τρόπος ζωής και εφόσον ακολουθείς έναν τρόπο ζωής για τον εαυτό σου εεε είναι εύκολο να το μεταδώσεις και στους υπόλοιπους. Όταν ο ίδιος θες να τρως καλά και να πίνεις καλά, να κοιμάσαι καλά, να...έχεις εεε μια ας πούμε ζωή γεμάτη με εμπειρίες, με τέχνες, με γράμματα, με συναναστροφή με ανθρώπους που ασχολούνται και με το πνεύμα τους και όλο αυτό κάνει έναν κύκλο, μεταφέρεται σε όλους αυτούς που μας επισκέπτονται.

operations and very often he/she is the one to execute them. During the interviews, the respondents were also asked to describe their typical day. It turns out that some of them have to be receptionists, managers and accountants, while also organizing and leading recreational activities for the guests. R1 explains why he has to handle everything:

“When you have built something from the ground up and you have made it reach a point that you are happy with and you want to maintain, you cannot but take care of everything. My role is more or less everywhere.”³⁷

(R1, 42 y/o, male)

For him, it is a given that he will oversee every operation because this business is his own personal venture and he is dedicated to keeping it competitive and successful.

As Vösu & Sooväli-Sepping (2012) have demonstrated, rural entrepreneurs, such as the study’s respondents, take on different roles. The emic approach to understanding the respondents’ roles made evident that these roles are complex and multilayered. As mentioned above, the selected agritourism providers are busy managing their establishments. They also describe their personal role as one of a host, who will try to make the guests feel at home:

“the fact that [the tourists] come to a space, which is my house, (...) means that I have to be a hostess, the way I would be with a friend, this is how I see it.”³⁸ (R3, 38 y/o, female)

According to R3, her role is to be a hostess who will treat the guests as friends, even more so as her house is on the same grounds of the establishment. In acting as a hostess, she preserves practices of the Cretan hospitality. Given this evidence, her reality aligns with this of farm women in the study of Wright and Annes (2014). The authors note that farm women used their home as the farm tour’s setting, an interesting observation that comes in contrast to Daugstad & Kirchengast (2013) findings on the pseudo-backstage of agritourism.

The role of a host and this of the business owner merge into one when respondents talk about their repeating guests. Naturally, repeaters are crucial for the establishment’s long-term success and viability. “The repeaters are the best clients”, says R4 (47 y/o, female). Almost all of the respondents mentioned that these loyal clients make up a good percentage of their total clientele. What is interesting to note here is their approach towards the repeating guests. According to McCannell (1973), in the modern tourism context, the local tourist workers will not pay much attention to tourists, because they view them as part of the scenery

37 όταν έχεις ξεκινήσει κάτι απ' το μηδέν και το φτάνεις σ' ένα σημείο, το οποίο θες να το κρατήσεις εκεί, δε μπορείς να μην ασχολείσαι. Ο δικός μου ο ρόλος είναι λίγο-πολύ παντού.
38 το ότι έρχεται σε ένα χώρο, που είναι το σπίτι μου, ας πούμε, σημαίνει ότι κι εγώ πρέπει να είμαι μία οικοδέσποινα, όπως θα ήμουν με έναν φίλο μου, εγώ κάπως έτσι το βλέπω

and they do not assign any special meaning to their presence. Contradicting this view, the respondents in this study prove that tourists, particularly the ones who keep coming back, are regarded as more friends than guests:

“(...) we now have a very large circle of customers and I would say friends even, meaning that these people do not think of us as a business which is only a business and it only has a business purpose [to accomplish], right?”³⁹

(R5, 55 y/o, male)

R5 considers repeaters as returning friends, with whom he has developed familiarity. He states that these guests understand that the establishment is not run for lucrative purposes only and that means that they feel respected and at home. This quote shows that, if balanced successfully, the roles of host and business owner can lead to a very rewarding relationship with the guests both on a financial and a personal level.

There is one more particularly significant note to make before concluding the Analysis chapter. Despite the relatively small and geographically limited sample, this research is in line with the existent observations on the fragmented understanding and practice of agritourism as it has developed in Greece so far. The data analysis revealed a reoccurring pattern that testifies to the confusion around the agritourism concept in Greece. During the interviews, and without prior instigation by the interviewer, the research participants expressed contradictory views on the concept (Karampela and Kizos, 2018). They self-labelled their business referring to related tourism types, such as alternative tourism or even ecotourism, another niche tourism type cognate to agritourism. In some cases, they openly expressed their difficulty in defining the term and the corresponding tourism practices. Namely, R3 (38 y/o, female) turned to the researcher to ask for a definition of the agritourism concept:

“And the picture you have...the picture so far, but also what you research into, [that is] agritourism, how do you define it? Because this is for me a difficult subject, after all.”⁴⁰ (R3, 38 y/o, female)

39 έχουμε πλέον έναν πολύ μεγάλο κύκλο πελατών και θα έλεγα και φίλων, έτσι, δηλαδή, δεν μας βλέπουν οι άνθρωποι σαν μία επιχείρηση η οποία είναι καθαυτό επιχείρηση και έχει μόνο επιχειρηματικό σκοπό, έτσι

40 Και η δικιά σας δηλαδή...και ως τώρα εικόνα, αλλά και αυτό που ψάχνετε, ο αγροτουρισμός, πώς το ορίζετε; Γιατί αυτό είναι για μένα μεγάλο θέμα τελικά.

This confusion was linked to problematic or nebulous guidelines from the part of tourism-related authorities (Mylonopoulos et al., 2017). Finally, to highlight their contradictory views on the matter, respondents presented different realities regarding the competition in their market. Some believe there is a small number of agritourism establishments in Crete, while for others there are numerous similar businesses in the mainland. Certainly, this research solely illustrates the reality of the selected providers, but these findings can contribute in drawing a picture of the concept's empirical understandings in Greece.

5. Conclusion

This thesis analyzes how agritourism providers in Crete represent the island's cultural heritage in their agritourism B&B establishments. Additionally, it investigates to what extent the preservation of the island's culture is a deliberate aim of these providers. To answer this twofold research question, an emic perspective was adopted and agritourism practices, services and tourism products were considered through the lens of the providers' understandings and opinions. In-depth interviews were the most fitting method to approach the research question from this emic aspect, as they allowed the selected providers to reflect on their role and the tourism products they design. Agritourism providers were conceptualized as cultural intermediaries, whose function is more than managing a B&B establishment in Crete. They were regarded as cultural agents or mediators, whose perceptions and choices shape the representation of Cretan cultural heritage and they can possibly instigate cultural preservation. In the following, the answer to the twofold research question is discussed.

Viewing the selected providers "as intermediaries continually engaged in forming a point of connection or articulation between production and consumption" (Negus, 2002, p. 503), the process of cultural commodification was analyzed drawing on their own agritourism services. This was an essential part of the study, not only because tourism products and experiences are founded on the commodification of cultures (Edensor, 2001) but also because it is through commodification that local cultural codes become available for tourist consumption (Bessière, 1998). The study findings are in line with the observations of Vösu and Sooväli-Sepping (2012, p. 78) and show that "commodification may lead to the realisation of cultural creativity by tourism entrepreneurs". Furthermore, the analysis confirms that natural resources are a crucial component of a distinct cultural system (Bessière, 2013). The selected providers creatively use Crete's natural resources to design activities, that is human experiences (Smith, 1994), that introduce their guests to Cretan culture. Predominantly, these activities revolve around the local produce and gastronomy, they showcase what the region has to offer and they also revive past traditions. The respondents subjectively draw on cultural archives, collective memory and individual understandings of heritage (Bardone et al., 2013) to design these activities. As a result, their

tourism products are an expression of their personal perceptions of tradition and potentially their lifestyle and they represent the island's cultural heritage in distinct ways.

The distinctiveness of these agritourism products is not only influenced by the providers themselves but is also dictated by the territorial characteristics of the region where they are located. In order to understand how they represent Crete's cultural heritage, the impact of the Cretan terroir on them and their services was taken into consideration. This was relevant to investigate as agritourism is a highly territorial type of tourism development, linked to specific places, and production, as well as consumption, are kept local (Marsden, 1999). The analysis demonstrated that the concept of terroir is a determining factor in the selection and customization of the cultural experiences offered and it significantly guides the providers' choices at different levels. The Cretan terroir is mainly pronounced in food heritage, which "evokes images, memories and pride", (Alonso & Krajsic, 2013, p. 158). It appears that the providers' core identity is firmly linked to the Cretan land and more specifically to their own homeland, with its unique agricultural produce, socio-historical specificities and a certain way of life (Bessière, 2013). Thus, gastronomy is an expression of their unique regional identity. To best preserve their identity, agritourism providers act as "both archaeologists and innovators at the same time" (Bessière, 1998, p. 27). They engage in reviving past traditions or restoring their built cultural heritage, but such projects are also infiltrated with their individual perspectives. The result is a unique and complex representation of Cretan culture, which however succeeds at clearly differentiating their location from others and their local establishments from mass tourism hotels.

The connection to the Cretan land and the importance of upholding the local identity emerged as key points of understanding authenticity from the providers' perspective. The concept of authenticity has been proven relevant in agritourism studies, but with the main focus being on the degree of authenticity that characterises the tourist experiences (Phillip et al., 2010). Zhou et al. (2015, p. 29) remark that "how hosts experience authenticity has been neglected" in academic research, so this study provides empirical insights to gradually form an understanding of authenticity from the agritourism providers' perspective. Regarding them as cultural intermediaries was pivotal in relating their perceptions of authenticity to their business choices and tourism products. In other words, since these providers are viewed as cultural agents, the way they perceive authenticity directly influences the way they convey it to their guests during activities or social interaction. Two tensions were revealed during the analysis. On the one hand, the respondents linked authenticity to a state of being in which one is their "real" self (Wang, 1999) and one shows their true identity. This state of being is

communicated in host-guest encounters, which are thus sincere rather than simulated or fake. “The moment of interaction may become the site in which value is generated” (Taylor, 2001, p. 9) and indeed such moments of interaction and host-guest intimacy are frequent in these agritourism establishments (Moira, 2004; Bardone et al., 2013). As observed by Andéhn & L’Espoir Decosta (2020) the research participants try to convey existential authenticity drawing on common experience in activity-related situations. On the other hand, authenticity was related to the pre-modern rural way of life (Cole, 2007). In such viewpoints, the connection to the land and the local identity were conceived as an equivalent to being authentic. Hence, in order to convey this perception of authenticity to the guests, agritourism providers tend to preserve the valuable elements of their territorial identity.

Throughout this research, the agritourism providers were conceptualised as cultural intermediaries, meaning that agritourism practices were studied from a cultural approach. It was, nevertheless, important to consider market challenges or financial constraints these providers face, as they entail implications for the representation and potential preservation of the Cretan cultural heritage within their B&B establishments. It must be noted that these people are business owners-managers who need to operate their establishments in a financially viable manner. The respondents shared their views or concerns with regards to business matters and the analysis showed the weight of these matters for the tourism products provided. Firstly, in an attempt to remain competitive, some providers might add services that contradict the perceived authentic character of their establishment. To them, however, these choices make sense, confirming what Zhou et al. (2015, p. 42) note, which is that “personal emotional benefits are the key factor to mediate the conflict between economic benefits and authenticity”. Similarly, some of them are flexible to adjust their services to the changes in demand, a choice that might affect the establishment’s local identity. Furthermore, while engaging in creative commodification of the Cretan cultural codes, the providers are challenged to design cost-effective activities that will “meet marketplace demands” (Smith, 1994, p. 582) and generate revenue. This might be a complex task, so many of them opt for maintaining local collaborations that guarantee the establishment’s long-term viability. Finally, agritourism providers depend much on their repeating guests and this was a central point when talking about business matters. The analysis demonstrated that it is especially with repeaters that the multilayered role of these providers comes to the fore.

Conceptualising the research units as cultural intermediaries to understand how they see themselves and their services gave prominence to their agency in representing Crete and its cultural heritage. The key theoretical concepts of the thesis touched upon key points of the

providers' function as cultural workers. The undertaken analysis indicated that providers participating in this study represent the island's cultural heritage in a number of different ways: through the recreational and educational activities they design or suggest to their clients, the revival of regional cooking traditions, the promotion of Cretan gastronomy and the holistic use of the local agricultural produce. Their function as cultural intermediaries is not limited to pre-arranged interactions or planned activities but also extends to spontaneous host-guest encounters that take place daily. These people act as an embodiment of the Cretan way of life, they are live mediators of their land's identity, so, even unconsciously, they represent the local culture. What is more, their responses show that they are reflexive of their role as guides who introduce guests to Cretan life and culture. In fact, they take this role seriously and they aim at conveying an accurate picture of reality to their guests. However, as rightfully observed in similar studies on farm/rural tourism (Võsu & Sooväli-Sepping, 2012; Bardone et al., 2013; Wright and Annes, 2014), the providers tend to merge their individual understandings of heritage and/or tradition, their personal memories and values and the collective representations. As a result, the ways they represent the Cretan cultural heritage are unique, personal and highly linked to territorial identity. These representations are complex in terms of their authentic quality, they might draw on prior research or on emotional value and they can even express a sense of pride in the Cretan identity. Overall, it has been demonstrated that these agritourism providers are key performers in the representation of local culture and they decisively shape the ways this representation materializes.

In examining the ways in which agritourism providers represent the Cretan cultural heritage, this study also attempted to understand to what extent these people view cultural preservation as their goal. Although it is not explicitly stated as their objective, in their role as cultural agents, the respondents engage directly or indirectly in the preservation of local cultural practices. Creative commodification (Bardone et al., 2013) entails the revitalization of certain old customs or ways of life, as is the case with the gastronomy activities that revive old food traditions of Crete. As cultural intermediaries, hosts are simultaneously producers and consumers of the local culture and heritage and thus they contribute to the preservation of these elements through the act of providing agritourism services. Moreover, since many of the respondents relate authenticity to the pre-modern rural life, they make an effort to preserve certain terroir elements that recall this bygone era. These elements pertain mostly to intangible cultural heritage and in fact the food heritage of each specific region, which is linked to "a system of shared representations" (Bessière, 2013, p. 276). By preserving "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills" (UNESCO, 2003) of their region,

they can preserve their local identity and thus, they can differentiate their land and its unique characteristics. Consequently, this enables them to introduce their guests to the “real” Cretan life and culture and successfully carry out their perceived task of providing insightful guidance to them. Additionally, it enables them to show their guests how this specific region and establishment stand out from the rest. However, it is not only intangible cultural elements that are revitalised in this agritourism context. Most of the participants have engaged to some extent in restoration works to construct their guesthouses and small hotels. Doing so, they preserve traditional architectural elements of their region but also aim at showcasing the continuity in the states of the building. Similar studies on farm tourism entrepreneurs also indicate that there is preservation of tangible heritage involved in their work (LaPan and Barbieri, 2013; Wright and Annes, 2014). Overall, often intuitively or for emotional reasons, these agritourism providers do preserve parts of the island’s cultural heritage.

This study demonstrates the pivotal but also complex role of agritourism providers as cultural intermediaries. In a novel way, it employs a concept of the cultural studies to conceptualise the research units and emically understand agritourism practices in the island of Crete. It analyzed how agritourism providers represent the cultural heritage of Crete in different ways in their B&B establishments and it also noted that these people engage to some degree in cultural preservation. The findings are consistent with similar studies on rural/farm/agri-tourism entrepreneurs in other European countries (Võsu & Sooväli-Sepping, 2012; Bardone et al., 2013; Wright and Annes, 2014) that indicate how these people negotiate the notions of authenticity, heritage, tradition and identity to create unique representations of their local culture. Moreover, this study proves that in the case of agritourism, cultural intermediaries are not simply tourist workers who “oil the wheels of tourist–local interaction and exchange” (Edensor, 2001, p. 70) but they are actively “involved in the production, mediation and regulation of discourses of destination’s authenticity and uniqueness” (Azara, 2013, p. 187). Generally, the findings are important as they attest that cultural representation and preservation is an active process, which can be boosted by agritourism.

This research had certain limitations, which were accentuated by the restrictions posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. First, it focuses on a specific location in Greece, that is the island of Crete, so this does not allow for the findings to be generalised to other regions. Also, taking into account the fragmented picture agritourism presents at a national level, more research is needed to investigate the representation of cultural heritage in agritourism establishments across the country. Second, this study depicts agritourism based on the respondents’ individual descriptions which could involve bias. Given the limitations posed by

the pandemic, on-site research was not feasible, as a trip to Crete was not possible. Instead, during in-depth online interviews, the respondents were incited to provide detailed descriptions of their lived world in the B&B establishments they own and manage. Finally, since interviews were conducted online, there were some limitations on receiving non-verbal information that could be of significance for the data interpretation.

Reflecting upon the study's limitations, some suggestions for further research are presented, so as to deepen the understanding of the providers' role and its implications for the representation and preservation of local cultural heritage. An ethnographic study based on longitudinal participant observation could provide a more comprehensive analysis of how these providers represent culture on a daily basis. Edutainment activities and arranged demonstrations of cultural practices, as well as ordinary host-guest encounters, could be scrutinized to examine how providers act as cultural intermediaries. Besides, participant observation could offer useful insight into the reception of agritourism practices by the guests of these establishments. This study did touch upon some of the market challenges these providers have to face, but more extensive research is needed to analyze how such challenges affect the tourism products and the guests' experience subsequently. Towards that, further research could investigate how agritourism providers balance the need to stay competitive with the task to represent or preserve the Cretan culture. Finally, the providers' local collaborations with regional producers or small enterprises could be studied in order to widen the spectrum of Cretan culture representation and preservation by rural entrepreneurs.

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7. Appendix

Appendix A - Research Participants Overview

Table A1 Research Participants Overview

Nr.	Name	Age	Gender	Location	Current role	Years in the sector	Studies/previous work
1	Manolis Saridakis	42	male	Heraklion, Crete	Owner-Manager	15	degree in medical equipment operation, former tourism employee in Crete
2	Titos Hondrakis	45	male	Heraklion, Crete	General Manager	14	former employee in hotel chain in Crete
3	Danai Kindeli	38	female	Chania, Crete	Owner-Manager	8	degrees in translation, international relations, fashion communication
4	Aliki Dialyna	47	female	Lasithi, Crete	Owner-Manager	12	degrees in economics and interior design, former bank clerk
5	Tasos Gourgouras	55	male	Chania, Crete	General Manager	22	former freelancer in advertising, documentary film-making
6	Ioanna Mantala	54	female	Lasithi, Crete	Owner-Manager	8	degree in hotel business management
7	Miron Toupogiannis	72	male	Rethymnon, Crete	Owner	10	degree and active as architect
8	Vasilis Petrodaskalakis	51	male	Rethymnon, Crete	Owner	16	degree and active as engineer, transport planner

Appendix B - Interview Guide

Warm-up questions at the beginning

- What is your experience in agritourism so far? How long have you been active in this sector?
- What does an average day look like for you? Describe it, please.

THEME COMMODIFICATION

How are the living traditions of Crete infiltrated into the offerings of this kind of establishments?

- Tell me a few words about the services/products you offer at your establishment.
- What are the criteria for choosing the type of offerings for your business?
- Why do you use/sell local products for your cuisine/cooking lessons (or other gastronomy-related service mentioned on the websites)?
- As I see on your website, you offer only local cuisine. Do you also eat the meals you prepare for your guests?
- When I tell you the word “traditional”, what comes to your mind?

THEME REPRESENTATION

To what extent is it an explicit goal of agritourism providers to represent Cretan culture through their products?

- Tell me a few words about your goals – aspirations of this establishment.
- When you first decided to set up this business, what were your thoughts?
Would they regard themselves as cultural intermediaries?
- What do you enjoy the most in your work/in leading this business?
- Think about your position, your responsibilities, your actions in this role. How do you see yourself?
- How would you describe your role in relation to your guests? Probing: Do you have personal contact with your guests? What do you want to achieve from that?
- What are the main things you want your guests to keep from their stay?
- Tell me 5 words that best describe your establishment’s character.

THEME AUTHENTICITY

- Presenting your establishment online, you use words like authentic, true, real (draw on specific examples of each case here – read phrases out of their website). Could you elaborate on what these words mean to you?
- What makes a tourism product authentic, in your opinion?
- Why is it important for you to offer authentic tourism products?

THEME IDENTITY

In which ways does their sense of identity influence their tourism products?

- What are your feelings towards Cretan traditions? Do they play a part in your life? Do they play a part in your business?
- In your own words, describe what Crete means to you.

Biographical questions at the end – Face sheet information

- What is your age?
- Where are you from originally?
- What have you studied? Where have you worked previously?
- How long have you been engaged in this sector? (What is your position in the business?)