



Universitat de Lleida

Next-Generation in Family Business: the Vague Standpoint of the Successor Family Farms and Generational Renewal

Manel Plana-Farran

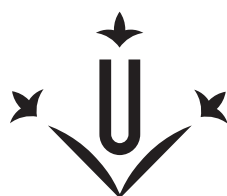
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Universitat de Lleida

TESI DOCTORAL

Next-Generation in Family Business: the Vague Standpoint of the Successor Family Farms and Generational Renewal

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“La pitjor collita és no sembrar”

Francesc Canosa Farran

“El que reclama aquest món és respecte per la seva
determinació de continuar existint. Respecte”

Ferran Sáez Mateu

A tots aquells que ja no hi són, però que sempre estan presents.

Als meus pares, forjadors de vida i exemple de sacrifici i generositat, sempre generositat...

I enmig de la boira, apareix una llum dolça i calmada (...). I quan tu vas voler, vas arribar (...). I amb tu vaig aprendre, encara més, a saber què és el més important a la vida (...).

Sílvia, Albert i Júlia

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Resum

La successió a les empreses familiars s'ha manifestat com un element central en l'estudi d'aquest tipus d'empreses. La presència majoritària de l'empresa familiar en l'economia representa, sense cap mena de dubte, el moll de l'òs del teixit empresarial i social. Si ens fixem en el nostre entorn més proper, les nostres terres s'han caracteritzat per ser una de les principals zones agràries d'Europa on l'estructura productiva més comuna és l'explotació agrària familiar.

Un dels aspectes que es deriven de la successió a les empreses familiars és la necessitat de parar l'esment en les següents generacions com a part essencial d'aquest escenari; en definitiva, fer-les presents amb la seva pròpia veu. L'objectiu principal d'aquest treball és el d'entendre com es percep la successió a les empreses familiars per part d'aquests joves de les famílies que tenen una empresa. D'aquesta manera, també s'aconsegueix visibilitzar-los i donar-los-hi el necessari protagonisme com actors i actrius principals de la successió, donant resposta així, a la crida que s'ha realitzat per part de la literatura en la matèria.

La formació d'aquestes generacions que han d'encarar aquest procés successori és un element fonamental per proporcionar el coneixement, les aptituds i les actituds per la continuïtat de les empreses familiars, esdevenint un repte individual i col·lectiu alhora. És per aquest motiu que les nostres fonts d'obtenció de dades han estat institucions on aquests joves es formen, el món universitari i el món de les escoles agràries.

Els resultats posen de manifest que l'empresa familiar és una entitat complexa on existeixen dinàmiques familiars i empresarials que es troben en un mateix espai i que representen lògiques emocionals i empresarials que calen ser tractades amb noves eines, com pot ser el mindfulness. En el cas de les explotacions agràries familiars, la seva continuïtat, resideix, entre d'altres aspectes en el sentit de pertinença a l'explotació per part de les següents generacions i en la voluntat de continuar amb el llegat familiar.

Aquest treball contribueix a aprofundir en el coneixement dels elements que afecten la voluntat de continuar les empreses familiars per part de les generacions que tenen el repte de fer el canvi generacional a les empreses familiars i a les explotacions agràries familiars i quins elements els concerneixen a l'hora de decidir-se. Aquestes eleccions són transcendents pel propi jove, per la família i també pel futur d'aquests sectors.

Resumen

El estudio de las empresas familiares y la sucesión en las mismas se ha manifestado como un elemento básico en este tipo de empresas. Cabe decir que esta forma empresarial representa el elemento central de nuestra economía y del tejido empresarial y social. Nuestro territorio se ha caracterizado por ser una de las principales zonas agrarias de Europa siendo la estructura productiva más común la explotación agraria familiar.

Uno de los aspectos que se derivan de la sucesión en las empresas familiares es la necesidad de centrar la atención en las siguientes generaciones como parte esencial de este escenario. El objetivo principal de este trabajo se fundamenta en entender cómo se percibe la sucesión en las empresas familiares por parte de los jóvenes que pertenecen a familias con empresas. De este modo, también se consigue visibilizarlos y proporcionarles el necesario protagonismo como actores esenciales de la sucesión, respondiendo así al llamamiento que se ha realizado por parte de la literatura en la materia.

La formación de estas generaciones es un elemento clave para proporcionar el conocimiento necesario para abordar la sucesión. Por esta razón, nuestras fuentes de obtención de datos han sido instituciones en las que estos jóvenes se forman, el entorno universitario y el de las escuelas agrarias.

Los resultados ponen de manifiesto que la empresa familiar es una entidad compleja en la que existen dinámicas familiares y empresariales que representan lógicas emocionales y empresariales que deben ser tratadas con nuevas herramientas, como puede ser el mindfulness. En el caso de las explotaciones agrarias familiares su continuidad reside, entre otros aspectos, en el sentido de pertenencia a la explotación por parte de las siguientes generaciones y en la voluntad de continuar con el legado familiar.

Este trabajo contribuye a profundizar en el conocimiento de los elementos que afectan a la voluntad de continuar con las empresas familiares por parte de las siguientes generaciones.

Abstract

Succession has emerged as a central element in the study of family businesses. It is widely recognized that family businesses represent the backbone of our economy. Our region in particular represents one of the principal agricultural areas in Europe where the most common productive structure is the family farm.

One of the aspects arising from succession in family businesses is the need to focus on the next generation as an essential element in this situation. The main objective of this work was to understand how succession in family businesses is perceived by these young members of families with businesses. In this way, it also aimed to make them visible and give them their due prominence as essential elements of succession, thus responding to the call that has been made in the literature on the subject.

The training of these generations who must face this succession process is a fundamental element in providing the necessary knowledge to tackle it. For this reason, our data have been collected from institutions where these young people are trained, i.e., universities and agricultural schools.

The results show that the family business is a complex entity in which family and business dynamics exist in the same space and represent emotional and business logics that must be treated with new tools, such as mindfulness. In the case of family farms, their continuity resides, among other aspects, in the sense of belonging to the farm felt by the ensuing generations and in their will to continue the family legacy.

This work contributes by deepening our knowledge of the elements that affect the willingness of the next generation to continue family businesses.

Agraïments i reconeixements

Escriure un treball com aquest requereix d'un cert esforç i dedicació. Però, sobretot, exigeix reconèixer que sense algunes persones que et trobes pel camí, no haguessis arribat al final d'aquest principi.

És per això que vull agrair a tots aquells que m'heu ajudat a caminar, algunes vegades portant-me de la mà, d'altres escoltant-me i d'altres animant-me, però sobretot, ensenyant-me.

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A la família, a la família i a la família tot l'agraïment.

List of Abbreviations

FB	Family Business
FF	Family Farms
IEF	Instituto de la Empresa Familiar
ASCEF	Associació Catalana de l'Empresa Familiar
GVA	Gross Value Added
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
EU-28	28 European Member States
EC	European Commission
Eurostat	Statistical Office of the European Union
GR	Generational Renewal
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
SEW	Socioemotional Wealth
FIBER	Family influence, Identification of family members, Bind social ties, Emotional attachment, Renewal through dynastic succession
REI	Renewal through dynastic succession, Emotional attachment, Identification of family members
SEWi	Socioemotional Wealth importance
MAAS	Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale
FFMQ	Five Facets Mindfulness Questionnaire
BA	Business Administration
UdL	Universitat de Lleida

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Introduction

Introduction

In the rapidly changing contemporary environment, the willingness of students to initiate a career through entrepreneurial activities (Weng et al. 2012) or to continue a business created by relatives is a key element of occupational commitment. According to Arzubiaga et al. (2018) and Pressuti et al. (2019), both activities rely on risk-taking, proactiveness and the need to search for different opportunities. Furthermore, students are continuously facing different decisions about the future such as the continuity of studies, the possibility of creating their own business or incorporating themselves into the business owned by their family (i.e., family business, hereafter FB). Success when dealing with these decisions depends on knowledge acquisition and the training of young and next-generation students, since these variables represent an essential step in adapting and successfully responding to an increasingly dynamic and unsettled economic environment (e.g., Blanco-Mazagatos et al. 2018; Woodfield and Husted 2017).

In the case of students who are willing to join their FB, these factors need to be interwoven with the management of several emotional logics in the short, medium and long term (González Ramírez et al. 2007). These emotional aspects are closely related to succession—a focal point for understanding generational replacement in society (Abramson et al. 2009). Generational change and continuity represent key aspects of specific businesses, especially in the case of FBs. In this vein, Arjis et al. (2021) emphasize the need to challenge and broaden our understanding of the intensive interaction between family and business subsystems. Such transformations reflect the changing environment of business activities, ranging from entrepreneurship to family businesses. The rules of the game are certainly changing in response to new demands, knowledge and conditions (Cusworth et al. 2021) that directly affect new generations. Nonetheless, the presence of next-generation members as strategic and reflective actors (Riley, 2009) is dismissed in the entrepreneurship literature—and particularly in the family business literature (Chiswell, 2016; Fürst, 2017).

In the following section, as a central component of this dissertation, the concept of the FB will be briefly summarized by looking at the main characteristics and attributes of these increasingly significant organizations among scholars.

Family Businesses at a Glance: The Case of Family Farms

FBs are regarded as the backbone of economic growth in both advanced and emerging economies (Holt et al. 2018; Oudah et al. 2018). According to a report published

by the IEF (Instituto de la Empresa Familiar) entitled *Informe de la Empresa Familiar en España, 2021*, FBs represent 89% of firms, contribute 57% of GDP and generate 67% of occupancy. Likewise, the ASCEF (Catalan Association of Family Business) declares that 88% of businesses in Catalonia are FBs, representing 69% of GVA and providing 74% of Catalan employment. This consistent picture of the importance of FBs is not only true of Catalonia or Spain but also about globally. The data show that family firms are both the most common and oldest form of business structure worldwide (De Massis, Frattini, Kotlar, Petruzzelli, and Wright, 2016), representing the majority of businesses (Daspit, Chrisman, Sharma, Pearson and Long, 2017). As a consequence, FBs play an essential societal role, representing 90% of European firms and contributing to sustainable economic growth (De Massis, Audretsch, Uhlaner and Kammerlander, 2018).

FBs are characterized by visible and active owners, a long-term orientation, a collective identity, family values, emotional ownership and a desire by the firm to persist across generations (Berrone et al. 2012; Miller et al. 2005). Furthermore, FBs provide us with concepts, interactions and dynamics that are worth understanding such as continuity, legacy and resilience. From this perspective, the long-term vision of surviving over multiple generations (Chua et al., 1999) represents a unique and special characteristic in a challenging 21st century environment (Kotlar & De Massis, 2013; Arzubiaga et al. 2021). However, this sort of firm has a low survival rate. Only 30% of them are handed over to the second generation, while only 10–15% of family businesses reach the third generation (Hielb et al. 2015; IEF, 2018, Gallizo et al. 2020, Jaskiewicz et al. 2021).

With this in mind, FBs provide a unique context in which to analyze and research the importance of succession, next-generation views and their effect on factors affecting the intention to continue the business (Miller et al. 2003, Chrisman et al. 2007; Miller et al. 2007; Cabrera-Suárez, 2010; Berrone et al. 2012; De Massis et al. 2018; Arijs et al. 2021;), particularly with regard to family farms (hereafter FFs') (Suess-Reyes et al. 2016; Mishra, A. et al. 2008; Gallizo et al. 2020; Kurland et al. 2020). In particular, agricultural economies associated with intensive agricultures have experienced major shifts in recent decades (Arsel, M. et al; 2012; Helm, 2017). In other words, agriculture represents one of the most intense scenarios where these alterations have taken place (Toulmin et al. 2016; Contzen et al. 2017; Bosc et al. 2019), especially when society's demands on farming shift "from something that provides one good (food) to something that supplies many (food, access to green spaces, healthy rural environment, flood resilience, reduced greenhouse gas emissions)" (Custworth et al. 2021, pag. 929). As with many FBs, one of the primordial objectives of FFs is to pass on control of the most hereditarian activity (i.e., agriculture), (Chiswell, 2014) to the next generation (Gasson and Errington, 1993).

Agriculture plays a crucial role in economic growth. According to the World Bank (2020), farming represents 4% of Global gross domestic product (GDP). Figures gleaned from Eurostat show that there are around 12 million farms in the EU and 28.96% are worked either solely by family members or they do most of the work (Eurostat, 2016). Consequently, family-based agriculture has great relevance throughout the world (Foguessato et al. 2020; Joosse and Grubbström 2017), representing one of the essential elements that characterize family businesses as a whole—their intense relationships with their immediate socio-employment and economic environments (Plana, 2016). Farming and family farming are perched on the brink of major changes (Chiswell, 2014) resulting from wider social changes related to alterations in agroindustry. There are new demands on agriculturalists and new challenges faced in farming as a consequence of incorporating science and technology into farmwork (Coopmans et al. 2021).

The future of farming and more specifically family farming relies on agricultural workers, managers and next generation farmers (Coopmans et al. 2021). Continuity and succession in family farming represent key aspects for researchers and policymakers, referred to in some cases as “the young farmer problem” (European Commission, 2012; Eurostat, 2018). With this in mind, generational renewal (GR) on European farms is one of the key objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) (EC., 2021), and it is therefore imperative that policymakers understand the processes of intergenerational family farms.

In light of the above, FB and FF research has acknowledged the importance of the next generation in terms of family firms’ continuity and their role in succession and the continuity of the family legacy (Murphy et al. 2019; Eckrich & Loughhead, 1996; Bjöenemby & Nicholson, 2007; Glover 2016; Suess-Reyes 2016; Potter & Lobley, 1992, 1996a, 1996 (b)). Therefore, it is remarkable that a large stream of family firm research has been focused on analyzing the succession process in general (e.g., Gimenez-Jimenez et al. 2021; Umans et al. 2020) and knowledge acquisition, as well as the training of the new generation in order to respond to a constant, dynamic and changing economic environment (e.g., Blanco-Mazagatos et al. 2018; Woodfield and Husted 2017). Consequently, the process of knowledge acquisition by the successor, mainly before getting into the family business and before attaining leadership responsibilities, has received increasing research attention (Carolan, 2018).

Notwithstanding the great significance of the view of the next generation on the process of succession, there is a lack of understanding about how this process affects prospective successors. In fact, researchers (Kantelhardt, 2006; Chiswell, 2014; May et al. 2019; Custworth et al. 2021; Csizmady et al. 2021) have exposed the general and debilitating absence of the next generation from data collection methods in the

succession literature (Riley, 2009). James (1990) claims that the succession process “remains half blind” (1990: 283) in the absence of a potential or future successor. The understanding of intergenerational firm transmission remains hugely debilitated by the exclusion/omission of the potential successor (Lobley et al’s, 2005a).

Family Firms: A Complex Organization

Family firms have been recognized as complex entities where family dimensions and business and commercial logic need to be fit into a single organization (Jaskiewicz et al., 2016). The family and the business subsystems have been represented as two unaligned social systems that represent emotional and business elements, respectively (Zellwegger, 2017, Arzubiaga, 2021). According to Pieper et al. (2015), the family firms’ arena represents a specific plot for potential family and generational conflict, which is considered even higher as more generations become involved in the business due to divergent visions, goals and attitudes across generations. In this vein, Magrelli et al. (2020) state that interactions between different generations in family firms provoke tensions between family members. In fact, family enterprises represent singular organizations that need to manage several emotional logics to survive in the long term (Gersick, Davis, Hampton & Lansberg, 1997; Suess-Reyes, 2016).

Succession in Family Firms. The Vague Standpoint of the Successor

Succession in family firms is described as the act of passing the baton from one family member to another (Jaskiewicz et al. 2015) where there are different approaches based on personal, psychological, and emotional dynamics (Miller et al. 2003, Magrelli et al. 2020). Studies on family succession sustain that in such processes, the junior/potential generation is focused on future renewal and innovation activities in family business instead of maintaining what has been or will be passed on to them, unlike the senior generation, which is more concerned with the legacy and its perpetuation (De Massis et al., 2016a; Le Breton-Miller and Miller, 2018; Miller et al. 2003; Magrelli et al. 2020). Because of these aspects, FB succession has received increased attention from scholars in recent years (Van Helvert-Beugels et al; 2020; Martín-Cruz et al. 2020). In particular, research on family firm succession has been focused on resources for making decisions regarding the future (Grote, 2003; Salvato and Corbetta, 2013; Strike et al. 2018; Magrelli et al. 2020) with the goal of providing generations with specific tools to help understand and recognize each other rather than supporting their psychological requirements (Clark and Salaman, 1998).

In the case of family farms, Chiswell's (2014, p. 75) recent research on succession enlarged the overview of research methods on succession in family farms. This research goes in line with other comprehensive studies that indicate that the subjects targeted have primarily been principal farmers, with the next-generations' views being forgotten or neglected (Hutson, 1987, Errington and Tranter, 1991; Blanc and Perrier-Cornet, 1993; Potter and Lobley, 1992a; Ward and Lowe, 1994; Lobley et al. 2002; Sottomayor et al, 2008; Calus and Van Huylbroeck, 2008; Lobley, 2010; Inwood and Sharp, 2012). In this vein, and based on the "complexities of the succession process" (Potter and Lobley, 1996: 290), the lack of the next generations' views on the succession process in FBs, and especially family farms, is remarkable—representing a significant omission in the research and literature and an important gap to fill (Chiswell, 2014).

In light of the above, the succession process comprises "practical, legal, managerial and symbolic actions undertaken to transfer" (Coopmans, 2012, p. 46) a firm from the principal to the successor (Fischer and Burton, 2014). One area of the intricate process of succession in family businesses in general is the non-financial aspects. Concerning this, Murphy et al. (2019) state that the more next-generation family members interact with the family business, the more they prioritize the nonfinancial aspects of the firm, strengthening their interactive socio-emotional wealth (hereafter, SEW). This concept, SEW, is regarded as a dominant paradigm among FB scholars, being depicted as "the nonfinancial aspects of the firm that meet the family's affective needs such as identity, the ability to exercise family influence and the perpetuation of the family dynasty" (Gómez-Mejía, Haynes, Núñez-Nickel, Jacobson, & Moyano-Fuentes, 2007, p.106).

Family Firms and SEW

The introduction of the SEW concept is the result of the tremendous growth in the FF field of research (Swab et al. 2020) in recent decades. According to Brigham and Payne, the introduction of SEW by Gómez-Mejía et al. (2007) represents "one of the most important developments during this time period" (Bringham and Payne, 2019, p. 326) in family business research. Gomez-Mejia et al. (2007) developed a general SEW model to explain those behaviors that differentiate family businesses from their non-family counterparts. SEW was initially defined as "those non-financial aspects of the company that refer to or respond to family affective needs such as identity, the ability to exercise family influence and the perpetuation of the family dynasty" (Gómez-Mejía, Haynes, Núñez-Nickel, Jacobson, & Moyano-Fuentes, 2007, p. 106). All in all, the SEW model suggests that FBs are specifically motivated by and committed to the preservation of their SEW, which refers to the non-financial aspects or the "affective resources" of family owners. Given this approach, the behaviors that lead to losses

and earnings from these “affective resources” that SEW represents reflect the frame of reference from which FBs make important strategic decisions regarding business policy. More specifically, the SEW approach suggests that nonfinancial goals prevail over economic motives in family firms’ decision-making (Arzubiaga, Díaz-Moraina, Brauwerts, and Escobar, 2021), with regard to nonfinancial facets of the firm that meet the family’s affective needs through the business (Berrone, Cruz & Gómez-Mejía, 2012; Stockmans, Lybaert, & Voordeckers, 2010, Gallizo et al. 2017). In this respect, Glover and Reay (2015; pp.163) affirm that “it is surprising that firms such as family farms can be successfully transferred from generation to generation, and yet economic profits can consistently be low or even negative”.

The aforementioned fact highlights that, as compared to nonfamily businesses, whose decisions are driven by purely economic reasons, FBs are distinctive with respect to behavior and decision-making, with nonfinancial goals prevailing over economic aims (Firfiray et al. 2021; Arzubiaga et al. 2021; Chrisman et al. 2015). This logic follows the increasingly studied SEW approach—the idiosyncratic nature of decision-making in family firms (Brigham and Payne 2019), which refers to the nonfinancial facets of the firm that meet the family’s affective needs through the business (Stockmans et al. 2010). These needs are closely related to the ability to exercise family influence (Schulze et al. 2003), identity, the family name (Barroso-Martinez et al. 2019), the perpetuation of family values (Handler, 1990) and the preservation of the family dynasty (Stockmans et al., 2010).

One of the basic assumptions in the SEW discussion is related to how this differential behavior emerges in family firms. In this respect, Murphy et al. (2019; p.397) affirm that “SEW originates and is rooted in the early interactions between family members and the family business as they create a sense of belonging and identity with the business”. Furthermore, these authors argue that the more family members learn about the firm and the more formally involved they are, the more they will strengthen their SEW when interpreting nonfinancial aspects of the firm in decision making. Indeed, new generations will continually make strategic use, and remain protective of, SEW whether they continue working in the family business or not (Jiang et al. 2018).

With regard to SEW outcomes, prior research has explained family firms’ decision-making through the family’s desire to preserve their SEW (Muphy et al. 2019). More specifically, in the last decade scholars have pointed out that different outcomes in family firms such as environmental performance (Berrone et al., 2010), financial performance (Cruz et al. 2012; Kotlar et al. 2018), investment in research and development (Chen et al. 2020), innovation and technology decisions (Arzubiaga et al. 2021; Souder et al. 2017) and firm value (Zellweger and Dehlen, 2012) need to be understood following

the logic of SEW. In the case of family farms, the aforementioned outcomes need to be aligned with their primary goal; that is, to preserve family control and transfer the business on to the next generation (Gasson and Errington, 1993). Indeed, most farms are successfully passed from generation to generation, which means that the financial and often emotional survival of each generation is connected to the farm's success (Glover and Reay 2015).

All in all, SEW logic suggests that family firms prioritize maintaining family control, although it implies accepting an increased risk of poor firm performance and preventing the firm from failing by acting more conservatively (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007). The SEW approach sheds light on “decision-making dynamics within family enterprises” (Schulze and Kellermanns (2015, p. 448), permitting us to “bridge the gap between economic and behavioral perspectives about FB” (Schulze and Kellermanns, 2015, p. 448). In line this, Wright et al. (2014) sustain the necessity of context awareness as an essential aspect to broaden our analysis of firms beyond intrafirm dynamics; that is, it is necessary to take into account the industrial and institutional context in which the firm operates (Chrisman and Pattel, 2012; Schulze and Kellermanns, 2015). In a similar manner, Simon (2009) emphasizes the preservation of SEW as an added value in industries that are tied to specific geographical locations or that operate in specific industry contexts such as agriculture in rural settings.

Another compelling aspect linked to the development of research on SEW is the question proposed by Schulze and Kellermanns (2015) about “where or in whom does SEW reside?”. The literature has evolved from focusing on the interest of family principals (Berrone et al., 2012) to the family as a whole (Schulze and Kellermanns, 2015). Based on new insights (Swab et al. 2020. Schulze et al. 2015, Bruckhard 2020), it can be stated that transgenerational intentions broaden the SEW players, transforming the firm into an important source of identity, belonging and meaning for family members, including next-generation members.

Since its emergence (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007), researchers and scholars have developed different ways to conceptualize SEW and its dimensions (e.g., Berrone et al., 2012; Debicki et al. 2016; Jiang et al., 2018), with the multidimensional FIBER (Family and control influence, Identification of family members with the firm, Binding social ties, Emotional attachment, Renewal through dynastic succession) measure (Berrone et al, 2012) being the most accessed and well known. Subsequently, Hauck et al. (2016) validated the REI scale as a short form of the FIBER scale and Debicki et al. (2016) developed a socioemotional wealth importance (SEWi) scale for family firm research that permits us to measure the importance of SEW to family owners and managers of family firms.

Dayan et al. (2019) affirm that SEW is a mindfulness-based concept referring to “affective endowments” of family owners (Gómez-Mejía et al. 2011; Berrone et al. 2012; Naldi et al. 2013; Debicki et al. 2016). In this vein, Malhotra et al. (2012, p. 608) sustain that SEW can be considered a mindfulness-orientated complex construct because it involves “the connection and sharing of the mindfulness of individuals to create new meaning and knowledge that will help both individuals and the organization achieve greater congruence between their intentions and outcomes”. Moreover, new research on SEW provides a wide range of implementations, from social organizations (Miller, D. et al. 2014) to other family members (Suess-Reyes et al. 2016; Fitz-Koch et al. 2018; Gast et al. 2018), facilitating its applicability to new sets of FBs. For instance, Kurland et al. (2020) broadened SEW to a wider level of research, analyzing returns to their communities in the agrarian industry context, concluding that SEW theory should expand to include a community level of analysis, specifically, family farms.

The Presence of Mindfulness in Family Firms

The complexity of family organizations as well as the necessity of managing different subsystems that make up FBs make them a proper context in which to apply mindfulness (Dayan et al. 2019). FBs depict a paradoxical arena as a result of conflicting perspectives, values and goals posed by both family and business subsystems (Arzubiaga et al. 2021). Family members in a family firm, individuals and families in business need gears and skills for managing both emotional and financial demands and both individual and collective expectations (Schuman and Brun de Pontet, 2014). In this vein, Zellwegger (2014) provides insightful research on the collective mindfulness of the family as a source that can generate a positive outcome, displaying “an ongoing wariness of the synergies between family and firm” (Zellwegger, 2014, p.11) and yielding opportunities and advantages due to family involvement. In this respect, scholars agree that the boundaries between the family and the firm are rather blurred in family firms (Danes & Morgan, 2004; Labaki, Michael-Tsabari, & Zachary, 2013, Kellermans et al. 2014; Chirico et al. 2014) so as to turn mindfulness into a useful tool for managing the paradoxes that stem from the conflicting perspectives, values, and goals posed by the family and business subsystems (Arzubiaga et al. 2021).

Mindfulness is defined as a form of meditation, a psychological process and a construct (Germer et al. 2005), and its different components from different perspectives can be evaluated through various questionnaires, such as the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) (Brown and Ryan, 2003) or the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer et al. 2006). For instance, mindfulness appears as a particularly useful and protective factor when it is needed to cope with uncertainty (Arzubiaga et al. 2021), primarily in FBs. Good et al. (2016) represent the benefits of

mindfulness in their research on mindfulness in businesses in seven processes; i.e., attention, awareness, cognition, self-regulation of behavior, emotions, thoughts and physiology. In this regard, research (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Khoury et al. 2015; Tolimson et al. 2018) states that mindfulness provides the capacity for people to focus on the present instead of being anchored in the past or anticipating the future (Dayan et al. 2019). As a consequence, mindfulness practice is increasingly being adopted in different work environments (e.g., hospitals, investment banks, and high-tech firms).

Additionally, in a dramatically changing work and economic environment, several skills are needed for career development. The willingness to initiate a career is a key element concerning occupational commitment (Weng et al. 2012). On the other hand, uncertainty is quite common in next-generation members of FBs (Dayan et al. 2021; Arzubiaga et al. 2021; Plana-Farran et al. 2022) and business administration students concerned with prospective occupational commitment. Consequently, mindfulness, as a concept related to the capacity to be aware of the present moment and helping people to reduce their stress and anxiety about the future, permits us to address the association between the personal and professional concerns of undergraduate students pursuing a career in business administration.

Motivation of the Thesis

There is a large stream of FB research geared towards analyzing the succession process in general (e.g., Gimenez-Jimenez et al. 2021; Umans et al. 2020). As such, the debate and research regarding the intention to succeed FBs among the next generation is a cornerstone for researchers and policymakers. Lobley et al. (2010: 61) suggest that effective succession represents an imperative aspect in the achievement of continuity (Glover, 2016). In this regard, continuity of family business is an important topic in economics and society more broadly (Glover et al. 2015). More specifically, according to Zellwegger et al. (2012), trans-generational continuity and sustainability intentions of the family represents a key factor in FB research.

In light of the above, several skills are needed for career development, including mindfulness as a concept that permits us to focus on the present (Brown et al. 2003). There is a stream of research about the use of mindfulness in considerable scientific fields, including education, business management and entrepreneurship (Van Gelderen et al. 2019; Arzubiaga et al. 2021). In the case of FB, and specifically next-generation members, mindfulness is a great tool for managing the paradoxes that stem from the conflicting perspectives, values, goals and views posed by the family and business subsystems, since scholars agree that the boundaries between family and the firm are rather blurred in family firms (Danes & Morgan, 2004; Labaki, Michael-Tsabari, & Zachary, 2013, Kellermanns et al. 2014; Chirico et al. 2015).

Family business in general, and family farms in particular, provide a unique context in which to analyze the importance of succession and the view of the next generation; in other words, we wish to study how succession affects the next generation and the factors that affect continuity.

The general objective of this thesis is to analyze next-generation family members' views on key aspects of succession and how they affect them and their decision to continue or not.

Following these motivation and research gaps, this thesis aims to address the following research questions: *In Family firms, how does being a next-generation member affect their concerns for succeeding and for future involvement in the family business? Additionally, how does being a next-generation member of a FB in a sector such as family farming affect which factors influence the intention to continue the family farm?*

Method

Data

According to the characteristics of this dissertation, data were collected from two specific collectives (university students and farm school students), focused on next-generation family members. Both groups share the characteristic of not having started professional careers yet but they are both training and preparing for this eventuality. Moreover, as an introduction to the farming context, a specific farm community group was added as another source of data related to fruit tourism projects.

Participants and Context

In Articles 1 and 2, the participants were 204 university students enrolled in degrees in business administration as well as business administration and law at the University of Lleida (UdL). The dataset is based on the responses of students who had not started professional careers yet but who were training and preparing for them.

In Article 3, primary data were provided by the tourism officer from the town council, who allowed us to observe the scope of the project. Moreover, the case study of Fruiturisme (a fruit tourism activity that focuses on entrepreneurship and the diversification of family-based farming) was complemented by eight in-depth interviews with local entrepreneurs who mainly belonged to family farms.

In Articles 4 and 5, the target group was 161 students belonging to family farms who were enrolled in Catalan agricultural schools. The dataset was based on agricultural school students who were training to work in agriculture and belonged to family farms.

Procedure and Data analysis

In this thesis, different methods have been used, depending on each of the articles presented. The methodology used in each of them is detailed below.

In Articles 1 and 2, which are related to the role of mindfulness in B.A. university students (Article 1) and mindfulness in next-generation members of family farms (Article 2), a questionnaire was created ad hoc asking about self-employment, personal and professional concerns about the future and whether they came from a family

business or not. Moreover, mindfulness, the central question of these two articles, was measured by providing a six-item version of the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scales (MAAS) (Black et al. 2012).

In Article 1, a structural equation model was used to relate mindfulness with the professional and personal concerns of the B.A. students. The model contrasted those who belonged to a business family with those who did not and those who had educational and self-employment prospects with those who did not.

In Article 2, in order to obtain data on the students' situation with regard to a family business, the Student's t-test was used to contrast its possible influence on the level of mindfulness. More specifically, using inferential intergroup analysis, this subgroup of the sample (FB members) was compared according to their intention/desire to join their family business.

Article 3 describes a specific scenario related to farming—a unique case of the development of a tourism project based on fruit tourism, more specifically in the town of Aitona, promoting the natural passage of fruit (the blossom). Because of these characteristics, the methodological basis relies on the case study. The primary data were obtained through eight in-depth interviews with local entrepreneurs (mainly members of family farms) that permitted us to frame the farming scenario in terms of generational renewal, continuity and aging.

In Articles 4 and 5, both studies were settled in the context of the agrarian environment. More specifically, these studies focused on agricultural schools, obtaining the data of young people planning to join the farming business. The targeted group was 161 students belonging to family farms who enrolled in Catalan agricultural schools.

With respect to Article 4, in the first place, through an inferential analysis, we proceeded to describe the sample of students. Afterwards, the REI scale was revalidated in a family farming context by the methodology of factor analysis by principal components to verify the one-dimensionality of each set of items within the dimension to which they theoretically belonged. Finally, in the next stage, we studied the relationship between the variables of these three REI dimensions and succession intention, for which a contrast test of the significance of the difference in means was carried out.

Finally, in Article 5, with the aim of obtaining results about new drivers of potential successors' willingness to continue training in the future in family farms, the data were analyzed with a logistic regression with the binary dependent variable of intention to continue education (yes or no) as the dependent variable.

Objectives and Structure of the Thesis

By addressing the abovementioned research questions, this thesis aims to:

- Focus on successors in family firms by analyzing the effect of the attitude of next-generation family members on succession. Moreover, to determine which are the factors that affect the intention to continue family firms in general and family farms in particular.

In order to achieve this main objective, we set the following aims:

1. To determine the difference in mindfulness between university students who are potential successors of family businesses compared with university students who are not successors of family businesses.
2. To study the influence of mindfulness on university students' concerns for the future based on whether they come from a FB background.
3. To study the family farming scenario and next-gen continuity in FF.
4. To validate the SEW scale in young FF students and analyze the factors affecting succession in FFs.
5. To determine the factors that affect FF students' intention to take over the family farm.
6. To study the factors that affect the will to continue with training in young FF members.
7. To examine the effect of different intrinsic and extrinsic factors on the willingness of potential successors of family farms to continue training in the future.

Five studies were conducted to address our previously set objectives. The Role of Mindfulness in Business Administration (B.A.) University Students' Career Prospects and Concerns about the Future corresponds to objectives 1 and 2. Mindfulness has emerged as an important concept because it stimulates focus in the present. For objective 1, we evaluated whether mindfulness in terms of professional and educational prospects is associated with belonging to a family that runs a business, intention to engage in further education or intention to become self-employed. To address objective 2, we examined the effect of mindfulness on the prospective personal and professional concerns of university students using three moderators, i.e., the presence of a family business, further education intentions and self-employment intentions. We address this topic with a sample of undergraduate students enrolled in business and economics studies. The aim of this study was to evaluate whether mindfulness is effective in regulating emotions among B.A. students with relation to their professional and personal concerns. More specifically, we evaluated whether the

association of mindfulness with professional and educational prospects depends on whether one belongs to a family running a business, whether one intends to engage in further education or whether one intends to become self-employed.

Mindfulness and Next-Generation Members of Family Firms: A Source for Sustainability corresponds to objective 1 and partially to objective 2. The study attempted to address the potential effects of different personal attributes and horizons on the mindfulness level of potential successors in family businesses. More specifically, this research used the MAAS mindfulness scale to determine the level of wellbeing and attention capacity among university students who belong to a business-owning family based on their own perceptions and convictions regarding their possible incorporation into the family business and whether this is likely to happen at some time in the future. This research also analyzed whether being a member of a business family had any impact on wellbeing and whether there were differences between these and other students who do not belong to a business family.

Fruit Tourism: The Boost of Fruit Tourism in Catalan Rural Areas corresponds to objective 3. As such, this study focused on diversification in family farms as a driver of sustainability and survival, which is a strategy for rural development and a means to support and complement these family farms. Diversifying through expanding into agrotourism enhances economic and social sustainability. In particular, we analyzed how tourism activity represents a script for economic development in rural areas, with a specific focus on entrepreneurship and the diversification of family-based farming. This research enabled us to set the scene in the family farming arena related to succession and continuity.

The Survival of Family Farms: Socioemotional Wealth (SEW) and Factors Affecting Intention to Continue the Business corresponds to objectives 4 and 5. This article addressed the problem of succession in family farms in the context of generational change. This study attempted to assess the intention of young members of family farms who study in agrarian schools to take over the FF. This article addressed the intention of the interested party to succeed the family business, investigating how SEW impacts the young people's willingness to continue a FF, adopting the SEW literature as a framework for identifying the psychological and socioeconomic factors involved in making the decision to assume the succession. In addition, a scale measuring SEW, named REI (a short version of the FIBER scale), was validated for application with next-generation FF members.

Successors' Future Training in Family Farms: The Impact of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Factors corresponds to objectives 6 and 7. This article aimed to study which factors impact the willingness and commitment of the next generation of family farms to continue training

after the succession process has occurred. In particular, the article examined the effect of different intrinsic and extrinsic factors on the willingness of potential successors of family farms to continue training in the future once they are leading the family farm. This research drew on socioemotional wealth (SEW) theory in the agriculture sector.

Status of the papers

The research studies of the dissertation have resulted in five papers (three of them have been published and two more are under revision) which are found in Chapters two to six. The overall research papers comprises two specific fields, i.e. university students and farm schools students, except chapter 4 that permits to set the farming activity context.

As part of the process of development of the thesis dissertation, the papers have been presented not only for being published but exhibited previously at international conferences. Whole papers have been published or they are under review process.

Publications

1. Plana-Farran, M.; Blanch, A.; Solé, S.; **The Role of Mindfulness in Business Administration (B.A.) University Students' Career Prospects and Concerns about the Future.** *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 2022, 19, 1376. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19031376>.
2. Arzubiaga, U., Plana-Farran, M., Ros-Morente, A., Joana, A., & Solé, S. (2021). **Mindfulness and Next-Generation Members of Family Firms: A Source for Sustainability.** *Sustainability*, 13(10), 5380. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13105380>
3. *Crespi-Vallbona, M.; Plana-Farran, M.;* **Fruiturisme: The Boost of Fruit Tourism in Catalan Rural Areas.** This article is under 2nd review in *Tourism Planning & Development Journal*. Citation Report. Business and International Management (Q1); Development (Q1); Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Management (Q2).
4. Plana-Farran, M.; Gallizo, J. **The Survival of Family Farms: Socioemotional Wealth (SEW) and Factors Affecting Intention to Continue the Business.** *Agriculture* 2021, 11(6), 520; <https://doi.org/10.3390/agriculture11060520>.
5. *Plana-Farran, M.; Arzubiaga, U.; Blanch, A.;* **Successors' Future Training in Family Farms: The Impact of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Factors.** This article is under the 2nd review in *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*. Impact Factor: 1.964, Journal Rank: 7897, SJR (SCImago Journal Rank): 0.482, Quartile: Q1.

TABLE 1: CUMULATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

	Research Purpose	Data	Methodology	Findings
Paper I	To analyze the role of Mindfulness on BA students' career prospects (across 3 moderators, FB, edu. Pros. And self-employment prospects).	204 university students enrolled in B.A. university students. Ad Hoc questionnaire and six item version of the MAAS-Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale	Structural equation model with two latent variables (Mindfulness and concerns). Model contrasted across three moderators (FBs' or not, edu. and self-employment prospects)	Effectiveness of Mindfulness in regulating emotions among BA students in the face of business-degree uncertainty related to labor and self-employment prospects. The condition of FBs' member does not affect mindfulness levels.
Paper II	To address the potential effects of personal attributes and horizons in the mindfulness level of potential successors in Family Business.	204 university students enrolled in B.A. university students. Ad Hoc questionnaire and six item version of the MAAS-Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale	Structural equation model, using Student's t-test to show differences between two means of independent groups. Analysis of variance when contrast more than two means	Young people's certainty and expectations regarding their incorporation into the family business have a clear impact on their levels of mindfulness. Hence, uncertainty and a lack of clarity have a direct impact on levels of emotional well-being and mindfulness.
Paper III	To describe a specific facet of family business, ie Family farms and its sector context through a unique project of farming diversification: Fruit Tourism	8 in-depth interviews with local family farms and multiple observation. Primary data provided by tourism center of the Town Council, Aitona	Multiple case study	Diversification of family farms is a key aspect but it is not motivated by the need for direct descendants to continue the family business.
Paper IV	To address the intention to take over the FFs in the case of young members who study in Agrarian Schools.	156 students from 13 agricultural schools in Catalonia that pertain to Family Farms	Confirmatory factor analysis for applicability of Rei Scale, Unidimensionality and reliability of each REI dimension Comparative inferential analysis	SEW scale (REI version) fits well for studying family-farming future-successors. The level of SEW affects positively the intention to continue family farms.
Paper V	To examine the effect of different intrinsic and extrinsic factors on the willingness of potential successors of family farms to continue the training in the future.	156 students from 13 agricultural schools in Catalonia that pertain to Family Farms	Logistic regression with the binary dependent variable of intention to continue education as the dependent variable	Dintrinsec Factors of potential successors in running the family farms, positively influence the willingness to continue training in the future.
<p>The cumulative purpose of the research permits to focus on the succession, particularly in next-generation family members</p>		<p>The combination of three data sets offers different perspectives to analyse the phenomenon.</p>		<p>This approach allows to obtain relevant information related to the vague standpoint of the successor in FBs' and Family Farms.</p>

Chapter 2

The Moderating Role of Mindfulness in Business Administration (B.A.) University Students' Career Prospects and Concerns about the Future

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the IFERA International Conference held in Zadar (Croatia) (2017). The title of the paper was: *Next-Generations in Family Firms: Mindfulness and Enrolment Levels*.

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Article

The Moderating Role of Mindfulness in Business Administration (B.A.) University Students' Career Prospects and Concerns about the Future

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Abstract: In a challenging work environment, entrepreneurship orientation (EO) can be an important asset for university students. In this study, we investigated the EO and concerns about the future of B.A. students, focusing on the moderating role of mindfulness levels. A total of 204 students, including those coming from family businesses (FB), were asked about their intention of creating their own business and future concerns with an ad hoc questionnaire, and about their mindfulness levels with the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale. The results showed no differences in concerns about the future between those students coming from a family business and those who did not. However, in that group of students who were uncertain about starting a business career, a negative association between mindfulness and future concerns was found. Although more investigation is needed, it can be concluded that, in the face of uncertainty, higher levels of mindfulness help to reduce concerns about the future.

Keywords: mindfulness; concerns; entrepreneurship orientation; management

1. Introduction

In the changing prevailing and contemporary environment, the willingness to initiate a work career is a key element concerning occupational commitment [1]. New employment opportunities relate to entrepreneurship [2]. In a dramatically changing work and economic environment, several skills needed for career development are receiving increased attention from researchers worldwide [3,4].

Family enterprises represent singular organizations that need to manage several emotional logics to survive in the long-term [5]. Those university students belonging to a family business bear a considerable emotional attachment [6]. On the other hand, uncertainty is quite common in university students [7]; hence, mindfulness has emerged as an important concept because it stimulates the capacity to focus on the present [8]. However, whether mindfulness relates to the personal and professional concerns of close-to-graduation business students remains relatively unknown. This association could be moderated by factors such as belonging to a family already running a business, or to future education or self-employment prospects.

Mindfulness appears as a particularly useful protective factor when coping with uncertainty. In the current study, we address this topic with a sample of undergraduate students enrolled in business and economics studies. More specifically, we evaluate whether the association of mindfulness with professional and educational prospects depends on whether one belongs to a family running a business or not, to one's intentions to engage in further education, or to one's intentions to become self-employed.

1.1. Family Business (FB)

Family members [9] manage a family business. That means the possibility of a partnership between spouses or siblings and, importantly, across generations [10]. In this vein, [11, 12] maintain that FB are characterized by visible and active owners, a long-term orientation, a collective identity, and a desire for the firm to persist across generations. Furthermore, there is a considerable consensus regarding the core elements characterizing a family business. Thus, authors such as Lansberg et al. [13] establish property as a basic element, whereby the members of the family bear the legal control. In addition, the continuity and existence of generational change provide a basic and fundamental distinction for something to be considered a family business. An increasing number of studies add the self-perception of belonging to a family business [14,15].

According to Cabrera and Santana [16], the differences between an FB and a non-family business (nonFB) are based on four aspects: structural, operational/functional, managerial, and strategic, which in turn lead to a set of strengths and weaknesses. Thus, Barroso [14] establishes that within the weaknesses there are succession and emotional conflicts. Kenyon-Rouvinez et al. [17] assume that more conflicts tend to arise in FBs than in nonFBs due to the overlap between the family system, management, and ownership.

1.2. Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO), Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) and Concerns about the Future

EO is a crucial driver of entrepreneurial activities in business performance at the individual level [18], and an important element of EI [19]. This latter concept differentiates between entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs depending on risk-taking, pro-activity, and ability to capture a business opportunity. EI is the behaviour in the business aspect whereas EO focuses on individuals as organisations [20].

McCline et al. [21] measures EO throughout the degree of innovation in opportunity, achievement, and self-esteem, distinguishing between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. On the other hand, authors as Gaglio and Katz [22] do not perceive significant differences between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. Risk-taking management guides individuals toward action, which is known as the willingness to perform activity with unknown outcomes [23]. EO means an action-behaviour that motivates one to venture into the unknown in the interest of obtaining a self-occupation activity or returns by grasping opportunities in the marketplace. Gorostiaga et al. [24] define as part of EO the assumption of risks associated with decisions with a marked orientation toward achievement and learning. Keh et al. [25] maintain there is a fundamental difference in the thinking processes of entrepreneurs when they evaluate and analyse opportunities.

Young people studying management and business administration are expected to be future companies' builders and leaders. They are supposed to become entrepreneurs but on many occasions they have not been prepared to enhance their "entrepreneurship capacity" [24].

1.3. The Moderating Role of Mindfulness in Emotions and Concerns in University Field

Many studies have addressed the stress levels of university students caused by factors such as the pressure to achieve certain qualifications or continuous working pressure [26, 27]. In addition, a good adaptation to the university environment is needed and uncertainty about the future is always present [28, 7].

Mindfulness has become an important concept when talking about mental health. It is defined as focusing on the present moment in a non-judgmental and accepting way [29]. It can be a dispositional trait or a state that can be trained with several studies showing its efficacy in improving mental health and diminishing the stress and anxiety in different populations [8,30,31]. Regarding university students, mindfulness can reduce anxiety, depression, and academic stress, even having a protecting role for burnout in healthcare students [32,33].

There are no mindfulness interventions in management students to our knowledge, but the benefits of mindfulness in organizations are being increasingly used. There are researchers who differentiate between mindfulness on individual and collective levels, defining this last as a sort of psychological state of a team or an organization [34,35]. Previous research about mindfulness in business shows seven processes that benefit from it: attention, awareness, cognition, self-regulation of behaviour, emotions, thoughts, and physiology [36].

As consequence of these factors, mindfulness has the capacity to help people to focus on the present instead of being anchored in the past or anticipating the future [8] so it can be expected that it has a protecting role in the face of uncertainty and future concerns.

1.4. The Present Study

University students are continuously facing different decisions about the future such as the continuation of studies or the possibility of creating their own business. This will to create a new business relates to entrepreneurial orientation, which is a key point when talking about the students of management degrees. In the case of students who are members of a family with a business, they also have to manage with this increased pressure [37].

Mindfulness is a new but well consolidated concept that relates with the capacity to be aware of the present moment and it has been demonstrated to be useful for helping people to reduce their stress and anxiety about the future.

This study addressed the association of mindfulness with the personal and professional concerns of undergraduate students pursuing a career in business administration. This group is particularly suited to address this topic because these students may be prone to undertake the building of their own business, or continue with the family business in case they belong to one. More precisely, we examined whether the association between mindfulness with personal and professional concerns varied depending on whether the participants belonged to a family business, and whether they were certain or uncertain about pursuing further professional training or going into self-employment.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and Context

The participants were 204 university students enrolled in degrees in Business Administration as well as Business Administration and Law at the University of Lleida (UdL). According to Zellwegger [38], the dataset is based on the responses of students who have not started professional careers yet but who are training and preparing for them. The formal program, consisting of lectures and seminar groups, was the same for all of the participating students. Of the total of 204, 11 students had to be excluded from the study because they did not answer the questions or failed to answer some of the questions in the questionnaire survey developed by Gross [39]. Thus, the final sample consisted of 193 students. Participants' ages ranged from 17 to 30 years old, with a median of 19. The mean age was 20.1 years, with a standard deviation of 2.38 points.

2.2. Measures

A questionnaire was created ad hoc for this study. Students were asked about self-employment, personal and professional concerns about the future, which degree they were studying, and if they were coming from a family business or not.

Professional and personal future concerns: the students were asked if they were worried about their personal and professional future. The answers could be “yes,” “no,” or “I don’t know”. Self-employment and education prospects: the students were asked about their intention to keep on studying and creating their own business, and the answers could be “yes,” “no,” or “I don’t know”. Mindfulness was measured with a six-item version of the MAAS-Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale [40]. This shorter scale yielded a Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient of 0.80.

2.3. Procedure

The sample of students was obtained from a University Business Conference held in the city of Lleida in 2018. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. A brief ten minute explanation was offered to the students in order to prevent any potential misunderstandings related to the questionnaire. At the end of the conference, those individuals who wanted to participate were administered the two questionnaires, which they answered on site.

2.4. Statistical Analyses

Figure 1 shows a structural equation model with two latent variables, Mindfulness and Concerns. Mindfulness was measured with the six items comprising the scale used. The concerns variable was measured with two observed indicators of professional and personal concerns about the future. This model was contrasted across the three moderators: a family running or not running a business, educational prospects, and self-employment prospects.

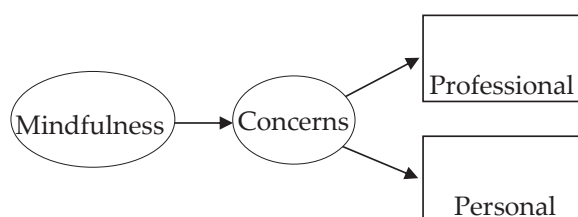


Figure 1. Structural equation model relating mindfulness with professional and personal concerns about the future. This model was contrasted across belonging or not to a family that was running a business, and across whether there were educational and self-employment prospects or not. The mindfulness latent variable was measured with six items (7, 8, 9, 10, 13, and 14) from the classical Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale.

Two models were contrasted between the two levels of each moderator. The first model constrained the path linking Mindfulness and Concerns to be equal across the two levels of each moderator. The second model freed this path to vary across the two levels of the moderator. Both of these models were contrasted with a chi-square difference test [41], with a significant difference test being supportive of meaningful differences across the respective levels of the evaluated moderators.

Additional fit indices to evaluate the estimated models were the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the Akaike’s Information Criteria (AIC), with CFI and TLI values close to one, RMSEA < 0.09, and lower AIC values being supportive of a good fit to the observed data. The data analyses were conducted with the lavaan package from the software R

[42,43]. The data and code used to implement the current statistical analyses are available from the corresponding author.

3. Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of mindfulness and professional and personal concerns about the future across the three studied moderators, family business, educational prospects, and self-employment prospects. Differences in the three variables were minimal across the moderator’s levels. Only medium effect sizes were found for professional concerns regarding family business ($d = 0.28$), and for mindfulness regarding self-employment prospects ($d = 0.26$).

Table 1. Means (M), standard deviations (Sd), and effect sizes (d) of mindfulness, and professional and personal concerns about the future across belonging to a family business (Yes, No), and education and self-employment prospects (Yes, Uncertain).

Variable	Family Business			Education Prospects			Self-Employment Prospects		
	Yes	No	d	Yes	Uncertain	d	Yes	Uncertain	d
Mindfulness	24.7 (5.5)	24.9 (4.8)	0.04	24.8 (4.6)	24.8 (5.8)	0.00	24.22 (4.9)	25.5 (4.6)	0.26
Professional concerns	3.5 (0.8)	3.8 (0.9)	0.28	3.7 (0.92)	3.6 (0.74)	0.06	3.66 (0.91)	3.67 (0.79)	0.02
Personal concerns	3.3 (1.1)	3.3 (1.1)	0.05	3.3 (1.2)	3.3 (.99)	0.03	3.33 (1.15)	3.24 (1.03)	0.08

Table 2 shows the parameter estimates of the analysed structural equation model (Figure 1). For the family business and educational prospects moderators, the association of mindfulness with concerns about the future was very similar at both levels of both moderators. The model fit was acceptable for either model, even though the chi-square difference tests across equal and different parameter models were non-significant for family business ($\Delta\chi^2 = 0.11, p = 0.917$) and education prospects ($\Delta\chi^2 = 0.12, p = 0.733$). Only for self-employment prospects was there a statistically significant negative association of mindfulness with concerns ($-0.37, p < 0.05$) for those individuals who were uncertain about entering self-employment in the near future, whereas it was virtually null for those individuals wishing to set up their own business.

Table 2. Parameter estimates and fit indices showing the association of mindfulness with future concerns (professional and personal) by family business, education prospects, and self-employment prospects.

	Family Business		Education Prospects		Self-Employment Prospects	
	Yes	No	Yes	Uncertain	Yes	Uncertain
Mindfulness → Concerns	-0.13	-0.11	-0.08	-0.16	0.02	-0.37 *
R^2	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.00	0.14
χ^2	48.82		59.01		48.16	
df	39		39		38	
CFI	0.968		0.935		0.961	
TLI	0.954		0.906		0.942	
RMSEA	0.051		0.080		0.058	
AIC	4463		4313		4013	
$\Delta\chi^2$	0.11		0.12		2.54	

Note. * $p < 0.05$.

This effect was weak, with individual differences in mindfulness only explaining 14% of the variability in professional and personal concerns about the future, even though there was an acceptable fit to the observed data (CFI = 0.961, TLI = 0.942, RMSEA = 0.058, AIC = 4013). Moreover, the chi-square difference test across the equal and different parameters of the model was only close to significance ($\Delta\chi^2 = 2.54$, $p = 0.111$). These findings suggest, however, that mindfulness might somewhat buffer the psychological negative effects of the dilemma of what path to undertake when finishing university training.

4. Discussion

The present study addressed whether mindfulness was associated with prospective personal and professional concerns with a sample of undergraduate students. These associations were examined regarding three moderators, the presence of a family business, further education intentions, and self-employment intentions[44].

The main findings suggest that mindfulness did not influence future professional and personal concerns regardless of whether individuals belonged to a family business or whether they had intentions to pursue further education. These results agree with recent findings described by Arzubiaga et al. [45] where no differences on mindfulness levels emerged between members and non-members of family businesses. Although some findings argue about the theoretical effects of mindfulness on family business [38], there is paucity of research measuring mindfulness levels on real family businesses and making conclusions based on that.

There was a weak negative association of mindfulness with future professional and personal concerns with a greater uncertainty about becoming eventually self-employed. This means that higher mindfulness levels implied lower future levels of concern in the group of students who were uncertain about creating their own business. Therefore, it seems that mindfulness may be effective in regulating emotions among business students. Mindfulness might promote buffering effects between those who have uncertainty about their self-employment prospects. This can be because mindfulness facilitates more adaptability and open-minded thinking, thereby enhancing EI, learning skills, and education and self-employment prospects. Furthermore, mindfulness may be beneficial to student's emotional attachment as it generates a low level of worries related to business students. These results are in line with that literature that shows how mindfulness can help us to focus on the present moment instead of being anchored in the past or thinking about the future and even creating fearful expectations [8]. Notably, the roles of emotion regulation and mindfulness emphasize the advantages of embodying mindfulness practices in business administration students.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has some limitations to bear in mind. The sample is of a limited size and the conclusions of the study are likely to be constrained to students pursuing careers in business. Future research should consider larger sample sizes to confirm or refute these preliminary results. Moreover, this study focuses on a single university from a southern European country. For this reason, the results may not be representative enough to explain the BA students' behaviour and their mindfulness levels when facing the pressures of uncertainty. On the other hand, the statistical effect was weak, but this is a very new finding in the field of management and career development and it can open a new line of research when talking about ways to help the undergraduate students to manage their uncertainty regarding the future.

In addition, we suggest that BA studies, programs, and researchers expand investigation on BA students' emotional experiences, membership of FBs, and emotion regulation to enhance their capacity to aim for business challenges. Based on the present results, the university BA education system would benefit from the development or incorporation

of a training program for students' mindfulness regulation. Through the emotion regulation program, BA students would be able to first recognize their emotions, and then better understand the emotions of their labour and business environment. It would be beneficial to develop a program or at least to embody a subject in business degree. We propose integrating classes related to mindfulness and emotion into the BA curriculum providing the opportunity to acquire and practice mindfulness, which is required to facilitate better management and improvement of the quality of life.

5. Conclusions

Mindfulness may be effective in regulating emotions among business students in the face of business-degree uncertainty related to labour and self-employment prospects. Moreover, the condition of a being member of an FB or not does not affect mindfulness levels in the same vein of previous studies [45]. Regarding prospect BA students' careers, higher mindfulness levels implied lower future levels of concern in the group of students who did not know whether they wanted to create their own business. Mindfulness may be effective in regulating emotions among business students as it promotes a buffering effect for those who have uncertainty related to their self-employment prospects. Mindfulness results in a protector element for the mental health of BA students, and new research along these lines is warranted in the future.

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Chapter 3




Mindfulness and Next-Generation Members of Family Firms: A Source for Sustainability

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Article

Mindfulness and Next-Generation Members of Family Firms: A Source for Sustainability

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Abstract: Family businesses are considered complex organizations where emotional and management challenges need to be faced. This is even more difficult when time of succession arrives and the new members are expected to engage with the business. In this study, a total of 204 university students were asked about their present and future situation regarding the family business. Mindfulness levels were also evaluated using the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale. There were no significant mindfulness level differences between students who pertained to a family business and those who did not. In the first group, however, those students who were sure about their future in the family business, and had more motivation about it, obtained higher scores on the mindfulness scale as well as being more satisfied with their social relationships. It could be concluded that certainty and motivation about their future in a family business of young family business members correlates with higher mindfulness levels and social well-being.

Keywords: family firm successor; mindfulness; family firms; intention to join; future expectations



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1. Introduction

Family business succession has received increased attention in family business research in recent years [1,2], as such firms are regarded as the backbone of economic growth in both advanced and emerging economies [3,4]. Despite their great relevance, however, family businesses have usually low survival rates, since only 30% of them transition to the second generation, whereas only 10–15% of family businesses reach the third generation [5]. As such, the debate about the social sustainability of family businesses and the preservation of their family heritage is becoming a relevant topic in last year [6]. Regarded as a tripartite concept consisting of an economic, ecological, and social dimension according to the so-called “three pillar model” [7,8], it is affirmed that only when a family business is able to balance these three dimensions can survive in the long run. More specifically, apart from the general external challenges that all businesses have to deal with, such as increasing and global market competition, market turbulence, and emerging technological advances and disruptions [9], the reason for these low survival rates seems to lie in the fact that many of these businesses do not properly manage the organizational internal challenges that they have to face [10]. In this vein, one of the main challenges of family firms in obtaining transgenerational success is adequately preparing the next generation for running the business in the near future [11].

In family businesses, the complex interconnection between the family and the business subsystems gives special importance to both worldview and behavioral aspects [12]. However, only mindful family firms, understood as the ones conscious of their willingness to preserve their affective endowment, have a specific way of combining family and business

desires, by obtaining a realistic outlook on their surroundings [13]. Hence, as long as mindfulness entails the ability to scan the environment and be alert to multiple perspectives that can help the organization to achieve the desirable outcome [14], developing mindfulness among new generations may contribute to a better understanding of how to manage the paradoxes that stem from the conflicting perspectives, values, and goals posed by family and business. Nevertheless, there is a lack of evidence about which factors affect the level of mindfulness of potential successors in family businesses.

In view of the above research gap, the present study attempts to address the potential effects of different personal attributes and horizons in the mindfulness level of potential successors in family businesses. Employing a data set of 204 Business Administration and Law students, the present study is designed to fill this gap by introducing the idea that mindfulness could be a powerful tool that offers relevant benefits to potential successors of family businesses. This research makes a relevant contribution to both family business and mindfulness literatures by empirically investigating how some of the main attributes of the potential successors (i.e., having or not having a family business in the family; the generation of the family to which the potential successor belongs) and their future expectations (intention of joining the family business; certainty and clarity levels about their professional future) influence these successors' mindfulness levels. In this study, levels of mindfulness among young people who form part of a family business have been found to be clearly affected by their certainty and expectations regarding their own incorporation into the business. The higher the intention and certainty of joining the family business and the more motivation to form part of it, the higher the levels of well-being and attention among the students surveyed. On the other hand, we also found that uncertainty and a lack of clarity regarding their professional future within the family business, represented by doubts over whether they are going to join it or not, affect the levels of well-being, concentration capacity, and full awareness of the potential successors of family businesses, resulting in lower levels of mindfulness. Thus, we propose that the capacity for attention and proactivity of new generations, as well as the ability to perceive their environment and adapt to change in a scenario like the current one, are fundamental characteristics for future leaders of family businesses [10]. This research also contributes to a similar discussion in the mindfulness literature. Specifically, it adds to the debate explored by [15] Pandey et al. (2017) about the influence of mindfulness on human thought and behavior, given the comprehensive influence of mindfulness on it.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. In the second section we set the theoretical background where we develop the main concepts of the study. In the third section, we describe the sample and research methodology. In the fourth section, we provide the results. Finally, in the fifth section we discuss the main findings, contributions, and limitations of our study, and propose areas for further research.

2. Theoretical Background and Development of Hypotheses

2.1. Family Businesses: The Need for Managing Complex and Paradoxical Organizations

Family businesses are characterized by visible and active owners, long-term orientation, collective identity, family values, emotional ownership, and a desire for the firm to persist across generations [16,17]. These organizations have historically been regarded as complex entities where family and commercial logic need to be accommodated in a single organization [18]. In this sense, family and the business subsystems have been depicted as two conflicting social systems that represent emotional and business arenas, respectively [19]. The potential for this conflict was considered to be even higher as more generations become involved in the business because of divergent goals and attitudes across generations [20].

Nevertheless, this view has evolved toward a unified systems model of family organization that highlights the prevailing interaction among its individual members, the family, and the business [21]. As such, a correct integration of subsystems can be the source of competitive advantage for a family organization [22]. In other words, family and business

are not necessarily competing forces, since synergies may be achieved by linking these two perspectives [23]. In this sense, family businesses may benefit from a paradoxical management [24], as the juxtaposition of familial influence with traditional business goals creates the distinctive, paradoxical landscape of the family firm [25]. That is why leaders who think paradoxically—those that are capable of embracing and synthesizing competing demands—are better positioned to maximize the positive potential of paradox [26]. Paradoxical tensions demand paradoxical thinking, a more fluid and holistic mindset that leverages the distinctions and synergies between elements in search of solutions [27]. In family firms, the ability to see both sides of paradoxical problems in family businesses is a strong driver of business adaptability and survival [28]. More specifically, paradoxical management may help taking advantage of combining the presumed logic of the family system in terms of tradition, emotional/irrational decision-making, nepotism, long-term orientation, and non-financial values with the presumed logic of the business system characterized by renewal, rational decision making, meritocracy, short-term perspective, and financial values [19].

Nevertheless, confronting paradoxical situations is not easy, since they cannot be solved but only managed [29]. This is a great challenge for decision makers given that from early childhood on we are educated to solve problems or make them disappear [30]. In this respect, it is essential for the long-term success of a family business that it is ultimately run by a competent and well-motivated successor [31]. Regarding the former, the competence of a successor has been closely joined to general factors such as educational background as well as experience within and outside the family business but also to more specific skills such as strategic, marketing, and financial skills [32]. Nevertheless, in recent years, the focus of the desirable attributes of successors has been put on more behavioral aspects such as the attitude toward entrepreneurial career, affective commitment to the family business [33], and, in particular, the capability to manage internal conflicts within the firm and the paradoxes that emerge from them [34]. Therefore, in the following subsections the importance, benefits, and potential drivers of a flourishing tool for managing the conflicts and the paradoxes arising within the family firm are discussed: mindfulness.

2.2. Mindfulness and Family Firms

Mindfulness practice is increasingly adopted in different work environments (e.g., hospitals, high-tech firms, investment banks, military), and it is presented as a popular and contested concept, a multi-dimensional and evaluative term, embodying multiple elements and criteria for evaluation [35]. Kabat-Zinn and associated researchers [36–39] have been responsible for an expansion of interest in mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) in a diverse range of domains including in workplaces, businesses, schools, and hospitals, in addition to wide applications in psychology, psychotherapy, education, and medicine [40].

Mindfulness entails the ability to scan the environment and to be alert to multiple perspectives that can help the organization achieve desirable outcomes [14]. Major corporations such as Google and General Mills have already adopted mindfulness practice in their own development and training programs [41]. In the case of family businesses, mindfulness can be a great tool for managing the paradoxes that stem from the conflicting perspectives, values, and goals posed by the two family and business subsystems. Indeed, if only one side of a tension is emphasized, demand for the other will intensify, fueling anxiety and even decision-making paralysis [27]. Thus, conflicting views demand a more fluid and holistic mindset that leverages the distinctions and synergies between elements in search of solutions. The characteristics of family businesses suggest that boundaries between family and the firm are rather blurred in this kind of business [42,43].

Recent studies differentiate between individual and collective levels in mindfulness, although mindfulness has been viewed as an individual's psychological state [44] or a type of personality trait [45]. Hu et al. [46] maintain that mindfulness can be a collective-level psychological state of an organization or a team. Regarding the former, following [40], we will briefly define mindfulness based on its three most distinguishable characteristics.

First, mindfulness consists of focusing on the present, on what is being done at this precise moment [47,48]; this means not thinking about the past or the future [49]. The second characteristic of mindfulness is that it has both an internal and external focus [47–50]. The internal factors are those related to the individual (thoughts, feelings, emotions, bodily sensations, etc.), and the external factors relate to the situation or environment (a specific physical or social event) [47]. Finally, mindfulness also consists of paying attention by means of accepting without judging, evaluating, or giving meaning to what is happening [47,48]. When an event is being experienced, it must be perceived in the most objective and neutral way possible, without paying attention to biased interpretations of personal memories, learned associations, prejudices, cognitive schemas, automatic thoughts, or future projections [40,50].

2.3. Main Benefits of Mindfulness in Organizations

Different investigations and bibliographic reviews have shown how higher levels of mindfulness improve mental and physical health, and the quality of relationships with others [47,50,51]. In this vein, the literature highlights seven different core processes as the main ones benefiting from mindfulness in business: attention, awareness, cognition, self-regulation of behavior, emotional self-regulation, self-regulation of thought, and physiological self-regulation [49,50].

First, with regard to attention, individuals can focus more effectively on what they are doing at that moment, without being distracted by internal and external factors [50]. More attentive employees are better able to achieve work-related goals by maintaining adaptive behaviors [52]. Improved attention will influence their awareness, cognition, emotional regulation, behavior, and physiology [50]. Second, improved awareness enables workers to reduce the impact of stressful situations. It is also negatively related to emotional exhaustion and positively related to job satisfaction and psychological needs [52]. Third, when paying attention to the task and not getting distracted, cognitive ability improves and consequently employees also obtain greater cognitive flexibility [50]. This makes it easier for them to adapt to new or unexpected conditions to improve their performance and be able to implement effective problem-solving techniques [53]. Fourth, individuals consciously self-regulate their behavior, and their responses are consequently more adaptive and logical with regard to their objectives [50]. If employees do not regulate their emotions effectively, they can present psychopathological problems such as anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, addiction to substance use, and eating disorders [54,55]. Thus, mindfulness contributes to individuals being less likely to suffer from this type of disorder. It also makes it easier for employees to be more empathetic to one another and decrease mental rumination, that is, the constant loop of thoughts in our head [49,50,56]. Fifth, with regard to the self-regulation of thought, mindfulness allows individuals to observe what is happening (inside and outside) from a more objective point of view, separating the event, thought, or emotions from personal attributions linked to beliefs, memories, learning, or associations. Thus, negative events become less threatening, can be separated from the individual, and consequently do not negatively affect their self-esteem or self-concept [49,51].

2.4. Drivers of Mindfulness in Potential Successors in Family Firms

The figure of the potential successor is described as someone who could, potentially, in the future, gain managerial control of the business [57]. Career intentions in new generations follow very particular paths in companies where the leadership belongs to the parents. More specifically, new generations usually transmit the challenges and opportunities related to an entrepreneurial career [58], being their own behaviors and intentions molded by the experiences of their childhood. In this sense, ref. [30] point out that parents serve as role models for their children and indicate that family support to achieve self-efficacy and controllability feelings are key to starting an entrepreneurial career or taking the baton in the family business. Furthermore, the feeling of certainty among these

successors that they will assume the leadership of the family company may also affect their mental self-preparation for this new challenge.

Overall, we presume that the succession intention, understood in terms of the willingness to take the baton in the family firm, will be tempting only to a particular type of individual with certain levels of perceived behaviors. In other words, we expect that succession intention in family firms is not a common element present in all next-generation offspring. Indeed, some aspects, including certainty and expectations regarding their incorporation into the business family, willingness, and motivation for it will be analyzed using mindfulness level scale on students who belong to families owning and running a business.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and Context

The target group was all 204 students enrolled in degrees in Business Administration as well as Business Administration and Law at the University of Lleida (UdL). Following [33], the data set is based on the responses of students who have not started professional careers yet. This fact allows us to take a prospective view as well as to avoid a survivor bias from which retrospective studies usually suffer. This course is part of a cross-cutting activity in the first semester of the Faculty of Law and Economics. It is a specific activity for a two-day introductory-level program on Business, Law and Family Business. The formal program, consisting of lectures and seminar groups, was the same for all of the participating students. Of the total of 204, 11 students had to be excluded from the study because they did not answer the questions in the questionnaire devised by [56] or failed to answer some of the questions. Thus, the final sample consisted of 193 students. Participants' ages ranged from 17 to 30 years old, with a median of 19. The mean age was 20.1 years, with a standard deviation of 2.38 points. Table 1 shows the descriptive analysis of the variables in the sample. Participants who did not have a family business ($N = 114$; 59.4%) served as a control group.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis. Characteristics of the participants in the sample ($n = 193$).

Variable	N	Measure	Descriptive	
			% (n)	Mean (S.D.)
Gender	190	Men	56.8%	(108)
		Women	43.2%	(82)
Age	193	Years	20.07%	(2.38)
Degree	185	Bus. Admin	82.7%	(153)
		Law	0.5%	(1)
		Bus. Admin + Law	14.6%	(27)
		Law	2.2%	(4)
		Other		

3.2. Procedure

Aiming at reaching as many students as possible, they were provided with the survey at five different lecture hours. In order to avoid any potential misunderstandings or mistakes, we offered them a previous 10 min explanation of the survey. In each group, the students were given 15 min at the end of the first lecture session in addition to a 10 min break to respond to the survey. Participation was anonymous and not mandatory. The entire data collection was completed one month before the final exam.

3.3. Instruments and Measures

In the present investigation, a questionnaire with different sections was used. On the one hand, a section about demographic variables was utilized in order to ask the students about their gender, age, and the university degree they were taking. On the other hand, a section on the student's situation with regard to family businesses was used, in which the

students were asked whether their family had a family business and, if so, which generation of the family he/she belonged to. Furthermore, the students were also asked whether they wanted to join the family business, whether they would work in it, whether they saw themselves as a future manager in it, etc. The questionnaire also contained questions related to social relationships. The questions related to expectations, behavior, and perspectives were composed of 12 Likert-type response questions, with answers ranging from 1 to 3.

The results of this test were compared with the mindfulness score obtained by each student in the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), in its Spanish version [59]. This scale has 15 Likert-type response items (Figure 1) ranging from 1 (almost always) to 6 (almost never) and is designed to provide an overall assessment of an individual's dispositional capacity to be attentive and aware of experiencing the present moment in everyday life. Therefore, higher scores on the MAAS scale will imply a greater capacity to be present in the "here and now". This instrument takes mindfulness to be a unifactorial construct, encompassing awareness and present attention as the only factor. It has good convergent validity with the Five Facets Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) [60] and discriminatory validity with respect to depressive symptoms. It also has good reliability indexes (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$), good temporal stability (studying reliability, it obtains a Pearson's correlation of 0.823 with a $p < 0.001$), and replicates the original univariate structure that accounts for 42.8% of the total variance.

1. I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until sometime later.
2. I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention, or thinking of something else.
3. I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.
4. I tend to walk quickly to get where I'm going without paying attention to what I experience along the way.
5. I tend not to notice feelings of physical tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention.
6. I forget a person's name almost as soon as I've been told it for the first time.
7. It seems I am "running on automatic," without much awareness of what I'm doing.
8. I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.
9. I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lose touch with what I'm doing right now to get there.
10. I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing.
11. I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time.
12. I drive places on 'automatic pilot' and then wonder why I went there.
13. I find myself preoccupied with the future or the past.
14. I find myself doing things without paying attention.
15. I snack without being aware that I'm eating.

Figure 1. Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) items.

3.4. Statistical Analysis

The obtained data were analyzed using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 22 (IBM Corporation, 2013, IBM SPSS Statistics v 25.0 for Windows; Armonk, NY, USA). The distribution of frequencies and percentages was used with the qualitative (nominal) variables, with an estimate of 95% confidence intervals. For quantitative variables, the data were explored using the Q-Q plot for normality fit, histogram, coefficients of skewness, and kurtosis/height, together with the Kolmogorov–Smirnov goodness-of-fit test and description with the usual tools of centrality (mean, median) and variability (standard deviation and range). Regarding the reliability of our measurement scale, this was estimated with Cronbach's α coefficient and intraclass correlation.

In order to show significant differences between two means of independent groups, the Student's *t*-test was used; when comparing gender with level of mindfulness, for example. When trying to contrast more than two means, analysis of variance (ANOVA) of a fixed effects factor was used. In some cases, the multiple contrast test (Tukey) was applied between pairs of groups in order to observe their significance. In addition, the effect size was estimated using R^2 and the Chi-square test, for the crossover of categorical variables (R^2 estimated from Cramér's *V*). Finally, the usual 5% level of significance was established (significant if $p < 0.05$), except in the KS goodness of fit test, where only serious deviations were considered significant, that is, at 1% ($p < 0.01$).

4. Results

4.1. Exploratory and Descriptive Analysis

4.1.1. Description of the Sample

As Table 1 shows, a similar number of men ($n = 108$) and women ($n = 82$) participated in the present study; three people did not answer this question. The mean age was 20.7 years (2.38 S.D.). With regard to their education, a large part of the sample (82.7%) was studying Business Administration, while the second most studied degree was the double degree in Business Administration and Law (14.6%).

4.1.2. Mindfulness Level

First, a general descriptive analysis of the participants' responses to the items on the MAAS scale was performed on a scale of 1–6, in accordance with their quantitative Likert nature, from almost always to almost never. The results of this description are summarized in Table 2: although some subjects did not respond to any of the items (missing values), the maximum loss was not significant (3 cases in Item 1, or 1.6%, for example). For this reason, the following tables do not have the same number of subjects, the figure varying from 189 to 192.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis. Variables for the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) items ($N = 192$).

Variable	Centrality			Variability	
	N	Mean	Median	Range (Min./Max.)	S.D.
MAAS 1	189	4.23	4.00	1/6	1.02
MAAS 2	191	4.58	5.00	1/6	1.24
MAAS 3	192	4.23	4.00	1/6	1.14
MAAS 4	191	3.36	3.00	1/6	1.29
MAAS 5	190	4.23	4.00	1/6	1.20
MAAS 6	191	4.31	5.00	1/6	1.47
MAAS 7	191	4.30	4.00	2/6	1.07
MAAS 8	192	4.06	4.00	1/6	1.13
MAAS 9	191	4.21	4.00	1/6	1.08
MAAS 10	190	2.12	4.00	1/6	1.16
MAAS 11	191	3.99	4.00	1/6	1.18
MAAS 12	190	4.93	5.00	2/6	1.24
MAAS 13	191	4.04	4.00	1/6	1.23
MAAS 14	192	4.28	4.00	1/6	1.11
MAAS 15	192	4.55	5.00	1/6	1.41

Reliability coefficient = 0.837.

All of the items presented median values of 4 or 5 points, and mean values of between 3.36 (Item 4) and 4.93 (Item 12); that is, there was a slight tendency toward the central values on the scale. Practically all of the items cover the full range of the response scale (1–6), with a reasonable degree of variability (standard deviations of between 1 and 1.5 points), which implies the presence of responses toward always and never, but without extreme values being frequent. The reliability of the responses given by these participants to the 15 items was estimated using Cronbach's α coefficient of internal consistency and corroborated by means of intraclass correlation. The result obtained by both methods (0.837) led us to conclude that the degree of reliability achieved by the instrument was high and, therefore, acceptable.

From the responses provided by the participants to these items, a summary variable was created that assesses each subject's overall level of mindfulness through the median value of these responses. Thus, the resulting value assesses each subject on the same item response scale (1 = almost always; 6 = almost never). This variable took values in the range 2.00–6.00, with a median of 4.00 and a mean value of 4.32 points. These results indicate a good mindfulness level in general. But if we analyze the items with more detail, we can

observe that items 4 and 10 are those with lower means. So it seems that students are less mindful when they are doing tasks or jobs and walking quickly, activities they do without paying attention. On the other hand, best results are found in items 2 and 15, when asking about if they break or spill things because of carelessness and eating without being totally aware of it.”

4.2. Inferential Intergroup Analysis

Student’s *t*-test was used to contrast the possible existence of significant differences between men and women. This method was supplemented by estimating the effect size; rather than using Cohen’s *d* to compare mean values, the value of the R^2 coefficient was employed due to its greater ease of interpretation and greater generality. The results are shown in Table 3. The mean values were found to be practically the same for both genders (4.32), so the difference between them (0.0015) could not in any way reach statistical significance (in this case, $p > 0.05$).

Table 3. Mindfulness by gender ($n = 189$).

	Men		Women		T-Student		R^2
	N	Mean (S.D.)	N	Mean (S.D.)	Value	<i>p</i>	
Mean level of mindfulness	108	4.319 (0.87)	81	4.321 (0.80)	−0.01	0.990 *n.s.	0.000

* $p < 0.05$ sig. n.s.: no significant.

According to the responses obtained from participants, 40.6% (78 of 192) had a family business. Using the statistical procedure outlined above, it was determined whether this factor significantly influences the level of mindfulness. The results (Table 4) presented a very slightly lower mean value (0.0752) in those cases that did have a family business.

Table 4. Mindfulness by having a family business (F.B.) ($n = 192$).

	Has F.B.		Does Not Have F.B.		T-Student		R^2
	N	Mean (S.D.)	N	Mean (S.D.)	Value	<i>p</i>	
Mean level of mindfulness	78	4.28 (0.87)	114	4.35 (0.81)	−0.61	0.541 *n.s.	0.002

* $p < 0.05$ sig. n.s.: no significant.

Participants who did have a family business ($n = 78$) were filtered in order to test for the possible existence of differences between genders a second time. However, no significant differences were observed.

Continuing with the analysis of this sample subgroup, the possible effect of the generational factor on the level of mindfulness was contrasted. When we speak of first generation, we mean that the students’ predecessors created the company, that is, the students are the potential second generation. In this case, ANOVA with one fixed effect factor was used (Table 5). The average value was observed to be higher in cases where the family business was second generation (4.46) compared to a third or later generation (4.28) and especially a first-generation family business (4.19). However, the differences did not reach statistical significance (in this case, $p > 0.05$), nor can the effect size (1.8%) be considered to support the existence of a relationship.

This subgroup of the sample was then compared according to their intention/desire to join their family business. In this case (Table 6), ANOVA did detect statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$), with a moderately high effect size (9.3%). The data indicated that the highest mean was found for those participants who stated that they were going to work in their family’s business (4.60), followed closely by those who were not (4.34), and far from those who had doubts or responded that they did not know (3.98). When Tukey’s post-hoc

test, or a-posteriori contrast test, was applied to the paired groups, the only significant contrast ($p < 0.05$) was observed between the two extreme groups (yes/do not know), a difference between the two being estimated at between 0.186 and 1.037 points (95% CI).

Table 5. Mindfulness by generation of F.B. ($n = 75$).

	1st Generation		2nd Generation		3rd Generation		ANOVA		R ²
	N	Mean (S.D.)	N	Mean (S.D.)	N	Mean (S.D.)	Value	Sig.	
Mean level of mindfulness	34	4.19 (0.92)	25	4.46 (0.76)	16	4.28 (0.97)	0.67	0.513 *n.s.	0.018

* $p < 0.05$ sig. n.s: no significant.

Table 6. Mindfulness by intention to join the F.B. ($n = 77$).

	Wants To		Does Not Want To		Does Not Know		ANOVA		R ²
	N	Mean (S.D.)	N	Mean (S.D.)	N	Mean (S.D.)	Value	Sig.	
Mean level of mindfulness	26	4.60 (0.69)	19	4.34 (0.97)	32	3.98 (0.88)	3.80	0.027 *	0.093

* $p < 0.05$ sig.

Regarding the comparison based on the belief that they would end up working in the family business (Table 7), a quasi-significant relationship was found ($p < 0.10$) accompanied by a moderate effect (6.9%). Therefore, despite a lack of solid evidence, there are clear indications of a possible relationship between this factor and mindfulness. According to the data we have, it would seem that the significance of the differences is the same as with the previous contrast, that is, those who believed that they would work in the family business, were the ones with the highest mean value (4.58), while those who had doubts about it, were the ones with the lowest mean value (4.06). In fact, if the other group is omitted and only these two groups are compared using Student's *t*-test, the significance of this difference can be proven (t -value = 2.48; $p = 0.016$; effect size: 9.4%).

Table 7. Mindfulness by belief they will work in the F.B. ($n = 77$).

	Believe They Will		Believe They Will Not		Do Not Know		ANOVA		R ²
	N	Mean (S.D.)	N	Mean (S.D.)	N	Mean (S.D.)	Value	Sig.	
Mean level of mindfulness	26	4.58 (0.77)	16	4.28 (1.03)	35	4.06 (0.83)	2.72	0.027 *n.s.	0.069

* $p < 0.05$ sig. n.s: no significant.

5. Discussion and Remarks

This study sheds light on the relevant and non-studied effects of different personal attributes and horizons in the mindfulness level of potential successors in family businesses. Based on the increasing mindfulness literature [14,40,41], this study introduces the idea that mindfulness could be a powerful tool that offers relevant benefits to potential successors of family businesses. More specifically, this research uses the MAAS mindfulness scale to determine the level of well-being and attention capacity among university students who belong to a business-owning family based on their own perceptions and conviction regarding their possible incorporation into the family business and whether this is going to happen at some time in the future. Relatedly, this research also analyzes whether or not being a member of a business family has any impact on well-being and whether there are differences between these and other students who do not belong to a family business. The results show that there are no apparent significant differences in the level of mindfulness among students who belong to a family business, and there do not appear to be any differences in gender.

However, this study has discovered some relevant findings that may add to the literature on both family business and mindfulness. More specifically, this study has found that young people's certainty and expectations regarding their incorporation into the family

business have a clear impact on their levels of mindfulness. The degree of certainty was based on students' affirmative or negative response to the question of whether they will join and their motivation to face the challenge of being part of the family business, those who answered yes having a higher level of mindfulness and obtaining a statistically significant difference compared to those who answered that they did not know. We can therefore state that uncertainty and a lack of clarity have a direct impact on levels of emotional well-being and mindfulness, represented by mindfulness in young people who belong to a family business. In this sense, the more intention and self-belief to join the family business and the more motivation to form part of it, the higher the levels of well-being and attention among the students surveyed, as represented by levels of mindfulness. This finding complements the ones shown by [61] as well as by [11] about the relevance of junior generation's attitudes, intention, and commitment toward succession.

On the other hand, uncertainty and a lack of clarity regarding their professional future within the family business, represented by doubt around whether they are going to join the business or not, affects levels of well-being, concentration capacity, and full awareness among potential successors of family businesses, who display lower levels of mindfulness. In this sense [62], in line with [63] highlight that succession processes are often surrounded by contextual instability as a consequence of their unclear financial results as well as the difficulties in foreseen their non-economic outcomes. The latter seems to be related to the quality of the social relationships of potential successors. In our study, students with higher levels of mindfulness who belong to a business family have been observed to be more satisfied with their social relationships, and more certain about wanting to join and end up working in the family business. We can therefore state that these individuals are motivated and determined to work in the family business.

These results are complemented by previous research on the effects of mindfulness levels in companies, which found that the higher the mindfulness levels of the members, the greater their contribution to the development and growth of the company [40,47–50,52,64]. This is very closely related to some of our findings. In this sense, those students who scored highest in terms of mindfulness level belonged to a business family, were convinced that they were going to join the family business, and were motivated to do so. These factors provide the basis for a positive contribution to the development and growth of the family business.

Our insights into the importance of the intention to join the family business as well as the expectations of potential successors in their mindfulness levels offer relevant and insightful managerial implications. Increasing mindfulness levels in successors is a complex challenge for family businesses, and our study finds that this is more effective if the potential successors have already decided that they will join their family business and have high expectations for the firm's future. Rather than simply pushing the potential successors to acquire specific management knowledge at the highest education levels, our study encourages family SME (Small & Medium Enterprises) owners to instill certainty in the next generation about their future role in the business as well as positive expectations about the firm's future. This idea goes in line with the findings shown by [65], who highlighted the importance of taking care of the incentives of new successors when designing the succession processes.

This study has some limitations that offer opportunities for future research. This study focuses not only on one country, Spain, but also on one university in a specific region, Lleida. Therefore, any conclusions should be interpreted carefully in other regions or in other collectives of potential successors. As such, these results call for different settings to theorize about mindfulness in family firms, and future research should take advantage of integrating findings across different contexts and build more cumulative research results. Analysis of mindfulness level in a work setting is strong, but not between members who belong to a family business or potential successors in a family business. Mindfulness practices are supported by considerable research in domains other than the workplace (e.g., [66]); however, more research is needed to enrich the family business

literature from a mindfulness and psychological perspective. For example, future research is needed to assess whether and to what extent our findings apply to family firms where the succession process is at different stages. Indeed, our findings, although explorative, indicate the opportunity for future research to explore further the heterogeneous drivers of the level of mindfulness that the successors in family firms may have. On the other hand, this is a cross-sectional study that assessed potential successors' perceptions at one point in time. The level of mindfulness and its potential drivers are dynamic variables that should be analyzed over time. Therefore, future studies should seek to capture those constructs longitudinally.

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Chapter 4

Fruiturisme: the Boost of Fruit Tourism in Catalan Rural Areas

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Congreso de Economía Agroalimentaria held in Cartagena (Spain) (2021). The title of the paper was: *Turismo, emprendimiento y diversificación en el sector agrario: el caso "Fruiturisme"*

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Fruiturisme: the Boost of Fruit Tourism in Catalan Rural Areas

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Abstract

This research involves an in-depth study of tourism as an economic driver in rural areas, specifically in those with prominent entrepreneurship and diversification in agrarian family businesses. We base it on a case study of Fruiturisme, a tourism project being developed in the small town of Aitona (Catalonia) which offers the experience of viewing fruit trees in bloom. In-depth interviews to local stakeholders are used to collect data and provide arguments to reinforce entrepreneurship and diversification in agrarian family businesses. We highlight the characteristics that foster the development and continuity of such agrotourism projects in domestic and international markets, as well as the sustainability of agrarian family businesses. The support and developmental drive by Aitona Town Council, together with the endogenous collaboration of the residents of the entire municipality, has generated an ideal scenario in which to create a tourist product that is recognized nationally and internationally. It is recommended to go on with this collaboration to diversify the business activity of different farms and entrepreneurship in the town.

Key words: tourism development, rural entrepreneurship, agrarian family businesses, fruit tourism, agritourism

Introduction

The transformation of arable farming in recent decades has decisively shaped the landscape and consequently increased the shift towards monoculture, specialization, mechanization, and the intensification of production (Sumane et al., 2018; Suesse-Reyes, 2016). At the same time, the constant reduction in agricultural income (Glover et al. 2013), the lack of generational replacement and an increasing aging of the farming community suggest growing difficulties for survival that mainly affect family farms. Hence, the diversification of economic activities has emerged as an essential strategy for rural development and as a means to support and complement these

family farms. Rural tourism, or agrotourism, is in vogue in Europe, whereby visitors seek direct contact with nature and the products generated therein, as well as the opportunity to connect and interact with the producers in an environment that is far removed from normal purchasing activity (Sharpley and Vass, 2006).

The objective of this study is to analyse tourism activity as a driver of economic development in distant regions from major urban tourist centres, with a specific focus on entrepreneurship and diversification of family-based farming. The article begins with a review of the scientific literature that has analysed the agricultural sector and rural tourism. This is followed by a case study of *Fruiturisme*' (Fruit Tourism) in the municipality of Aitona (Catalonia, Spain), a project that encourages and supports the diversification of family businesses and income by offering didactic tours of its local orchards. Qualitative technique is used in this exploratory research. Secondary data on the project provided by the Aitona Tourism Council and primary data collected from in-depth interviews with most of owners of agrarian family businesses is used to test both research questions on fruit tourism as a new trend in agrotourism and as a driver of socioeconomic change in rural areas and of diversification and entrepreneurship among family farms. The study concludes with some proposals for practical action to tourism managers of this small town to reinforce the consolidation of fruit tourism.

Tourism: driver of economic development

Tourism is considered to be one of the most important drivers of local development and growth. Its companies are viewed as the pioneers in creating happiness (Pearce, 2009; Pearce et al., 2011) and in recent years there has been a proliferation of tours and itineraries in every corner of the planet (Hernández Ramírez, 2011; López-Guzmán and Sánchez Cañizares, 2008; Rengifo, 2006, Cardoso et al., 2018) to satisfy the desire to discover unusual, authentic places, one of the primary requirements being to learn about local culture and knowledge (Salazar, 2005; Crespi-Vallbona and Mascarilla-Miró, 2020).

Development of a competitive tourist destination needs suitable resources, attractions to be admired (Ritchie and Crouch, 1993) and media campaigns to manage its attributes and create brand awareness (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999; Cracolici, et al., 2008). Destinations seeking a competitive and sustainable advantage in the tourism sector need to build an attractive image for visitors (Glinska and Florek, 2013), and to generate a positive narrative to encourage loyalty and recommendation. The main characteristics on which this image is based need to be sought and refined (Glinska and Florek, 2013), while also bearing in mind that these can change over time. There is also an indispensable need for continued marketing actions to monitor and

rectify deficiencies and dispel negative perceptions. Therefore, in order to succeed, destinations need to be converted into viable, attractive and, consequently, marketable products (Pulido, 2006).

Tourists are attracted by the added value generated by responsible destinations, while resources that are repetitive or lack differentiation, mainly due to overexploitation of the product and (over)exposure to homogeneous stimuli (Davey, 2005), are less appealing. Moreira and Iao (2014) define destination fatigue from the traveller's perspective as a consequence of over-exploitation that negatively affects a destination's image and generates a decrease in intentions to travel there. Saturation due to an excessive number of visitors and over-commodification of the product has this negative effect. Indeed, in addition to the traditional economic, sociocultural and environmental pillars of sustainability, another one can be added when analysing the impacts of tourism: the quality of the experience offered to the tourist (Crespi-Vallbona et al., 2019). Butler's life cycle of a destination (1980) describes different phases, namely exploration, implementation, development, consolidation, saturation, decline and (or) rejuvenation, with varying numbers of tourist arrivals according to each phase. The exploration and development phases require the design of fashionable products and a trendy image through the introduction of something new, different and unique with regard to what is already available. Added value and competitive advantage are created by outdoing the opposition in the offer of what is vital for tourists (Hassan, 2000, Dwyer and Kim, 2003). D'Harterre (2000: 23) defines competitiveness as "the ability of a destination to maintain its position in the market and share and (or) improve it over time." Being a competitive tourism destination boosts the local economy (Dwyer and Kim, 2003). Ritchie and Crouch (2000) consider that competitiveness connects with sustainable development not only economically, but also ecologically, socially and culturally. Specifically, in the case of nature-based tourism, Boukas (2019) states that tourism in natural engagements acts as an instrument for the conservation and renaissance of rural society and culture. Furthermore, Sidali et al. (2015) focus on the distinctiveness of these places, regarding its cultural and natural capital. Not in vain, these discovery visits to blooming fields bring participants the opportunity to enrich their knowledge about the processes, contexts and meanings associated with the production, harvesting, processing and consumption of fruits, in line with food tourism approach of Knollenberg et al. (2021).

Miossec (1976) describes the development of tourism regions over time and space, identifying specific phases with distinct changes in the number of destinations within the region, transport links to and within the region, tourist behaviour or knowledge of the region, and the attitudes of decision makers and the host community. His research identifies that there tends to be a pioneering destination that leads the way in terms

of tourism development, which ultimately spills across to neighbouring municipalities to create a whole tourism region.

Destination Management Organizations (DMO) are the institutions in charge of planning, managing and/or marketing tourism destinations (Pike, 2016). Despite their territorial, organisational, legal or economic differences, DMO usually share certain common characteristics, such as trying to involve public and private stakeholders, as well as the local community, in tourism businesses (or programmes) and in decision-making processes (Hall, 2011). This community-based approach to the planning and management of local events or projects reinforces their sustainability and support (Crespi-Vallbona, 2022).

Based on the foregoing, we propose the following research questions:

- 1) Are fruit fields icons of identity and tourist attractions?
- 2) Is sustainable tourism a driver of economic and social development in rural settings?

The binomial of agrotourism and agrarian holdings

The development of rural tourism and agritourism has increased in recent decades (Sharpley and Vass, 2006). This success is due to the decline of the agricultural sector (Busby and Rendle, 2000) and the need for producers to reinvent themselves by finding alternative sources of income. Extensive academic literature has analysed how farmers have turned to tourism as a viable means to diversify their businesses (Lobo et al., 1999, Jolly and Reynolds, 2005, McIntosh and Bonnemann, 2006). Meanwhile, for consumers, agrotourism presents urbanites with an opportunity to connect with the land, their roots and essential simplicities of life. In this sense, Choo and Petrick (2013) have analysed meetings between agrotourists and service providers, local residents and other rural tourists to learn about the degree of satisfaction among agrotourists with regard to these social encounters and exchanges of experiences. These tourists describe a vital need to socially interact with local residents, service providers (Solnet, 2007) and other clients (Huang and Hsu, 2010). The concept of servicescape based on a physical environment created between service providers and customers is especially important.

Meanwhile, the agricultural sector is currently confronting very severe changes on an economic, social and environmental level, including those to food safety, quality standards, changing customer tastes, climate change and intense farming, together with an expansion of production areas and adaptation to mechanization (Alsels et al., 2011).

Volatility in market prices (Darnhofer et al., 2010), the application of new technologies to agricultural activity and the need for intensified production have had direct consequences on the production system (Suess-Reyes & Fuetsch, 2016). In the case of fruit farming, these consequences have been reflected in the characteristics of agricultural holdings, which are increasingly more extensive, with some uniforming of crops and varieties. In this sense, rural tourism brings new opportunities to traditional businesses (De Jesús & Medina, 2021; Varisco, 2016).

Agricultural holdings tend to be family farms (European Commission, 2014), hence the future of agriculture in Europe is in the hands of the next generations of these family businesses (Grubbström et al, 2017). However, the data indicates an alarming lack of generational replacement with the consequences that this entails: abandonment of arable and livestock farms, depopulation and a reduction in biodiversity (Eurostat, 2014).

A fundamental reason for the survival of family farms is their resilience and their flexibility in the face of changing technological, economic, social and political circumstances, on and off the farm (Gasson & Errington, 1993)

Milestad et al. (2012) argue that recent decades have brought such profound changes to our understanding of agricultural systems that farms can no longer be seen as a stable element of the environment but instead as units that evolve, adapt and respond to an ever-changing environment. And tourism has emerged as one of the best solutions to diversify activities, whereby the essence that lies behind agricultural products can be sold as an authentic experience.

Farmers not only have to face uncertainty about the direction of agricultural policies and markets, but also contradictory demands to increase food production and thus support the ever-growing world population while at the same time reducing the carbon footprint of intensive production methods (Darnhofer et al., 2016).

Darnhofer et al. (2016) describe different spheres of adaptive capacity, one of which is the farmer's own ability to use his/her resources and perceived options and potentialities to respond differently, depending on his/her own values. Within this same sphere, these authors also describe the personal capacity for adaptation as well as the influence that the environment can have on the farmer's role (Peerlings et al., 2014).

This adaptability of the agricultural sector also involves the need to diversify activities (Meuwissen et al., 2020), mainly with regard to family farms (Slijperl et al., 2021) for which Glover and Reay (2015) describe this as a key driver for continuity. Such

diversification may not only mean growing a wider range of produce, but even specialization in the creation of high added value gourmet or artisans' products, marketed either via almost direct sales chains to the end customer or through suppliers that specialise in handmade products.

Based on this, we propose the following research questions:

- 3) Are family farms resilient and adaptive businesses?
- 4) Does diversification help agricultural holdings to survive?

Fruiturisme. Contextualization

There is a long tradition of fruit farming in the province of Lleida (Catalonia), traditionally within the framework of family farms. However, in the current climate of globalisation, there has also been intense penetration in recent years of huge farms and companies from other sectors in the form of vertical integrations. Furthermore, the introduction of technology and mechanization to production methods has increased the total costs, and the decrease in agricultural income has consequently led to the use of diversification as a survival strategy.

Lleida is one of Europe's leading producers of drupe. The region's landscape is shaped by large expanses of fruit trees whose characteristics vary from season to season. Therein lies the inspiration for the Fruiturisme project, which is mainly based on the flowering periods of these expanses of fruit trees.

Fruiturisme is an original project that exploits and enhances the richness of a region based on a specific product, i.e. different varieties of peach, and which is the essence of its associated tourism and business activities. It aims to economically revitalise Aitona, using its fruit as a hallmark of the local identity, heritage, landscape and culture, but the lack of precedents in the use of fruit as a tourist attraction means the idea is set to spread to other fruit-growing regions of Catalonia.

The project was launched by the town council in 2011, with the aim of promoting a natural and scenic treasure, namely the flowering of fruit trees for two weeks, generally around the middle of the month of March. This flowering has been used as a tourist attraction, called "Aitona, a sea of colour" (Figure 1), defined as "the rose sea", due to the colour of the flowers that later turn into drupes.

This project has just received a major boost: recognition by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF, 2011-2015) of the enthusiasm, effort and involvement

of all local agents in the form of financial aid to support Aitona town council's implementation and development of the project, due to its originality, innovation and commitment to the economic development of the region.

FIGURE 1: AITONA, A SEA OF COLOUR



Source: Aitona Town Council.

In short, Fruiturisme offers a seasonally adjusted tourism product that didactically presents the arable activity in the municipality of Aitona. In summer, visitors are taken on tours where they learn about the different varieties of peaches and pick fruit directly from the trees. In autumn, the ochre landscape of falling leaves offers a wonderful opportunity to listen to nature before the trees take a well-earned break in the winter season. Spring brings their rebirth, and this is the period that Fruiturisme is at its most intense as it promotes the visual splendour of pink fields of peach blossom, ready for harvest in summer, thus closing the life cycle of the fruit trees.

Methodology

The methodological basis of the present research is the case study. According to Yin (2009), case studies are an appropriate method of analysis when complex phenomena raise questions about how and why certain actions or changes occur. The primary data provided by the tourism officer from the Town Council allowed us to observe the scope of the project, the involvement of the local population and businesses, as well as the visitors and profits generated. The primary data obtained through eight in-depth interviews with local entrepreneurs also helped to answer the initial questions of this research. Social scientists consider interviews to be essential tools for exploring social reality (Cresswell, 2013). The interviews were conducted virtually between May 11 and August 30, 2021, and lasted approximately one hour each. The interviewees were representatives of the following businesses: Marxantó Craft Beer, Torre Roca, Mirador Montefiu, Chocolate Pangea, Cal Kika Jams, Mel de l'Oest and Nous Calzada (Table 1). The interviews were conducted in Catalan and were recorded for later analysis.

TABLE 1: INTERVIEWED BUSINESSES

Code	Business	Owner's gender	Age	Description of business	Number of years within the business	Number of years within tourism-related sector	Date of interview
N1	Cal Kika	woman	48	Agricultural family business that has diversified from fruit production to jams, juices, and syrups. Its star product is called "chirlets", nectarine pearls that consumers can enjoy as a gourmet product all year round.	1940	2018	11/5/2021
N2	Chocolate Pangea	man	52	Artisan chocolate maker. The entrepreneur moved from a family farm to other activities, to later return to the agri-food sector as an artisan, which he views as the result of that latent passion that always exists among people who have been linked to agriculture. The product has been recognised internationally by the Academy of Chocolate Awards, in 2016, 2017 and 2018.	-	2016	1/6/2021
N3	Torre Roca	man	43	This family business has expanded by producing jams and marmalades from the fruit harvested on its own farms. In addition, the historical fourteenth century farmhouse has been restored and adapted for rural tourism accommodation.	2016	2018	7/7/2021
N4	Mirador Montefiu	man	56	Campsite. This is a joint-venture by two friends to replace another investment project by one of the partners that ultimately didn't work out.	-	2019	14/7/2021
N5	Nous Calzada	man	56	Family farm that evolved from fruit crops to nut crops.	2001	2011	26/7/2021

Code	Business	Owner's gender	Age	Description of business	Number of years within the business	Number of years within tourism-related sector	Date of interview
N6	Cervesa Marxantó	man	49	Family beer business that is mainly characterized by its strong commitment to the promotion of local fruit, helping to raise awareness of the unique quality and variety of the produce and the efforts of local farmers.	-	2020	3/8/2021
N7	Mel de l'Oest	woman	38	A young beekeeping business, which exploits the flowering that occurs in Lleida to directly produce and sell different types of honey.	-	2016	11/8/2021
N8	Aitona Town Council	woman	51	Tourism officer	2011	2010	10/9/2021

Source: Own elaboration.

The selected business cases must be based on a certain criterion (Kuzel, 1992; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). In this case, these businesses have either been created since the start of the Fruiturisme project or they already existed and have diversified or adapted to new demand in the fruit sector in Aitona as a result of it. These seven cases are most of all business activities carried out in the context of this project in the agri-food or tourism sectors (there are two business that declined their participation), together with the entity that promoted the activity of fruit tourism. They were asked questions derived from the Literature Review, as shown in Table 2, with the aim to confirm or reject the initial research questions. The rest of business in this small town have to do with the traditional fruit production (a total of six cooperative business), with shops of groceries (three), and gastronomy (two bars and two restaurants). They are part of the town, but were not founded or refocused due to Fruiturisme, therefore they do not participate in the qualitative data collection.

After data collection, all of the interviews were transcribed. Interviews and the analysis were carried out in Catalan, and the quotations presented in this paper have been translated from the original language into English. As part of the analysis of the interviewees' responses, a process of codification and categorization into thematic topics was conducted, discussed and agreed by the authors of the paper. According to Yin (2009), a thematic analysis is useful to ordered categories to data analysis. According to Yin (2014), a thematic analysis is useful to order categories to data analysis. In this sense, from the data analysis and according the research questions, four main topics were identified: (a) fruit tourism as a new way to enjoy natural environments; (b) tourism activity as a driver of economic and social development in rural settings; (c) the capacity of entrepreneurs and family farms to be resilient and adaptive in their businesses; and d) business diversification as a mean to survive in rural settings.

TABLE 2: QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

Research questions	Related questions	Authors
Are fruit fields icons of identity and tourist attractions?	Are the people of Aitona proud of Fruiturisme? Do you consider Fruiturisme to be sustainable? Why? What is the added value of this project?	Salazar, 2005; Boukas, 2019; Crespi-Vallbona & Mascarilla-Miró, 2020; Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Cracolici, et al., 2008.

Research questions	Related questions	Authors
Is sustainable tourism a driver of economic and social development in rural settings?	<p>Would you have started your business without Fruiturisme?</p> <p>Does Fruiturisme benefit your business?</p> <p>Has the people's welfare improved with the launch of Fruiturisme?</p> <p>Have you actively participated in the design and execution of the project, or was it solely the work of the Local Administration?</p> <p>How does your business contribute to this added value?</p>	Miossec, 1976; Hassan, 2000; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; D'Hartherre, 2000; Glinska & Florek, 2013; Ritchie & Crouch, 2000; Hall, 2011; Boukas, 2019; Knollenberg et al., 2021; Sidali et al., 2015.
Are family farms resilient and adaptive businesses?	<p>Have you diversified / changed your business due to Fruiturisme or had you planned to do so before?</p> <p>Have you taken advantage of previous knowledge acquired in agricultural activity to be successful in your new project?</p> <p>Would it have been possible to start the project if you had not had the family farm?</p> <p>Do you consider it necessary to diversify / change your business in order to survive?</p> <p>Is diversification / renewal of the business a necessity?</p>	Slijperl et al.,2021 Meuwissen et al., 2020; Peerlings et al.,2014; Darnhofer, 2016; Adger, 2000; Glover & Reay, 2015; Miossec, 1976
Do diversification of agricultural holdings contribute to their survival?	<p>Do you think this innovation will help the family business to survive?</p> <p>Will your relatives continue your own business?</p>	Adger, 2000; Corsi, 2004; Glover & Reay, 2015; Gasson & Errington, 1993; Suess-Reyes & Fuetsch, 2016;

Source: Own elaboration.

Analysis of results

This section analyses the collected data and gives answers to the four research questions. Question 1 that **“Fruit fields are icons of identity and tourist attractions”** is confirmed. Not only does the DMO representative defend fruit fields as tourist attractions and icons of identity, but so do the other interviewees and the description of the project itself. Fruit trees have generated a new form of tourist interest and

motivation. Not in vain, these discovery visits to blooming fields bring participants the opportunity to enrich their knowledge about the processes, contexts and meanings associated with the production, harvesting, processing and consumption of fruits, in line with food tourism approach of Knollenberg et al. (2021).

... The richness of fruit is a hallmark of identity and a significant tourist attraction ... Through Fruiturisme, Aitona Town Council is making its commitment to fruit tourism known to the world, making fruit a tourist attraction and presenting it as a benchmark for fruit-farming areas throughout Catalonia, offering visitors a new concept of rural tourism and agrotourism. (N8)

According to its own description, Fruiturisme identifies itself as a pioneering project that started in Aitona and is spreading the word about its local fruit to boost the region's economy. Its main objectives are to promote fruit culture and transmit the values of arable farming by disseminating it as a form of tourism activity. It also offers activities in which visitors get to taste not just the fruit, but also the heritage, landscape and culture of Aitona, which in turn generates new opportunities for economic development in the region. The design of its fruit-themed logo (Figure 2) defines the project, combining a yellow / red nectarine or peach with a garnet coloured paraguayo, topped by a green leaf.

FIGURE 2: FRUITURISME LOGO



Source: Aitona Town Council.

Through successive advertising campaigns appearing in different media in recent years, the Fruiturisme brand has become established as a tourist destination in Catalonia. The famous photo of the “rose sea” of Aitona fields in flower has even appeared on the cover of an issue of Lonely Planet (2018) travel magazine dedicated to Catalonia (Figure 3), in the movie “Second Origin” and as a Windows screensaver.

In short, when Carles Porta released the film, we invited him to Aitona for a conference attended by all the guides and farmers, because we created the “Route of the Flower of Second Origin” in the 2016 season. (N8)

FIGURE 3: LONELY PLANET COVER (2018)



Source: Aitona Town Council.

Aitona has gone from being a small town in the province of Lleida that is unknown to most of the Catalan population to being constantly present in the media because of its fruit crops. Consequently, it has become a talking point and trending topic on social networks, such as Instagram, which have echoed the promotion of visits and the spectacular nature of the pink landscape between late February and mid-March. The general-interest press has been covering the major success of Fruiturisme since it began in 2011, and how it has become one of the country's most relevant agricultural tourism landmarks. There has been exponential growth in the number of visitors, from 1,500 in the first year, reaching almost 20,000 in 2019. It is not only about domestic tourism, there are international visitors of many different nationalities. The local DMO has no record of the number of visitors, but does differentiate three types of tourist: a) **Local tourists** from nearby municipalities in Lleida, Tarragona and Aragon. Apart from the pandemic year of 2021, interest in visiting Aitona has constantly increased among people from the city of Lleida and nearby towns; b) **Domestic tourists** from the rest of Catalonia, mainly from the provinces of Barcelona and Girona; and c) **International tourists**, international students (ERASMUS, Chinese from UdL). In March 2020, Japanese tourists even arrived from abroad.

In short, Fruiturisme has created a narrative that has captured visitors. It has not only been recognized by the public in the form of a rising number of visits, but has also received recognition from the Generalitat de Catalunya in the form of the 2019 "Best Tourist Experience" award, one of its highest tourism awards that each year honours the Catalan tourism sector for its contribution to making Catalonia a leading international destination.

... In fact, Aitona now appears day after day on TV3, on the news and in weather forecasts.... (N1)

... and our town is known in Barcelona... that wasn't the case before (N3)

Aitona and Fruiturisme offer the unique experience of being able to see fields of sweet fruit up close, and to learn all about the flowering, ripening, harvesting and treatment processes involved in the marketing of this agricultural produce through the region's Cooperative and [local wholesaler] SAT's. Likewise, they reinforce the concept of agrotourism, by raising awareness of fruit farming. The project's versatility and uniqueness have led to its expansion with new initiatives in various fields, including those that have emerged as a result of local agri-food products. (N8)

The roots of nature, and the essence of the land and its produce, reinforce a sense of identity among the locals, who feel that Fruiturisme enhances the value of the local land, its cultural and natural identity, and its ancestral traditions, which in turn have become specific icons that attract tourists. This nature-based tourism and its positive effects in local society and culture aligns with Boukas (2019).

Urban people like to see a different landscape that they do not usually get to see, and that only lasts two or three weeks ... The countryside and nature offer a different perspective, a different philosophy, and people like to see the chain that food comes from, from the moment when you plant a tree to the moment the fruit appears ... etc., this interest in knowing about each product that comes from the field, knowing how they are made and breaking from the daily routine to find out where the food they eat comes from ... (N1)

Now our culture, our way of life, has become known...." (N3)

And Fruiturisme has not only besotted tourists. Locals love it too. At first, they did not appreciate the local scenery because it was what they saw every day, but now they admire it and are proud of belonging to a place with which they so strongly identify.

We do not appreciate the countryside because it is our environment ... and we do not notice its beauty, for us when the trees begin to bloom, life gets harder because it means a lot of work ..., but visitors, people from elsewhere, have made us see what we have here and appreciate it... There are many local people who go out on Saturday and Sunday and do the same as foreign Fruiturisme visitors ..., they feel proud of their town's landscape ... (N1)

It's funny to see people with cameras in our town. (N2)

We'd been seeing flowering peach trees all our lives but now we see something different... we did not appreciate them The people feel very proud to be from Aitona, because it's a name that people are familiar with everywhere... It's funny... (N4)

Finally, Fruiturisme has undeniable added value, which can be seen not only in the town that sparked this interest (Aitona) but also in the neighbouring towns that have followed suit by offering tours of their own fruit trees. Aitona was the pioneering municipality, but others are now doing likewise. In this sense, this fruit tourism development in Aitona and surrounding towns ascertains Miossec theory (1976) of development of tourism regions starting from a pionner place.

Fruiturisme is a new, unique, innovative project developed in the municipality of Aitona that, through the dissemination of local sweet fruit, aims to promote the economic revitalization of Baix Segre...(N8)

But of course a lot of people come ... and I think it will get be too much for us unless they expand these visits to other towns that ... Nowadays, other towns like Alcarrás, Soses and Torres de Segre are offering our product... but of course Aitona is the best place ... Fruiturisme will need to be reformulated so that the surrounding towns are also given an opportunity. The event has already become too big here and I don't know if it will be able to cope with so many people (N3)

In sum, this modality of tourism related to blooming of fruit trees deepens started in Aitona and expanded in the near surroundings confirms the current trend of rural tourism or agrotourism, whereby visitors seek direct contact with nature and the products generated therein, as well as the opportunity to connect and interact with the producers (Sharpley and Vass, 2006; Sims, 2009).

Research question 2 that “**Sustainable tourism is a driver of economic and social development in rural settings**” is also confirmed. Tourism projects certainly boost the economy in rural settings. In Aitona, without the drive generated by the Fruiturisme event and its promotion, many of the businesses that have appeared since 2011 would not exist, such as tourist accommodation and local food producers. One of the most paradigmatic examples is the Mirador Montefiu campsite, which serves as an important complement to Fruitutisme visits by offering an excellent panoramic viewpoint.

These tourist projects like Fruiturisme boost the economy ... and they gave us enough strength to start working on the farmhouse and opening rural accommodation (N3)

Small producers are too small to be able to make themselves known by their own means, advertising is very expensive ... and if there is no help from the administration, it is very difficult for these businesses to get the word out so Fruiturisme has helped a lot... It's certainly a sustainable event, people go to Japan from around the world to see cherry trees covered with blossom... you have to sell well and continue to do things well (N2)

...No doubt ... As a result of the increase in visitors to the municipality, various entrepreneurial activities have arisen among local producers that have either been created and / or reinforced via the Fruiturisme project (N8)

... If something works, people dare, and perhaps more companies will emerge... (N4)

As for economic revitalization, the growing interest in visiting Aitona, specifically when the peach trees bloom in March, has made it possible to increase the volume of services and boost existing ones, such as bars, restaurants and shops. The business initiatives that have emerged out of Fruiturisme in recent years have created a synergy of support and dissemination in the Terres de Lleida agricultural community, triggering decisions to finally start new businesses or refocus old ones with a guarantee of commercial success. Without the encouragement and support of the local administration, start-ups would not be successful. This management and intervention of local DMO is in line with Hall's governance approach (2011) to join all the stakeholders in the success of Fruiturisme.

... We were always thinking about it, should we open, should we not open, do we, don't we... but Fruiturisme emboldened us. (N1)

... We are farmers, fruit growers, and come from several generations and Fruiturisme has been like a common thread to be able to diversify. In fact, we had a 14th century farmhouse that had to be renovated... and this was the impetus we needed and we started to make a small investment to restore the house and use it for something else. We started at the bottom, and built a restaurant and a kitchen ... and then we felt more confident and built a house for seven people and then we did up the garden with a swimming pool ... and this was due to Fruiturisme ... without that project we surely would not have dared. (N3)

Most of the undertakings are in the gastronomic sector, one of the main ways in which tourists are able to feel involved in a destination and its cultural essence. Product tastings are of general interest and educate visitors and consumers about new food and beverages, while also generating interaction with end consumers. Such establishments are commonplace in craft markets, not only at the place of origin, but all around the country, where first-hand information can be obtained on the customer's interests and tastes. There is also a pedagogical purpose, to showcase the importance of quality fruit and other local produce at 0 km.

The people are very open minded, and since these markets are on weekends and holidays... you talk a lot with the people on the street... and they all tell you their

stories and they allow you to present good products that you like... and that are different from other products. (N1).

I worked in farming for many years. Because of this project we produce this craft beer that represents the essence of our town with a taste of peaches and cherries. It all evokes our roots. (N6)

... The benefits don't happen overnight ... it takes years ... time to make a brand ... and to appreciate the quality of local fruit, which is different to fruit from Chile, for example (N2)

Moreover, Fruiturisme has made small local producers well-known and encouraged them to attend gastronomic fairs. They are promoting both the tourism project and their own businesses, generating synergies and collaboration. Network governance is a key factor in this success (Hall, 2011; Crespi-Vallbona, 2022).

So, for example, when we go to fairs, the Town Council gives us a Fruiturisme roll-up to promote it ... and it is a hook to promote what is done in the town ... (N1).

The project started with the Town Council, but it is constantly requesting the contribution and collaboration of the local populace, mainly farmers, artisan producers and business associations. People are also asked to make sure that the pavements and facades are kept clean and tidy for the event. However, the greatest collaboration is requested from the businesses that benefit the most and offer tourist services related to Fruiturisme. This reinforces the Crespi-Vallbona's community-based approach (2022) to support and keep sustainable local events or projects.

From its beginnings at the Aitona Town Council, farmers and fruit centres as well as institutions, associations, traders and the local people were eager to collaborate ... Anyone who wanted to show visitors their agrarian identity, way of life, heritage and culture, ... could work as local guides, for example. (N8)

Every year they ask us how to make Fruiturisme more attractive..., for example, two years ago all the local producers added a product-tasting... which did not work but they asked us for help... There are other people from the town who work as guides (N1)

Indeed, the local DMO is interested in introducing new itineraries to the Fruiturisme project.

..Both local guides and ourselves are preparing the "silence among peach trees tour". The microclimate among our trees when the blossom blooms and the fruit subsequently appears is a unique experience, another specific part of our identity...(N8)

Research question 3 that “**Family farms are resilient and adaptive businesses**” is also confirmed. These companies tend to seek to differentiate their products and innovate, foster added value and be resilient. Business diversification is a challenge and a necessity, especially after a long period of economic decline. The Fruiturisme project ultimately generates a greater entrepreneurial desire, even if it is in other businesses with different purposes. In fact, fruit products allow to diversify the forms of tourism in rural areas and act as a business opportunity to entrepreneurs (de Jesús & Medina, 2021; Varisco, 2016).

Fruit is a kind of product that only lasts three months ... The rest of the year the farmer also has to work the land ... but he only gets money for three months ... so we think about ways to make a profit for the rest of the year as well, and that’s why we think about “calçots” and rural accommodation... (N3)

A traditional agrarian background and self-training are therefore essential factors when aiming to diversify a business. Personal motivation is also a basic necessity, as is the ability to spot business opportunities and ways to attract tourists to the area.

...Without our agricultural backgrounds, without our land ... we would have barely been able to do what we have done... (N3)

Resilience and the capacity to observe changes provide opportunities to adapt and survive in the market, and mean that it is possible to overcome the shortcomings of the farming industry. By being cognisant of the need to adapt to the environment, businesses and families can benefit from the chance to set up a new economic activity as a result of the recent boom of tourism in Aitona.

We started our craft beer activity after talking to family members about the Fruiturisme project and the opportunities that it could provide. A member of the family (he is a craft beer specialist) told me how it was possible to craft beer using fruit essences (plain peaches, nectarines...(N6)

We didn’t want to have to work hard for little money, with increasing costs year after year. That was why we switched crops from “peaches to nuts”. We had been thinking about and planning all these changes for years. It was the price crisis that ultimately made us take the step ... We engaged in it because of the Fruiturisme project, and we sometimes receive orders from new clients because they know about Aitona and Fruiturisme or have visited and enjoyed it... (N5)

The role of women in the rural economy and in the continuity of agricultural holdings as managers of newly diversified businesses deserves new attention and studies.

...Cal Kika and Casa Roca were ideas that came from women, who made all the moves while the men continued working in the fields. The men helped with the new projects, but the promoters, the disseminators even, were the women and I would say that the business is registered in their name. (N8)

Research question 4 that the “**Diversification of agricultural holdings contributes to their survival**” is rejected. Notwithstanding that diversification is a key driver for the continuity of family farms, this is not observed in this case. In fact, diversification or the creation of a new activity is part of the process of adapting to a new scenario.

We have not diversified to ensure or to strengthen the family farm so that our children can continue it; our new activity responds more to an opportunity that has been presented to us...” (N5).

Diversification allows us to survive as a company and to think about the success of the business for our children ... Xavier wants to work at home when he finishes school, ... In fact, it was him who came up with the idea of “calçots” ... but he feels that I should not create obstacles and should instead support and follow through on those ideas (N3)

Hopefully my children will continue the business ... But anyway, that’s not why we started it ... We only encountered problems everywhere ... We started two weeks before the pandemic ... and the only reasons we started were motivation and desire, not thinking about our children’s futures. (N4)

Until now, family farms tend to have been consistently handed down from generation to generation. But notwithstanding that farming represents the most hereditarian of occupations (Glover et al. 2013), only one of the respondents says that the farm will be continued by his descendants (N3). For the others, passing the family business down through the generations is not a key aspect, mainly because their children want to make their own way.

The lack of intention among next-generations to run the family business is expressed in the interviews:

There is no chance of my daughters continuing the business that I have started. In fact, they see me as very daring and a bit out of touch with reality. They have made it clear to me that they do not want to continue the bee business. But for me, this business has been a matter of personal fulfilment (N7).

Keeping the family business going is more of a pipe-dream than a real possibility. In this vein the relationship between the product and the family name represents a

powerful reason to expect such continuity, showing the importance of the emotional attachment among their managers.

The craft beer that I have created bears the family name. That's the only reason why it would be very exciting for my daughters to keep it going. The name represents how it originated in our family. (N6)

Conclusions

This research is based on agrotourism, and specifically on a new form focused on fruit tourism, developed in Aitona, a small town in Lleida province (Catalonia). The main aim of Fruiturisme is to create value from arable farming and to raise didactic awareness of Aitona's specific varieties of peach trees. The *Aitona amb molt de gust* (Aitona with a lot of taste) brand has spread beyond the town itself to the whole Baix Segre region, and its iconic towns, fruit trees and farmers. In that sense, this modality of tourism related to blooming of fruit trees deepens the current body of knowledge related to rural tourism, or agrotourism, whereby visitors seek direct contact with nature and the products generated therein, as well as the opportunity to connect and interact with the producers (Sharpley and Vass, 2006; Sims, 2009).

The support and developmental drive by Aitona Town Council, together with the endogenous collaboration of the residents of the entire municipality, has generated an ideal scenario in which to create a tourist product that is recognized nationally and internationally. Fruiturisme has helped to diversify the business activity of different farms, being a clear example of the relationship between the creation of a tourism project, entrepreneurial activity in rural areas and public-private collaboration. Fruiturisme reinforces the need of a network governance in local projects to achieve success and sustainability (Hall 2011; Crespi-Vallbona, 2022).

The added value of this tourist destination is undoubtedly associated with its agricultural activity, which is so rooted to the land and the primary sector, as well as the transformation witnessed by this ancestral tradition in recent years. Rural entrepreneurship is stronger the more it is linked to an experience that attracts tourists who are aware of nature and attachment to the land, and who seek direct contact with the producer-artisan. This reinforces other academic contributions based on the significance of cultural and natural capital (Sims, 2009; Knollenberg et al., 2021; Sidali et al., 2015).

There are two common elements shared by all these entrepreneurial activities. The first is a direct or indirect link with the agricultural sector, either now or in some previous

period of the lives of the people who have started or diversified their business. The second is the weight of the Fruiturisme project, which brings people together, creates synergies, and encourages entrepreneurs to make their bold move.

Hence there is clearly an intense relationship between rural entrepreneurship and the existence of a tourism project that is rooted in the land, in nature, whereby the explosion of life and colour represented by the “rose sea” of peach trees can subsequently be used to explain all the different phases involved in the production, harvest, transformation and sale of sweet fruit (peaches, nectarines, paraguayos and platerines).

This research confirms other empirical studies on the capacity of family farms to adapt (Darnhofer et al., 2016; Peerling et al., 2014). Diversification as a strategy is closely related to structural factors such as the exploitation and modification of products and the search for new ones, the existence of new opportunities created from a new product (in this case, Fruiturisme) and the willingness to adapt to these new opportunities.

These results demonstrate the importance of diversification, entrepreneurship and adaptability for present-day family farms, but also suggest that diversification is not motivated by the need for direct descendants to continue the family business, which is not viewed as a priority or main objective.

Management implications

DMO is usually the key stakeholder in the planning, implementation, promotion and management of local events or projects. In this specific town, Aitona, there are some recommendations for its policy-makers. Firstly, is to implement a system to collect visitor data: number, nationality, interests, etc. to provide sufficient information to support the creation of new tourism schemes and evaluate visitors’ satisfaction. Secondly, it is required to establish a network with the DMO of the surrounding towns to create other activities and visit options to attract more visitors and avoid seasonality. In this sense, it should be interesting to involve the respective resident community to this design thinking process.

Future research

As so many of the new entrepreneurs in this case study are women, future research could focus on the role of women in the rural economy and the continuity of the agricultural holdings. It also would be interesting to analyse the perception of visitors of fruit tourism.

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Chapter 5

The Survival of Family Farms: Socioemotional Wealth (SEW) and Factors Affecting Intention to Continue the Business

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 13th Workshop on Family Firm Management Research (EIASM). Bilbo (Spain). 2017 The title of the paper was: *Succession and Continuity of Family Business in the Agri-Food Chain: Family Farms and Cooperative Behaviour*.

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Article

The Survival of Family Farms: Socioemotional Wealth (SEW) and Factors Affecting Intention to Continue the Business

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Abstract: This article addresses the problem of succession in family farms in a context of generational change. Family businesses are characterized by their long-term orientation and by having a positive effect through environmental goals that remain in place generation after generation. The general increase in average age among farmers is seen as a barrier to more sustainable land use, and the survival of family farming therefore depends on the availability of a successor in the family. Socioemotional wealth (hereafter, SEW) is understood as the affective endowment of family members. This study adopts the SEW dimensions conceptually validated to analyse the effects of psychological and socioeconomic factors on potential successors' intentions. The results of a survey administered to students attending agricultural schools in Catalonia show that intentions to assume the management and ownership of the family farm increase in line with individuals' interest in creating their own business, their ability to take over the farm, and their emotional inclination to continue the family legacy. In addition, SEW was measured in relation to the potential successor and not the incumbent, as has typically been the case in previous work, bringing this important research subject as a principal actor. Finally, an empirical validation of a short FIBER scale, i.e., REI scale, was obtained that relates individuals' intentions to succeed the family farm to the socioemotional wealth of business families, testing suitability of the REI scale as a measure of intention to succeed.

Keywords: family farms; succession; continuity; socioemotional wealth



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1. Introduction

The intention to continue the business is essential for a smooth transition in management and the success of family businesses [1]. If we refer to succession in family farms (hereafter, FFs), this is conditioned by the possibility of designating a successor or heir [2,3]. According to Suess-Reyes et al. [4], "The future of family farming does not only depend on the farm's adaptability to changing environments, but also on the family's and specially the next generation's sense of attachment to the business and its intention to successfully carry the family's heritage on into the future." As such, the debate and research about intention to succeed FFs among the next generation is the cornerstone for researchers and policy makers. In this vein, one of the main challenges with FFs obtaining transgenerational success is adequately preparing the next generation for providing continuity for the farms in the near future [5].

According to Haberman and Danes [6], FFs are unique businesses in terms of their continuity, values, and expectations for succession, and they have their own characteristics that condition their behaviour in decision-making. Rojas and Lorenzo [7] state that appointing a successor to guarantee the continuity of the farm positively moderates the effect of low profitability, while increasing the effect of setting environmental goals. Family farming accounted for more than 19 of 20 farms across the EU [8], and similar statistics are seen for Catalonia and Spain in particular. The Eurostat Farm Structure Survey [8] shows that 55.8% of European farmers are over 55 years of age, 31.4% are older than 65, and only 6% are younger than 35. This indicates the challenge to the future of rural development,

i.e., the “young farmer problem”, which refers to the poor generational renewal rates in the farming sector in the EU [9].

Family businesses are “characterized by visible and active owners, long-term orientation, collective identity, family values, emotional ownership, and a desire for the firm to persist across generations” [10]. It is highly unlikely that the agricultural activity on the farm will be assumed by an outside buyer, given the high investment necessary and the low expected profitability [11], which is why families have the responsibility of designating a successor to ensure the continuity of the farm. Chiswell [12] states that farming is the most hereditary of occupations. The succession process is a concern among rural entrepreneurs and is key to the survival of FFs [13]. In some cases, farmers are undecided about starting the succession process, choosing a successor, or assigning responsibilities. To help the process, different public administrations are developing strategies to support successors in gaining greater awareness of the links between issues related to succession, business longevity, and increased competitiveness [4].

Innovation capacity can be built through education and training, and a special focus on women and youth [14,15] is highly recommended. These strategies are most deeply rooted in agricultural schools, known as Agricultural Training Schools in Spain, and grouped within the “European-International” School Network in Europe (<https://europea.org> (accessed on 2 April 2021)). Among the aims of agricultural schools is that of encouraging young people to enter the field by training them to guarantee the profitability of their farms, recover self-esteem, and explain to society the importance of food production and the services provided by farms. These educational centres constitute a meeting point for young people who have made the decision to dedicate their working lives to agriculture and who, in many cases, come from farming families. FFs are, in general, intergenerational, so continuity depends on the availability of a successor in the family [16–18].

Education of heirs is another point that influences their decision to continue the FFs. According to Aldando-Ochoa et al. [19] and Hennessy and Rehman [20], formal education of the heirs of FFs decreases the probability of succession. However, as stated by Chiswell [12], research does not consider the intention of successors, or factors affecting the decision regarding FFs.

In view of the above situation, the research question would be: What are the psychological and socioeconomic factors that influence succession intention related to family farms? In Spain and particularly in Catalonia, this research question is important because there is a problem of lack of vocation among young children of farmers, which could cause a crisis of continuity for family farms. It is important for us to know the psychological and socioeconomic factors that influence the transmission of control of family farms to the next generation.

This study attempts to address the intention to continue the FFs in the case of young members of family farms who study in agrarian schools. We used a set of data obtained from 156 students from 13 agricultural schools in Catalonia that pertain to family farming. This article addresses the intention of the interested party to succeed the family business, investigating how SEW impacts on the will of continuing FFs and adopts the SEW literature as a framework for identifying the psychological and socioeconomic factors involved in making the decision to assume the succession [10,21]. In addition, a scale measuring SEW, named REI (a short version of FIBER scale)—known as affective endowment in the context of a family business—was validated for application with next-generation FFs’ members.

This research makes a contribution to the research on family farms and the intention to continue them by empirically investigating how some of the main attributes of potential successors (i.e., gender, entrepreneurship, considering agriculture as a viable career future, and affective endowment) influence the intention of these successors to continue the family farm. The results show that the ability and inclination of the potential successor to remain in the family business—with men more likely than women—and to assume responsibility for the management of the business are the most influential factors. The results obtained

are relevant for identifying the succession intention of the heirs and for facilitating the succession process in farming families.

Based on the responses obtained from the survey, a comparative inferential analysis was performed on the intention to continue the family farm according to the intention factors expressed by the respondents. Subsequently, a factor analysis was carried out to establish a relationship between the aforementioned intention and the SEW of the respondents belonging to family farms. The rest of the article is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a review of the previous literature and develops the theoretical framework on which the research is based. The sample of respondents and the applied methodology are explained in Section 3. Section 4 describes the inferential analysis and presents the results obtained from the study, relating the intention to succeed to SEW. Finally, in Section 5 we discuss the main findings and conclusions of our study and propose areas for future research.

2. Background and Factors Involved in the Intention to Continue the Family Farm

2.1. Family Farms: The Need to Manage a Generational Change

Family farms in Catalonia and around the world are currently experiencing very serious economic, social, and environmental changes [4]. Food safety, sustainability of production, increasing demands on quality standards, and changes in customer tastes have contributed to a new scenario in which the agricultural sector is forced to act, and young farmers must assume a leadership role [22].

More than 90% of the world's farms and almost 75% of agricultural land are managed by families [23]. The reasons range from FFs' aim to satisfy the needs of the family [24] to the use of family labour that allows for the adjustment of labour intensification [25]. Farm tasks are carried out by family members in a more efficient, motivated way and with the ability to understand the local environment [26]. Diversification to agricultural or nonagricultural companies, intensification, or specialization are identified as key strategies for adapting and facing the demands of the market and the pressures of the environment [27–29].

Generational change on farms is driven by required innovations in agricultural processes, new technologies in agricultural work, and climate change, all of which have direct consequences for the production model. The agrifood sector is therefore facing a situation of change, challenge, and the need for constant adaptation that affects all its actors, especially the potential successors of family farming [30]. At the same time, the new generations do not see the agricultural world as attractive for their professional future. Previous studies have pointed out the progressive decrease in the number of young people joining in agricultural activities, an issue that is attributed to economic and social considerations [17,26,31]. This lack of new interest in agriculture has led to a progressive increase in the age of farmers and a lack of generational change in family farms [18]. Therefore, the following subsections discuss the importance, benefits, and potential drivers of young family members' intentions to continue FFs in a changing scenario.

2.2. The Challenge of Succession and the Intention to Succeed

The problem of succession in an estate is normally decided by the family, which chooses between heirs; however, the consent of the chosen person is essential for accepting the responsibility for the management of a business. Chiswell [12] has suggested that succession in family farms be analysed from the perspective of potential or future successors, rather than seeing them as marginal figures.

The low proportion of young people engaged in agriculture is a problem that affects rural sustainability and concerns both government institutions and professional agricultural organizations. Zagata and Sutherland [32] have argued that the low proportion of young people on farms is perceived as a loss of potential when it comes to creating more efficient, competitive, and sustainable farms in accordance with the demands derived from the environment and the sector itself. In the EU, the continuous decline in the number of young farmers is considered one of the main drawbacks of EU agriculture [33].

Succession planning is critical to the life of a family farm. It has been observed that, when families cannot identify an heir, they either divest or develop a static management mode, without progress, while farmer families that manage to identify an heir face a variety of horizontal and vertical growth challenges that threaten the continuity of the farm in the future [2].

In our use, intention is the attitude that individuals have towards taking over the family farm. According to different theories, the stronger the intention, the more likely this behaviour is to take place. However, it is well known that the lack of requirements regarding behavioural skills, or the presence of environmental restrictions, can prevent people from acting according to their intentions [34]. “Only when people have control over behavioural performance is intention expected to be a good predictor of behaviour” [34].

In farm succession research, Duesberg et al. [35] conducted a qualitative study to understand the perceptions of farmers without a successor regarding various land transfer options, while Morais et al. [18] investigated to understand the beliefs underlying successors’ intention to take over the farm. One possible use of the results of this study would be to help farmer families to identify their heirs early by identifying the determining characteristics of their intention to continue the business.

2.3. Factors Influencing the Intention to Continue the Family Farm

While, in many families, there are no explicit rules about succession, the decisions families ultimately make include factors related to the number of successors, their gender, the order of birth, their dedication, and their personal management skills [36].

Based on previous studies [37], we have identified the following factors that influence the intergenerational succession of rural agricultural enterprises.

In a masculinized agricultural society, the gender of the successor plays a prominent role in the succession process. The agricultural sector is a very male-oriented field [38]. Gender is one of the first individual identities; being natural, it cannot be chosen, and it influences behaviour in more categorical ways that can be constructed later [39]. In general, women are not perceived as eligible successors, especially when there are male children. However, in recent years there has been a correction of this trend that needs to be verified [40].

The age of the potential successor is also something to consider. Younger participants who intend to continue their studies may think that their future will not be on the family farm [41].

Commitment, understood as the intention of a potential successor to manage the family farm, was identified as an important factor in previous research. The acquisition of the family business was positively valued, and there were also positive perceptions regarding the business management capacity and social pressure to control the family property [18]. In our work, we asked respondents about their particular interest in continuing the family business, understanding that this is one of the main elements in the decision-making process—that is, people are determined to dedicate their lives to the activities of agricultural and livestock management.

The formal and informal knowledge of the agricultural environment and of the particular farm can increase the intention of succession of the heir. It has been proven that specific knowledge of the farm generates an incentive for young people to assume the responsibility of continuing with the agricultural business [42,43], and that children’s interest in agriculture is a factor to consider when analysing the characteristics of potential and/or future successors of family farms [44]. Likewise, previous research has revealed the need for complementarity of formal and informal knowledge in the agricultural sector. Specifically, although local experience is valued, a new formal knowledge base is also required, with new content and learning processes necessary for the transition to a more sustainable agriculture [45]. Young people trained in this new knowledge will be more willing to assume the generational transfer [45].

2.4. *The Relationship between Intention of Potential Successors and Socioemotional Wealth (SEW)*

Research has found that “family businesses limit the goal of maximizing profits in exchange for maintaining control of the business and passing that control on to future generations” [46]. In addition to economic ownership, FFs have affective values that influence the succession process; these family business values have been grouped under the concept of socioemotional wealth. SEW is understood as the “affective endowment of family owners” [47]; that is, the benefits unrelated to profit that a family obtains from its position as the owner of a company [47–49]. Unlike nonfamily farms, family-owned farms attend to both economic and affective values in their decision-making process, and this is the case of property transfer, where family entrepreneurs have the incentive to preserve control for future generations [50].

This article looks at the SEW of potential successors to family farms. We assume that the desire to preserve SEW motivates family farm owners to retain their legal ownership and that this SEW goes beyond its financial objectives. This is the case with those family farm owners who show a commitment to preserving the tradition of agriculture in the region. For them, following a conservation strategy acts as a substitute to ensure the emotional attachment of their successors to agriculture [51].

One aim of this study was to contribute to the literature on SEW and family businesses by considering that an owner’s SEW should be studied in the cultural context in which the family business exists. The young farmers who have participated in this study were trained through formal and regulated programs at agricultural schools and learned values of attachment to the land and respect for the environment, with the aim of joining the family farming business and taking charge of it. These students’ intention to take over the business is indicated by their willingness to continue the family tradition and the model of life represented by working on the farm. These features corroborate the existence of an “affective patrimony” that is not only in the hands of the family owners but also in the hands of the potential and future successors. This leads us to suppose the existence of a relationship between the heir’s intention to succeed the family business and the emotional wealth of the family [12].

2.5. *Development of Hypotheses*

Identifying the impact of psychological factors and affective values that affect the succession intention of young farmers is key for farming. The nature of SEW permits the capture of the affective endowments and how they affect the intention to continue the FFs. This was our starting point in identifying the impact of psychological and family farm factors on the succession intention of the potential heirs of agricultural holdings. Following it, our approach tried to predict the behaviour of the individual involved in the succession debate, as determined by prospective-successors’ views about continuing the family legacy, their sense of belonging to the business family, and their personal commitment, according to SEW, as perceived by the successor—in the assumption of the farm, the individual prioritizes the preservation of property and the protection of the agricultural community over economic interests [51].

In this research, we explored the succession intention via the impact of some psychological factors that are present during the intergenerational succession process in family farming. It is known that a FF’s continuity exerts a powerful influence on the development of the farm (Chiswell, 2014). At that moment, the intention to take over the farm will be greater if the successors consider that the following circumstances exist: viability of their professional future, ability to take charge of the farm, and the desire to continue the family legacy (socioemotional wealth). Based on this reasoning, we proposed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. *The affective relationship and belonging to the FFs (SEW) exerts a positive influence on the intention of the successors.*

In order to obtain more information on the factors that influence the intention of agricultural successors in Catalonia, we examined two background control variables: gender and age (Table 1). These two factors were identified in previous studies as drivers influencing the option to succeed the FF and discouraging the emigration of young people away from rural areas [18].

Table 1. Comparative inferential analysis. Intention to continue the FFs depending on the gender and age of the participant ($n = 156$).

FACTOR/Categories	Total Sample ($n = 156$)	Intention to Succeed (%)		Chi-Squared Test		Effect Size R^2
		YES (88.5%)	NO (11.5%)	Value	p -Value	
Gender				5.57 *	0.018	0.036
Male	($n = 148$)	89.9%	10.1%			
Female	($n = 8$)	62.5%	37.5%			
Age				1.19 ^{NS}	0.754	0.008
15–20 years	($n = 129$)	87.6%	12.4%			
21–25 years	($n = 14$)	92.9%	7.1%			
26–30 years	($n = 6$)	100%	0.0%			
>01 years	($n = 7$)	85.7%	14.3%			

^{NS} = Nonsignificant. * = Significant.

To establish the relationship between the student members of FFs' succession intention and the SEW, an abridged version REI was used [52]. We intend to evaluate the theoretical construct of emotional wealth via the empirical FIBER scale [53].

The FIBER scale in the REI version consists of 16 items in Likert format with five options, configured on three dimensions: (a) R—Renewal of family ties through succession, four items; (b) E—Emotional Relationship of family members, six items; and (c) I—Identification of family members with the company, another six items. Moreover, the REI scale has been revalidated for the population of students of agrarian schools that belong to FFs. A factor analysis by principal components was applied to verify the unidimensionality of each set of items with the dimension to which they theoretically belong.

For the present statistical analysis, and with the intention that a higher score in the variable is interpreted as a higher degree (greater domain) in the dimension evaluated, the responses of the respondents were recoded on a scale of 1 = completely disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and Context

Our field of action in this research comprised agricultural schools, and we obtained the data of young people planning to join the farming business, who in most cases belonged to farming families.

The target group was 161 students belonging to family farms who enrolled in Catalan agricultural schools. The dataset was based on agricultural school students who were training to work in agriculture and belonged to family farms. Thirteen agricultural schools are present in the region, and they depend on the Departments of Agriculture and Education. The training courses are recognized by the Catalan Department of Agriculture and give qualified students eligibility for EU young farmers' subsidies. Of the total of 161, 5 students had to be excluded from the study because they did not answer some of the questions. Thus, the final sample consisted of 156 students. Participants' age ranged from 15 to 31 years old. The most common age was 15 to 20 (71.9%).

3.2. Procedure

In order to reach as many students as possible, a schedule was agreed with the management of each agrarian school. We visited each school (thirteen in total, around all Catalonia), explaining the objective of the study. Participation was anonymous and not mandatory. In order to avoid any potential misunderstandings or mistakes, we were present during the process of survey completion. The data collection was completed during 2019.

3.3. Instruments and Measures

In the present investigation, a questionnaire with different sections was used. A section about demographic variables was utilized in order to ask the students about their gender, age, and the intention to succeed FFs. An additional section was used to assess the student's situation with regard to his or her intrinsic factors. Finally, the last section was the REI scale, which measured three dimensions (i.e., Renewal of family ties through succession; Emotional attachment of family members; Identification of family members with the company).

3.4. Statistical Analysis

The obtained data were analysed using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 22 (IBM Corporation, 2017, IBM SPSS Statistics v 25.0 for Windows; Armonk, NY, USA). The distribution of frequencies and percentages was used with the qualitative (nominal) variables, with an estimate of 95% confidence intervals. For quantitative variables, the data were explored using the Q–Q plot for normality fit, histogram, coefficients of skewness, and kurtosis/height, together with the Kolmogorov–Smirnov goodness-of-fit test and description with the usual tools of centrality (mean, median) and variability (standard deviation and range). Regarding the reliability of our measurement scale, this was estimated with Cronbach's α coefficient and intraclass correlation.

Exploratory factor analysis by principal components was used to discover the internal structure of variables being used to detect the relationship between the different variables. Moreover, the Mann–Whitney–Wilcoxon test, a nonparametric test that contrasts whether two samples proceed from an evenly distributed population, was used to test significant differences between the means of groups, for example, when comparing intention to succeed FFs with level of SEW. In addition, the effect size was estimated using R^2 and the chi-square test, for the crossover of categorical variables (R^2 estimated from Cramér's V). Finally, the usual 5% level of significance was established (significant if $p < 0.05$), except in the KS goodness-of-fit test, where only serious deviations were considered significant, that is, at 1% ($p < 0.01$).

4. Results

4.1. Inferential Analysis

In the first place, we proceed to describe this sample of students attending agricultural schools, all of whom were related to a family farm. The majority of students in the general sample who came from FFs were men: 94.9%. The majority were between 15 and 20 years old: 82.7%. Additionally, the majority (88.5%) were conducting their studies to continue with the farm of the family, based on question that sought to capture the intention to succeed.

The gender of the potential heir was one of the first factors to consider. There was a statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) between the intention to continue with the FFs and sex (a slight effect of 3.6%), such that we can admit that this intention was higher among men than among women (89.9% vs. 62.5%). However, there was no statistically significant relationship ($p > 0.05$) with age (almost null effect: <1%). Therefore, there was no evidence that the succession intention was linked to the student's age, this intention always being above 85.7% (Table 1).

4.2. Revalidation of REI scale in the Context of Family Farming

The REI scale was revalidated for the population of Agrarian Schools' students who belong to FFs. The methodology of factor analysis by principal components was used to verify the unidimensionality of each set of items within the dimension to which they theoretically belonged. The degree of reliability of each of these dimensions was also estimated using the classic Cronbach's α coefficient, as well as of each of the items with the item-total homogeneity index. The results obtained are summarized in the tables below.

Three dimensions were obtained that grouped a set of items that measured the basic affective gifts that a family can derive from the control of a company. The degree of reliability of each of these dimensions was also estimated, using Cronbach's α coefficient, as well as of each of the items with the item-total homogeneity index.

1. Dimension R (Figure 1) refers to the renewal of family ties through succession, where the items include continuing the family legacy and tradition, valuing the family's investment as long-term, and the transfer of the family farm to the next generation being an important goal for family members.

Item	Statement	Scale (1-5)
SEW R1	Continuing the family legacy and traditional is an important goal for my family business.	Strongly disagree –totally agree
SEW R2	Family owners are less likely to evaluate their investment on a short-term basis	Strongly disagree –totally agree
SEW R3	Family members would be unlikely to consider selling the family business	Strongly disagree –totally agree
SEW R4	Successful business transfer to the next generation is an important goal for family members	Strongly disagree –totally agree

Figure 1. Statements and scales used for the measurable items that represent SEW dimension R. Source: [54].

The mean values of these four items were high (between 3.82 and 4.43 out of 5), which indicates that the position of the students in our sample clearly tended towards agreement with each proposal made to evaluate this dimension. The values of the communalities were optimal in all the items and the factor loadings were high (between 0.617 and 0.813). These data demonstrate that the unidimensionality of these items with respect to dimension R. Additionally, the reliability indices of the items were sufficient (>0.300), so that the reliability of this dimension was good (0.664), (Table 2).

Table 2. Unidimensionality and reliability. Dimension: R—Renewal of family ties through succession of the REI ($n = 156$).

ITEM	Descriptive	Factor Analysis by C.P.		Reliability
	Average (D.E.)	Commonality	Factor Load	
SEW—R1	4.43 (0.72)	0.381	0.617	0.359
SEW—R2	3.82 (0.94)	0.442	0.665	0.409
SEW—R3	4.05 (1.17)	0.536	0.732	0.474
SEW—R4	4.17 (0.93)	0.661	0.813	0.574
Total	16.47 (2.69)	—	500.49%	0.664

2. Dimension E (Figure 2) refers to the emotional attachment of family members, considering whether these bonds are strong or not. This dimension reports on the emotional proximity of each of the members with reference to the family and the company.

Item	Statement	Scale (1-5)
SEW E1	Emotions and sentiments often affect decision-making processes in my family business	Strongly disagree –totally agree
SEW E2	Protecting the welfare of family members is critical to us, apart from personal contributions to the business	Strongly disagree –totally agree
SEW E3	. In my family business, the emotional bonds between family members are very strong	Strongly disagree –totally agree
SEW E4	. In my family business, affective considerations are often as important as economic considerations	Strongly disagree –totally agree
SEW E5	Strong emotional ties among family members help us maintain a positive self-concept	Strongly disagree –totally agree
SEW E6	In my family business, family members feel warmth for each other	Strongly disagree –totally agree

Figure 2. Statements and scales used for the measurable items that represent SEW dimension E. Source: [54].

In our results, (Table 3) the mean values of all the items of dimension E were high (between 4.11 and 4.33), indicating favourable opinions of potential successors towards the content of each one. The values of the communalities were very high, and the factorial weights were as well (between 0.730 and 0.825). This demonstrates the one-dimensional belonging of these six items to dimension E of emotional attachment. Likewise, the reliability indices of these items were high (>0.600), which generated a high reliability coefficient (0.857).

Table 3. Unidimensionality and reliability. Dimension E—Emotional Attachment of family members of the REI (n = 156).

ITEM	Descriptive	Factor Analysis by C.P.		Reliability
	Average (D.E.)	Commonality	Factor Load	
SEW—E1	4.11 (0.97)	0.652	0.807	0.699
SEW—E2	4.33 (0.76)	0.539	0.734	0.611
SEW—E3	4.17 (0.82)	0.680	0.825	0.722
SEW—E4	4.13 (0.83)	0.533	0.730	0.606
SEW—E5	4.16 (0.84)	0.539	0.734	0.614
SEW—E6	4.31 (0.86)	0.567	0.753	0.629
Total	25.22 (3.89)	—	58.49%	0.857

- Dimension I (Figure 3) refers to the identification of family members with the agricultural exploitation, where the members have a strong sense of belonging and a great personal commitment towards the business, to the point of feeling proud to communicate to others that they belong to the family business.

Item	Statement	Scale (1-5)
SEW I1	Family members have a strong sense of belonging to my family business	Strongly disagree –totally agree
SEW I2	Family members feel that the family business’ success is their own success.	Strongly disagree –totally agree
SEW I3	My family business has a great deal of personal meaning for family members	Strongly disagree –totally agree
SEW I4	Being a member of the family business helps define who we are	Strongly disagree –totally agree
SEW I5	Family members are proud to tell others that we are part of the family business	Strongly disagree –totally agree
SEW I6	Costumers often associate the family name with the family business’s products and services	Strongly disagree –totally agree

Figure 3. Statements and scales used for the measurable items that represent SEW dimension I. Source: [54].

The mean values of the six items of the dimension that summarize the identification of the family members were high (between 3.95 and 4.33), which implies a high degree of agreement with the statements. The communalities were high (>0.500), and the factor

loadings were also high (between 0.670 and 0.804). Consequently, we can conclude the unidimensionality of this set of items with respect to dimension I. Likewise, the reliability indices of these items were high (>0.500), so the reliability coefficient of the full dimension was also high (0.810) (Table 4).

Table 4. Unidimensionality and reliability. Dimension I—Identification of family members with the company of the REI ($n = 156$).

ITEM	Descriptive	Factor Analysis by C.P.		Reliability
	Average (D.E.)	Commonality	Factor Load	
SEW—I1	3.95 (1.07)	0.531	0.729	0.596
SEW—I2	4.12 (0.92)	0.449	0.670	0.538
SEW—I3	4.32 (0.84)	0.546	0.739	0.580
SEW—I4	4.19 (0.91)	0.647	0.804	0.666
SEW—I5	4.33 (0.82)	0.492	0.701	0.536
SEW—I6	4.01 (1.02)	0.447	0.668	0.526
Total	24.90 (4.02)	—	51.86%	0.810

In summary, the obtained results adequately guarantee (1) the belonging of these items to the theoretically expected dimension, (2) the sufficient reliability of each of the items, and (3) the high reliability of each of the items.

4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Applicability of REI Scale

In order to revalidate the use of the REI scale in the population, a confirmatory factor analysis was used. Figure 4 presents the validated model, with the three dimensions intercorrelated with each other, together with the items that we have just demonstrated to belong to each of them.

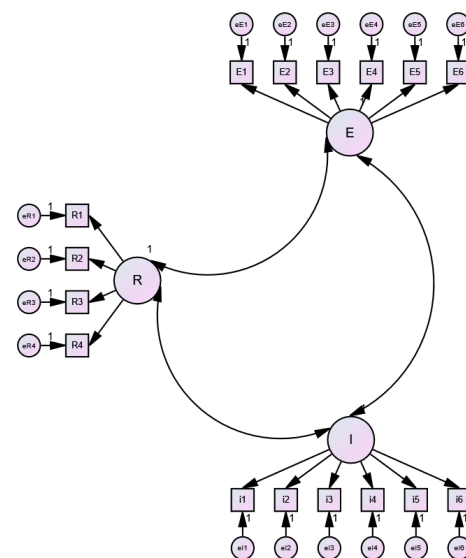


Figure 4. Correlation diagram of the confirmatory factor analysis. Items and dimensions are from the REI scale. $n = 156$ students from agrarian schools with FFs.

The fit of the data with the model was studied using the goodness-of-fit index (Table 5). The value of the RMSEA index was found to be below the 0.080 cutoff, with both its lower value (0.065) and almost all of its CI (95%): 0.047–0.082; therefore, it does not generate doubts about the optimal fit of the data to the model. In the same sense, the other indices

(NFI, IFI, TLI, CFI) exceeded the minimum cut-off (0.800) and generally even the value 0.900 was considered as a large adjustment. Finally, the chi-square test ratio was less than 3, which confirmed the good fit. In short, the fit of the theoretical model that we were trying to test with the empirical data was good enough so that the result of the CFA obtained could be considered as reliable.

Table 5. CFA: Goodness-of-fit. Questionnaire REI ($n = 156$ students of Agrarian Schools, members of FFs).

Model	RMSEA	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	Cmin/DF
Three dimensions	0.065	0.850	0.935	0.921	0.934	1.65

This CFA result is summarized in Table 6 for clarity of discussion. We can verify that: (1) the items have high standardized coefficients (>0.500) in the dimension to which they must belong, and (2) and the dimensions are highly related to each other as proposed in the model.

Table 6. Confirmatory Factor Analysis. REI Scale ($n = 156$ students of Agrarian Schools, members of FFs).

N° Ítem	PART	AU.LID	AP.SIG
SEW—R 1	0.518		
SEW—R 2	0.596		
SEW—R 3	0.510		
SEW—R 4	0.710		
SEW—E 1		0.788	
SEW—E 2		0.648	
SEW—E 3		0.764	
SEW—E 4		0.684	
SEW—E 5		0.679	
SEW—E 6		0.682	
SEW—I 1			0.630
SEW—I 2			0.586
SEW—I 3			0.697
SEW—I 4			0.763
SEW—I 5			0.664
SEW—I 6			0.551
DIMENSIONES	R	E	I
R	–	0.948	0.871
E	0.948	–	0.855
I	0.871	0.855	–

4.4. REI Dimensions and Intention to Continue the FFs

In the next stage, we studied the relationship between the variables of these three REI dimensions and succession intention, for which a contrast test of the significance of the difference in means was carried out. Due to the lack of adjustment to normality, a nonparametric method was chosen, the Mann–Whitney U Test. The existence of significance implies that there was a relationship between SEW and the succession intention and that the REI variables were explanatory factors of it. The contrast test was also accompanied by the estimation of the effect size in R^2 , from the value of Cohen's d . The results are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Comparative inferential analysis. Differences in the SEW based on the students’ succession intention ($n = 156$).

DIMENSION VARIABLES	Total Sample ($n = 156$)	Student Succession Intention (%)		Mann–Whitney Test		Effect Size R^2
		Yes (88.5%)	Not (11.5%)	p -Value		
R—Renewal of family ties through succession				3.25 **	0.001	0.101
Mean (standard deviation)	16.47 (2.69)	16.78 (2.44)	14.11 (3.39)			
Minimum/Max. values	7/20	8/20	7/20			
E—Emotional relationships of family members				4.38 **	0.000	0.189
Mean (standard deviation)	25.22 (3.89)	25.83 (3.16)	20.56 (5.58)			
Minimum/Max. values	8/30	11/30	8/28			
I—Identification of family members with the company				3.66 **	0.000	0.139
Mean (standard deviation)	24.90 (4.02)	25.44 (3.52)	20.78 (5.17)			
Minimum/Max. values	9/30	15/30	9/29			

** = Highly significant.

Dimension R. It was observed that the mean value in this variable was higher in the group of subjects who intended to continue with the FFs (16.8 vs. 14.1), a difference that we must consider as highly significant with $p < 0.01$ and that corresponds to a moderate–high effect size (10.1%).

Dimension E. Once again, it was found that the mean value of the participants who answered that they would continue with their EAF was higher than those who said they would not (25.8 vs. 20.6). This difference is highly significant ($p < 0.001$) and is equivalent to an effect size that is already considered large (18.9%).

Dimension I. Similar to the previous dimensions, in this final dimension, it was again found that the average values of the respondents who intended to take over the family business was higher than the average of those who said they would not continue (25.4 vs. 20.8). This difference was also highly significant ($p < 0.001$) and equivalent to an effect size that, although somewhat smaller than the previous one, is still large (13.9%).

To contrast the H1, given the positive influence of the SEW on the intention of the successors, we have developed an abridged version of the REI [54], empirically revalidated according to the results obtained in the preceding section. With this version, we intend to evaluate the theoretical construct of emotional wealth with the empirical validation of the scale. (Figure 5)

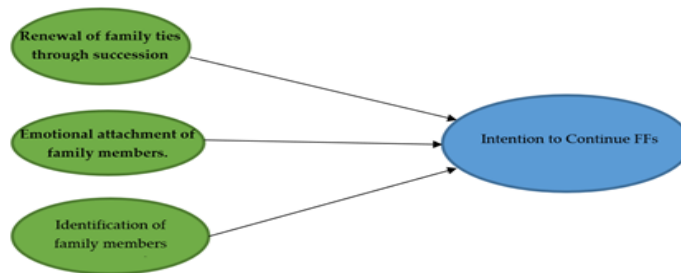


Figure 5. REI scale and intention to continue FFs. A comparative inferential analysis. Intention to continue the FFs depending on SEW student’s level.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This study analysed the intention to take over the family business among students who belonged to a family farm and attended agricultural school. It was based on the theoretical framework of the SEW literature and the application of REI dimensions to

analyse the intention to succeed FFs [54]. The results obtained from the comparative inferential analysis on intrinsic factors related to the student indicated that gender strongly influences these students' intention to take over the family farm. Moreover, the rest of the results obtained shed light on a key aspect for renewal and continuity in farming, i.e., the commitment of these students to succeed FFs.

This study revealed some significant findings that may contribute to the literature on both family farming and family business. More specifically, this study found that the SEW scale (REI) fits well for studying family-farming future-successors; moreover, the results have shown that level of SEW affects positively the intention to continue family farms. According to these results, a relationship was observed between the SEW level of students and the intention of succession. Specifically, we obtained: (a) a high degree of agreement with the belief in the renewal of family ties through dynastic succession, (b) a high degree of emotional attachment of family members to FFs, and (c) a high degree of family identification with the company. The high factorial scores explain that the existence of a sense of belonging and commitment of the young FF members positively influence the succession intention of the potential successors. Hence, we state these factors are facilitators of succession intention.

The REI scale allowed us to use an instrument designed to analyse the level of socioemotional wealth (SEW) to test H1 with respect to the intention to take over the family farm. From this analysis, three factors were obtained that summarize the influence of the affective endowments of the family on the control and transfer of the company. The first, "family ties", is related to the importance of continuing the family legacy and tradition. In this regard, it was found that prioritizing succession and family elements over economic motivations played a major role in determining the intention of the possible successors to succeed the family farm. Staying in control and transferring the business to future generations is an important motivation among FFs' holders to extend the useful life of the farm. For Inwood and Sharp [2], agricultural families that prioritize succession and noneconomic domestic factors implement a wide range of growth and innovation strategies in agricultural production that, ultimately, contribute to the persistence and resilience of the farm. In this dimension, we observe that prioritizing succession and family elements over economic motivations are characteristics that give a high weight to the succession intention of potential successors.

The second factor, "emotional attachment", obtained a high score for all its items, showing that the existence of an affective relationship between family members makes it more likely that a potential successor will decide to accept the inheritance. The emotional bond of the family has been considered important in the succession process; in fact, in previous research it has been shown that trust and communication between family members have a strong influence on the succession process [54–57]. According to the study by Morris et al. (1997) [58], problems within the family and emotional detachment were the main factors that led to 60% of failed successions among the companies studied. The third factor, "identification of relatives with the FF", explains the high influence that the sense of belonging and the personal commitment of the members of a family-run agricultural business have on the intention to continue the farm.

In the end, the results obtained determine the intrinsic and socioemotional factors of agricultural school students that facilitate the process of incorporation to FFs. Knowledge of these factors is useful to better understand the generational transition process. The practical implications of this study include the actions that parents and older relatives can take with respect to future generations. These should be actions aimed at helping potential successors to obtain greater knowledge of the business, encouraging them to share the objectives of the company, and transmitting a sense of belonging, thereby enhancing the affective relationship of family members. These are elements that must be present in farming families to improve the intention of succession of their heirs.

Our insights into the intention to continue FFs and bring the successor into focus offer relevant and insightful managerial implications. Increasing attention to economic, social,

psychological, and emotional aspects of FFs' successors is capital for the present and future of family farming. This idea goes in line with the findings shown by Arzubia et al. [59], who specifically highlighted the importance of taking care of the socio-emotional aspects of new successors when facing and designing succession processes.

This study has some limitations that offer opportunities for future research. This study focuses on a region, Catalonia, and on farming school students. Therefore, any conclusions should be interpreted carefully in other regions [60], in other FFs' potential successors, or in other family farming collectives. As such, these results call for different settings to theorize about emotional attachment and continuity in family farming, and future research should take advantage of integrating findings across different contexts and regions, deepening and building more cumulative research results. FFs' succession is supported by considerable research in domains other than the domain of the potential successor, [12]; however, more research is needed to enrich the family farming literature from an emotional and psychological perspective. For example, future research is needed to assess whether and to what extent our findings apply to other agrarian regions or to family farming principals. Our findings indicate the opportunity of future research to explore the emotional implication and commitment to family farming. The level of FFs' continuity represents a challenge for the future of farming.

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Chapter 6

Successors' Future Training in Family Farms: the Impact of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Factors

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 11 Congreso de la Asociación Española de Economía Agraria. Elche (Spain). 2017 The title of the paper was: *Family Farms, an essential structure for Rural Development*.

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Successors' Future Training in Family Farms: the Impact of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Factors

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Abstract

This study examines the effects of different intrinsic and extrinsic-to-potential successors' factors on the willingness of potential successors of family farms to continue training in the future. Building on socioemotional wealth (SEW) theory and a knowledge-based view, we consider the potential successors' (yet students in agricultural schools) perspectives, and conceptually and empirically examine whether they believe intrinsic factors, namely, their own personal interest and willingness to create a new business, as well as extrinsic factors, namely, confidence in farm viability and the fact that they have been instituted as successors, influence their willingness to continue training in the future. Our unique data on 156 students enrolled in agricultural schools in Catalonia (Spain) reveal that while intrinsic factors increase potential successors' tendency toward continuous training, extrinsic ones, contrary to our expectations, do not. These findings address an important practical issue in terms of family farm successors' perceptions, offering contributions to agriculture, family business in general, and family firm succession literature in particular.

Keywords

Family farm, Training, Knowledge acquisition, Successors, Socioemotional wealth, Knowledge-based view.

Introduction

Next-generation educational background is regarded as one of the most critical factors for family firm survival (Cabrera-Suarez et al., 2018; Sardeshmukh and Corbett, 2011), because it delineates the set of future competitive advantages of these businesses for the coming years or even decades (Jaskiewicz et al., 2015; Wang, 2016). Therefore, it is remarkable that a large stream of family firm research has focused on analyzing the succession process in general (e.g., sharmano et al., 2020; Gimenez-Jimenez et al.,

2021; Umans et al., 2020) as well as knowledge acquisition and training of the new generation as components associated with providing successful responses to a growing dynamic economic environment (e.g., Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2018; Woodfield and Husted, 2017). Moreover, the educational background of successors is even more relevant, since incumbents prefer promoting their offspring rather than offering the baton to non-family managers (Basco and Calabró, 2017; Chiswell, 2018; Chua et al., 1999). Consequently, knowledge acquisition of the successor, particularly her or his training prior to gaining leadership responsibility (Carolan, 2018), has received considerable research attention. Nevertheless, to-date, we lack a comprehensive understanding of whether, and under what conditions, the successor will continue with his or her training once he or she is running the family business.

This research gap in continuous training appears to be particularly relevant in the agricultural context, given that farming is the most hereditary occupation (Chiswell, 2014) and is having disruptive changes in the industry (Suess-Reyes et al., 2016). On the one hand, family farms represent an idiosyncratic model of family businesses by following certain traditions and pursuing the primary goal of passing the business on to the next generation of family members (Gasson and Errington, 1993). In other words, it is highly unlikely that agricultural activity on the farm will be assumed by an outside buyer given the high investment necessary and the low expected profitability (Cavillochi et al., 2015). For instance, in Europe, family farms account for more than 19 out of 20 farms (Eurostat, 2016). Family farms are based on a long-term orientation that offers an identity and sense of pride in being lifelong farmers to the owners of these businesses (Suess-Reyes et al., 2016). Relatedly, the partnerships facilitate the transmission of knowledge between generations (Duesberg et al., 2017), and sharing of risks and work (Moreno-Pérez and Lobley, 2015). As a result, a considerable number of family farms have survived beyond the third generation, and almost a third have functioned in the same geographical setting for over a century, working together with different generations (Lobley et al., 2002).

On the other hand, in view of the significant changes in terms of technology, market structure, and legal aspects in the agriculture industry in the last decade, Suess-Reyes et al. (2016) argue that the future of family farming is not only dependent on the farms' adaptability to the changing environment but also on the next generation's adequate preparation and continuous training to provide continuity of the farms in the near future. In other words, generational change is not limited to the "simple" incorporation of young people into farming; it must be accompanied by continuous knowledge acquisition and training in order to manage the challenges experienced by the agricultural sector. In other words, the agricultural sector has recently experienced significant changes that have affected farm businesses, as well as their functioning and outcomes (Vik and McElwee, 2011). In this regard, the existing literature describes

knowledge as a crucial component for providing “important implications for the creation and sustainment of competitive advantage” (Grant, 2015 p.1). Furthermore, farming serves as an essential activity where not only tacit knowledge, but also explicit knowledge as well as their interaction, is clearly expressed (Rose et al., 2019). Proper training includes the acquisition of specific knowledge provided by agrarian schools (Coopmans et al., 2021).

Despite the important significance of continuous training in family farms, there is a lack of understanding about which factors impact the willingness of the next generation in family farms to continue training after the succession process has occurred. Drawing on socioemotional wealth (SEW) and knowledge-based view approaches to illuminate this important research gap, this study specifically investigates whether intrinsic factors (a personal interest and willingness to create a new business) as well as extrinsic factors (confidence in farm viability and having been instituted as successor to potential successors in family farms) influences successors willingness to continue training in the future once they are leading the family farm. Our unique data on 156 students belonging to family farms enrolled in 13 agricultural schools located in Catalonia (Spain) reveal that while intrinsic factors increase potential successors’ tendency toward continuous training, extrinsic factors, contrary to our expectations, do not.

To address the aforementioned research questions, this study aims to make three principal contributions to the knowledge, family firm, and agriculture literature. First, we advance the knowledge literature by revealing how intrinsic factors (the personal interest of potential successors in running the family farm and their willingness to create a new business or expand the ongoing one) as well as extrinsic factors (their confidence in family farm viability and the fact that they have been instituted as successors to potential successors), affects their willingness to continue training in the future. Our results contribute to a better understanding of the determinants of potential successors’ willingness to remain updated through continuous training.

Second, we advance research on family farms (e.g., Suess-Reyes et al. 2016), where prior research underlines the need to combine both tacit and explicit knowledge to remain competitive (Cavicchioli et al., 2018). In particular, we reveal the promotion of intrinsic factors to successors as important antecedents of the tendency toward knowledge acquisition in a non-manufacturing setting, particularly among farm leaders. Family farms are considered to be outstanding examples of long-term sustainability because they continually reallocate resources to address the changing needs that emerge in the economic landscape (Foguessatto et al., 2020). As such, our findings complement the body of identified knowledge acquisition and training antecedents within the agriculture sector in general, and family farms in particular.

Third, we contribute to the family business literature by pursuing research questions based on SEW and knowledge-based view theories. Glover and Reay (2015) noted that family farms have a high level of SEW that has been established over several generations, and its preservation seems to be important in driving behavior. Despite this significant consideration, to our knowledge, this study is one of the first to quantitatively base its theoretical background on SEW at the individual level of future family leaders. In line with Murphy et al. (2019), by revealing a sense of belonging and identity as the roots of an individual's SEW, our study deepens how SEW pushes future leaders to remain updated and complements these findings by adding theoretical insights provided by significant aspects of the knowledge-based view.

Theoretical background

The importance of SEW in family farms

Family farms comprise of 98% of all farms and 53% of agricultural land, producing at least 53% of the world's food (Graeub et al., 2016) and constituting at least 500 million family farms out of a total of 570 million farms (FAO, 2017). Despite this, family farms usually produce less than average returns on investment and often continue with negative profits (DEFRA, 2012). In this vein, Glover and Reay (2015, p.163) affirm that "it is surprising that firms such as family farms can be successfully transferred from generation to generation, and yet economic profits can consistently be low or even negative." This fact highlights that, compared to non-family businesses, whose decisions are driven purely by economic reasons, family firms' decision-making nonfinancial goals prevail over economic motives (Arzubiaga et al., 2021a; Chrisman et al., 2015). This logic follows the increasingly studied SEW approach, the idiosyncratic nature of decision-making in family firms (Brigham and Payne 2019), which refers to the nonfinancial facets of the firm that meet the family's affective needs through the business (Stockmans et al., 2010). These needs are closely related to the ability to exercise family influence (Schulze et al., 2003), identity, family name (Barroso-Martinez et al., 2019), perpetuation of family values (Handler, 1990), and preservation of the family dynasty (Stockmans et al., 2010).

One of the basic assumptions in the SEW discussion relates to how this differential behavior emerges in family firms. In this respect, Murphy et al. (2019; p.397) affirm that "SEW originates and is rooted in the early interactions between family members and the family business as they create a sense of belonging and identity with the business." Furthermore, these authors argue that the more family members learn about the firm, as well as the more formally involved they are, the more they will strengthen their SEW when interpreting the non-financial aspects of the firm in

decision-making. Indeed, new generations will continually make strategic use and remain protective of SEW, regardless of whether they continue working in the family business (Calabró et al., 2018).

With regard to SEW outcomes, prior research has explained the effects of family firms' decision-making through the family's desire to preserve SEW (Muphy et al., 2019). In particular, in the last decade, scholars have pointed out that different outcomes in family firms, such as environmental performance (Berrone et al., 2010), financial performance (Cruz et al., 2012; Kotlar et al., 2018), investment in research and development (Chen et al. 2020), innovation and technology decisions (Arzubiaga et al., 2021a; Souder et al., 2017), and firm value (Zellweger and Dehlen, 2012) need to be understood following the logic of SEW. In the case of family farms, the aforementioned outcomes need to be aligned with their primary goal, which is to preserve family control and transfer business to the next generation (Gasson and Errington, 1993). Indeed, most farms successfully pass from generation to generation, which means that the financial and often emotional survival of each generation is connected to the farm's success (Glover and Reay, 2015). Overall, SEW logic suggests that family firms prioritize maintaining family control, although it implies accepting the increased risk of poor firm performance and preventing the firm from failing by acting more conservatively (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007).

Knowledge acquisition among new generations in changing environments

The large environmental, economic, social, political, and institutional challenges that the agriculture industry has faced in developed countries in recent years is pushing smaller-scale farms and family farms toward their disappearance at a rapid pace (Joose and Grubbström, 2017). In particular, factors such as the growing rigidity of food safety and quality standards, rapid variations in consumer needs and expectations (Alsos, 2011), changing social values (Lankester, 2012), and the development of large, resource-intensive farms have increased the complexity of the playground for family farms (Suess-Reyes et al., 2016). As a result, family farms need to adopt innovative strategies that may allow these businesses, on the one hand, to compete with the raise of alternative farming businesses supported by public institutions in Europe (Barlas et al., 2001) and, on the other hand, provide a response to a growth of the population worldwide (Chiswell, 2014; Duesberg et al., 2017).

The involvement of new generations in farming is more necessary than ever (Chiswell, 2018) since these younger generations may contribute to their knowledge of the stimulation of innovation and the use of new technologies that may achieve higher productivity levels (Carolan, 2018; Milone and Ventura, 2019; Vik and McElwee, 2011). Overall, prior research has shown that farming activity has historically been based on

experience-based knowledge, a form of tacit knowledge (Nonaka and Toyama, 2007) that passes from generation to generation (Cabrera et al., 2001). Woodfield et al. (2017) affirm that, although a central activity in most firms, knowledge acquisition and sharing are particularly relevant for family farms. More specifically, Bruce (2019) indicates that, apart from gaining equipment and capital, once aspiring family farmers advance in the succession ladder, they also undergo a socialization process that allows them to develop a commitment to continue the family legacy and acquire knowledge based on family tradition. In this step, the transfer of knowledge from incumbents to new generations is key for both the successor's development and, subsequently, to maintain the competitive advantage of the family firm (Botero et al., 2021; Trevinyo-Rodríguez and Bontis, 2010). More specifically, new generations receive valuable industry-specific knowledge and information about the technology, production process, marketing, and distribution that flows through interactions between family decision makers, other family members, and family businesses (Cabrera et al., 2018; Rondi and Rovelli, 2021).

Tacit knowledge, which is usually received by the successor as a result of the senior generation's practical knowledge acquired from running the family firm (Su and Daspit, 2021), is context-specific and particularly useful in traditional industries (Woodfield and Husted, 2017). Moreover, the older generations' own knowledge, ability, knowledge, and skills to perform are based on the former's mental schemes, beliefs, and insights that have been successful in the past (Nonaka et al., 1995). Nevertheless, these characteristics of tacit knowledge could influence the tendency toward path dependency (Hirsch-Kreinsen and Schwinge, 2014), which may cause some difficulties in changing environments (Chirico and Salvato, 2008) as well as obstruct developing innovations leading to wealth creation (Woodfield and Husted, 2017).

In this vein, decreasing income and the urgent need to respond to a changing industry in terms of market rules, technology, and even social and political aspects (Carayannis et al., 2021), have pushed family farms to engage in new, sophisticated business strategies (Suess-Reyes, 2016), where technological advances play a crucial role. In this regard, the adaptation of the family farm to these new rules of the agricultural industry makes it necessary to complement tacit knowledge acquired on the family farm with knowledge acquired through formal education (Nye, 2021). In this context, new generations may play a significant role in the adaptation of the family firm to the new playground by contributing to their new knowledge gained through education as well as through work and experience outside of the family firm (Sharma et al., 2003; Woodfield and Husted, 2017).

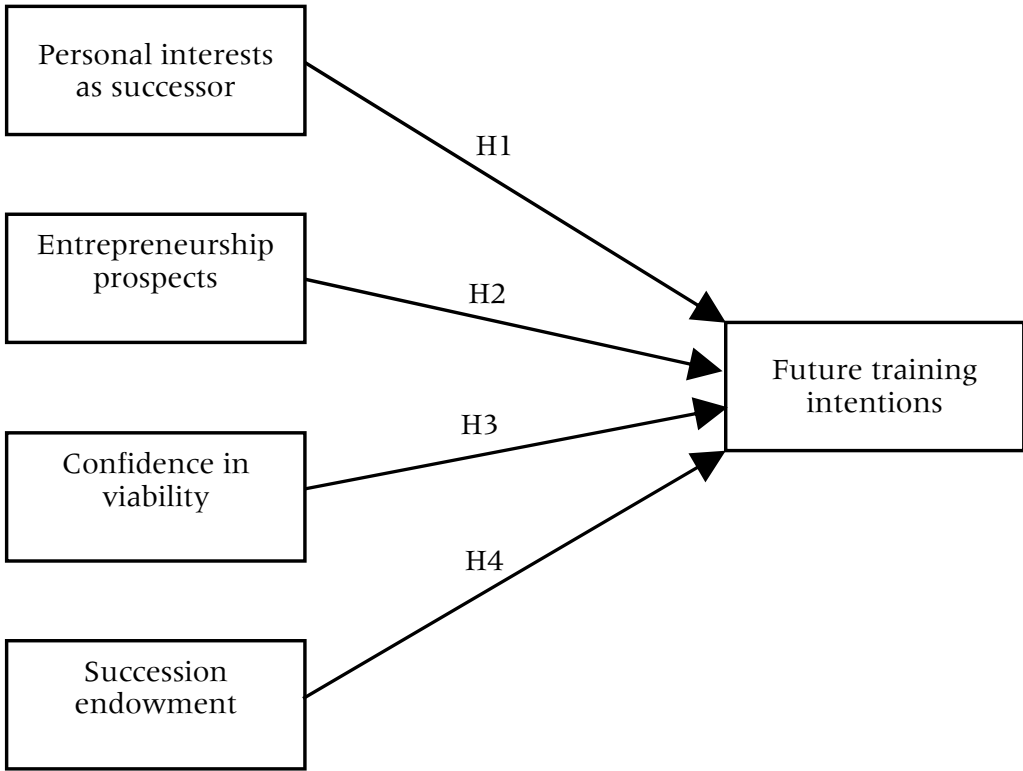
Overall, diversification and sophisticated changes around the core business are easier to develop among young and educated farmers (McElwee and Bosworth, 2010). A higher educational background implies greater skills that involve greater farm profitability

(Mishra and El-Osta, 2008), and young people have the technical knowledge to improve productivity (Cush and Macken-Walsh, 2016; Rech et al., 2021). Moreover, the Commissioner of Agriculture of the EU, Hogan (2018), argues that, apart from an educational background, the continuous training of highly qualified new generations of young farmers is key to bringing all the benefits of technology to Europe in support of higher productivity and sustainable agricultural practices.

Hypotheses development

In family businesses, the willingness of the successor to continue training in the future is usually dependent on different intrinsic-to-potential successors and extrinsic-to-potential successors (onwards, intrinsic, and extrinsic factors). Regarding the former, this study focuses on the effects of the personal interests of potential successors in running the family farm and in creating a new business or expanding the ongoing one, and the impact this may have on the willingness of the successors to continue training in the future. Regarding the latter, we analyze whether confidence in the viability of potential successors and the fact of having been instituted as successors may influence the desire of successors to continue training in the future.

FIGURE 1: HYPOTHESIZED RELATIONSHIPS (H1 TO H4) BETWEEN PERSONAL INTERESTS AS SUCCESSOR, ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROSPECTS, CONFIDENCE IN THE VIABILITY OF THE FAMILY FARM, SUCCESSION ENDOWMENT, WITH FUTURE TRAINING INTENTIONS



The effect of intrinsic factors in the willingness to continue training

On family farms, the personal interest of potential successors in running the business is likely to strengthen their willingness to continue training in the future. From the SEW approach, the combination of family and business subsystems creates a unique identity within family firms (Berrone et al., 2012). A family's social status is firmly linked to organizational identity with the business carrying the family's name (Arzubiaga et al., 2021a; Beck and Prüggl, 2018). Family identity pursues protecting family image and, accordingly, family members make decisions to enhance the firm's reputation (Deephouse and Jaskiewicz, 2013). Some of these decisions, which could be made within different fields such as strategy, manufacturing, or even human resource management, need upper-level and updated knowledge to succeed (Arzubiaga et al., 2021b). This is especially relevant in the case of family farms as a consequence of the big changes in this industry in recent years (Suess-Reyes et al., 2016). In this vein, new generations, who usually exhibit an early interest in family business (Kraiczky et al., 2014), often lead their education to their eventual business role (Arregle et al., 2007). For this purpose, these new generations may focus on firm-specific studies (Arzubiaga et al., 2019b) that will enhance their desire to continually train in the near future.

On the other hand, the SEW approach also points out that the emotional attachment of family members toward the family business may have important implications in their own goals and decisions (Arzubiaga et al., 2021a; Kellermanns et al., 2012). This emotional attachment originates in the family's shared knowledge, experience, and storytelling, which influences how family members feel and make decisions at present (Filser et al., 2018). Indeed, family businesses could add family members with feelings of security, belonging, and cohesion (Berrone et al., 2012). This emotional attachment is particularly powerful in family farms, where younger generations have gradually ascended the agricultural ladder as they grew up (Bruce, 2019). Younger generations usually try to find new ways to revitalize and expand the business (Cruz and Nordqvist, 2012) by incorporating new knowledge and perspectives into the knowledge and expertise of older generations (Alayo et al., 2019), so as to facilitate more updated ideas and higher quality decision-making (Arzubiaga et al., 2019a). This is particularly relevant in cases where younger generations of family farms return to the farm, since these potential successors will pursue reinvigoration by running diversification strategies learned outside the family business (Glover and Reay, 2015). Moreover, Suess-Reyes (2016) argues that the intention to diversify the farm business is influenced by the decision-maker's personal goals, such as pursuing a new challenge or shaping a personal interest. Consequently, potential successors who have their own personal interest in running the family farm will be interested in continuing their training in the future. Thus, we conclude that potential successors' personal interest

in running a family farm is positively related to their willingness to continue training in the future. Formally stated:

H1. The personal interest of potential successors in running a family farm is positively related to their willingness to continue training.

One of the main non-economic goals of family businesses is the development of social ties with both family and non-family stakeholders (Berrone et al., 2012). Regarded as binding social ties, the interactions and cooperation among different generations allow the development of new knowledge (Arzubiaga et al., 2021a). On the one hand, senior family members may contribute with their tacit knowledge and expertise to the internal debate and decision-making processes (Arzubiaga et al., 2019b). On the other hand, younger generations usually provide fresh perspectives that may help enrich and update the already internalized knowledge within the family firm (Nason et al., 2019). Furthermore, younger family members often have very different educational backgrounds and expertise compared to older family members (Talke et al., 2010).

In addition, the binding social ties dimension of SEW highlights the importance of maintaining social relationships with external stakeholders (Berrone et al., 2012). Prior research argues that the stronger and more frequent the relationships with external agents are, the more likely the decision makers in family firms will be to adopt innovative strategies (Arzubiaga et al., 2019a). This is especially valuable in the case of new generations, since fluent relationships with experts will help them to demystify the fear of taking the baton in the family business, as well as offering them with a more accurate picture of the benefits and costs of expanding it. As such, an intense relationship with external professionals may strengthen the receptiveness to external and novel knowledge (Classen et al., 2012). In other words, these interactions with experts, which may facilitate the acquisition, sharing, and use of novel knowledge (Del Giudice, 2010) to guide potential successors' future performance as family farm leaders, may underlie the need for continued training in the future.

The sensitivity toward the need for continuous training is also reinforced by the fact that younger generations are usually better prepared and have upper-level education and external experience than older generations (Cruz and Nordqvist, 2012). In particular, new generations have internalized the idea that continuous training may provide them with the pool of skills and capabilities needed not only to run but also to expand their family farms in the near future (Plana-Farran and Gallizo, 2021). Indeed, potential successors feel that continuous training in the future will add updated knowledge and cutting-edge ability to evaluate markets and competitors. For instance, continuous training may provide potential successors with the knowledge to analyze whether or not to enter new fields such as alternative agriculture and, if so,

how they can do it (Bruce, 2019). Thus, we conclude that the willingness of potential successors to create a new business or to expand the ongoing business is positively related to their willingness to continue training in the future. Formally stated:

H2. The willingness of potential successors to create a new business or expand the ongoing business is positively related to their willingness to continue training in the future.

The effect of extrinsic factors in the willingness to continue training

SEW originates as a result of the interactions between the family business and family members from their childhood, since they create a sense of identity with the business as well as a sense of belonging to it (Murphy et al., 2019). Young family members perform their first steps in the family farm as unpaid workers at the lowest level in order to gain farm-specific knowledge and expertise so as to lead the family farm in the future (Bruce, 2019). This gradual evolution in their role within the family farm facilitates the development of invisible, strong ties between potential successors and the family farm, which may drive the desire of new generations to run the family farm in the future (Plana-Farran and Gallizo, 2021).

However, despite the power of these non-visible ties, confidence in the viability of the family farm may also play an important role in the decision-making of potential successors regarding whether or not to follow the family farm (Lobley and Potter, 2004). Aspects such as the economic context of a region, characteristics of the farm enterprise, and family circumstances may influence their desire to lead a family farm (Bruce, 2019). In this regard, the specific, high-level education in agriculture, as well as their expertise outside the family farm, may provide potential successors with valuable instruments not only to have a more objective picture of the future economic viability of the business (Cavicchioli et al., 2015), but also to make them more confident in themselves as future successors (Suess-Reyes et al., 2016). Knowledge-based resources can trigger the improvement of efficiency rates in ongoing production and facilitate the development of novel products and services in the market (Plana-Farran and Gallizo, 2021). Furthermore, continuous knowledge acquisition and training among new successors may promote the development of routines that could be useful in new situations, thus reducing the need to continually create new routines (Nadolska and Barkema, 2014). In other words, potential successors who value their own knowledge acquisition and training feel confident about the future viability of the family farm and may pursue continuous training in the future.

On the other hand, although younger generations in family businesses are usually better prepared in terms of upper-level education and expertise (Cruz and Nordqvist,

2012), later generations are usually subject to greater scrutiny by the public (Firfiray et al., 2018). It is not uncommon for the public to believe that successors are running the business, not as a consequence of their competence and merits, but through nepotism (Fang et al., 2018). Fang et al. (2018) affirm that younger generations are likely to act following strategic conformity, understood in terms of firm behaviors that follow prevailing routines and strategies in the market (Miller et al., 2013). In this regard, these authors argue that although the family firm performs well, the new generations may prefer to follow the latest tendencies in the market with the aim of convincing external stakeholders that they are capable of achieving similar or even superior performance. Consequently, potential successors may be conscious of the need for continuous training in the future. Thus, we conclude that confidence in the family farm viability of potential successors is positively related to their willingness to continue training in the future. Formally stated:

H3. Confidence in the family farm viability of potential successors is positively related to their willingness to continue training in the future.

From a SEW approach, family firms usually develop a long-term orientation to keep the family business under control in future generations. This long-term orientation results in the development of a transgenerational vision and a feeling of dynasty (Berrone et al., 2012). Thus, families assume that finding an adequate successor is key to the success of the family firm in the long haul (Sharma et al., 2003), although families often struggle to identify a successor for their family farm (Joose and Grubbstrom, 2017). Indeed, in family farms, choosing a successor and developing his/her skills is a long process, often called the agricultural ladder, which needs to be ascended gradually (Bruce 2019). As such, the inter-generational transfer of farmland within farm family's needs to fulfill different phases (Bates and Rudel, 2004). More specifically, these authors argue that aspiring farmers start as unpaid laborers in their youth who gain knowledge and experience until they are prepared to start their own business or run their predecessors business. In general, the development of a family dynasty entails that family owners deeply reflect on transferring control of the firm to the next generation (Arzubiaga et al., 2021a), which makes them more inclined to prepare themselves in terms of knowledge acquisition, but also keep on training once they are chosen as successors. This encourages family firms to improve their ability to face changing economic landscapes with the goal of transferring a sustainable organization to their successors (Berrone et al., 2012).

Prior research indicates that a higher number of young family members living on farms enhances the number of potential successors (Glauben et al., 2009; Suess-Reyes et al., 2016). Nevertheless, Cavicchioli et al. (2015) argue that many potential successors may also have a counterproductive effect on potential successors. These authors

explain that increased competition among different potential successors may reduce children's desire to lead family farms in the future. Accordingly, the uncertainty of their future may lessen the desire of potential successors to continue training. This transforms the nomination phase into one of the most important aspects of succession processes in both family and non-family firms (Basco and Calabró, 2017). In other words, having been chosen as the successor adds motivation to these family members to acquire new knowledge and abilities in the future. Therefore, we conclude that having been instituted as successors in family farms positively influences potential successors' willingness to continue training in the future. Formally stated:

H4. Having been instituted as a successor in a family farm is positively related to a willingness to continue training in the future.

Method

Industry context and participants

Our study was conducted in an agrarian environment. Farming has a long track record and is a key-stone industry in Catalonia, Spain, and Europe. According to data collected from the Spanish Government (MAPA, 2021), only 0.23% of land in Spain is managed by farmers under 25 years of age, and 3.57% of farmers are between 26-34. On average, farmers under 35-years-old don't reach 5% of the total land. They mainly pertain to the family farms.

Family farms are considered a source of tacit and explicit knowledge (Grubbström et al. 2014), having to face new demands in an evolving tendency from traditional industries to a technological sector. Boundaries of farming have been and are in permanent change, pushed with the introduction of new production and environmental requirements as a consequence of new and evolving science and technology (Suess-Reyes et al., 2016). In this sense, farming has progressed globally over the past century. Science, technology, and new political trends have evolved from practice-based to specific knowledge. Formal education has considerably increased farming practices and productivity (Johnson et al., 2007). Moreover, the appearance of formal education through faculties of agricultural studies or agrarian schools from the middle of the last century has permitted the acquisition of specific knowledge through new agricultural programs (Plana-Farrán and Gallizo, 2021).

Although a very small dimension of family farms is the main characteristic, family farming activity represents around 90% of farming in Catalonia (Spain). Furthermore, family farms in the specific region we studied have considerable knowledge associated

with a history of farming in different areas (e.g., fruits, cattle, grapes, almonds, and olive oil, among others) that represent a culture, sense of belonging, and being rooted in the land (Plana-Farran and Gallizo, 2021).

Our field of action in this research comprised of agricultural schools around Catalonia, and we obtained data on young people planning to join the farming business, who in most cases belonged to farming families. Although we surveyed all the students in all the agricultural schools in Catalonia, the target group for this specific study comprised of 161 students from family farms enrolled in Catalan agricultural schools. In other words, the dataset was based on agricultural school students who were trained to work in agriculture and the agroindustry and belonged to family farms. Thirteen agricultural schools are present in the region, spread around different rural and agricultural scenarios that comprise the entire Catalan region, depending on the Department of Agriculture and Education. Training courses are officially recognized and provide qualified student eligibility for EU young farmers' subsidies. Of the 161 participants, five students had to be excluded from the study because they did not answer some of the questions. The final sample was composed of 156 students.

Measures

We used an ad hoc questionnaire to collect data on the measures used in this study. First, the participants were asked about their personal interests as successors in running the family farm. This question was answered on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from very low (1) to very high (5). Second, we asked about their confidence in the viability of the family farm, which was answered on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from very low (1) to very high (5). Third, we asked the respondents whether they had been endowed with becoming a successor to their family farm, which was answered in a Yes/No format. Fourth, the respondents were asked whether they intended to create a new business or expand the actual one, which was answered in a yes/no format. Fifth, we asked students about their future training intentions, whose answers had a dichotomous yes/no format. Finally, demographic information, including age and sex, was collected using the same questionnaire.

Procedure and Data analyses

To reach as many students as possible, a schedule was agreed upon with the management of each agrarian school. We visited each school (13 in total, around all Catalonia) to explain the objective of the study. Participation was anonymous and not mandatory. To avoid any potential misunderstanding or mistakes, the study researchers were present during the completion of the survey. The data collection was completed in 2019.

The data were analyzed utilizing a logistic regression with the binary dependent variable of intention to continue education as the dependent variable (in a yes or no response format). There were four predictors corresponding to interest, confidence, transmission of business, and entrepreneurship. The contribution of each predictor was evaluated using a single regression model. These five models were compared with a model without predictors using an ANOVA *F*-test and evaluated with a Nagelkerke pseudo coefficient of determination (R^2) and Akaike's Information Criteria (AIC). The contribution of each predictor is indicated by a significant *F*-test, higher Nagelkerke's coefficients, and lower AICs values. All statistical analyses were conducted using the R software (R Development Core Team, 2014). The data and codes for the statistical analyses are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Results

Table 1 shows the logistic regression outcomes that predicted the intention to continue education. The models with interest and entrepreneurship were fairly good at predicting this outcome. First, the model with interest yielded a significant *F*-test ($F = 4.584$, $p < .05$) and a significant odds ratio (OR = 1.82), indicating that higher interest was related to a higher likelihood of pursuing further education. Second, the model with entrepreneurship yielded an even higher significant *F*-test ($F = 8.57$, $p < .01$), with a larger significant odds ratio (OR = 2.948). These findings suggest that individuals who were more willing to initiate a business were also more likely to have further educational intentions. However, confidence and transmission were not related to the likelihood of pursuing further education.

TABLE 1: LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS PREDICTING TRAINING INTENTIONS (B = STANDARDIZED REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS, SE = STANDARD ERROR; OR = ODDS RATIO). THE ANOVA *F* TEST CONTRASTED EACH PREDICTOR TO A MODEL WITHOUT PREDICTORS

Model		B	SE	OR (95% CI)	F
1	Interest	.767*	.289	1.824 (1.051, 3.281)	
	Nagelkerke $R^2 = .044$; AIC = 189				4.584*
2	Confidence	.362	.185	1.212 (0.845, 1.754)	
	Nagelkerke $R^2 = .011$; AIC = 192				1.091
3	Transmission (Yes)	.635	.349	1.882 (0.954, 3.765)	
	Nagelkerke $R^2 = .032$; AIC = 190				3.326
4	Entrepreneurship (Yes)	1.046**	.381	2.948 (1.421, 6.365)	
	Nagelkerke $R^2 = .081$; AIC = 185				8.570**

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Discussion and implications for theory and practice

This study explores new drivers of potential successors' willingness to continue training in the future on family farms and explains how different factors linked to potential successors' intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence their willingness to continue training in the future. The empirical investigation, using a sample of 156 students belonging to family farms enrolled in Catalan agricultural schools, produced some interesting results.

First, we hypothesized and showed that the personal interest of potential successors in running the family farm leads to a higher willingness to continue training in the future, confirming the connection of the family's social status to the organizational identity, as well as the emotional attachment of new generations to the family farm (Plana-Farran and Gallizo, 2021) as engines of the desire to follow training in the future. On the one hand, our results suggest that the close bonds between the family firm image, which are protected by the family identity, and its subsequent reputation (Arzubiaga et al., 2019a) may incentivize potential successors to lead their education toward firm-specific studies (agricultural studies) to gain updated knowledge that allows them to compete in a changing environment. Moreover, this tendency toward knowledge acquisition in a dynamic environment will enhance the desire for new generations to continue training in the future. On the other hand, our results also indicate the significance of emotional attachment that new generations have to the family farm in their desire to continue training in the future. The literature on family farms indicates that these binding ties emerge as a consequence of the agricultural ladder; thus, this represents the gradual evolution of potential successors in their role within the family farm (Kloppenburger Jr. and Geisler, 1985). This gradual evolution of potential successors in their role within the organization may enhance the desire to continue training in the future to adequately respond to deeply changing market expectations and needs. Our findings extend and complement studies that focus exclusively on the importance of a family's shared knowledge and storytelling from generation to generation as an important driver of family members' feelings and decisions at present (Filser et al., 2018).

Second, our results also confirm that the willingness of potential successors to create a new business or expand the ongoing family farm leads to a willingness to continue training in the future. This finding emphasizes the significance of the binding social ties dimension of SEW, which shows that social relationships with external stakeholders (Berrone et al., 2012) may increase interactions with experts (Arzubiaga et al., 2021b). In this vein, prior research suggests that, as a consequence of this flow of knowledge and information (De Massis et al., 2016), potential successors in family farms will not only acquire novel competences, but will also increase their sensitivity toward the

need for continued training in the future. This finding is consistent with that of Bruce (2019), who suggests that knowledge acquisition may offer potential successors the ability to identify new markets and decide whether to enter. Nevertheless, instead of focusing on the potential effects of knowledge acquisition on the abilities of new generations, as in Bruce et al. (2019), our research adds to this by focusing on how the willingness to create a new business or expand the ongoing business impacts the willingness to continue training in the future.

Third, contrary to our expectations, we find that confidence in the family firm viability of potential successors does not significantly influence their willingness to continue training in the future. This finding shows that potential successors feel confident that family firm viability pushes them to prioritize the strategies and know-how that were once successful in the past. For example, Gomez-Mejia et al.'s (2007) SEW framework helps to explain this finding. According to the SEW perspective, emotional attachment emerges as a consequence of a family's shared knowledge, and past experiences influence family members' present and future decisions (Filser et al., 2018). Moreover, potential successors, guided by the desire to preserve the family firm heritage, may be reluctant to change the family business's future functioning (Arzubiaga et al. 2021b), so as avoiding the acquisition of new knowledge through continuous training in the future. Relatedly, our finding that having been instituted as a successor in the family firm does not influence potential successors' willingness to continue training in the future may also be explained from the SEW perspective. More specifically, although the need for continuous training can be regarded as helpful for successors to respond to the changing environment, the fact that a family's tendency to maintain control over the firm's operation makes family firms more inclined to contract family managers over non-family professionals (Umans et al., 2020) with the aim of maintaining the ongoing knowledge of how that has been internalized from past generations. This may explain why having been selected as a successor does not have a significant impact on the willingness to continue training in family farms.

Our findings offer insights for family-firm owners and managers. In particular, since we focused on potential successors' intention to continue training in the future, our discussion about the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic factors as significant antecedents of the willingness to continue training in order to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving industry (such as agriculture) might offer family firms the opportunity to work on priorities for these future CEOs during their formative period. For instance, the personal interest of potential successors in running a family farm enhances their willingness to continue training. Relatedly, the willingness of potential successors to create a new business or expand the ongoing one also pushes the desire of potential successors to continue training in the future. In this sense, with the insights from this study, family firm incumbents can start from early childhood by incorporating the

family values such as entrepreneurial orientation or identification with the ongoing family farm to develop an intrinsic orientation toward continuous training within the new generations of the family farm. These facts do not necessarily imply instituting one of their children as successors from the very beginning, but creating dynamics around the future of the family farm that has to do with developing an entrepreneurial spirit and a clear identification with the family farm, two key factors that may enhance their willingness to continue training.

Limitations and future research

Our study has several limitations that provide directions for future research. First, we relied on data from a single region, Catalonia, which may have limited the generalizability of our results. Although we do not expect a significant variation in results between Catalonia and other Western regions, cultural factors may influence our arguments, especially in countries with natural cultures that significantly differ from Catalonia's (Hofstede, 2001). Second, our study is cross-sectional in nature, which implies a need for further study into the causal relationships between the dependent and independent variables using longitudinal research (Arzubiaga et al., 2019b). Nonetheless, we tested for a common method bias (Podsakoff and Organ 1986) and did not find any concern. Third, the limitations of this study include the fact that the survey respondents were students at agrarian schools that pertain to family farms and study for enrollment in the agrarian sector, mainly family farms where they belong. This spread unquestionably entails a bias toward new entrants in farming, and the results should therefore be interpreted in this light. Fourth, although relying on a single informant is common when the main informant is surveyed (Simon and Shrader, 2012), this still creates a limitation. Indeed, the surveys were answered by the students who belonged to a family farm, not by principals who were heavily involved in the succession process.

These limitations open new avenues for future research. On the one hand, future studies may analyze the influence of the already studied drivers on the continuity of training in different contexts to examine the generalizability of our findings. Moreover, our results call for different settings in order to theorize about knowledge management and continuity in family farming. Future research should take advantage of integrating findings across different contexts and regions, deepening and building more cumulative research results. Furthermore, since continuous training could have both positive and negative effects (such as frustration and potential conflicts in the cases where the succession will not eventually take place), future studies could also focus on the dual nature of the continuous training.

On the other hand, future research analyzing longitudinal data may provide further insights into the causality of these relationships. In addition, family firms' succession has been studied by considerably in domains other than family farms; however, more research is needed in the family farm field to shed light on the different factors that influence the succession process in this field as well as the educational background and expertise of potential successors.

Conclusions

Continuous training in family farms, regarded as essential for remaining competitive in a changing environment (Suess-Reyes et al., 2016), is dependent on the willingness of its potential successors. Drawing from a sample of 156 students enrolled in Catalan agricultural schools and belonging to family farms, this study examined the effects of two intrinsic and two extrinsic factors on the desire of potential successors to continue training in the future. More specifically, based on the SEW and knowledge-based perspective, this research found that intrinsic factors (the personal interest of potential successors in running the family farm and their willingness to create a new business or expand the ongoing one) positively influenced the willingness of these potential successors to continue training in the future. Nevertheless, this research also shows that extrinsic factors (their confidence in family farm viability and having been instituted as successors to potential successors) did not significantly impact their willingness to continue training in the future. These main findings suggest that regardless of contextual factors, such as the viability of a specific sector, the non-economic goals internalized by potential successors through their evolution in the agricultural ladder may push successors to pursue continuous training in the future.

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Chapter 7

Discussion and Conclusions

Discussion and Conclusions

The main goal of this doctoral thesis is to contribute to the understanding of how the succession process is perceived for next-generation members of family firms, and family farms in particular. Potential or future next-generation family firms' members represent an essential part of the future architecture of family business; consequently, bringing the successor into focus permits us to obtain relevant and insightful managerial implications.

Because of the contemporary environment, the willingness to initiate a career is a key element in the present and future employment path of young people. Students that either belong to a family business or are focused on initiating a career have to face and manage uncertainty. As a result, mindfulness has emerged as an important coping mechanism because it stimulates our capacity to focus on the present (Brown et al. 2003).

This aim implied, on the one hand, assessing the effect of being a next-generation member of a business family on one's emotional aspects and identifying the factors affecting one's intention to continue the FB. On the other hand, it also meant determining the necessity of observing the succession process from the next-generation point of view (for instance, the willingness to continue the family business through specific training activities).

The empirical findings from the search to meet the appointed objectives have led us to several main conclusions:

1. Mindfulness and mindfulness levels shed a light on the effects of different personal attributes and horizons of potential successors in family businesses, representing a powerful tool that offers relevant benefits to potential successors of family businesses.
2. The present study addressed whether mindfulness is associated with prospective personal and professional concerns, and the results suggested that it does not influence future professional and personal concerns regardless of whether individuals belonged to a family business or whether they had intentions to pursue further education.
3. Regarding mindfulness with future professional and personal concerns, results show that higher mindfulness levels implied lower future levels of concern in students who were uncertain about creating their own business. This means that

higher mindfulness levels implied lower future levels of concern. Hence, it can be stated that mindfulness might promote a buffer effect for university students who have uncertainty about their self-employment prospects.

4. The condition of next-generation family members does not affect the wellbeing and mindfulness levels of university students. There are no apparent differences in the levels of mindfulness between students who belong to a business family and those who do not.
5. Certainty and expectations regarding incorporation into the family business have a clear impact on levels of mindfulness. Hence, it can be affirmed that uncertainty and a lack of clarity have a direct impact on levels of wellbeing and mindfulness, which is represented by mindfulness in young people who belong to a family business.
6. The impact of next generations' attitudes to intention and commitment toward succession represent a key aspect of their motivation and determination to work and to enroll in the family business. This study also shows that mindfulness results in a protective element for the mental health of B.A. students
7. The impact of structural factors such as the exploitation and modification of products in farming is closely related to diversification as a strategy. Research demonstrates the importance of diversification, entrepreneurship and adaptability for present-day family farms. Furthermore, the results confirm a tendency in family farming (i.e., generational renewal issue) whereby diversification is not motivated by the need for direct descendants to continue the family business.
8. A significant conclusion from this research is that the SEW scale (REI) fits well when studying family-farming future successors, permitting the use of this scale beyond the owners. SEW scale revalidation is an essential tool in the study of the motivation of next-generation members of FFs.
9. The results obtained in this study show that the level of SEW positively affects the intention to continue family farms, as we observed a relationship between the SEW level of young students that belong to a FF and their intention of succession.
10. A significant conclusion of this research is that the existence of a sense of belonging and commitment of the young FF members positively influence the succession intention of the potential successors, meaning that these factors are facilitators of succession intention.

11. It was found that prioritizing succession and family elements over economic motivations played a major role in determining the intention of the possible successors to succeed the family farm. Moreover, results shown that the existence of an affective relationship between family members makes it more likely that a potential successor will decide to continue the family farm and accept the inheritance. Finally, the sense of belonging and the personal commitment of the members of a family-run agricultural firm affect their intention to take over the farm.
12. This study also highlights the importance of the next generation's educational background as one of the most critical factors for family firm continuity and survival, representing a future competitive advantage. The generational change in family firms is not limited to the "simple" incorporation of young people into the business; it must be accompanied by a continuous knowledge acquisition and training process to manage the challenges that the economic environment poses, including in farming.
13. Regarding next-generation family members' requirements for training, our results pinpoint which factors impact the willingness of the next generation of family firms (and specifically family farms) to continue training after the succession process has occurred.
14. The findings also show the influence of two intrinsic and two extrinsic factors on the will of the potential successors to continue training. Intrinsic factors, including their own personal interest in running the family farm and willingness to create a new business or expand the ongoing one, positively influence the will of these prospect successors to continue training in the future. On the other hand, extrinsic factors, such as confidence in the family farm's viability and having been instituted as a successor, do not significantly impact their willingness to continue training in the future.
15. A significant conclusion from this research is that potential family farm successors are focused on continuous knowledge acquisition and training as components associated with providing successful responses and adapting to a dramatic and growingly dynamic economic environment. In light of the above 13 points, the agricultural sector is affected by deep changes that impact farm businesses and their functioning, as well as the next generation's process of incorporating the family farm.

Practical Implications

In addition to the conclusions exposed above, this doctoral research also offers some important managerial and practical implications. Based on the results obtained, we conclude that:

1. Our insights into the importance of the intention to join the family business, as well as the expectations of potential successors depending on their mindfulness levels, offer relevant and insightful managerial implications. Our study finds that this latter aspect is more effective if the potential successors have already decided to join their family business. However, our study encourages family firm owners to instill certainty in the next-generation successors about their future role in the business, as well as positive expectations about the firm's future. These factors may provide the basis for a positive contribution to the development, growth and smooth generational transmission of the family business.
2. The results related to the moderating role of mindfulness in B.A. students suggest that these studies, programs and researchers need to expand their investigations into students' emotional experiences. As such, B.A. education systems would benefit from the development or incorporation of a training program for students' mindfulness regulation. We propose integrating classes related to mindfulness and emotions into the B.A. curriculum to provide students with the opportunity to acquire and practice mindfulness.
3. Next-generation members have internalized the idea that continuous training may provide a pool of skills and capabilities that are needed to run and/or to expand their family farms in the near future.
4. Next-generation educational background is regarded as the backbone and one of the most critical factors for family firm survival because it determines the continuity and future competitive advantage of these businesses. The findings related to continuous training positively links the willingness of potential successors with intrinsic factors (i.e., the interest of potential successors in running the family farm and their willingness to create a new business or expand the existing one). On the other hand, extrinsic factors (i.e., confidence in the family farm's viability and having been instituted as a successor) do not significantly impact their willingness to continue training in the future.

Limitations and Future Research

In the case of studies related to Articles 1 and 2, the studies have some limitations to bear in mind. The sample is of limited size and the conclusions of the study are likely to be constrained to students pursuing careers in business. Both studies focus on a single university. For this reason, the results may not be representative enough to explain the B.A. students' behavior and their mindfulness levels when facing the pressures of uncertainty. Therefore, any conclusions should be interpreted carefully in other regions or in other collectives of potential successors. As such, the results of Articles 1 and 2 of this dissertation call for different settings to theorize about mindfulness in entrepreneurship and family farms, and future research should take advantage of integrating findings across different contexts to build more cumulative research results.

Analysis of mindfulness levels in work settings is strong, but not between B.A. students, next-generation members who belong to a family business or entrepreneurs. In fact, more research in mindfulness practices is needed to enrich the family business and entrepreneur literature from a mindfulness and psychological perspective.

On the one hand, our findings indicate the opportunity for future research to further explore the heterogeneous drivers of the level of mindfulness that the successors in family firms may have. On the other hand, our broader scope of emotional regulation and mental health in B.A. studies is aligned with the paradigm shift in the field of psychology related to entrepreneurship (Metallo et al. 2021; Kusa et al. 2021; Piñeiro-Sousa et al. 2020) and family business (Aris et al. 2021). As a consequence, universities, business schools and policymakers should consider introducing a mindfulness program or mindfulness practices into their B.A. studies.

In terms of Articles 4 and 5, our work has several limitations that provide future research directions. First, we rely on data from a single region, Catalonia, which may limit our results' generalizability. Although we do not expect a significant variation in results between Catalonia and other western regions, cultural factors may influence our arguments, especially in countries with natural cultures that significantly differ from Catalonia's (Hofstede, 2001). The limitations of this study include, firstly, the fact that the survey respondents were students of agrarian schools that came from to family farms and enrolled for study in the agrarian sector, mainly family farms where they are from. This spread unquestionably entails a bias towards new entrants in farming, and the results should therefore be read in this light.

Another aspect to take into account is the potential endogeneity and thus the effect that unobserved or non-included factors (e.g., size, sector, and generations) might have on the outcome of the continuity decision. The surveys were answered by the students who belong to a family farm, but not for the principals that, obviously, are deeply involved in the succession process.

This study offers opportunities for future research. The results call for different settings to theorize about knowledge management and continuity in family farming, and future research should take advantage of integrating findings across different contexts and regions, deepening and building more cumulative research results.

Together with this, FFs' succession is supported by considerable research from perspectives other than the domain of the potential successor; however, more research is needed to enrich the family farming literature from an emotional and psychological perspective. For example, future research is needed to assess whether and to what extent our findings apply to other agrarian regions or to family farming principals.

Our findings indicate an opportunity for future research to explore the tacit and standardized knowledge implication and commitment to family farming. The level of FFs' continuity represents a challenge for the future of farming.

Finally, another line of future research that can be applied to all the articles that make up this dissertation is the gender perspective as applied to FBs and, more specifically, FFs.

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