



Semantic Investigation of the Policy of Islamic Republic of Iran in the Field of Cultural Economy: A Contextual Analysis

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 30 January 2025 Revised: 20 February 2025 Accepted: 13 February 2025 Online: 06 September 2026	The influence of the Iranian political system encompasses all aspects of culture, including its economy. The aim of this research was a semantic study of the policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the field of cultural economy through a contextual analysis. This is a qualitative research in nature and semi-structured interviews and the systematic approach of Strauss and Corbin were used to collect and analyze the data respectively. The findings indicated the negative role of causal factors (political and economic challenges), contextual factors (lack of attention to consumer interests, lack of creativity, weakness in attracting capital, and lack of recognition of competitors), and intervention factors (ministries and government organizations) in weakening the economy of culture in Iran, which includes consequences such as weakening domestic production, increasing frustration among producers for investment, weakening the presence of Iranian culture on the international stage, the withdrawal of the workforce from the cultural products sector, and as a result, the destruction of the generational process of cultural knowledge transfer. In conclusion, it can be said that culture and cultural goods have generally been considered by Iranian policymakers as an "effective tool" for cultural influence and aggression rather than an effective commodity in generating national wealth. According to the findings and in order to improve & promote the economy of culture, it is recommended to reform the country's macro-cultural policies, increase the financial & supervisory role of the government (while reducing its interventionist role), and increase the role of the private sector.
KEYWORDS	
Cultural Policy Cultural Economy Government Islamic Republic	

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1. Introduction

Culture and economy are intertwined and each has an undeniable impact on the other. Attention to cultural and creative products as a purely "entertaining, historical and tradition-based" activity that was unique, non-replicable, non-repeatable and non-disseminated in nature has moved away from the status of "cultural effect" and become a "cultural commodity" that is produced based on consumer needs and the sales market (Banks, 2007; Belfiore & Bennett, 2007; Hesmondhalgh, 2012; Taylor & Littleton, 2008).

In this process, it is rare to find a government that is oblivious to the role of the cultural economy. However, the preferences of politicians and practical actions have more impact than the beautiful words and sentences written in upstream documents. Therefore, governments can still be divided into two general groups: First, governments that sincerely believe in the impact and role of the cultural economy in generating national wealth and constantly strive to increase the share of this sector in the market. The principles governing the cultural policies of these governments are: the belief in the effective role of cultural products in promoting country's social & historical traditions, a positive view of the economic role of culture through supporting production & export of cultural goods, and promoting & transmitting their culture peacefully and based on mutual empathy to others (Porcher, 2019; Trompenaars, 1994; Hatmanu Gagea et al 2015). The other group are countries that view cultural goods as a negative tool for the influence of foreign culture and refer to it with terms such as "tools of cultural invasion and domination". In the first group, culture is a new tool for strengthening the national economy, and in the second group, culture is an ideological tool for preventing or countering enemy influence (Tincani, 2018; Robin, 2001).

Of course, this fundamental difference should not be overlooked that in the first group, culture serves the economy, and in the second group, culture serves politics. Despite these differences, both groups have a similar idea that the production and distribution of cultural products is one of the best ways to promote and transfer "own" culture to the "other". In any case and regardless of political controversies, nowadays the realm of economics can no longer be separated from the realm of ideology and culture because artifacts, ideas, cultural representations, and even emotions & psychological structures have become part of the economy (Heilbroner, 1990; Sandner, 2008).

Accordingly, over the past half century, the economic impacts of culture – in its various forms and from the three dimensions of production, distribution and consumption – have attracted the attention of development economists. For example, a report by the United Nations Conference on Trade & Development shows that cultural industries account for 2.6 percent of the total

employment market (nearly 50 million jobs worldwide) (Mammadova, & Abdullayev, 2025). The data also reveals that in 2022, the arts and cultural industries in the USA reached an all-time high, contributing 4.3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), or \$1.1 trillion, to the economy. In the same year, total employment in the arts and culture sector increased to pre-pandemic levels—with nearly 5.2 million workers producing arts and cultural goods and services and wages exceeding \$540 billion - (National Council on the Arts, 2024). In 2019, in France, the cultural & creative industries generated approximately €92 billion in revenue, equivalent to 12% of exports and 2.3% of the country's national GDP, almost as much as the agricultural sector and twice as much as the automotive industry (France Diplomacy, 2023). In the UK, the government estimates that the creative industries contributed £126 billion in gross value added to the economy and employed 2.4 million people in 2022 (UK Parliament, 2024).

This situation is not unique to developed countries, and developing economies are also rapidly increasing the share of the “cultural economy” in their national wealth generation. India is a good example of this. The country has a large informal economy that has grown around handicrafts and textiles. These industries are in fact the second largest employer after agriculture. The India Brand Value Foundation claims that India is home to at least 7 million artisans, with up to 200 million people working in the informal sector, who earn their living in various ways from handicraft production (Hitchen et al., 2023). In 2022, China's business income from the cultural industry reached 16,550.2 billion Yuan, an increase of 169.8 billion Yuan over the previous year, an increase of 1.0%. In terms of industry types, the cultural wholesale and retail industry and cultural services earned 2,916.9 billion Yuan and 8,440.1 billion Yuan, respectively, an increase of 3.0% and 1.7% over the previous year (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2023).

A look at the state of the cultural economy in Iran indicates hearing a different voice, while the upstream documents such as "Cultural Engineering Map" explicitly refers to organizing the cultural industries system as one of the strategic measures (Cultural Engineering Map, 2013). The Cultural Engineering Map, as the most important upstream document in the field of culture, has been designed, compiled and approved by the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution in accordance with the principles and values of Islam, Islamic Revolution's ideals and the guidelines of the Supreme Leader in 8 chapters. A study of the content of this document shows that to some extent the economic aspects of culture - and its effects and benefits - have been given attention by Iranian policymakers, but despite the emphasis of this upstream document and the abundant rich cultural resources and reserves - Iran's ranking 10th among the countries of the world in cultural

heritage (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, (2020) -, in reality and practice, the share of the cultural economy is very small and close to zero.

In an optimistic assessment, Negahdari (2022), the head of "Research Center of Islamic Consultative Assembly" stated that the share of the cultural economy in the country's GDP is 2.8 percent. This is a bitter reality that indicates Iran's low influence in the global cultural arena. In Iran and unlike many countries, the cultural sector is not revenue-generating and has also been very costly due to some unsuccessful policies. This situation shows that the cultural economy of Iran is underdeveloped and faces numerous social, cultural and economic challenges. It should also be acknowledged that cultural policies in Iran are mostly based on an "ideologically-oriented" view and that the "cultural economy" is not, in practice, a priority for the country's cultural policymakers.

Analysis of the cultural engineering map indicates that the main concern of the compilers of this document is more focused on achieving the goals of the Islamic Revolution through exporting cultural goods to other parts of the world or preventing the entry of foreign cultural goods into Iran, an issue that demonstrates the effective role of "ideology" on the cultural market (Aqdaghi, 2019; Khaleqpanah & Sanaei, 2019). Therefore, the main issue of the present study is what factors and conditions have caused this situation. Before answering this question, it is necessary to have a brief look at the findings of previous research to better explain the necessity of the present study: Gustafsson & Lazzaro (2021) argue that cultural and creative industries can strategically help solve four challenges in EU member states: Creativity, cultural diversity and deepening European values; European identity & cohesion; job creation, economic resilience & smart growth; and improving external relations. In answering the question of "who governs culture", Marx (2020) points to how power is distributed between actors in the public and private sectors and at different state levels in Switzerland, emphasizing the role of local communities, social organizations & institutions, cultural intermediaries, social movements, and artists & civic activists. Borén et al. (2020) show how the conflict between local interests and national priorities and EU preferences has influenced cultural policy in the city of Gdańsk, Poland. Gillman (2018) highlights the marginal role of local communities in determining cultural policies and the conflict between their demands and priorities of the Brazilian government. Ho (2017) shows how the absence of a cultural policy during the British rule of Hong Kong changed to a focused market orientation after the handover of the island to China. Lee (2017) critically examines the dominant discourse on creative industries, arguing that this discourse emerged in the political-economic context of our time, where creativity and knowledge are celebrated, while human labor as a factor of production and social force is increasingly delegitimized and marginalized. He also argues that, by paying attention to creativity

in the cultural sector, we need to better understand its economic (productivity-low) and social (diversity-high) characteristics and the implications for cultural policies. Hennekam and Bennett, (2017) examine the precarious nature of creative industries in Australia, Canada and the Netherlands, focusing on job security, in-service training & access to benefits and identify common themes such as the rise of non-standard forms of employment & persistence of precarious work throughout the working life; criticism of initial training; need for and challenges of lifelong professional learning; and lack of awareness and access to benefits & support. Homan (2016) reviewing of cultural policy in Australia for popular music highlights that this type of music has contributed to economic growth in addition to responding to the needs of audiences. The findings also show that governments use this music as a tool to strengthen cultural nationalism by increasing funding and subsidies. Lee (2014) indicated that how in South Korea, government economic policies to support creative industries have been influenced by neoliberal discourse and local context.

In Iran and during the last two decades, research has been conducted on the economy of culture and its dimensions. For example, Shoja Heidari & Madani (2014) identified and prioritized the indicators for evaluating cultural policymaking and the economy of culture and found that Iran is not in a good position in various areas of the economy of culture, given its great potential. Gholampour Ahangar (2022) examined the culture budget in the last four decades and found that the share of the cultural budget in the country's general budget has not exceeded a certain level and has always fluctuated between 1 and 4 percent. Intezari and Derakhshan (2014) compared Iran and advanced countries in terms of governance and development of the cultural economy and found that Iran is not in a good position. Comparing the averages also shows that there is a significant relationship between good governance and development in the cultural economy.

In general, good governance indicators have a direct, positive and significant relationship with the development of the cultural economy, while Iranian policymakers have not made much effort to improve these indicators. Khaleqpanah & Sanaei (2019) examined "Modernity and Discursive Formulation of Iranian Cultural Policy from 1906 to the Present" and found that in all three periods, the Qajar, Pahlavi, and Islamic Republic of Iran, the government has been the center and giver of meaning to cultural policies. Fakhri and Naderinejad (2019) examined upstream documents regarding the developments in cultural policymaking of virtual social networks in the Islamic Republic of Iran and found that five policy axes in this area include taking advantage of the opportunities of social networks and developing efficient content & services, developing a networked society, preserving security and Iranian-Islamic cultural identity, a supportive approach

to the hardware & software capacities of domestic social networks, and strategic management of social networks. Ramezani et al. (2019) examined the background, patterns, and shortcomings of cultural policy-making in the Islamic Republic of Iran and found that despite the fact that cultural policy-making has been in place for many years, in the implementation phase, the dispersion of decision-making and the diversity of decision-making authorities have caused conflicts between cultural institutions and groups. Parkan and Nikobian (2019) show that the spirit governing cultural policy-making in the Islamic Republic of Iran is the emphasis on Islamic law to realize an Islamic government and society. They also found that despite the emphasis of up-stream documents on religion-based orientation, there is a gap between theory and practice in areas such as harmonious relationship between ethics & culture, valuable art and public art, and the limits and gaps of true joy and fun. Masoudinia, Rashidpour & Ebrahimzadeh (2018) believe that the most important effective strategies for strengthening the structure of Iran's cultural economy include reforming property rights laws, improving the cultural business environment, legalizing government intervention and handing over to the private sector, and building a healthy production and distribution network. Derakhshe and Esmaili (2017) examined the international cultural policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran and believe that the Islamic Revolution challenged the prevailing cultural patterns of the world. Accordingly, the divine and universal mission of the revolution, as well as presenting a positive image of it and confronting various actions of competitors, constitute the subject of Iran's international cultural policy. Moqtadaei and Arghandi (2016) analyzed the cultural policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran and found that there are numerous problems in the areas related to theoretical studies and the formation, implementation, and evaluation of cultural policy. Mohammad Hadi and Faraj Nejad Abraghwi (2014) conducted a comparative study of the cultural policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the macro and intermediate levels and determined that the Fourth Development Plan differs more and more clearly from the principles of cultural policy than the Fifth Development Plan. It also seems that in most cases, policymakers have engaged in cultural planning according to the incrementalist model, accepting the legitimacy of previous policies. Shiri and Hassan Ostadali (2013) compared the factors affecting the performance and cultural policymaking of the government of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the ninth and tenth terms, and pointed out the role of factors such as attracting efficient and experienced managers, politicization of cultural management, the multiplicity of responsible institutions, haste in making macro decisions in the cultural field, and the interaction of cultural organizations with each other. Shahram Nia and Chalmaghani (2011) examining cultural policymaking during the presidency of Seyyed Mohammad Khatami, state that during this period, a

specific political discourse was invented in the socio-political arena and components such as political development, civil society, and socio-political rights & freedoms were raised, which marked a new page in Iran's socio-political life and pushed the construction of power more and more towards a democratic direction. Salehi Amiri and Azimi Dolatabadi (2008), examining the impact of globalization on the cultural policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, believe that the emergence of this phenomenon has simultaneously created opportunities and limitations for Iran's cultural policy.

A review of the findings of previous research indicates the diversity of the various dimensions of the economy of culture in different societies. The findings also indicated areas of conflict between international standards, government priorities, and local preferences and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the economy of culture. While previous findings are mainly based on the application of quantitative methods in assessing the state of the economy of culture, the priority of present research is to assess the state of the economy of culture based on the lived experiences of experts and specialists in identifying, explaining, and interpreting the current state of the economy of culture in Iran. Accordingly, the overall objective of the present study is to examine the semantics of the policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the field of the economy of culture based on a contextual analysis. The sub-goals of the research were:

- Identifying causal factors affecting state of cultural economy
- Identifying intervening factors affecting state of cultural economy
- Identifying background factors affecting state of cultural economy
- Identifying phenomena, consequences and strategies affecting state of cultural economy
- Identifying the final state of cultural economy (core factor)

2. Research Method

The research method was qualitative using grounded theory approach. In this approach, the researcher usually uses data collected through interviews to create concepts, categories, and ultimately theory. This method allows the researcher to understand complex social phenomena in depth and to discover hidden patterns and relationships in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Accordingly, the data collection method was semi-structured interviews with 25 experts (faculty members of department of the art at the universities of art, Tehran, and Islamic Azad, artists, and producers of cultural and creative industries) who were selected through snowball sampling (theoretical saturation). One of the advantages of grounded theory is the use of an analytical tool

namely a paradigm. A paradigm organizes findings and ultimately increases their explanatory power and consists of three parts: conditions, action/interaction, and consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 128). Conditions can arise from time, place, culture, rules, beliefs, economics, power, the social world, and organizations. Action/interaction refers to the strategic or routine measures that people use to deal with situations, issues, and problems. This part of the paradigm shows what people, organizations, and the social world do or say. Action/interaction includes not only what happens between individuals, but also group discussions and conversations that occur between individuals. In relation to action/interaction, conditions take on three forms: 1- Causal, 2- Intervening and 3- Contextual (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: p. 131). Wherever there is an action/interaction, there are usually consequences. Consequences can be intended or unintended. Explaining consequences can help to clarify the phenomenon under study. Consequences, like conditions, can have internal characteristics. They may be single or multiple, visible or invisible, and have a limited or widespread effect (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 134). Therefore, the fundamental question of the research at this stage is how cultural economics experts understand and interpret the current situation and its changes and developments. What concepts, topics, and ideas have been raised for them in the process of making sense of these changes, and ultimately what is the fundamental concept resulting from these interpretations?

3. Findings

After implementing the content of the interviews and during the coding process, categories were gradually found and developed. This was done through three stages of open, axial and selective coding. The findings from the interviews show that in the open coding stage, 37 initial concepts were extracted, in the axial coding stage, 6 major categories were extracted and in the selective coding stage, 1 axial category was extracted. Thus, the six major categories are explained with respect to the 37 initial concepts in order to explain how the main concept was formed (Table 1):

Table 1: Results of the three stages of open, axial, and selective coding

Concepts	Categories	Main Core
1. Ignorance and lack of ability to benefit from country's cultural and civilizational history 2. Lack of a specific definition of economy of culture in the country's macro policies 3. Failure to distinguish cultural goods from cultural services 4. Lack of belief in culture as a commodity 5. Instrumental and ideological view of culture 6. Lack of attention to intellectual and artistic property 7. Instability in the return on capital 8. Incomplete cycle of production, distribution and consumption 9. Ignorance and lack of belief in the role of fashion 10. Ignorance of new technologies role in creation of cultural products	Causal factors	Persistent instability
1. Lack of attention to national and global consumer interests 2. Lack of creativity and diversity in cultural goods 3. Weakness in attracting domestic and foreign investors 4. Lack of recognition of international competitors 5. Unstable political relations 6. Economic stagnation and inflation	Background conditions	
1. Government Board 2. Islamic Consultative Assembly 3. Supreme Council for the Cultural Revolution 4. Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance 5. Ministry of Cultural Heritage 6. Radio and Television 7. Municipalities 8. Banks 9. Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs 10. Ministry of Commerce	Intervening factors	
1. Foreign competitors 2. Modern technologies	Phenomenon: Presence of competitors	
1. Acceptance 2. Resistance 3. Surrender	Strategies	
1. Weakening the producer 2. Increasing producers' desperation to invest 3. Weakening culture on the international stage 4. Destruction of generational process of transmitting cultural knowledge 5. Weakening the national economy 6. Increasing unemployment rate	Consequences	
Number of concepts and categories: 37	6	1

Causal conditions: In light of the content analysis of the interviews and initial coding, the interviewees pointed to the fundamental role of factors rooted in the three conceptual domains of politics, economics, and culture. Since the main causes of the current state of the cultural economy are mainly affected by the shortcomings in one of the three aforementioned domains, we will name these domains "*causal factors*" (10 factors). Regarding the first factor, namely the disregard and lack of ability to benefit from the country's cultural and civilizational history, there is a type of collective agreement among all experts that Iran has a unique capacity, history, and diversity among the nations of the world in terms of producing cultural and creative industries in all its forms. However, at the same time, this common agreement is shown by the experts that Iran society – and its various institutions – have not been able to properly exploit this capacity for the benefit of the cultural economy. The second factor refers to the lack of a specific definition of the cultural economy in the country's macro policies. This is evident in the words of one of the interviewees :

"In my opinion, many government officials and people do not have an accurate understanding and picture of the economy of culture and view cultural products more as an intrinsic and personal art than as an income-generating product."
(Interviewee No. 8)

According to experts, this situation has led to the emergence of the third and fourth factors, namely the lack of distinction between cultural goods and cultural services and lack of belief in culture as a commodity. In reality, many people still think that providing culture in its various forms is the State's duty. At the same time, and for this reason, the government also considers itself entitled to decide on the type of cultural goods and whether they are useful or harmful to the people:

"In many cases, the government does not distinguish between goods and services. While goods are produced and consumed based on customer taste, services is a privilege that the government sometimes grants or withholds. Film production is an example of this. While everywhere in the world making a film is an artistic product; the Iranian government does not view it from an economic perspective and considers itself authorized in how it is presented to the consumer." (Interviewee No. 21).

Another causal factor is the instrumental and ideological view of culture and its various dimensions, such as the economy of culture. In Iran, there is an inextricable relationship between politics and culture. This is clearly stated even in the upstream documents that cultural policies are the same as the policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This is despite the fact that in many countries of the world, cultural policies do not necessarily fully comply with the political principles of governments or parties (Robins, 2015). For this reason, the intervention of governments and parties in the cycle of production, distribution and consumption of cultural goods is minimal.

"There are two aspects to the impact of politics on culture and the economy of culture in Iran. First, the government wants artists to be the messengers of Iran's political, social, and cultural system in other countries through the production of cultural goods, and second, the government does not want cultural goods from other countries to become widely available in Iran. This policy is a double-edged sword" (Interviewee No. 11).

Background Conditions: These conditions refer to the impact of a combination of factors that are sometimes affected by multiple objective variables and social contexts, and their effects cannot be eliminated in the short term. Data analysis points to six background factors affecting Iran's cultural economy: Lack of attention to national and global consumer interests, lack of creativity & diversity in cultural goods, weakness in attracting domestic and foreign investors, lack of recognition of international competitors, instability in political relations, and economic stagnation & inflation. For each of these factors, interviewees have provided reasons and evidence. For example, the majority of experts believe that the state of Iran's economic system, affected by cyclical stagnation and inflation, has severely weakened the cultural economy over the past few decades:

"Now that I look closely, I see that working conditions are constantly becoming more difficult.... Raw materials are becoming more expensive and the economic power of buyers is decreasing. This is the situation in every cultural product. Therefore, producing the product is more difficult, selling it to fewer customers, and exporting it has faced more challenges" (Interviewee 5).

In this regard, many interviewees pointed to the strong capacity of Iranians to produce diverse cultural products, but at the same time emphasized that issues such as political sanctions have closed international markets to cultural goods. For example:

"Now, if you look at carpets, they are one of the most well-known cultural and economic goods in Iran, but there are all kinds of obstacles for me as a producer and exporter in the international market. The result is the loss of the market to Indian, Pakistani, and even Afghan competitors" (Interviewee No. 13).

Regarding the underlying conditions and the elimination of its negative effects, attention should be paid to the role of the government, the producer and the exporter at the same time.

Intervening factors: Intervening conditions refer to the influence of a set of institutions and organizations that, in a natural process, should accelerate the activity of cultural economy, while the research findings do not necessarily indicate this support. In fact, most interviewees mention the role and involvement of ten government institutions and organizations in the cultural economy. While implicitly confirming the positive role of these institutions in cultural economy, they simultaneously point to two negative issues: First, the multiplicity of decision-making centers and second, the interference of directives, laws and regulations:

"If the parliament approves a law, that should be the only criterion. It is no longer possible for every organization to constantly issue laws and directives for itself. Now, whether for production or export, we have to pay attention to ten places to see what licenses we have or have not obtained" (Interviewee 25).

Phenomenon: Phenomenon refers to the output or negative impact of three causal, contextual, and intervening factors on the cultural economy. Data analysis has shown the emergence of two phenomena: the superiority of foreign competitors - in both domestic and international markets - and the introduction of modern technologies - in the production of cultural goods and departure of traditional production practices - and as a result, the destruction of dense cultural knowledge. These two phenomena are evident in the words of one of the interviewees:

"Now you go to Naqsh-e Jahan Square in Isfahan. Unfortunately, for years this market has been filled with Chinese products that are similar to Iran's art, taste, and culture, but without quality. On the other hand, new technologies have increased the diversity of products and cultural goods, and there are no longer customers for many traditional cultural goods. That is why our share in the cultural economy is constantly getting smaller and smaller." (Interviewee 2)

Strategies: Strategy is the formulation of a plan, methods of solving a problem or dealing with disruptive factors to achieve a goal. In the present study, the strategy is based on the interviewees' understanding and interpretation of the future situation and their proposed solutions to resolve challenges of the cultural economy in Iran. Accordingly, to combat the challenges of cultural economy and improve its situation, three strategies can be mentioned: Acceptance, resistance and surrender. The acceptance strategy means that the interviewees acknowledge that nothing can be done against the destructive force and pressure of causal, contextual and intervening factors and in the current economic situation of the country and that efforts must be continued under these conditions. In this case, acceptance means peaceful coexistence with the domestic and international conditions of the cultural economy. The resistance strategy is based on combating the negative impact of these factors by adopting rational methods, amending laws, improving the situation of other social systems and providing more financial support to the cultural economy. The surrender strategy means accepting defeat against the pressure of competing forces and completely stopping activities. In this situation, the cultural economy is constantly regressing and its role in generating national wealth is on a downward trend. It is natural that the adoption of each of these strategies is based on how experts understand and interpret the current situation. This situation has led to consequences that we will discuss in the next section.

Consequences: Consequences refer to the current state of the cultural economy, a situation that shows that its contribution to national wealth generation is very small compared to other countries in the world. According to the interviewees, the inability to deal with disruptive factors or the lack of a plan to improve and develop the cultural economy has consequences such as weakening domestic production, increasing frustration among producers for investment, weakening the presence of Iran culture on the international stage, the withdrawal of the workforce from the cultural products sector, and as a result, the destruction of the generational process of transferring cultural knowledge and finally weakening the national economy:

"Now, there is no longer a large investment in the production of cultural products like in the past. Home-grown cultural products, which are generally produced by women and girls, also do not have the strength to compete with international competitors. Basically, there is no mechanism to present them in a larger arena. Some cultural products, such as Iranian films - which have some international fame - also face non-economic challenges. To be honest, I do not see a clear future" (Interviewee No. 11).

However, these consequences may occur with regard to the specific situation of each cultural product. Such consequences are not merely objective and can involve the three mental states of hope, confusion, and despair for producers or investors.

Main Core: The effects resulting from the interrelationships of the six components have led us to find, in a meaningful reconstruction of the current state of the cultural economy, that the perception and interpretation of the interviewees as experts in this economic field has resulted in the creation of a core concept or core namely "*Persistent Instability*." Persistent instability reflects the emotional and rational states of the experts in terms of analyzing the current state and drawing the future perspective of the cultural economy in Iran. This concept indicates that the majority of the experts does not have much faith in a secure and clear perspective for economic investment in the cultural sector and evaluate the state of its production, distribution, and consumption as affected by "persistent instability" in terms of the continuity of activity in this field (Figure 1).

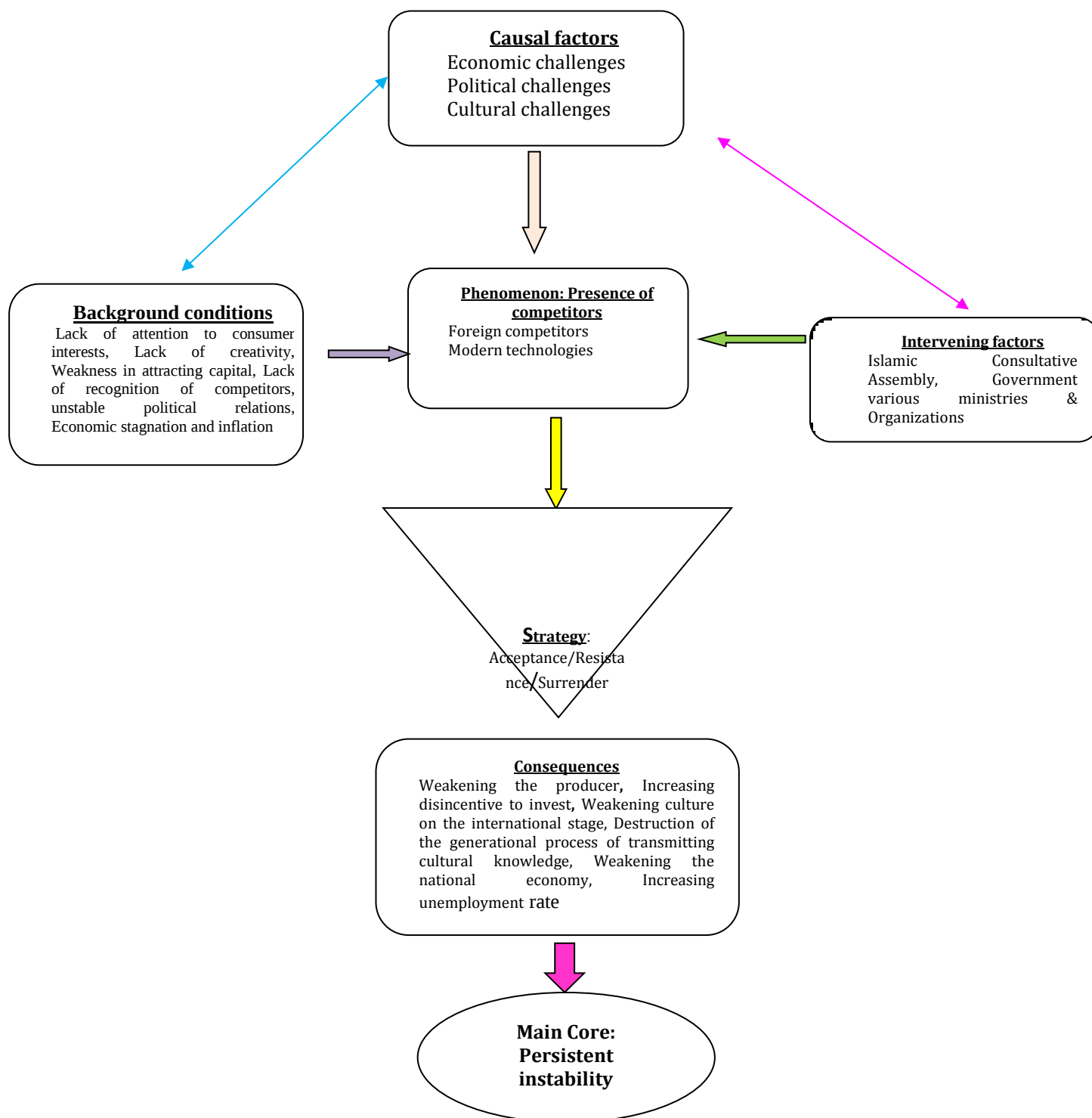


Figure 1. Paradigmatic model of semantic understanding of the state of the economy of culture in Iran

4. Conclusion

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution in the late 1970s, Iran underwent fundamental political changes, which mainly focused on religious aspects, examining, deciding, revising, and acting on all aspects of life, including economy and culture. Over the past four decades, the Iranian political structure has viewed culture mainly as a personal, unstructured, emotional, and non-profit matter. Of course, we have witnessed minor differences between different governments, but cultural policies, which are mainly reflected in upstream documents, have not given much value to the economy of culture in the real sense. The findings of previous research and national reports also show that the contribution of the economy of culture to national production is very small and negligible. In other words, culture has generally been considered by Iranian politicians as an "effective tool" for cultural influence and invasion, an attitude that is still accepted. Despite the dominance of this attitude, it must be acknowledged that Iran's seven thousand-year history has provided this country with enormous potential that can provide golden opportunities for investors in cultural and creative industries. At the same time, the emergence of phenomena such as globalization, despite seeking cultural homogenization, has provided a good opportunity for cultural diversity through the exchange of cultural and creative products. The movement of capital, the communications revolution, and the growth of interdependence of national economies in a global market has brought about enormous cultural consequences that governments such as the Islamic Republic of Iran cannot ignore. The findings of the present study show that the economy of culture in Iran faces various challenges. Some of the challenges are political in nature, such as a non-economic view of culture, excessive government dominance, and multiple legislative and decision-making centers. This finding supports the research of Shoja Heidari and Madani (2014); Fakhri and Naderinejad (2019); Khaleqpanah and Sanaei (2010); and Parkan and Nikobian (2019), who have emphasized the reduction of government ownership in the cultural economy.

Another finding of the research reveals that underlying factors such as lack of attention to consumer interests in the new millennium, lack of creativity of producers, weakness in attracting capital, lack of recognition of global competitors, and cyclical recession and inflation have weakened the position of Iran's cultural economy. In this context, the most urgent step should be to reform the laws in favor of the cultural economy, avoid issuing and approving different laws by different legislative authorities, and designate a single authority to guide investors economically. This finding is in line with the findings of Entezari & Derakhshan (2022); Masoudinia et al. (2018); Esmaili Kalishami & Derakhshah, (2017); Moqtadaei & Arghandi, (2016); Mohammad Hadi & Faraj Nejad AbarGhoyi (2014); Shiri & Hassan Ostadali, (2013), and Shahramnia & Chalmaghani (2011).

Considering the findings, the following are suggested as basic strategies for improving and promoting the cultural economy to policymakers and planners in the field of culture in Iran:

- Increasing the government's financial and supervisory support role while reducing its interventionist role,
- Long-term and strategic planning of the cultural economy in the country's development programs with an emphasis on the role of the private sector,
- Correcting the aggressive and negative view of culture and accepting it as a tool for understanding and empathy with others,
- Policy-making considering global economic developments and the role of phenomena such as globalization in the cultural economy,
- Policy-making considering the role of modern technologies in the cultural economy.

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