

2017

Quality of Life of Lifestyle Entrepreneurs: A Conceptual Model

Maria Joao L. S. Vieira

Edinburgh Napier University, 40128555@live.napier.ac.uk

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Recommended Citation

Vieira, Maria Joao L. S. (2017) "Quality of Life of Lifestyle Entrepreneurs: A Conceptual Model," *Critical Tourism Studies Proceedings*: Vol. 2017 , Article 15.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.tru.ca/cts-proceedings/vol2017/iss1/15>

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Title: Quality of Life of Lifestyle Entrepreneurs: A Conceptual Model

Author: Maria Joao Vieira

Affiliation: Edinburgh Napier University

Contact: 40128555@live.napier.ac.uk

Session Type: Presentation

Abstract:

This presentation aims to explore how lifestyle entrepreneurs (LsEs) perceive quality of life (QoL) after engaging with a home-business that operates in the accommodation sector, and also to understand the impacts of that choice on their own QoL. A conceptual model of QoL for LsEs will be suggested based on 38 in-depth interviews with LsE owners of B&Bs in Portugal, conducted as part of an ongoing doctoral study.

Interest in lifestyle entrepreneurs (LsEs) has been growing among academics (Marchant & Mottiar, 2011); still, despite the relevance, studies on the understanding of this complex concept are lacking, whether in regards to its “conceptualization” or “content of current research” (Carlsen et al., 2008, p. 260). Knowledge about the group is scarce and tends to be focused on the motivations to open small tourism businesses (Thomas et al., 2011), being relatively consensual that LsEs’ main motivation is not profit nor desire for growth (Shaw & Williams, 1998; Ioannides & Petersen, 2003). This assumption, as obvious as it appears, does not do justice to the relevance this group of entrepreneurs has in the tourism and hospitality sector. Instead, the lack of understanding of LsEs’ goals, intentions, lifestyle, and perception of quality of life (QoL) allows the creation of discourses that tend to portray stereotypes.

The label LsE has been used in the tourism literature to describe owners of small firms who intentionally choose a particular lifestyle over profit and business growth (Lashley & Rowson, 2010; Skokic & Morrison, 2011). LsEs want to have more control in their own lives and achieve a certain level of QoL and personal happiness (Lashley & Rowson, 2007; Lundberg & Fredman, 2012). The label LsE on its own suggests that the style of life is something of importance to this group of entrepreneurs. To describe the concept of entrepreneur(ship) with the term lifestyle makes the focus shift to lifestyle choices. The lifestyle label is then related to a desire to open a small business, taking into consideration aspects like family, style of life, and commercial concerns (Saxena, 2015); blending lifestyle and work as if they are one and the same (Holland & Martin, 2015); and an ambition of achieving a certain QoL, which may in turn be associated with the possibility of living a pleasant life guided by personal preferences and values (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000).

Taking into consideration the agreement that seems to exist in the literature regarding QoL as one of the main drivers for LsEs to engage in tourism related entrepreneurial ventures (Shaw & Williams, 2004; Getz & Petersen, 2005; Ateljevic, 2007), it becomes relevant to understand how this particular group perceives QoL and how they self-assess their own QoL. It becomes even more important in a society that is supporting the ideal of living a more healthy and fulfilling life (Rapley, 2003), and where QoL is a global desired result of service delivery for economic, social, and political reasons (Galloway et al., 2006).

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