

Title: Quality of Life of Tourism Entrepreneurs: Is It about the Lifestyle?

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Abstract:

Owners of small businesses, within the tourism and hospitality literature, tend to be labelled lifestyle entrepreneurs (LsEs) and described with an emphasis on the style of life they want to achieve while running their businesses (Lashley and Rowson, 2010; Skokic and Morrison, 2011). The lifestyle label is often related to: a desire to open a small business where its owner can take into consideration aspects like family, lifestyle and commercial concerns (Saxena, 2015); the possibility of blending lifestyle and work as if they are one and the same (Holland and Martin, 2015); and to an ambition of achieving a certain quality of life (QoL) aligned with personal preferences and values (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000). Amongst authors it seems relatively consensual that LsEs main motivation to begin an entrepreneurial venture is not profit nor desire for growth (Shaw and Williams, 1998; Ioannides and Petersen, 2003). Nonetheless, knowledge about the group of tourism entrepreneurs' is scarce (Thomas et al., 2011) and tends to be focused on the motivations to start the business. Taking into consideration the apparent agreement that exists in the literature regarding QoL as one of the main drivers for LsEs to engage in tourism related entrepreneurial ventures (Shaw and Williams, 2004; Getz and Petersen, 2005), it becomes relevant to understand how this particular group perceives and defines QoL. Given the significance of LsEs in the tourism and hospitality research, both for the high number of small businesses in the sector and for the opportunity they represent in terms of added knowledge to the current society, having a deeper understanding about LsEs perception of QoL might be helpful in advancing the knowledge about this special group of tourism entrepreneurs. This presentation aims to introduce the conceptual model of QoL of LsEs that emerged from an ongoing doctoral study. The model was developed from the thematic analysis of 36 in-depth interviews that were conducted with LsEs, owners of B&B's in Portugal. The findings suggest that there are seven issues contributing to LsEs' perception of QoL: self-realization, occupation, interpersonal relationships, finance, home, personal preferences and location. Selfrealisation and occupation are the ones that matter the most, reflecting the holistic style of life that LsEs want to live. Ideally, a life where there is no distinction between who they are and what they do. Realistically, a life with a gap between what they perceive quality of life to be and the life quality their day-to-day activities allows them to achieve. Quality of life seems not to be about the lifestyle, but about a deep reflexive journey from LsEs' self into a better version of it. The implications of the findings and how they challenge the label LsE will be discussed.

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