International Journal of Management Cases

Non-financial indicators of small and medium-sized enterprises success

Female entrepreneurs in Cyprus: characteristics, barriers, and steps for development

Portuguese historical villages: Characteristics and resolving their negative aspects

Student attitudes toward use of social media in the learning process: A comparative study of Croatian and German students

IJMC

Contents

Non-financial indicators of small and medium-sized enterprises success

Lenka Procházková
Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic

Jakub Straka
Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic

Abstract
The aim of the paper is to introduce non-financial indicators of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) success and their importance in evaluating the success of these entities. Nowadays, financial indicators are the most frequently used for evaluating business success. Unfortunately, these indicators present the consequences of negative phenomenon and not the causes. Also some aspects of the business venture is not possible to describe with these indicators (e.g. environmental impact, innovation or customer satisfaction). Mentioned shortcomings of financial indicators in process of business evaluating can be eliminated using non-financial indicators presented in results of this paper. Non-financial indicators of success are created based on key success factors of SMEs. Key success factors of SMEs are identified on secondary data and primary questionnaire research performed among Czech SMEs in 2014. Non-financial indicators are divided into five groups. These are: human resources, marketing, manufacture, organization management and financial management.

Key words - Non-financial indicators, key success factors, SMEs, business success, internal SME environment.

Introduction

Small and middle-sized enterprises (hereinafter SME) have an important position in national economies. These subjects take credit for regional development and they also play an important role in social cohesion. SME are very flexible and innovative. These features are closely related to an easy organizational structure.

At the same time, these subjects suffer from difficult access to financial resources and they report lack of professionals and a small ability to user modern methods of performance and success evaluation at the market. Primarily, complexity and time, personal and often also financial demand are an obstacle to application of these models. But SME also require a systematic and complex approach to management.

Evaluation of enterprises through indicators is the most often realized in one of three ways: a set of indicators (usually indicators of liquidity, profitability, performance, liability and position at the market); a set of indicators grouped into a pyramid with a key indicator at the top; one indicator, a so-called composite indicator, which is synthesis of partial indicators (Synek, 2011).

Financial indicators prevail in all named ways of evaluation of enterprises. Usage of financial indicators as evaluation systems of enterprises is, however, connected with several problems: delay (historical character), orientation on short-term objectives, presentation of consequences rather than causes of negative effects. Some aspects of an enterprise activity are not possible to be described by financial indicators (e.g. an

influence of environment, innovation, customer satisfaction). The stated limits of financial indictors should be eliminated by introduction of non-financial indicators into evaluation systems (Synek, 2011). Johnson and Kaplan (1991) already highlighted failure of financial indicators in evaluation of performance and it is due to changes in the environment of enterprises and in strategies of modern enterprises. According to Johnson and Kaplan (1991: 256) it is more important to measure and report non-financial indicators than to measure profit. Those should be based on strategy of an organization and related especially to the area of production, marketing, research and development.

The above stated facts became a motive for building a model of evaluation of SME as a supporting tool for easy self-evaluation and eventual comparison with competing subjects. The most important contribution of the model for SME will be a possibility to identify weaknesses. This model will be based only on non-financial success indicators.

For this reason, the objective of the article is to present partial results of research work, it means non-financial success indicators of SME. These non-financial success indicators were created from identified key success factors and they are divided (as well as success factors) into five groups: human resources, marketing, production, organization management and financial management.

For needs of identification of SME in the Czech Republic and their division, the Commission Recommendation 2003/361/ES was used, which represents a new definition for SME (European Commission, 2012).

In order to fulfil the objective it was also necessary to define a successful enterprise. Many professionals deal with the term "successful enterprise", however, it is still a relative term. For SME business success may be especially to assure "survival" in the business environment in the considered time horizon (Weinzimmer and Manmadhan, 2009; Vodáček and Vodáčková, 2004; Cowling, 2007). Many authors see success of SME more objectively, such as financial growth, organizational structure and export volume (Fairlie and Robb, 2009; Masuo et al, 2001). Success is also achieving of a predetermined system of results of business activity, i.e. partial objectives in the considered time horizon (Vodáček and Vodáčková, 2004). It implies that success of an enterprise has different meaning for different people, groups of people and subjects. In spite of this, understandings of success of enterprises are close. (Philip, 2010; Blažek et al, 2008). By the summary of obtained knowledge it was possible to define a successful enterprise as an enterprise whose activity at the market satisfies requirements for achieving of objectives and results of business activity of all interested people or groups of people.

Materials and Methods

Non-financial success indicators were created from key success factors of SME. In order to identify them there were analysis and subsequent synthesis of secondary and primary data realized, thus a thorough study of professional domestic and foreign resources (monographs, professional articles and research published in professional journals). The main objective of analysis of secondary resources was to define key factors of the inner environment determining success of SME.

Key success factors of SME

Many authors deal with the identification of success factors of SME. With increasing importance of SME for national economies there is increasing quantity of studies in this topic. The results of thorough analysis of professional resources are the following overviews of key success factors (Tab. 1-5)

Tab. 1 Overview of key success factors of SME – group Human resources

Group	Authors	Factors		Factors	Authors
HUMAN RESOURCES	Man, Lau a Chan (2002), Ratnaningsih a kol. (2010)	employees		skills	Kislingerová a Nový (2005), Nieuwenhuizen a Kroon (2003), Lin (1998), Stoner a Freeman (1989)
				experiences	Al-Mahrouq (2010), Rose, Kumar a Yen (2006), Nieuwenhuizen a Kroon (2003), Kislingerová a Nový (2005)
				education	Charney a Libecap (2000), Al-Mahrouq (2010)
				fluctuation	Al-Mahrouq (2010)
				qualification	Lin (1998), Rose, Kumar a Yen (2006), Al-Mahrouq (2010)
				motivation	Lin (1998), Al-Mahrouq (2010), Kislingerová a Nový (2005)
		entrepreneur		education	Sinha (1996), Indarti a Langenbert (2004), Indarti a Langenberg (2004)
				work experience	Indarti a Langenberg (2004), Kislingerová a Nový (2005)

Source: Authors' results

Primary research and data processing

The next step was realization of a quantitative questionnaire survey. The obtained primary data served to verification of hypotheses stated based on knowledge of the secondary analysis and to verification of chosen success factors and their specifics.

The questionnaire was created by identification questions, questions related to an organization, human resources, the area of technical processes and technologies, the area of marketing and several additional questions. At the end of the questionnaire respondents evaluated a level of achieved success during their activity at the market. This question was important for the subsequent analysis of data in pivot tables (similarly as in foreign research, e.g. Philip, 2010; Indarti and Langenberg, 2004). During the analysis of dependence, achieved success enters as a dependent variable, other chosen variables of the questionnaire survey are then independent variables.

Tab. 2 Overview of key success factors of SME – group Marketing

Group	Authors	Factors	Authors	Factors	Authors
MARKETING	Indarti a Langenberg (2004), Man, Lau a Chan (2002) O'Farell, Hitchens a Moffat (1992),	strategy, vision	Man, Lau a Chan (2002), Wijewardena a Zoysa (2005), Kislingerová a Nový (2005), Indarti a Langenberg (2004),	price policy	Lin (1998), Al-Mahrouq (2010), Philip (2010)
				flexibility	Man, Lau a Chan (2002), Philip (2010)
				quality	O'Farell, Hitchens a Moffat (1992), Man, Lau a Chan (2002), Wijewardena a Zoysa (2005), Ratnaningsih a kol. (2010), Philip (2010), Lin (1998)
				customer service	Man, Lau a Chan (2002), Nieuwenhuizen a Kroon (2003)
				additional services	Man, Lau a Chan (2002), Philip (2010)
				(regular) buyers/customers	Chittithaworn a kol. (2011) Blažek a kol. (2008)

Source: Authors' results

Firstly it was necessary to carry out pre-research. The data collection was carried out through an electronic questionnaire with help of the virtual laboratory for collection and evaluation of primary data of query reports ReLa (Research Laboratory; developed by the Department of Marketing and Trade, PEF MENDELU). During the pre-research, 100 SME of food processing industry were questioned in September and October 2011. In order to increase return of filled questionnaires, all subjects were contacted also by phone. The return of questionnaires after data cleansing was 21%. Sorting of data of I. and II. level was carried out. It was followed by editing and change of formulation of some questions. During the quantitative survey, the adjusted electronic questionnaire was, similarly as during pre-research, sent by email to 6,235 SME of the processing industry. The final collection took place in September 2014. Before sending of the electronic questionnaire it was necessary to create a database of subjects to be questioned. There was realized the purposeful selection limited by availability of addresses of subjects. Requirements on respondents were following: quantity of employees 10-249 (small 10-49 employees, middle-sized 50–249 employees), the area of business section C Processing industry (according to the CZ-NACE classification), seat of an enterprise in the Czech Republic, an owner, owners or majority owners coming from the Czech Republic.

Tab. 3 Overview of key success factors of SME – group Production

Group		Factors	Authors	Factors	Authors
PRODUCTION		technology		level of production technology and equipment	Al-Mahrouq (2010), Indarti a Langenberg (2004), Lin (1998), Ratnaningsih a kol. (2010)
		innovation	Nieuwenhuizen a Kroon (2003), Man, Lau a Chan (2002), Al-Mahrouq (2010), Lin (1998), Kristiansena, Furuholta, a Wahida (2003), Philip (2010), Kislingerová a Nový (2005)		
		research and development	Lin (1998), Al-Mahrouq (2010), Ratnaningsih a kol. (2010)		
		know-how	Lin (1998), Ratnaningsih a kol. (2010), Philip (2010), Chittithaworn a kol. (2011)		

Source: Authors' results

The specific characteristics of respondents who filled the questionnaire is following. The group with 10 to 49 employees created 60.2% of respondents and the group with 50 to 249 employees created 39.8% of respondents. The majority of respondents, 71.2%, operate at the market as limited liability companies. It was followed by public limited companies with the share of 14.4%. Natural persons were represented by 8.5% and cooperatives by 5.9%. The largest representation, 33.1%, was created by the engineering industry. It was followed by enterprises dealing with production of food products and drinks that created 17.8% of respondents. 13.6% of respondents deal with production of electric equipment with the share of 11.0% followed by enterprises producing textile, clothing and footwear. The smallest group of respondents, 2.5%, deals with production of pharmaceutical products and preparations. 22.0% of respondents deal with different production within the processing industry.

Primary data were exported from the system ReLa into the program MS Excel. In this program there was cleansing and sorting of data realized. From the total quantity of 267 filled questionnaires there were 118 of correctly filled questionnaires obtained. Subsequently, data were coded and processed in the statistical software Statistica 12 from the company StatSoft CR Ltd.

Tab. 4 Overview of key success factors of SME – group Organization management

Group	Authors	Factors	Authors	Factors	Authors
MANAGEMENT OF COMPANY	O'Farell, Hitchens a Moffat (1992), Chittithaworn a kol. (2011)	organizational structure	Man, Lau a Chan (2002)	number of levels	Man, Lau a Chan (2002), Al-Mahrouq (2010), O'Farell, Hitchens a Moffat (1992)
		style and efficiency of management	Man, Lau a Chan (2002), Wijewardena a Zoysa (2005), Al-Mahrouq (2010)	communication	Lin (1998), Al-Mahrouq (2010), Philip (2010)
		stable suppliers	Blažek a kol. (2008)		
		culture of company	Man, Lau a Chan (2002), Ratnaningsih a kol. (2010), Verhees a Meulenberg (2004)		

Source: Authors' results

Tab. 5 Overview of key success factors of SME – group Financial management

Group	Authors	Factor	Authors		
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	Nieuwenhuizen a Kroon (2003), Ratnaningsih a kol. (2010)	resources	Man, Lau a Chan (2002), Indarti a Langenberg (2004), Wijewardena a Zoysa (2005), Chittithaworn a kol. (2011)		

Source: Authors' results

Sorting of I. level was carried out, it means absolute and relative frequency distribution. It was followed by data sorting of II. level, it means the analysis through pivot tables. By testing of hypotheses, there was verified dependency of data in pivot tables through the use of Pearson´s chi-square test of independency. For testing, there was the level of significance α=0.05 determined. For measuring of power of relationship in a pivot table there were Pearson´s contingency coefficient and Carmer´s contingency coefficient used. Based on these contingency coefficients it is possible to state how intensive dependency occurs.

The result of analysis of primary data was verification of chosen success factors and their specifics.

Frequency analysis

The identified success factors were subsequently transformed into non-financial success indicators. These indicators, however, do not have comparable importance. It was necessary to assign weights to these indicators especially for future usage during setting up the model.

Weight were assigned to individual indicators based on the realized frequency test analysis. This analysis serves to looking up the most frequent words in text and subsequent assignment to a topic. In this case it was used only for frequency analysis of chosen terms in text, especially in professional articles. It included terms related to key success factors. Frequency in professional text then logically determines weight of an indicator. Since the sum of weights in the model, which will be set up during the final phase of research must be 100%, in this case 100 points, it was necessary to determine a coefficient by which values obtained by frequency analysis would be multiplied and their sum would be 100 points. Based on obtained knowledge and after consultation with professionals, weights were in some cases determined by one percent higher or lower.

The frequency analysis was carried out in the statistical software Statistica 12 from the company StatSoft CR Ltd. Text mining was carried out in this software.

Results

Chosen results of primary research

Quantitative research served to verification and comparison of some chosen success factors stated in the overview (Tab.1, Tab.2, Tab.3, Tab.4, Tab.5) in the environment of Czech SME of the processing industry and especially to analysis of specifics of chosen success factors. Interesting were also owns respondents' views on the factors of success. Presented are also the results, that are not consistent with the findings from the analysis of expert sources. The chosen interesting results of research are following.

Level of fluctuation of employees in an enterprise

A positive finding is related to the level of fluctuation in enterprises. The quantity of employees who terminate employment is for 67.8% of respondents less than 2% from the overall quantity per year. For 29.7% of respondent, the level of fluctuation of employees is 2 to 10% from the overall quantity per year. Only 2.5% of respondents report fluctuation of employees more than 10% from the overall quantity of employees per year. The hypothesis was stated about fluctuation of employees in an enterprise:

H_0: The level of fluctuation of employees does not have an influence on success of SME at the domestic market.

H_1: The level of fluctuation of employees has an influence on success of SME at the domestic market.

During testing of the relationship between the level of fluctuation of employees and success of SME (chi-square=1.8662414, df=2) p-value 0.39408 was calculated, which at the stated level of significance α=0.05 means that we do not reject the hypothesis. We assume according to the results that there does not exist dependence between fluctuation of employees and success of SME at the domestic market.

Employees´ benefits

Motivation of employees is one of key success factors in the area of human resources management. Enterprises may use employees´ benefits in order to motivate and influence satisfaction of employees. This specific of motivation of employees was analysed within the quantitative research. The positive finding is that only 3.4% of respondents do not provide their employees with any benefits. 20.3% of respondents provide respondents with 1 to 3 benefits, 32.2% of respondents provide 4 to 6 employees´ benefits and 7 to 10 benefits are provided by 37.3% of respondents. Then 6.8% provide their employees with 11 to 13 benefits. The positive finding is that the majority of respondents provide 4 and more different employees´ benefits, despite some benefits are not designed for all employees of an enterprise. In relation to providing benefits to employees as a way of motivation, the hypothesis was stated.

H_0: Providing of employees´ benefits does not have an influence on success of SME at the domestic market.

H_1: Providing of employees´ benefits has an influence on success of SME at the domestic market.

During testing of the relationship between providing of benefits to employees and success of SME (chi-square=12.57844, df=4) p-value 0.01353 was calculated, which means at the stated level of significance α=0.05 that we reject the null hypothesis. According to the realized survey there is dependence between providing of employees´ benefits and success of SME at the domestic market. Power of dependence was calculated by Pearson´s contingency coefficient and Cramer´s contingency coefficient. Based on the calculated values where P=0.3103685 and C=0.3264919 it is possible to conclude that there is medium strong dependence between providing of employees´ benefits and success of SME at the domestic market.

Training of employees

Education of employees is one of key success factors of an enterprise. If an enterprise allows them, employees may further educate in a particular field by themselves or there occurs further education or continuous training in an enterprise. 15.3% of surveyed enterprises do not train their employees continuously, 2.5% train their employees according to legal requirements and 10.2% of respondents according to their needs. Then 37.3% of respondents train their employees once a year, 16.1% of respondents twice a year, 18.6% of respondents train their employees three and more times per year. Findings from professional resources show that education of employees and their continuous education and training have an influence on success of SME. Based on these information the hypothesis was stated.

H_0: Continuous training of current employees does not have an influence on success of SME at the domestic market.

H_1: Continuous training of current employees has an influence on success of SME at the domestic market.

During testing of the relationship between training of employees and success of SME (chi-square=5.426337, df=6) p-value 0.49040 was calculated, which at the stated level of significance α=0.05 means that we do not rejected the null hypothesis. We assume according to results of the realized survey that there does not exist dependence between training of employees and success of SME at the domestic market.

Technical level of production equipment

Key factors of the internal environment that determines success of SME include also technologies used in production and the level of production equipment. The survey was carried out among manufacturing enterprises. 2.5% of respondents evaluate their technical level of production equipment as excellent, 16.1% of respondents as very good. The largest share is then created by respondents (37.3%) who find the level of their production equipment as good. It is followed by 33.9% of respondents who evaluate their production equipment as sufficient. 10.2% of respondents evaluate the level of their production equipment as insufficient. The hypothesis was stated in relation to importance of this factor.

H_0: The technical level of production equipment does not have an influence on success of SME at the domestic market.

H_1: The technical level of production equipment has an influence on success of SME at the domestic market.

During testing of the relationship between the technical level of production equipment and success of SME (chi-square=22.50147, df=4) p-value 0.00016 was calculated, which means at the stated level of significance α=0.05 that we reject the null hypothesis. The technical level of production equipment has an influence on success of SME at the domestic market. Power of dependence was calculated by Pearson´s contingency coefficient and Cramer´s contingency coefficient. Based on the calculated values when P=0.4001889 and C=0.4366812 it is possible to conclude medium strong dependence between the technical level of production equipment and success of SME at the domestic market, which is also confirmed by results of foreign research.

Research and development

Research and development are closely related to an innovation activity in an enterprise. They are key success factors. According to obtained data, research and development is realized by 61.9% of respondents. These enterprises realize research and development in the area of increasing productivity (21.2% of respondents), in the area of increasing quality of products (50.8% of respondents) and in the area of product innovation (15.3% of respondents). The hypothesis about research and development of SME was stated.

H_0: Realization of research and development of SME does not have an influence on their success at the domestic market.

H_1: Realization of research and development of SME has an influence on their success at the domestic market.

During testing of the relationship between realization of research and development of SME and their success (chi-square=7.694857, df=1), p-value 0.00554 was calculated, which means at the stated level of significance α=0.05 that we reject the null hypothesis. Realization of research and development of SME has an influence on their success at the domestic market. Based on the calculated value of Pearson´s contingency coefficient when P=0.2474238 it is possible to conclude mild dependence between realization of research and development and success of SME at the domestic market.

Used tools of communication mix

Communication with customers is a typical activity of marketing. Promotion is an important part of enterprise strategy as a key success factor. Enterprises have large quantity of tools for communication with a customer. It is apparent from obtained data that the most used way of communication is advertisement on the internet (59.3% of respondents), which is related especially with low costs spent on this type of promotion. It is followed by direct marketing (41.5% of respondents) and advertisement in print (34.6% of respondents). The least used form of promotion is advertisement on TV (3.4% of respondents). Results correspond with an amount of costs, which is necessary to be spent on a specific tool of promotion. The hypothesis was stated for the relationship of promotion and success of SME.

H_0: Usage of marketing communication tools does not have an influence on success of SME at the domestic market.

H_1: Usage of marketing communication tools has an influence on success of SME at the domestic market.

During testing of the relationship between quantity of used promotion tools and success of SME (chi-square=1.677917, df=3) p-value 0.64185 was calculated, which means at the stated level of significance α=0.05 that we do not reject the null hypothesis. We assume according to results of the realized research that there does not exist dependency between quantity of used promotion tools and success of SME at the domestic market.

Way of product price determination

The key success factor – price policy (as a set of basic decisions and measures related to the market) enables to reach determined objectives through a price. The particularity of this factor is the way of product price determination. Enterprises may use various methods of price determination. The majority of subjects choose the cost method (62.7%). 16.1% of respondents stated that their price determination is based on product prices of competitors. 12.7% of respondents determine a product price according to marketing objectives (maximization of turnover, current incomes, current profit or just survival). 5.9% of enterprises determines a product price according to demand. The remaining enterprises (2.5%) use an individual approach and combination of various approaches. The hypothesis was stated in relation to the method of price determination. H_0: There is no dependence between product price determination and success of SME at the domestic market.

H_1: There is dependence between product price determination and success of SME at the domestic market.

During testing of the relationship between product price determination and success of SME (chi-square=7.942886, df=4) p-value 0.09369 was calculated, which means at the stated level of significance α=0.05 that we do not reject the null hypothesis. We assume according to results of the realized research that there does not exist dependence between the way of product price determination and success of SME at the domestic market.

Non-financial success indicators of SME according to respondents

Respondents were asked about non-financial success indicators of an enterprise (important for them) because of their increasing importance. Answers of respondents related to non-financial success indicators are summarized in the following table. The most often stated were product quality and satisfaction of. It was followed by the indicator good reputation of an enterprise and its solidity. Respondents also stated loyalty of customers

Tab. 6 Non-financial success indicators according to respondents

Indicator	Absolute frequency
Product quality	15
Satisfaction of customers	15
Good reputation and solidity	14
Customer loyalty	10
Market share	8
Good references	8
Awareness (of brand, company, products)	6
Pleasant work environment	4
Stability	3
Speed	3
Low fluctuation of employees	3
Satisfaction of employees	3
Competitiveness	2
No complaints	2
Flexibility	2
Corporate culture	2
Long-term position at the market	1
Approval of EU subsidies	1
Perfect service	1
Authority in professional circles	1
Know-how	1
New territories	1
Ability and willingness to help (support of science and young people)	1
Interest in employment	1

Source:Authors' results (Questionnaire survey, 2014, n=93)

Non-financial success indicators of SME

From the key success factors (see Tab. 1, Tab. 2, Tab. 3, Tab. 4, Tab. 5) non-financial success indicators were created. These non-financial indicators include fluctuation of employees, qualification, skills and knowledge of employees, training/education of employees, motivation of employees, strategy and vision, marketing communication, stability and reliability of buyers/customers, satisfaction of buyers/customers, customer service, flexibility, technical level of production equipment, research and development, product innovation, enterprise management methods, corporate culture, internal communication, selection of an supplier, stability and reliability of suppliers, usage of financial support, financial analysis and cash flow.

In the following table (Tab. 7) there are stated individual non-financial indicators including their weights. Weights were assigned to individual indicators according to results of frequency analysis of text. It included frequency analysis of chosen terms (names of factors) and their synonyms in professional texts. The result of analysis is a ratio of frequency and quantity of professional texts in which these terms appear. These values determined weights that will non-financial success indicators have in the model. The model will be set up within the final phase of research. Since the sum of weights in the model must be 100% (in this case 100 points) it was necessary to determine a coefficient, by which the result of frequency analysis will be multiplied and thus a value leading to determination of weights in the model will be obtained. Based on acquired knowledge and after consultation with professionals, weight were in some cases determined by one percent higher or lower.

Discussion and Conclusion

For an enterprise that wants to be successful it is necessary to measure performance. It is an indispensable part of an enterprise. Results of measuring are very important for internal users (owners, managers and employees) as well as for external users (business partners, state, financial institutions).

The objective of the article was to present non-financial indicators of success of SME that were created as partial results after several years of research. The objective of the research is to set up the model of evaluation of SME based on non-financial indicators that would be easily applicable for SME.

Created non-financial success indicators of SME include fluctuation of employees, qualification, skills and knowledge of employees, training/education of employees, motivation of employees, strategy and vision, marketing communication, stability and reliability of buyers/customers, satisfaction of buyers/customers, customer service, flexibility, technical level of production equipment, research and development, product innovation, enterprise management methods, corporate culture, internal communication, selection of suppliers, stability and reliability of suppliers, usage of financial support, financial analysis and cash flow.

Tab. 7 Determination of weights of indicators – results of frequency analysis

Group	Indicator	Frequency of terms/quantity of resources	Adjustment by coefficient*	Resulting weight
Human resources	Fluctuation of employees	2.4	1.2	2.0
	Qualification, skills and knowledge	13.6	6.8	6.0
	Training/education of employees	10.8	5.4	4.0
	Motivation of employees	10.3	5.2	5.0
Marketing	Strategy, vision	19.0	9.5	10.0
	Marketing communication	12.7	6.4	6.0
	Stability and reliability of buyers/customers	11.8	5.9	6.0
	Satisfaction of buyers/customers	9.6	4.8	6.0
	Customer service	11.3	5.7	6.0
	Flexibility	2.4	1.2	2.0
Production	Technical level of production equipment	13.6	6.8	7.0
	Research and development	13.7	6.9	5.0
	Product innovation	7.3	3.7	3.0
Organization management	Methods of enterprise management	6.5	3.3	4.0
	Corporate culture	5.5	2.8	3.0
	Internal communication	10.2	5.1	6.0
	Selection of suppliers	6.4	3.2	4.0
	Stability and reliability of suppliers	7.3	3.7	5.0
Financial management	Usage of financial support	7.1	3.6	2.0
	Financial analysis	12.2	6.1	6.0
	Cash flow	6.0	3.0	2.0
	Total	200.0	99.9	100

* Ratio of frequency of a term and quantity of resources after multiplication by the coefficient 0.5
Source: Authors' results

Professional indicators are also stated by domestic and foreign professional. They include among non-financial indicators satisfaction and loyalty of a customer, reliability of a supplier, flexibility of a supplier and own flexibility, involvement of employees and their satisfaction, communication, possibility of personal growth, innovation, research and development and production (Nenadál, 2004; Kotler et al, 2007; Tomek and Vávrová, 2009; Kaplan and Norton, 2000; Plašková et al, 2004; OECD, 2013; European Commission, 2013)

Non-financial indicators created from the identified key success factors also correspond with a majority of non-financial indicators that were also stated by respondents during collection of primary data. Responsible employees (managers) and owners are aware of importance of non-financial indicators. However, according to findings importance is still attached especially to financial indicators.

Obtained data (secondary and primary), identified key success factors and created non-financial success indicators are important for further research activity in the area of success of SME. During building of the model it will be necessary to assure measurability of non-financial indicators. This requirement will be met by introduction of the point system. The nature of the model will lie in selection of a statement that best captures reaching of a given indicator in an enterprise. Individual levels of indicators will be verbally defined and evaluated by points. The model will serve as a supporting tool for enterprise management and it will meet the requirement of easy application and no demand on knowledge, experience and resources. The main contribution for SME will be identification of their weaknesses.

Acknowledgements

References

AL-MAHROUQ, M., 2010. Success Factors of small and medium-sized enterprises: The case of Jordan. *Journal of social science*, vol. 10, no. 1. pp 1-16, ISSN 1549-3652.

BLAŽEK, L. et al., 2008. *Konkurenční schopnost podniků: (analýza faktorů hospodářské úspěšnosti).* 1. vyd. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 211 p, ISBN 978-80-210-4734-1.

COWLING, M., 2007. Early stage survival and growth. *The Life Cycle of Entrepreneurial Ventures*, vol. 3, no. 6, pp 479-506, ISBN 978-0-387-32313-8.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2012. *What is an SME?* In: European Commission: Entrepreneurship and SMEs [online]. European Commission [cit. 2013-10-07]. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/index_en.htm

FAIRLIE, R. W. and ROBB, A. M., 2009. Gender differences in business performance: Evidence from the characteristics of business owners survey. *Small Business Economics*, vol. 33, no. 4, pp 375-395, DOI: 10.1007/s11187-009-9207-5.

CHARNEY, A. and LIBECAP, G. D., 2000. *The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education: An Evaluation of the Berger Entrepreneurship Program at the University of Arizona*, 1985-1999. Final Report. Kansas City: The Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership. 131 p.

CHITTITHAWORN, C. et al., 2011. Factors Affecting Business Success of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Thailand. *Asian Social Science*, vol. 7, no. 5, ISSN 1911-2025, DOI 10.5539/ass.v7n5pl80.

INDARTI, N. and LANGENBERG, M., 2004. *Factors affecting business success amon smes: empirical evidences from Indonesia. Small and Medium Enterprises Development Center (SMEDC)*, Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

JOHNSON, T.H. and KAPLAN, R.S., 1991. *Relevance Lost: The Rise and Fall of Management Accounting*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 269 p, ISBN 08-758-4254-2.

KAPLAN, R.S. and NORTON, D.P., 2000. *Balanced scorecard: strategický systém měření výkonnosti podniku*. 1st Ed. Prague: Management Press, 267 p, ISBN 80-7261-032-5.

KISLINGEROVÁ, E. et al., 2005. *Chování podniku v globalizujícím se prostředí*. 1st Ed. Prague: C. H. BECK, 422 p, ISBN 80-7179-847-9.

KOTLER, P. et al., 2007. *Moderní marketing*. 4. evropské vydání. Prague: Grada Publishing, 1048 p, ISBN 978-80-247-1545-2.

KRISTIANSEN, S., FURUHOLT, B. and WAHID, F., 2003. Internet cafe entrepreneurs: pioneers in information dissemination in Indonesia. *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, vol. 4, no. 4, pp 251-263, ISSN 1465-7503.

LIN, C. Y.-Y., 1998. Success Factors of Small- and Medium- Sized Enterprises in Taiwan: An Analysis of Cases. *Journal of Small Business Management*, vol. 36, no. 4, pp 43-56, ISSN 1540-627X.

MAN, T. W. Y, LAU, T. and CHAN, K. F., 2002. The competitiveness of small and medium enterprises: a conceptualization with focus on entrepreneurial competencies. *Journal of Business Venturing*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp 123-142, ISSN 0883-9026.

MASUO, D. et al., 2001. Factors Associated with Business and Family Success: A Comparison of Single Manager and Dual Manager Family Business Households. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp 55-73, ISSN 1573-3475, DOI 10.1023/A:1009492604067.

NENADÁL, J., 2004. *Měření v systémech managementu jakosti*. 2nd Ed. Prague: Management Press, 335 p, ISBN 80-7261-110-0.

NIEUWENHUIZEN, C. and KROON, J., 2003. The relationship between financing criteria and the Access factors of entrepreneurs in small and medium enterprises. *Development Southern Africa*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp 129-142, ISSN 0376-835X.

OECD, 2013. *OECD Science, Technology and Industry Scoreboard 2013: Innovation for Growth*. Paris: OECD Publishing, 276 p, ISBN 978-92-64-20073-p, DOI 10.1787/sti_scoreboard-2013-en.

O'FARRELL, P., HITCHENS, D. and MOFFAT L., 1992. The Competitiveness of Business Service Firms: A Matched Comparison between Scotland and the South East of England. *Regional Studies*, vol. 26, no. 6, pp 519-533, ISSN 1360-0591.

PHILIP, M., 2010. Factors affecting business success of Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs). *Asia Pacific Journal of Research in Business Management*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp 118-136, ISSN 2229-4104.

PLAŠKOVÁ, A., 2004. *Jak dosahovat podnikatelské úspěšnosti: výstup z projektu podpory jakosti č. 3/14+25/2004*. 1st Ed. Prague: Národní informační středisko pro podporu jakosti, 192 p, Průvodce řízením jakosti. ISBN 80-02-01684-x.

RATNANINGSIH, A. et al., 2010. Analysis of internal and external factors for competitive advantage of indonesian contractors. *Journal of Economics and Engineering*, no. 4, pp 51, ISSN 2078-0346.

ROSE, R. CH., KUMAR, N. and YEN, L. L., 2006. Entrepreneurs Success Factors and Escalation of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Malaysia. *Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp 74-80, ISSN 1549-3652.

SINHA, T. N., 1996. Human Factors in Entrepreneurship Effectiveness. *The Journal of Entrepreneurship*, vol. 5, no. 1., pp 23-39, ISSN 09713557.

STONER, J. A. and FREEMAN, E. R., 1989. *Management.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 196 p, ISBN 0135484219.

SYNEK, M., 2011. Nová ekonomika – nové ukazatele. In: KISLINGEROVÁ, Eva et al *Nová ekonomika: Nové příležitosti*

TOMEK, G. and VÁVROVÁ, V., 2009. *Jak zvýšit konkurenční schopnost firmy*. 1st Ed. Prague: C. H. Beck, 240 p, ISBN 978-80-7400-098-0.

VERHEES, F. J. H. M. and MEULENBERG, M. T. G., 2004. Market Orientation, Innovativeness, Product Innovation, and Performance in Small Firms. *Journal of Small Business Management*, vol. 42, no. 2, pp 134-154, ISSN 1540-627X.

VODÁČEK L. and VODÁČKOVÁ, O., 2004. *Malé a střední podniky: konkurence a aliance v Evropské unii.* 1st Ed. Prague: Management Press, 192 p, ISBN 80-7261-099-6.

WEINZIMMER, L. G. and MANMADHAN, A., 2009. Small business success metrics: The gap betweentheory and practice. *International Journal Of Business Research*, vol. 9, no. 7, pp 166-173, ISSN 1555-1296.

Female entrepreneurs in Cyprus: characteristics, barriers, and steps for development.

Ria Nicoletti Morphitou
University of Nicosia

Abstract

Purpose - The main purpose aims at exploring the possible barriers that women face in undertaking a business venture and identifying the characteristics of a successful woman entrepreneur as well as her motivation. The research is targeted at the development of recommendations that will enable and facilitate more women in becoming entrepreneurs. Design/methodology/approach - The research design is based on a qualitative primary data instrument: semi-structured interviews with 30 women that are successful entrepreneurs in Cyprus.

Findings – The outcomes indicate that women face a variety of barriers in entering the market as entrepreneurs and steps can be made to diminish these barriers. In addition, it is concluded that there is a set of characteristics that a woman should posses in order to become a successful entrepreneur and that there are important differences between male and female entrepreneurs. The motivation of a woman entrepreneur is not clearly defined by the results but the results support the existing motivational theories stated in the literature review. The results show that women have the potential to become entrepreneurs and the recommendations portrait a possible way to accomplish the development of more female entrepreneurs.

Practical limitations - The geographical scope of this research is limited to the Cypriot market. Thus, it has to be acknowledged that given the scarcity of female entrepreneurs in this context the researcher worked with a small sample of women.

Key Words: women entrepreneurs; barriers; characteristics; small business

Introduction

Over the last decade, women in Cyprus have been more willing, than ever before, to enter the market with their own ventures. This resulted from a change in the culture and the perceptions that existed for a long time. More and more women are now enabled by their academic and economic status, to pursue their own careers. All over the world one can identify examples of countries with very successful women entrepreneurs, but also examples of countries where women have not as yet the right to work somewhere, let alone pursue their own careers and create their own businesses. In Cyprus, this small island in the Mediterranean, women have managed to create and sustain small businesses. Slightly more than half of the population of Cyprus is women. In 2006, there were a total of 395.3 thousand females in Cyprus, representing 50.8% of the overall population that year. This phenomenon is not new. Across the years, women always outnumbered men (Statistical Service, 2008).

The importance of developing women entrepreneurs in every country is highlighted by Toumazi (2010). First of all, developing women's entrepreneurship means the creation of employment, and thus the reduction of unemployment and welfare benefits. The ramifications further include a rise in the taxes and social insurance contributions collected

by the state; not only from women business owners themselves but also from their employees. In addition, it contributes to the increase of products, services, profits and exports. On the whole it results in economic growth and sustainable development.

To further support this argument, it is evident that this is the correct course of action also from an ethical perspective. Strengthening women economically is interrelated with enhancing their position in society in general and their representation in politics and in decision making positions. Thus it enables the creation of the framework of the model of a full democracy. The framework of inclusion of women should be accommodated and followed. It is noted by Kelley, et al., (2011cited in GEM, 2010) that in societies where women perceive that they have the capabilities for entrepreneurship appears a greater likelihood that women will also perceive entrepreneurial opportunities. Social inclusion as a purpose is a very important aspect of this study. The specific objectives of this study are:

•Reinforce the literature relating to the profile of the woman entrepreneur in Cyprus.
•Identify the characteristics and attributes that women entrepreneurs posses and lack.
•Study the barriers that women face in their pursuit of entrepreneurship.
•Gather information from women's perspective and use the data for further recommendation of measures for expanding female entrepreneurship in Cyprus.

By setting these objectives the researcher hopes to gain and provide accurate information about the position of a woman entrepreneur in Cyprus at this specific moment in time. In addition to this, following the completion of this research, the researcher hopes to be in a position to make recommendations for the development of more women entrepreneurs in the Cypriot economy. There is not as much awareness as one could expect with regards to this issue. By identifying the barriers, recommendations can be derived in order to address them, and by identifying the attributes, recommendations can be made to strengthen them. Support systems should be available and financial access should not be difficult to obtain.

Literature Review

Characteristics and Barriers of Female Entrepreneurs

By women entrepreneurship, we mean the processes – businesses and services where women are responsible for the organization of all factors or production, act as risk takers and make job opportunities available for others. Women are known to play the role of building the core backbone of the economy of any nation (Schumpeter and Opie, 1934). In recent times, the rates at which women establish new businesses have hugely outgrown the rate at which men do so. This is applicable to every ethnic group around the world. However, women are still known to own and run fewer numbers of businesses than their male counterparts. In Europe-37, about 40.6 million entrepreneurs were active in 2012, out of whom about 29% were found to be women (11.6 million). The percentage of women entrepreneurs in the European Union (EU-28) stood at 31% (10.3 million). There was a significant variation in the overall percentage of female entrepreneurs. Liechtenstein was found with the highest percentage of female entrepreneurs at 43%, followed closely by Latvia at 40%, Lithuania at 40% and Luxembourg at 39%. Turkey was found to have the lowest percentage at 15%, exceeded slightly by Malta at 18% and Ireland at 20%. Europe-37 and European Union-28 percentage of women entrepreneurs as at 2008 were 30% and 28% respectively (European Commission, 2014).

In this regard, with the revised labor laws and creation of workshops and entrepreneurs' financing, the European government has attempted to aid women to join the workforce. Several traits are required in women before they could successfully take up entrepreneurship. Women are known to possess positive characteristics that are known to be among the key factors required to turn ideas into good political programs and taking the right actions on them. With the right attitude, there will be adequate grounds for both inventions and solution and that will initiate a good energy flow. Entrepreneurship is quite a hard task, and once negative attitudes take over the mind, the first hurdle will bring every endeavor to an abrupt halt (Khorram, 2016).

Female entrepreneurs find themselves facing daily issues such as new ideas, vision, and perspectives for the best way to offer new products and services to the customers. No day passes without a new idea popping into the mind of the entrepreneur. As a matter of fact, it would be right to say that every female entrepreneur lives in a world filled with innovations and ideas, and the fact that their new perspectives on issues is their major driving force when it comes to providing new lines of products and services. Successful female entrepreneur understands what it means to sharpen, center and prioritize the several brilliant business ideas (United Nations,2006).

For successful female entrepreneurs, self-directedness is one very natural outcome. Women are known to be voracious readers on any area they specialize in, always attending one workshop and webinar after another, listening to different audio messages and several other such deliberations. They have always known to become self-educated. They do not put a halt to their learning process after completing their formal education. In fact, their academic pursuits are one other major factor that is believed to have great sense of urgency-an urgency to have a spongy nature to soak up every little new research and findings so long as it have something to do with their specialty.

Finally, smart female business executives are known for their strategic ways of doing things. They always take their time to ponder and reflect on new business plans strategies, steps and ideas to ensure success. They love thinking, pondering, and discovering automated ways to act in line within the parameters of their environment for better successes. They always search for reliable and proven methods rather than trying to come up with something entirely new (Anon, 2016).

Barriers of Female Entrepreneurship

In Europe, female entrepreneurship is a very genuine dynamic force, but it faces threats from different obstacles. Identifying and fighting these obstacles is of utmost importance to help ensure that the future economic contributions (that female entrepreneurship could make) in Europe is not lost. Adopting a pure gender-oriented approach, surveys have proven the existence of both internal and external dimensions of these obstacles. The gap gender creates in entrepreneurship is shown by the statistical patterns which show disparities in the prevalence of entrepreneurial activities between the males and females. The overall societal gender differences have been blamed as the reason for the gender gap. These gender differences are rooted in the ancient belief that starting a business is exclusively a man's calling. However, entrepreneurship expectations from several policymakers lay emphasis on high-growth, high-tech, individualist ventures.

The internal obstacles are rooted in how women view recurrent behaviors that limit their efforts. First, women fail to realize the need for them to access business networks.

Inadequate networks that consist of closer family and friends may give problems in an economic setting that requires large-scale setting, for opportunities to be easily perceived and partnering with experienced industry players.

One other major barrier is the fact that most women seem unprepared when starting their businesses: they presently suffer a lack of, or limited access to adequate training. Several reasons can be proffered for this trend: the presence of widespread part time employment, the fact that women prefer investing in sectors with inadequate investment in the education of the executives, the fact that more women can be found in SMEs, the fact that women do not have enough time (COMM, 2014).

Finance and economy remains among the major external barriers. Easy access to finances is one essential factor required for an organization to achieve its business goals; especially for starting the business, investments, and growth. The larger companies can easily access loans from the capital market, but for new and small businesses, they have to depend on some kind of external financing and often face different market barriers that make it difficult for them to raise money. Generally, female entrepreneurs encounter more difficulties than the men do when it comes to accessing finances (Beaufort, 2014).

Secondly, conventional perspectives about women's roles in the society and the difficulties they face trying to find a balance between family roles and working in industries that require long hours to beat competition and long-term training to stay updated on industry trends could act as a major obstacle.

Conclusively, the choices women make in education, then their vertical and horizontal segregation at school, then in employment lines all work together to minimize their access to adequate business trainings. There is still the obstacle of certain stereotyped perceptions about women: market stakeholders are skeptical about getting involved with women entrepreneurs, which means women entrepreneurs are required to show more persistence in order to prove their level of knowledge, skills, and commitment to the clients, business partners and suppliers (Hunt and Fielden, 2016).

'Glass ceiling' Phenomenon

There are many problems and challenges that face in a women's attempt to professional advancement. The author would like to make a reference to the "glass ceiling phenomenon." This is the difficulty of advancement of women from middle management to senior levels. The term of "glass ceiling" was established when two editors of the Wall Street Journal, Carol Hymowitz and Timothy Schellhardt, in 1986 wrote that "those few women who reached stable levels of hierarchy, suddenly just before pressing the top and stop crashing onto an invisible barrier as a" glass ceiling" and see if what the block to reach the top "This shift seems like a lot and became popular by the formula (Damoulianou, 2008).

So, according to the phenomenon of" glass ceiling", women find it difficult to "break" the glass ceiling that will give them strength and corporate prospects. Women although dominated by the administration in areas such as teaching, are underrepresented in areas such as leadership roles in companies (Kim, 1999).

According to Cai and Kleiner (1999), there are five main reasons that hinder the careers of women, which are the following:

1.   Stereotypes and Prejudice: Women managers are considered less likely to have the characteristics of successful managers in relation to men. To overcome the bias management should increase the interaction of women with their male colleagues.

2.   Mentoring and networking: Women should be connected to powerful people and ensure a mentor. Many studies show that there is a lack of networking of women both within and outside the organization.

3.   Discrimination: The laws do not guarantee non-discriminatory work environments.

4.   Family matters: The society in general should be more thoroughly define the roles and expectations between men and women in the family to distribute better the time of the woman and reduce liabilities.

5.   To become the boss of yourself: More and more women are opening businesses but this is expensive and no guarantees of success.

Research on Women's Entrepreneurship Development in Cyprus

Women nowadays, face increasingly challenging tasks, responsibilities and challenges. Obligations incurred affect personal, family and professional life. Women, other than their professional obligations, are required to meet the needs of the home, to care for her children, to meet the expectations of her husband. There are few cases that are required to arrange for their elderly parents or in-laws (Green, Vryonides, 2005).

The PWC Cyprus organization supports the recruitment of female staff with practical initiatives ranging from flexible work schedules and programs to advancement in leadership positions. Theorganization has completed a research project that was published in March 2011. It was held in January 2011 with participants' female business managers from various industries from both the private and the Government sector in Nicosia.

The research showed that companies in Cyprus, do not provide equal opportunities for men and women despite the improving women's position in the Cypriot economy as compared to the same survey that was conducted five years ago. Mr. Dimakis (Strategist, Strategic Communications Analyst, Executive Director STR), while presenting the research results specifically said, "Progress, in Cypriot society, is a slow transformation, which is the dilemma of career and family, professional or mother spent in a professional and mother" (Green, Vryonides, 2005).

For this reason, women in the modern business environment are utilizing the female sensitivity to survive in a male-dominated environment. So they have to create defense mechanisms, and act many times more aggressively than men to prove their administrative capacity. The women surveyed indicated that they have a natural progression in the state/government sector due to seniority, as opposed to the private sector that women have to "fight" for their advancement. The survey demonstrated that 50% of organizations contacted did not participate in the research project. Less than 50% of the organizations had a woman on the board of directors. Generally, female presence at the higher levels of hierarchy for both public and private organizations was very low.

The main reason for not hiring women is family responsibilities (Business Weekly, 2011:3). Additionally there is limited provision of facilities for working mothers. In recent years implemented facilities for working mothers by private sector companies are available but a very high cost. Sixty five % of older women (40+) argued that within the private sector the advancement of men was nonexistent. When they were asked if there are the same

opportunities for career advancement for both men and women, the general perception always according to the PwC survey is that Cyprus companies do not provide the same opportunities for career advancement to women. Regarding the payment of women according to the PwC survey, it seems that there are variations in the private sector reaching up to 20% wage gap between men and women which coincides with Eurostat findings (The position of women in the Cyprus economy, 2011).

Methodology

Qualitative research is the method of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data by observing what people do or say. Whereas, quantitative research refers to counts and measurement of things, qualitative research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and description of items. It is much more subjective than quantitative research and uses different methods of collecting data, mainly with in-depth interviews and focus groups. The nature of this type of research is exploratory and open ended. Small numbers of people were interviewed in depth and/ or a relatively small number of focus groups are conducted.

In this research paper data was collected through face-to-face in-depth interviews with a non-probability purposive sample of 30 successful entrepreneurs. Successful entrepreneurs are those that have a profitable company after the fifth year of its establishment. Officially, women associations have data bases with the mobile phone numbers of their members and friends where the respondents were selected and contacted. In this way better quality and more detailed information could be acquired.

The in-depth interview is used when a researcher wishes to explore a subject in detail. All female entrepreneurs expressed their opinions about the issues under investigation. The sample is considered sufficient for the purpose of the current study, since sample sizes in qualitative research are most commonly between 15 and 40 responders (De Ruyter & Scholl, 1998).

The interviews took place in October to December 2015. The interviews were recorded for subsequent transcription. During the discussions a professional tape recorder was used in order to record the discussion, on approval of the interviewee student. The interviews were recorded to increase the accuracy of data collection since it permits the interviewer to be more attentive to the interviewee (Patton, 1987). It also allowed the authors to transcribe each interview completely to facilitate the process of content analysis. The researchers also took handwritten notes during the sessions.

After all the interviews were completed, the discussions were transcribed. The analysis was done by using an interpretation method to allow the researchers to acquire a more complete and in-depth understanding of the data. At the beginning of the analysis, close examination of the data, phrase-by-phrase took place. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998) the soc-called line-by-line analysis, although it is the most time-consuming form of coding, is often the most generative. This method is considered very useful, especially at the beginning of a study, so as to generate the categories to be developed.

Analysis and discussion of research results

Previous career and starting own business

Previous studies have indicated certain factors that make women to create own business. One of the reasons is to create business after losing a job to avoid unemployment: out of necessity. Many authors (Werbner 1999, Kean et al 1993) think that it is the reason especially for women in risk groups and/or with minority background (immigrant women, elderly women, women in rural areas). Another reason is to avoid the constraints and barriers that might occur in traditional career (glass ceiling in employment, limited career opportunities etc). Cromie (1987) has found that women are not interested in big profits, but they create own business for reconciling work and family and because of dissatisfaction with existing job and career options. Goffee and Scase (1985) refer to the reason why women start their own business, that is to break the barriers which are affecting them in society. Being a manager in own company gives women independence (both, in income and career options) and helps to avoid career constraints that may occur in paid job.

As analyzing the interview material in current research it came up that it takes quite a long time when women decide to start the business. The decision to start often comes after long period of thinking and calculating different options. Sometimes women have had two jobs (paid job and own business) for years after what they decide to focus on entrepreneurship.

I didn't «t feel well in the company where I was working as an employee. Also I felt a double burden: fulltime work as an employee, sideline work as an entrepreneur and family, home and, hobby. In result I thought long and hard about change the sideline work into a fulltime work as an entrepreneur. At the end of 2007 I left the consulting company and decided to start my own enterprise.

Often the pending decision to become an entrepreneur or not is forced by sudden loss of job or other kind of sudden change in life. And sometimes it is just the coincidence of different significant moments in life.

I lost my job in the company I had been working for 20 years, but as I was really tired of working in the office and hectic Fridays (because of long and unpredictable workdays on Fridays), I am now grateful for this job loss. At the same time we moved to live to the village. And at the same time, I had an accident that forced me to stay home for four months and then the final decision came and I created my own business.

Some of the interviews supported the idea from previous research that women create own business to build up their own career and to avoid barriers that would emerge in paid job. "I was working as an employee for four years. The job was not satisfying and presented no challenges. As an employee, how far can you go?"

When women describe the main motivators that pushed them to the entrepreneurship, one word is dominating and this is" independence". Women are highly valuing the personal freedom to choose the time and pace for working, to choose the people with whom to work and which is most important – " To do it my own way."

"I always wanted to work for myself. I wanted to be independent and creative. "

I decided to start with something new. My will of doing, creating, working out of schemes was unconventional for an entrepreneurial setting.

Some women have described how they have taken over the family business that has been owned through generations by their family. These stories are filled with sense of mission to keep the family business alive.

"I tried to find a job outside my father's factory after I finished my one degree and wanted to continue. It was difficult and so I started at my father's factory and ended up staying. When my father asked me to join the factory, I was a secretary. I have been in every level of the organization until I reached my current status. After my father's death, I was voted a president. It was a forced choice due to the willingness to keep family enterprise open.

The interviewees describe the first years in business very differently. The most common words that are used are °uncertainty" and °challenges". And depends on the person how she copes with uncertainty and sense of chaos. Some interviewees described starting a business as really hard times, especially when the start of entrepreneurship is connected with burden in the family.

"The first years of entrepreneurship require hard-hard-hard work. I was getting up at 4 am to get the housework done, take the children to school and by 7.30 to be at work. There were times when I could not feel my legs for days. I hardly saw my children and I believe that was their sacrifice"

"The blind leading the blind and hectic! "

One woman felt at the beginning that there was some big business secret that everyone else knew and that I needed to find it out in order to be successful.

Some of the women had mixed reactions, the combination of uncertainty and positive feelings of new challenges.

"First years in business were very hectic, very stressful, very uncertain, but also creative and discovering."

Some women felt the extra burden because of their gender. They mentioned that being a woman in entrepreneurship made their starting time more complicated "The beginning was very challenging not only as an occupation which required a lot of running around, but also as a woman in this occupation."

"The reactions I was getting because I was a woman were ridiculous."

Support in entrepreneurship

Stressful times and challenges during the first years in business raise the question of support for starting own businesses. Previous studies have shown that support networks for women entrepreneurs are consisting of mainly relatives, friends and other acquaintances (so called soft networks), who are not professional entrepreneurs and it is hard to get advice for starting or running business for their own. Describing the experiences of interviewed women entrepreneurs, we found quite similar situation. Most

women had to learn everything by themselves, they did not have mentor or peer support when they started own business. Most of the women mentioned the support from family and friends, but they admit that this was only friendly and supportive attitude (which is very important, of course) but they would have needed more.

"I had a lot of support, but it was mostly just the encouragement that I needed."
There were few exceptions of those who considered they have had a mentor. Mostly they have been the significant male persons in their life (fathers, bosses, husbands etc).

"My ex boss was my mentor and supported me in the first years. I worked for four years and it was like going to school. I only realized later on in life, how much I really learnt during my working for my ex boss. "

"*I consider my father as a mentor, as in the first experience I have learned a lot from him. I have tried to learn always from my managers.*"

"I had a mentor in creating my business. My husband is a business consultant for small enterprises and he helped me a lot to understand the business concept, how it works and what the most important things were to have in mind. He also helped me with feasibility studies for my work, and last but not least, that I should be fair with my customers in pricing and the quality of work. "

"My husband had an idea; I thought that it was a great idea and completely new area for me. But then I thought why not to try it. And he supported me on every level, he taught me how to think entrepreneurial, and especially if the client requests something, it is utmost, you have to fulfill the wish, whenever it is possible."

Two women had experience with female mentors during the projects and they both found this experience very useful and important.

"I got and get help from two business networks (ego-pilots and business angels), and from my family and friends. According to this I have had and have two mentors – my ego-pilot and my woman business angel. I find both are very useful all the time."
"I have participated in mentor group as a mentee, I was the beginner in entrepreneurship, and it was really good experience: it gave me self-confidence and the "glasses" on how to go on. The mentor has to be a person who is an entrepreneur herself and who has experience and knows what kind of problems may occur, and who can encourage and inspire others."

Generally, most women are regretting that they did not have mentor or other kind of business supporter when they started their own businesses. They admitted that the start would have been much easier if you had somebody to discuss business matters and who supports you.

"It's really important to have somebody who has already been there and done it: to whom you can go for advice. So find a mentor who is willing to just meet with you every few weeks, to see where you're up to and guide you along the right path."

"From my point of view a mentor is not only useful she/he is essential."

Generally, there was no difference if the mentor is a man or a woman, but some of the interviewees brought out extra assets of the female mentorship as admiring, dynamic and successful women. These perceptions show a gendered nature of business, if starters get contact with a woman who have gained success and is self -confident, it also acts as a role model for women who plan to be successful entrepreneurs themselves.

There were also some warning signs brought out, that should be kept in mind when organizing support for starters. For example one woman did not support the internships, because of *being a successful business women and taking intern to her company, then she would be worried that an intern would be there to steal her ideas and then set up in competition to her, taking clients away.* Another woman stressed:

"Internships are really important and useful to support women starting up their own business. But it is necessary to find the "right" company, where women have chance to learn things like an entrepreneur has to do not to work at the copy machine the whole day".

Work-life balance

As told before the husbands of women are mainly very supportive to women's work, even when it means a lot of travelling, long working hours or other kind of time spent away from family. Still, many women admitted that there is a lot of stress because running a business is really time consuming and because your business is always with you.

"As an entrepreneur I will close the door at 5pm, but the problems and thoughts are coming with me, I am not free, if you are an employee, it is easier - you close the door and forget."
"You go home, but your brain does not stop. "

Women are struggling hard to find the balance between work and family responsibilities. Only one of the interviewed women (without children) told that it has been easy. Sometimes it seems like work-life balance will cause extra stress for women, as a problem that they have to solve.

"For the last 20 years every day I try new to have work-life balance. Really stressful!"
"There is no balance! You need to sacrifice a lot in order to get somewhere. It was work, work and more work!"

Finding a balance is both an art and a science and somehow women do it all. There is paradox of flexibility. In one side, freedom to have flexible working schedule is a main positive side in entrepreneurship for women. At the same time, women complain about the flexibility, because time between work and family seems undividable and the workflows are sometimes unpredictable.

"The balance between work and free time is very important but as an entrepreneur not easy to realize all the time. I try to fix my work dates into the morning or into the early afternoon to have enough time for my children. It is not easy to turn off all the time (especially if something is still to do) and to concentrate on free time."

"But it is not so flexible, the orders from clients decide when you work, sometimes there are spare times, but as well there might be really busy times."

Working from home is considered to be a good option as it gives a woman much flexibility. However, it is important to have a separate office space, so that other things are not affecting and it is possible to focus on working. Division of time between work and family is especially important if the woman is working at home. Otherwise there could be misunderstandings with family members.

"Sometimes members of family call me to a chat because they know I'm at home. Everyone expects you to be able to get back at once and devote all your energy to them – not realizing you have other clients as well."

Similarly, working at home may devalue women as entrepreneurs, some of the family members may struggle with their perception what a real business is, even though the woman earns more money than she did previously, they still do not think of her work as a real business.

Strict time management skills were considered as main solution to achieve work-life balance. At the same time it was stated the double (or even triple) burden of the woman *A successful women entrepreneur is the one who can share time between all her life roles (wife, mother, business woman etc). Entrepreneurship needs very good time management and prioritising activities. (CY3)*

Another thing that helps to balance work and family and to do work from home is technology.

"It is very hard in to be a mother and an entrepreneur at the same time. I thank God for Skype!!! Technology offers such great possibilities. Tele-working, Skype meetings will help to spend more time at home and less at the office. I wonder what I would have done 15 years ago... I even do not want to think about it."

Gender perceptions

General finding was that women have not felt any discrimination, but if to look more closely many of them pointed out some moments where they felt that being a woman in entrepreneurship is not very common and therefore they need to make efforts to be as good as men:

"Always you have to develop and to qualify yourself, you have pressure and there is no much time to relax...and there are also self-doubts and the pressure comes from outside but also inside."

Some women used the word "improve" to describe the situation they have faced during the first years when they started own business "I had to work hard to prove my abilities. Exactly, the right word is prove, demonstrate, always and everywhere, because you are just a little nice girl without experience... "

"I had to prove myself. Every time when I went to a male client they wanted to help me or wanted to do the job instead of me... it was so frustrating. I know what I am doing! "

At the same time many of the women stated that things have changed a lot with time, and nowadays successful business women is a very common phenomenon and this has

broadened "people's minds and relieved the stereotypes. Women were also mentioning the strategies they use to look like professional and business oriented. Some of these strategies are connected with their work (quality, hard work), but some of these refer to the appearance of the business woman (clothing, behaviour etc).

"Respect is only gained from the quality of work you perform."

"Mostly men have characterized me as a 'tough cookie '. If I am strict, I only do my work and expect others to do the same. Detail counts and one cannot compromise with anything less than quality of work."

When I was dealing only with men, I had the attitude that art is a woman's job. I used to dress very conservatively, so that the gender issues were not present. I used to appeal to them not as a women but as an interesting person. I used to chat to them about all sorts of subjects (gadgets, cars, watches, etc. or anything they were interested in).

"A woman must behave like a professional if she wants to be a professional. Physical presentation is very important (grooming). A woman must ask herself do I look elegant. Do I look professional? These must be a yes during work hours."

Conclusions and Recommendations

Entrepreneurship is a dynamic field, particularly as it relates to the experience of women entrepreneurs. With the overall growth in the number of women in full -time work, there has been a increase in the number of women starting their own businesses and hence increase in the number of potential women entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is important to map the pitfalls that might come up, when women start their own businesses and listen to the experiences of those who have come through the first steps in entrepreneurship and have become successful entrepreneurs for now.

Women in Cyprus have the potential to undertake an entrepreneurial path. Women are competent and capable of being successful entrepreneurs and there are plenty of evidence for this fact. The entrepreneurial attributes that the interviewees stated as important were: having passion and inner drive, working very hard, being persistent, never giving up, strong education and knowledge on financial issues, great selection of employees and associates, managing people and having excellent communication skills. The interviewees pointed out that women have better communication skills than men, are more creative, organized and are multitaskers. An interesting fact appeared following the completion of the interviews: most of the interviewees mentioned that women are more educated than men but there is still a gap between men and women in all leading lucrative positions in business and in politics. The interviewees appeared frustrated with this fact and felt obligated to promote and encourage a cultural change as well as enforcing this change when given the opportunity. There are strong feelings towards promoting equality and readjusting the business environment.

The research reinforced the literature relating to the profile of the woman entrepreneur in Cyprus and to the characteristics and attributes of women entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the research shed light on the barriers that women face in their pursuit of entrepreneurship and, following the completion of the analysis, recommendations were derived.

In this current study women entrepreneurs with very different background shared their experiences and offered many good tips for young women who plan to start with business. The main suggestions are listed below:

Know yourself better and develop your understanding of your strengths and weaknesses. You can seek help to either develop your competencies or bring in external help. If you are aware of your weaknesses, you can go on to tackle them.

Have as many experiences as possible and learn about everything related to your business, in order to be able to expand you vision.

Get as much support as you can because it a rocky road and you cannot learn everything at once and by yourself.

Be ready for difficulties, if you are determined and focused, in the end you can achieve your dream and make a successful business. Remember that a bad experience is also an experience! Never stop trying when problems arise!

Do the job because you like it and love it!

If you are starting a business, you should have personal vision in self-employment and of the business field, self-confidence and realistic right estimation of personal competences, and of course be able to evaluate the marketability of the business idea.
Look for network partners and/or senior partners
Develop a realistic and professional business plan
Look for financial and professional support
Establish support from the rest of the family

References

Anker R and Knowles J.C 1986 Sex Inequalities in Urban Employment in the Third World. London, Macmillan Press.

Anthias, F. (1992) Ethnicity, Class, Gender and Migration. Aldershot: Avebury.

Andrew R. Thomas, Jeanne H. Coughlin (2002), The rise of women entrepreneurs.

Boyle, R. & Magor, M. (2008) A nation of entrepreneurs? Television Social Change and the Rise of the Entrepreneur, International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics, 4(2), 125-144.

Cai, Y. Kleiner B.H, (1999) "Sex discrimination in hiring the glass ceiling", Equal Opportunities International.

Correll, S. J. 2001. Gender and the career choice process: the role of biased self-assessments. American Journal of Sociology.

Commonwealth Plan of Action (1995). The 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development. A commonwealth Vision for Women Towards the Year 2000. Common Wealth Secretariat.

Davidson M. J & Burke R. J. Women in management. Current research issues 1994.

Danidson, M.,J & Cooper C.,L (1992). Shattering the glass ceiling: The Woman Manager. London : Paul Chapman cop.

Deborah J. Swiss and Judith P. Walker, Women and the Work/Family Dilemma: How Today's Professional Women Are Finding Solutions.

Hadjipavlou. M., (2010), Women and change in Greece: Feminisms and Gender in Conflict.

Hakim Catherine (2000), Work-lifestyle choices in the 21st Century. Preference -Theory. Oxford.

Harris, J., (2000), The recognition of prior learning (RPL) in higher education: Doing boundary work? Conference proceedings 10-13 December 2000, University of Technology Sydney New South Wales, Australia.

Green, T. and Vryonides, M. (2005) Ideological tensions in the educational choice practices of modern Greek Cypriot parents: the role of social capital, British Journal of Sociology of Education.

Johnson, S. and Robson, C. (1999) Threatened Identities: The Experiences of Women in Transition to Programmes of Professional Higher Education, Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology.

Kim. S, Kleiner B.H, (1999) "Sexual harassment in the workplace", Equal Opportunities International, Vol. 18.

Lyotard, J F, (1984), The Post modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

Maine's Achieving Women: Conversations with Entrepreneurs by Mary Lyon (2000).

Mayoux, L. (2001) Job, Gender and Small Enterprises (Series on Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender in Enterprises – WEDGE), International Labor Office, Geneva.

Moss, D. (2004) Creating space for learning: conceptualizing women and higher education through space and time, Gender and Education.

Ntamani 2005 Women agrotourism cooperatives and their offer (Thesis) Charokopeio University – Greece.

Gender justice development and Rights. Oxford studies in democratization. Molyneux M. and Razavi S. 2002.

Green, T. and Vryonides, M. (2005) Ideological tensions in the educational choice practices of modern Greek Cypriot parents: the role of social capital, British Journal of Sociology of Education, 26.

Grummell, B., (2007) The Second Chance Myth: Equality of Opportunity in Irish Adult Education Policies, British Journal of Educational Studies".

Pascal, G. and Cox, R. (1993) Women returning to higher education (Buckingham, Open University Press).

Procter I. and Padfield, M.(1998) Young adult women, Work and family. London. Mansell.

Radu, M. & Redien-Collot, R. (2008) The Social Representation of Entrepreneurs in the French Press: Desirable and Feasible Models? International Small Business Journal, 26(3), 259-298.

Revenga, A., and S. Shetty, 2012, "Empowering Women is Smart Economics," Finance & Development, Vol. 49, No. 1, International Monetary Fund.

Ridgeway, C. L. 1997. Interaction and the conservation of gender inequality: Considering employment. American Sociological Review.

Ridgeway, C. L., & Smith-Lovin, L. 1999. The gender system and interaction. Annual Review of Sociolog.y

Risman, B. J. 1998. Gender Vertigo. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

Schön, D., (1983), The Reflective Practitioner (New York: Basic Books).

Schumpeter, J.A. and Opie, R., 1934. *The theory of economic development; an inquiry into profits, capital, credit, interest, and the business cycle*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Suda, C. 1991.Social Cultural and Demographic Factors in Female Labour Force Participation in Kenya. In: Population and Human Resources development Planning in Kenya, pp. 354-273. Ministry of Manpower Development and Employment, Nairobi, Kenya.

Usher, R., & Edwards, R., (1994), Postmodernism and Education (London: Routledge).

Wirth, L. (2000). Breaking through the glass ceiling: women in management. Geneva: International Labor Office.

Zembylas, M. (2006). Work-based learning methodologies, politics and power: Developing a Foucauldian research ethic. Journal of Education and Work.

Articles

Portuguese historical villages: Characteristics and resolving their negative aspects

António Gonçalves
Centro Interdisciplinar de Ciências Sociais - cics.nova, Portugal

Vitor Ambrósio
Escola Superior de Hotelaria e Turismo do Estoril, Portugal

Abstract

The Historical Villages of Portugal Restoration Program, set up by a government initiative in 1994, enabled a new tourist product in Portugal's Centro Region, a rural, sparsely populated area with a high percentage of elderly people and declining levels of traditional agricultural activities. This program included an organised network of 12 villages.

The objective of this paper involves identifying and proposing solutions for the negative aspects pointed out by tourists visiting these 12 villages.

Considering tourism demand, a sample was defined to ensure a margin of error not in excess of 5%. The sample correspondingly required no less than 380 surveys with the study ending up with a total of 412 valid surveys. The socio-economic profile; motivations; behaviours; means of transportation; accommodation and evaluations of the visited village featured among the variables analyzed.

In keeping with the literature review, we furthermore identified solutions implemented at destinations displaying similar characteristics.

In general, tourists/participants were very engaged and interested in highlighting the positive aspects such as heritage protection and rural experiences for example. However, this paper focuses on the negative aspects reported: signage; restaurants-cafes; the retail of handicrafts.

The suggestions/solutions found in the literature for the aforementioned negative aspects required tailoring and adapting to the Portuguese realities.

Our reflections also propose solutions for the existing problems in conjunction with a coherent monitoring strategy that may assure the continuous improvement of the tourism supply and thus contributing to customer loyalty.

Key words: Historical villages; Tourist dynamics; Regional competitiveness.

Introduction

Boosting the development of tourism in rural contexts simultaneously constitutes an objective for stakeholders in the sector and an opportunity for the host region in keeping with the leveraging factor that tourism enables whether from a sustainable development perspective or in terms of deepening the relationship between urban territories and their rural counterparts.

Within this framework, the Historical Villages of Portugal Restoration Program, sponsored by the national government, in 1994 acted to implement this goal and founding what has now become a tourism destination of relevance that has continuously promoted the most relevant facets to the memories, identities and traditions of this territory composed of 12 villages. We would also highlight how the last 22 years have seen notable levels of investments put into the restoration of the built heritage and introducing various factors of innovation across different domains (accommodation, museology, gastronomy, restaurants, traditional products and handicrafts, festivities and tourism animation and entertainment).

This also enabled the re-approximation of their residents and their rural roots and opening them up to discovery by younger citizens in a dialectic between the legacy of ancestral origins and the demands of the 21st century (mobility, sustainability and an appealing image), essentially incorporating the multi-functional paradigm of rural tourism and territorial competitiveness.

Objectives

Within the framework of rural tourism development, with renowned success on the regional scale, necessarily structured within the scope of the national tourism range, this underpins the conceptual approach to the present case study with the following specific objectives: defining the multiple facets and functions of the concept of tourism applied to rural territories/Historical Villages; characterising tourism in rural environments in Portugal; inferring the relevance of the motivations of visitors/tourists in the process(es) of defining the tourism service range and assuming the balancing of supply and demand as a guarantee of territorial competitiveness. The general objective involves defining the measures applicable (priorities 1, 2 and 3) as a guarantee underpinning the consolidation of tourism inherent to this case study.

Methodology

The choice of the current case study stemmed from a range of evidence and certain challenges to the territorial expression of Portugal's Centro Region, which contains a set of differentiating factors across the physical, historical, heritage, cultural and socioeconomic levels. Hence, in recent years, there has been a clear rise in interest in and demand for the Historical Villages of Portugal reflected, for example, in the abundant media coverage given to this reality. In addition, we may also take into consideration the profound personal knowledge of the authors as regards some of the villages making up this network. This proximity to the territory ensure the *in situ* witnessing, empirically and unequivocally, of a rising tide in the number of tourism visitors.

In terms of producing and applying observation and data collection tools within the framework of the fieldwork ongoing, we made a survey of visitors/tourists. This aimed to generate the statistics then subject to analysis in order to define a profile for visitors/ tourists at Historical Villages. Within this perspective, we complied with a crucial objective to tourism management within the scope of identifying the demand. Thus, the positive aspects and, above all, the negative features reported by the respondents would enable a guided and extended reflection for a better provision of supply. Having completed this objective, the adjustment of supply to demand, this also ensures one of the premises to the competitiveness of tourism territories and destinations.

To this end, we requested the cooperation of the members of staff at the Historical Villages Tourism Posts for the implementation of the aforementioned questionnaire following prior authorisation from the respective municipalities and other supervisory authorities. The survey reports a 95% level of confidence and a tolerance rate of 5% following a total of 412 validated questionnaires completed by visitors/tourists.

Literature review

To this end, we surveyed the most recent scientific literature and correspondingly highlighting the approach made by Mason (2016) in his work *Tourism Impacts, Planning and Management*, for the management of demand, and Romão (2013) as regards the dimensions of the territorial competitiveness induced by tourism activities.

Considering the specific characteristics of rural tourism in Portugal, the work "*Reinventar o Turismo Rural em Portugal – Cocriação de Experiências Turísticas Sustentáveis*", under the coordination of Kastenholz (2014), represented un unavoidable landmark in terms of its territorial alignment – predominantly on the Centro Region -, and with a case study focusing on the Linhares das Beira Historical Village. The vision set out in *Estudo de Caracterização do Turismo no Espaço Rural e do Turismo de Natureza em Portugal*, by Oliveira das Neves (2008), proved of particular relevance and hitherto the most recent work undertaken with a technical-scientific basis of worth for this supply segment. In the present case, this correspondingly resulted in the need to update the statistics available, carried out through recourse to content published by the I.N.E. – the National Institute of Statistics.

The multi-functionality of tourism – contributing towards rural development

"Due to market failures, political failures, human error but also due to urbanisation, industrialisation and the tertiarisation of rural economies, the frontier of opportunity for production by agricultural economies in rural regions was drastically reduced, at least when ascertained in accordance with the dominant patterns of the modern economy" (Covas, 2004; 91).

Considering the framework around the decline in the rural world, particularly afflicting the inland regions of Portugal, tourism gradually came to the fore as a means of sustainable development and complementary to the more traditional activities still surviving in these territories alongside an ever lesser role played by the consequences of that entitled the "post-productive" era. In accordance with this assumption, considering the reality of the Historical Villages – territorial areas with limited resources and a demographic dynamic driven by a dual ageing dimension -, determined the multi-functionality of tourism in the conceptual approach set out below.

We may identify, and in order of relevance and the emergence of this activity, seven core functions (Thirion, 2003):

Recreational functional

This represents a function as intrinsic to the development of tourism as the food supply chain induced the need for the emergence of agriculture. In a classical approach, the definition of tourism rests on the need and importance, both physical and intellectual, of recreation with the course of time bringing about an economy, in territories displaying

specific attributes, based on the consumption of leisure. Analysis extending over the course of this process demonstrates the strong geographic, political, sociological and economic implications that enabled the existence of mono-tourism activities resulting in "erosive processes" and contributing towards tourism practices on the very boundaries of the host destination capacities (e.g. seaside and winter sports resorts), fostering the ecological, social and economic imbalances so characteristic of the typologies of large concentrations. From this perspective, we may further state that simultaneously and as a corollary of this process, there came about markedly undesirable levels of regional asymmetries.

Heritage and cultural function

This function effectively represents the first factor that decentralised tourism activities, expanding them beyond the boundaries of areas already heavily characterised by tourism. Crucial to this process was the evolution in demand that rose in keeping with the greater propensity towards cultural consumption. On the global scale, interpreting on the one hand the emergence of new destinations and on the other hand the heightened ease of travelling, this brought about a renewed interest in cultural (art, architecture, archaeology, gastronomy and handicrafts) and natural (landscapes, ecology and protected areas) heritage. This greater propensity shown over the last three decades especially interrelates with urban populations keen for "periods of disconnection" from a daily life spent in "stand by" mode through pleasing experiences in tranquil territories with their images legitimated through history and based on patterns consistent with the newly emerged benchmark reference values – the environment, sustainability, authenticity and quality.

This function, considering its transversal territorial extent, proved a beacon for regional and local development strategies targeting rural areas that had not in the past gained any openly assumed tourism competence. Within this scope, there was a conjugation of interests and efforts to qualify the cultural and natural heritage of rural areas as well as to offset any eventual limitations in terms of their means of access and fostering a context favourable to the creation and structuring of the essential supply for what would subsequently amount to a functional reconversion of rural areas based upon a new productive vocation.

Pedagogic function

In overall terms, we may affirm that the pedagogic function emerges from a perspective that proves complementary to the above. The demand reflected in consumption required, in addition to access to a specific heritage reality, its improved communication and interpretation. The resulting response involved greater attention to matters such as signposting, the setting up of welcome (tourism information offices) and interpretation centres alongside local museums and other such entities. The importance of the pedagogic function stems from its ambivalence: rendering communication feasible with the supply and meeting the requirements of a demand that generally proves both interested and with good knowledge about the most varied themes of a cultural nature.

Social function

This interlinks with the measures generating employment and social promotion brought about by tourism activities within a particular population group. Considering the purpose of this function, there has been the continued revaluation of cultural and heritage resources

for example. Hence, the safeguarding of traditional professions proved possible in the face of the new productive processes through recourse to industrial production tools along with techniques that rendered the longstanding practical knowledge and wisdom obsolete. There were almost always developed around the basis of a generational legacy sustained by empirical knowledge that proved able to tailor the needs for subsistence to the utilisation of natural resources in a harmonious fashion. In these processes, the presence of human groups, fully incorporated into the framework of the ecosystems prevailing, represents a determining factor of equilibrium.

In another dimensions, even while still incipient, tourism activities may return a complement to the income otherwise earned through the provision of accommodation or the retail of agricultural products. In tourism associated with a social valuation component, in which the economic dimension becomes a natural goal, we would also underline the renewed self-esteem internalised by those witnessing the arrival of flows of visitors/tourists to their places of birth as an immediate sign of recognition and interest in something that also forms part of their heritage. This furthermore encapsulates how the interactions between visitors and visited establish contacts that may represent to many elderly persons, within the role of hosts, the opportunity to recall their infancies within that particular territorial context and thus affirming the most basic of conditions – feeling alive and grateful -, simply through having been shown some attention.

Communicative function

This function proves determinant (incorporating the essence of the tourism business) and itself justifying the importance attributed to promotion strategies. Thus, we may state that the lines of communication for rural areas are based on a rural vision of the world built out of a stereotyped urban imaginary. This imaginary recurrently integrates the idea of genuineness, of origins, of greater proximity and healthy social interactions and the tranquillity of the pace of life. As a powerful imaginary, shaped and fully internalised into the urban context, in the majority of cases, this renders any real decodification of this *in situ* pre-concept impossible even in the face of the most obvious signs of internal diversity.

Citizenship function

Ideally, the contacts established by tourism between rural and urban areas serve to broaden the mutual knowledge about the various different restrictions and the challenges that may prove susceptible to fostering a critical and participative feeling among participants – the core foundations for the values of citizenship.

In Portugal, back in the 1970s, we may reference an association based dynamic – the Ligas de Melhoramentos –, an example of the exercising of citizenship involving both rural and urban actors that have survived and become contemporarily transposed into the field of business. We may correspondingly highlight the distribution of agricultural and traditional products based upon contracts agreed between farmers/producers and consumer cooperatives. However, there remains a vast road to travel and able to incrementally boost, within this logic of citizenship/business, the level of involvement of school age publics within the domain of environmental/territorial awareness and as well as the actual tourism players in rural locations. This win-win strategy brings together companies and their brands, with marketplace renown, to strategically become associated within a framework in which the qualitative variable gets guaranteed to thereby facilitate the strengthening of company images and brands.

Integrating function

To explicitly detail the functions mentioned above, we would state that tourism only evolves in accordance with the expectations of demand. Its multi-functionality revealed a genuine opportunity for rural areas to bring about rural development sustained by appropriation tailored to the heritage prevailing across its diverse forms of expression. This emphasises how, by means of an integrative component, tourism reflects on the capacity to mobilise other sectors of activity. Based upon the socioeconomic framework of rural areas, the integrating function of tourism enables the integrated development that assimilates the activities directly bound up with agriculture – the aesthetic component associated with a rural landscape; the heritage, environmental and educational components. This premise necessarily includes activities transforming local products, handicrafts, the different and diverse expressions of local cultures and fostering them within the goal of their continued affirmation and economic valuation.

Tourism in Rural Portugal – some notes on its characteristics

Taking this as our reference framework, the integrative function of tourism immediately facilitates the task of explicitly segmenting tourism supply through considering the diversity of resources available within the terrestrial physical framework. This logic of thematically compartmentalising the supply of tourism services constitutes a core purpose of the present analysis studying Tourism in Rural Environments (TRE hereafter).

Its theoretical and territorial boundaries stem from rural environments interrelated with areas where there remains an effective bond, marked by tradition, agriculture or an environment supported by a landscape with unequivocal features of a rural characteristic (General Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development, n.d.). This may be understood as the sum of the activities and services provided for remuneration, considering diverse typologies of accommodation and complementary services in the field of tourism animation within the scope of providing a preferably personalised stay.

Thus, integrating the architectonic component also takes on relevance to the regional/local profile alongside the more traditional materials and details that reflect the prevailing identity (General Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development, n.d.).

This similarly deploys the structuring of this supply, the set of daily lived experiences, immersed in a spirit of community resulting from an economic model of agricultural operation based on the family unit (General Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development, n.d.). Within this assumption, the principles of sustainability, long since routinized by rural populations, should be approached with the objective of safeguarding specific and particular regional and local characteristics. This might involve highlighting: the environmental values, the traditional economy – adapted through innovation to the demands of new markets -, the singularity of the history and traditions conveyed through the different expressions of popular culture. Commonly, an integral facet of this derives from the warmth of the welcome and sense of hospitality towards visitors/tourists in rural communities.

Taking into account the contemporary launch of TRE in Portugal, in the 1980s, we encounter how the motivations prevailing over the investments in this supply were not especially of an economic-business focus (Oliveira das Neves, 2008). The main stimulus stemmed from the highly favourable terms of financing that enabled the heritage valuation

of assets, handed down through inheritance, to undergo the highly costly rehabilitation/ maintenance required due to the imperative of irreversible damage to the physical constructions and the respective social statute of the owner(s). This pattern in particular ended up conditioning the structuring of the tourism service range in rural areas throughout years and limiting the sought after economic upgrading of the territories and the internal organisation of these business units.

"*TRE activities in Portugal take on an unequal importance in the economic strategies and the earnings of establishment owners but that correspond to over 75% of the turnover of around a third of such owners. In their complementary earnings strategies, these owners combine TRE activities, above all, with agriculture and stock breeding activities but also with leisure services in situations that reflect a logic of activity/earnings better integrated into the complex of tourism/leisure activities*" (Oliveira das Neves, 2008; 4-10).

The territorial/regional expression reveals a greater weighting of TRE units in the regions with a relevant level of built heritage (in northern and central Portugal and the Azores) and in areas with established track records as tourism destinations (Madeira and the Algarve). As regards the conditions for valuation, in addition to their presence with their own Internet websites and on some social networks, recent years have seen a more assertive commercial stance with these accommodation units reflected through centralised reservation systems with a global scale of projection. Within this field, the demand appreciates data on the location of the respective unit, the inclusion of images and photographs, descriptions of the services available and the ease of reservations and making contact.

At accommodation units circumstantially conditioned by a greater limitation in the diversity of supply, there has been the gradual development of business partnerships, within a logic of complementarity, enabling viable access to infrastructures and activities with some level of technical demand. This has correspondingly led to the emergence of tourism animation companies located in rural areas. Currently, we may consider there is a highly diversified range of activities in rural environments and including, for example, highlights such as a sensorial component associated with healthcare and wellbeing practices, charm based wine and gastronomy featuring traditional gourmet products and activities encapsulating a spirit of adventure and emotion – hot-air ballooning, equestrian activities, canoeing and photographic safaris.

Furthermore, taking into account the range of activities designed to drive demand, we may also identify how TRE units have benefitted directly from the establishment of footpaths (SD – Short Distance and LD – Long Distance) that now broadly cover much of the Portuguese territory and alongside the annual agenda of events established by the municipalities designed to generate motivations and interest in return visits and stays.

In the management of TRE units, there has also been a progressive advance in the professionalization of staff, normally young and, while limited in numbers, able to ensure the smooth running of the unit. The multifunctional nature of these positions, not at all an ideal outcome, represents a challenge to employees with technical-professional training following on from higher education at the beginnings of their careers.

The motivational framework of clients, as regards TRE in Portugal, proves necessarily broad but incorporating the factors of attractiveness inherent to the units – architecture, interior design, the functionalities of the spaces and facilities and enabling the activities

taking place in the surroundings, hospitality and the quality of the meals served (only breakfasts – in a majority of cases). The desire to discover a region, within a logic of cultural and landscape touring, constitutes another of the expressed motivations.

The TRE client type displays levels of personal autonomy as demonstrated by the means of selecting the unit (the Internet, recommendations from family/friends/colleagues and previous visits). This autonomy may also reflect in the means of reservation and entering into direct contact, whenever necessary, travelling almost always in their own vehicles and in the company of family members. In order to sketch the profile of TRE clients, we might mention that the majority are either in employment (medium and higher levels) or freelance professionals with at least one level of higher education completed.

On 31 July 2014 (Table 1), there were 883 rural tourism environment establishments and residential units (+6.1% on 2013). Almost a half of this tourism service (48.2%) is made up of country houses (426 units) followed by agro-tourism (119 units with a relatively weighting of 13.5%), the group of "Others" (103 establishments, 11.7% of the total) and rural hotels (60 accounting for 6.8%).

Table 1 – Rural Located Accommodation Units – 2014

Table 1 – Rural Located Accommodation Units – 2014		%
Country Houses	426	48.2
Agro-tourism	119	13.5
Rural Hotels	60	6.8
Guest Houses	175	19.8
Others	103	11.7
	883	100

Source: Portuguese Institute of Statistics

The motivations – a fundamental factor to structuring supply and characterising demand

The technical studies developed in the field of tourism, within the scope of studying supply and its competitiveness in accordance with a methodological framework, have almost always placed a particular emphasis on the experiences of visitors/tourists that shape the demand for a particular destination or tourism product.

Within this field, analysis of the patterns of consumption reports the experience of situations with beneficial returns across the sensorial, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, relational and functional fields, mobilising to this end the existential and behavioural dimensions to human beings (Schmitt, 1999, quoted by Kastenholz, 2014). This theoretical evidence, wisely drawn on by marketing, ended up by defining a new socioeconomic paradigm based upon the search for experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1998 and Schmitt, 1999, quoted by Kastenholz, 2014).

Travelling within a tourism context represents a means to express this need which, while perceived but not expressed/assumed, may induce greater difficulties in recognising that the tourism trip may also constitute a form of affirming one's own needs. One example would stem from demonstrating how tourists opting for the same tourist destination over the course of various years in which their loyalty necessarily reflects the desire to satisfy the need for protection and safety and thus avoiding risk in returning to an already known and tested territory (Holloway, 2006).

Departing from the assumption that a visitor/tourist recognises his/her own needs, reflected as motivations, he/she opts in favour of a product able to satisfy these needs and in which every consumer proves unique and hence there is the unavoidable need for a process of managing/monitoring the outlines of this profile of tourism demand. At an institutional or business level, this work should focus on researching and effective knowledge about the main interests and desires of both clients and potential clients within the scope of improving the structuring and aligning of supply.

The interpretation of any territory by visitors/tourists, reflecting their own respective specific characteristics, becomes fundamental to interpreting their behaviours, grasping their motivations and understanding how decision making processes take place. Within these goals, the conceptual approach made by Halloway (2006) to the process of theoretically circumscribed motivation enables, in an empathic manner, a better understanding of this behavioural variable (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – The Motivation Process
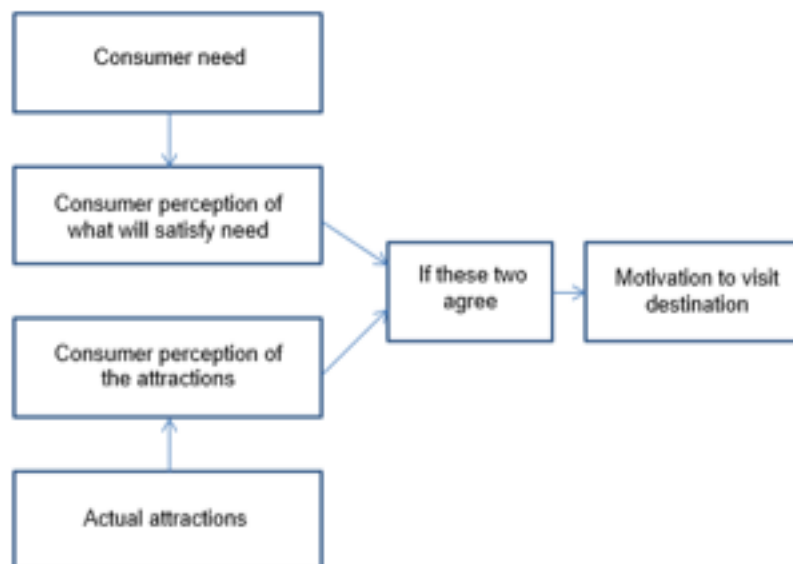
Source: Halloway (2006)

This will never prove an easy task given the existence of heterogeneous consumers with different motivations resulting in distinct typologies for rural tourists. The most commonly applied segmentation criteria for the tourism market identify distinct groups of tourists in accordance with geographic (place of origin), demographic and socioeconomic (age,

gender and profession) and behavioural (preferred type of accommodation, means of transport, duration of stay, reason for travelling and other motivations) variables (Férnandez, 2008; 241).

Remaining in the behavioural domain, considering the interest of the visitor/tourist in participating in certain activities, which configure a way of being and associating with a determined social representation, based upon the collection and processing of information across various levels, there is always the scope and the rationale for defining tourist typologies. Thus, based upon the survey information, in conjunction with direct contact with respondents, the main motivations result in the following proposal for the typologies of rural tourists visiting the Historical Villages of Portugal (Table 2).

Table 2 – Typologies of rural tourists visiting Historical Villages

Table 2 – Typologies of rural tourists visiting Historical Villages	
Typology	Description
Adventurer	Keen on high intensity and risky activities in the most appropriate locations for these practices at the destination.
Sporty	Experiences the need to travel routes in the surrounding environment whether on bike or by foot.
Fugitive	Openly fleeing from the daily routines, essentially seeking tranquillity reflected in the "change of airs".
Naturalist	Taking as their reference environmental values, seeking environments with direct contact and interpreting the landscapes and the ecosystems supported.
Nomad	Favours touring, in which the characteristics of the accommodation and gastronomy are greatly valued.
Nostalgic	Beyond the authenticity that the destination may hold, essentially searching for the roots.

Source: Authors

This apparent diversity in typologies does not necessarily raise difficulties for the understanding of the trends in demand and may also aid both the establishing of business objectives for new projects aligned retroactively with the segmentation of the respective prevailing supply chain already in place undertaken by the management teams in tourism territories displaying these characteristics.

Thus, composite analysis defining the tourism experience in rural environments (specific features, restrictions, limits and potentials) reveals, beyond some merely theoretical exercise, an opportunity to invert the "post-productive" advance in rural communities. Sounding out those aspects most valued alongside eventual failures enables the different stakeholders to invert processes and redesign strategies that seek a renewed socioeconomic valuation of the territory based upon its differentiated and quality supply. Within this framework, the endogenous resources, leveraging the identity, memory and tradition, constitute the *leitmotiv*/thematic basis for the continued supply of the appealing and unique experiences able to ensure the loyalty of visitors/tourists. This also renders legitimacy to the principles of sustainable tourism development in which the involvement of

the local communities proves effective and meaningful rather than some merely colloquial reference.

Historical Villages of Portugal – demand profile

Based upon the application and subsequent processing of the 412 surveys carried out, we below set out some of the most relevant highlights enabling the sketching of the profile of tourism demand at the Historical Villages of Portugal.

Respondent characteristics

In terms of gender, males clearly outweigh their female counterparts with 253 (61.4%) male respondents against 159 (38.6%) of females.

Furthermore, adults prevailed as the largest single age group with 322 (78.1%) respondents aged between 25 and 64, followed by the elderly (aged 65 and over) with 54 (13.1%) persons and the young, aged under 24, accounting for 36 (8.8%) respondents.

As regards nationality, the Portuguese were clearly in the majority – 315 (76.4%) – with the remaining 97 (23.6%) international arrivals made up primarily of Spanish (32 – 7.8%), French (29 – 7%) and British (17 – 4.2%) citizens.

The place of residence for 126 (30.6%) respondents was the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon, with 101 (24.5%) visitors from the Centro and 66 (16%) from the Norte regions.

In terms of their main occupations, 212 (51.0%) respondents declared they worked for an employer, 80 (19.5%) were retirees and 59 (14.3%) were freelancers or self-employed. In the employed category, 60 (14.6%) stated they worked in professions within the scope of *"Service and sales staff"*, 57 (13.9%) were *"Specialists in intellectual and scientific professions"* and with a further 26 (6.3%) identifying as *"Senior managers in the civil service, leaders and senior company staff"*.

In terms of the self-employed category, 13 (3.2%) described themselves as working in the *"Service and sales staff"*, 9 (2.3%) were *"Specialists in intellectual and scientific professions"* and 7 (1.6%) as *"Skilled staff and assembly workers"*.

In the retired class, 33 (8.1%) had formerly held functions within the scope of *"Service and sales staff"*, 10 (2.5%) *"Senior managers in the civil service, leaders and senior company staff"* and 8 (1.9%) as *"Machine operators, skilled staff and similar"*.

Visit/stay

As regards the motivations underpinning the reason for the visit to the Historical Villages of Portugal, the enjoyment of holidays represented the largest group of respondents - 221 (53.7%) -, ahead of visiting family/friends – 50 (12.2%). The residual class of "other", containing 42 (10.1%) of respondents reflects visitors there to go walking as their main reason.

In terms of accompanying visit members, 266 (64.5%) respondents answered that they were there with their families and 107 (26%) with friends whilst 328 (79.6%) had arrived in

their own vehicles, with 36 (8.8%) on a coach/excursion while 24 (5.8%) made recourse to rented vehicles.

Accommodation

In their choice of accommodation, 89 (21.6%) respondents said they were staying in a Historical Village with the village of Piódão referenced by 32 (7.7%) respondents, Belmonte by 15 (3.6%) and Trancoso by 9 (2.1%)

The preferred typology of accommodation was "*Traditional Hotels (Hotels, Hotels-Apartments)*" for 90 (21.9%) respondents with "*Local Accommodation (Motels, Guest Houses, BnBs and Hostels)*" the choice of 60 (14.5%) respondents and Tourism in Rural Environment units accounting for 42 (10.2%) respondents.

Historiographic Villages

Word of mouth references by "*family/friends/colleagues*" was the source of information on Historical Villages identified by 114 (27.7%) respondents with the residual class "*Others*" representing 82 (20%) persons stating that "*Already known from a prior visit*", with 42 respondents (10.1%) attracted by "*Promotional brochures/pamphlets*" as the most important source of information.

In the case of the number of Villages already visited, as set out in Table 3, the data reports that only 107 (26%) respondents had visited more than seven Villages and thus revealing a still broader visitor potential.

Table 3 – How many Historical Villages have your visited?

Table 3 – How many Historical Villages have your visited?		%
3.2.1 [1,3]	168	40.8
3.2.2 [4,6]	123	29.9
3.2.3 [7,9]	63	15.3
3.2.4 [10,12]	44	10.7
Did not respond	14	3.3
	412	100

Source: Authors

Asked about their interest in continuing on their visit itinerary to include other Historical Villages, 90 (21.8%) expressed an interest in visiting one more; 56 (13.6%) two more and 26 (6.3%) three more.

In terms of ranking the Historical Village visits, 1,506 (40.7%) of the classifications across nine items came in at level 4 (very much satisfied). Within this category, the "*Hospitality/ charm*" item stands out with 258 (62.7%) such rankings while "*Built heritage*" on 248 (60.2%) and "*Cleanliness*" on 234 (56.8%) were also to the fore.

The negative evaluations, both level 1 (very unsatisfactory) and level 2 (unsatisfactory) invariably focus upon the categories "*Availability of Restaurants/Similar*" and "Signposting" and always in that order.

The concepts of "*Heritage*", "*Memory*" and "*Tradition*", in accordance with the items set out in Table 4, gain greatest reference in an immediate association with the realities of the Historical Villages.

Table 4 – Concept(s) associated with the Historical Village realities

Table 4 – Concept(s) associated with the Historical Village realities		%
3.5.1 Memory	94	22.9
3.5.2 Heritage	190	46.2
3.5.3 Identity	15	3.6
3.5.4 Tourism product	21	5
3.5.5 Tradition	42	10.2
3.5.6 Rural world	24	5.8
3.5.7 Local/regional development	9	2.2
3.5.8 Other:		
Roots	1	0.2
Did not respond	16	3.9
	412	100

Source: Authors

In the final evaluation of the Historical Villages network, across the three aspects deemed most positive in the open answers, we encountered a coherence across the diffused levels of ranking:

1st positive aspect: the "*Restoration, rehabilitation and promotion of heritage*" was identified by 122 (29.7%) of respondents with "*Location and surroundings of villages/ landscapes, the setting and beauty of places/charm*" by 44 (10.7%) and "*Locations able to relive the past and participate in a Portuguese rural environment/preserving roots and tradition/nostalgia*" by 40 (9.8%).

2nd positive aspect: 42 (10.2%) respondents place the emphasis on "*Restoration, rehabilitation and promotion of heritage*", with 36 (8.8%) choosing "*Locations able to relive the past and participate in a Portuguese rural environment/preserving roots and tradition/ nostalgia*" and 27 (6.6%) selecting "*Location and surroundings of villages/landscapes, the setting and beauty of places/charm.*"

3rd positive aspect: "*Locations able to relive the past and participate in a Portuguese rural environment/preserving roots and tradition/nostalgia*" was referenced by 18 (4.4%) of respondents with "*Restoration, rehabilitation and promotion of heritage*" highlighted by 15 (3.7%) respondents with "Welcome/hospitality/friendliness" by 14 (3.4%).

In the negative performance, there is greater differentiation in the three categories requested in a descending order:

1st negative aspect: "*Lack of infrastructures (sanitary)/poor access and floors*" was reported by 56 (13.6%) respondents while "*Touristic product/lack of information in foreign languages/ lack of animation/ poor service standards/ poor promotion/tourist pollution/ merchandising*" fell short in the opinion of 46 (11.2%) and "*Depopulation /non-existence of the rural world / lack of investment*" for 34 (8.3%) of those surveyed.

2nd negative aspect: "*Safeguarding the heritage/ restoring monuments (castles)/ excessive concrete/ underused heritage*" gained the attention of 17 (4.2%) respondents, "*Touristic product/lack of information in foreign languages/ lack of animation/ poor service standards/ poor promotion/tourist pollution / lack of guides*" of 16 (3.9%) and "*Commerce and services: lack of accommodation /Automated Teller Machines (ATMs)/ Point Of Sale (POS)*" of 11 (2.7%) respondents.

3rd negative aspect: "*Touristic product/lack of information in foreign languages/ lack of animation/ poor service standards/ poor promotion/tourist pollution / lack of guides*" was put forward by 10 (2.4%) respondents with "*Commerce and services: lack of accommodation /ATMs/POS*" identified by 5 (1.2%) and "*Chaotic parking and noise*" by 4 (1%) of respondents.

Adapting supply to demand – a guarantee of competitiveness

The roots to a contemporary approach to the concept of competitiveness encapsulate the ideas of Adam Smith and David Ricardo that referred to economic systems incorporating the concepts of comparative or competitive advantage that then get applied to the economic specialisation of each different country (Romão, 2013).

In current terms, the application of the competitiveness concept to tourism activities proves fundamental and its theoretical framework spans synergies with the concept of sustainability. Within this domain, with analysis scaled at the regional level, competitiveness strengthens the formation of networks able to induce conditions favourable to innovation (Porter, 1985 and 2003, quoted by Romão, 2013).

Further considering that the role of tourism activities in the regional/local development of territories, which emerge in a highly competitive environment, this requires the application of targeted strategies that frame the rapid transformations taking place in recent years within the constellation of tourism associated activities. The acceptance of this fact should underlie the competitive advantages of destinations and should not be exclusively dependent on the resources available in the physical surroundings but rather a service sector tailored to the motivations driven by exigent levels of demand (Poon, 1994, quoted by Romão, 2013). Thus, the management of visitors/tourists represents one of the most effective means of dealing with the impacts of tourism, especially in environmental terms but also as regards the economic and socio-cultural effects. Visitor/tourist management processes have improved significantly over the last three decades and making a decisive contribution towards reducing the negative impacts of tourism activities (Mason, 2016).

Within this scope and taking into account the present case study, we may state that there is a legitimate expectation in the sense of the competitive longevity of the Historical

Villages of Portugal. Whilst still limited to attracting tourists from the internal market, there is a long route to travel towards obtaining greater projection in the traditional Portuguese tourism source markets. Particular and strategic attention also needs paying to the Spanish market on the grounds of its geographic proximity.

The national capacity of the Historical Villages Network to attract tourists extends to the metropolitan areas of Oporto and Lisbon (40.5% of respondents) courtesy of the facility of the structured means of access, whether via the A23 or the A25. Considering the tourism supply range in the vicinity of these metropolitan areas, this amounts to a very positive sign that advocates a redoubling of the efforts designed to sustainably leverage an increase in this demand.

Furthermore, given how enjoying holidays provides the most representative motivation, this then configures viable lines of activities within the framework of strategic measures designed to extend the stays of tourism and encourage overnight visits. When respondents were asked the question "*In this visit/stay, where are you going to stay?*" only 89 (21.6%) refer to either having accommodation or planning to stay overnight in a Historical Village, which reinforces the previous observation regarding the low level of actual tourism numbers.

In the knowledge that visits take place in the company of family members (26%), there is a need to redesign supply to provide inter-generational services, seeking the loyalty of all age groups but paying particular attention to younger persons. As regards loyalty, 20% of respondents stated that they already knew the Village from a previous visit, which conveys the existence of supply with the power of attraction and that should be methodologically leveraged and (re)qualified. Strengthening still further this dimension is the fact that 70.7% of respondent have been to a maximum of six of the twelve Historical Villages and clearly displaying a margin for new visits/stays to take place.

With personal vehicles the most common means of transport for visits/stays at the Historical Villages, this raises the need for the effective management of traffic as well as continued improvements to carparks, the circulation and presence of cars on streets. Considering the unique heritage framework of these locations, avoiding cars parking proves a means of eliminating unnecessary "noise". In this domain, due to reasons of comfort and convenience, as Historical Vehicles are not able to ban the presence of vehicles, they might propose a weekend in August when that restriction is put into practice – "Visit the Historical Villages without Cars".

The direct evaluation of the Historical Villages attributed 1,506 level 4 (very well satisfied) classifications distributed across nine items highlighting in their respective order of importance "*Hospitality/friendliness*", "*Built heritage*" and "*Cleanliness*".

Having undertaken this practical exercise of characterising the profile of demand and sounding out their readings of these territories, we are able to extrapolate a set of measures for short and medium term application and designed to reverse the most negative feelings expressed by visitors/tourists to the Historical Villages of Portugal.

Operationalising the measures

This task stems from a process of monitoring, which requires institutional continuity, and represents the methodology most appropriate to establishing priorities. Apparently not

identified, this scope has already seen some changes to procedures that introduced significant improvements over the last year within the scope of areas requiring corrective measures. We may here highlight those improvements made to cleaning processes and embellishing the Historical Villages, the placing of reception panels with reference to itineraries within the proximity of the Network (hence encouraging visits to other Historical Villages), setting up a new Internet website with an attractive image and the founding of new thematic routes, for example, the Historical Village Network – Jewish Heritage.

First priority measures for implementation:

- providing new and continued attention to matters related to the restoration and rehabilitation of heritage;
- placing fences-handrails in areas where they are lacking in monuments accessible to visitors/tourists;
- establishing an agenda for the improving of access conditions over the short and medium term within the scope of facilitating access to the Historical Villages for visitors/tourists with reduced mobility capacities;
- adapting the signposting within the interior of all Historical Villages so as to ensure coherence across the network (an easily obtainable goal but which should fall under the auspices of the National Plan of Tourism Signposting);
- strengthening the mission of tourism information posts and guaranteeing the provision of information through public attendance services in at least three foreign languages – English, French and Spanish;
- whenever possible, improving the automobile traffic and parking management processes;
- fostering guided tours of the Historical Villages via prior reservation;
- producing audio guides and applications (for smartphones) that facilitate the visit/interpretation of the heritage;
- boosting the dynamic, whether from a business perspective or an association based logic, driving the launch of restaurant and similar units in Villages in the network that do not yet provide such service(s);
- deepening, through a purpose specific alignment, an agenda of events based on the supply already available to the ten municipalities that territorially host the Historical Villages.

Second priority measures for implementation:

- developing tourism animation, in partnership with teaching institutions and local associations, especially for periods with peaks in visitors/tourists;
- defining the guidelines for certifying the endogenous resources commercialised in the Historiographic Villages as the areas of agricultural and traditional products (preserves, sweets, smoked meats, cheeses and liqueurs), handicrafts and articles of clothing;
- setting up a regulatory framework that will enable the founding in the near future of a Historical Villages certificate (within the perspective of eventually expanding the network);
- providing an online information service that, beyond generic information, might also function as a central reservation service for units;
- developing a shared line of merchandising, even while ideally each Village also displays factors of differentiation – and a mascot (based on traditional local stories) targeting the fostering of loyalty among a younger audience;
- launching a Historical Village Card (in keeping with the visit card concept), stimulating visits to various Villages in the network containing discounts and promotions that nevertheless from the outset still guarantee the covering of all costs.

Third priority measures for implementation:

- whenever possible, minimising the duration of construction in public areas – occasional interventions on the drainage network /others - , that always convey an unpleasant image and that may also hinder mobility/access;
- opening a tourism information office in Castelo Mendo (the only Historical Village that does not yet have such a service);
- resuming the collection of information by tourism information posts as regards the visitors/tourists at the Villages;
- fostering the collection of information on nights spent in the Historical Villages from accommodation units;
- submitting the Historical Villages Network of Portugal as a candidate to UNESCO World Heritage status.

Final Comments

Starting from the premise that the success of a determined and structured tourism supply depends on a conjugation of political and socioeconomic goals of the actors directly involved – companies, communities and visitors/tourists -, there is, regarding the Historical Villages Network of Portugal apparently contradictory signs that do not for the meanwhile jeopardise better standards of qualification, a *sine qua non* condition for promoting the tourism product.

With government initiative having proven decisive within the scope of establishing the conditions necessary to the later development of private sector business activities, 22 years on, we verify that the different responses have not been swift in coming given the demand that from early on identified with the project.

Hence, a fundamental priority stems from the implementation of the measures proposed within the framework of catching up on the time already lost. However, the investment necessary for this operationalisation also needs, and to better safeguard the overall project, to cover three core premises still requiring compliance with and that constitute a line of continuity to this present study: the drafting of a Tourism Strategic Development and Valuation Plan for the Historical Villages of Portugal, fostering the real involvement of the local communities and defining a model of governance that meets the true national, regional and local interests of this project.

References

Covas, A. (2004) *Política Agrícola e Desenvolvimento Rural*, Lisbon, Edições Colibri.
General Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development (n.d) *Características do Turismo no Espaço Rural* [online]. Available at http://www.dgadr.mamaot.pt/diversificacao/turismo-rural/caracteristicas-do-turismo-no-espaco-rural#home2 (Accessed 12 March 2016)

Fernández, J. (2008) *El turismo rural*, Madrid, Editorial Sintesis.

Holloway, J. C. (2006) *The Business of Tourism*, 7th Edition, England, Prentice Hall.
Instituto Nacional de Estatística (n.d.) *Estatísticas do Turismo - 2014* [online]. Available at https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_publicacoes&PUBLICACOESpub_boui=139601&PUBLICACOESmodo=2 (Accessed 12 March 2016)

Kastenholz, E.; *et al* (2014) *Reinventar o Turismo Rural em Portugal – Cocriação de Experiências Turísticas Sustentáveis*, Aveiro, U. A. Editora – Universidade de Aveiro.

Mason, P. (2016) *Tourism Impacts, Planning and Management*, 3rd Edition, Oxford, Routledge.

Oliveira das Neves, A. *et al* (2008) *Estudo de Caracterização do Turismo no Espaço Rural e do Turismo de Natureza em Portugal*, Estudo promovido pela Direcção-Geral de Agricultura e Desenvolvimento Rural (DGADR), financed by PIC LEADER +, carried out by Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos (IESE).

Romão, J. (2013) *Turismo e Lugar. Diferenciação territorial, Competitividade e Sustentabilidade em Turismo*, Lisbon, Escolar Editora.

Thirion, S.; Cavaco, C. (2003) *O Desenvolvimento Local em Meio Rural Face ao Desafio da Sustentabilidade*, Lisbon, Célula de Animação da Rede Portuguesa LEADER II.

Student attitudes toward use of social media in the learning process: A comparative study of Croatian and German students

Nikola Draskovic
Rochester Institute of Technology, Croatia

Ana Kustrak Korper
Zagreb School of Economics and Management, Croatia

Katharina Kilian-Yasin
University of Pforzheim, Germany

Abstract

The emergence of social media changed the communication landscape and the way people interact. Additionally, instead of being only a digital content consumer, one can also be a digital content producer. The interactivity of social media also provides potential for enhancing the student experience within the higher education. Various types of social media platforms could be used as instructional and communication tools, since student adoption rate of social media is very high. In recent years, social media use in higher education received some attention among academic researchers. As some studies suggest, social media facilitates dynamic interactivity, accessibility, and a new level of semi-formal relations between students and instructors. Social media will continue to play an important role within the constantly changing learning environment. However, the perceived semi-formal character of social media can limit its use. Especially, from a lecturer perspective. On one hand, students seem more willing than faculty to interact through social media while faculty seem relatively cautious toward interaction with students through different social media platforms. Using data from a convenience sample of undergraduate students in Croatia and Germany, this article focuses on the use social media for student-lecturer interaction. . The main aim of this study is to investigate what motivates students to use social media in a course, together with their perception of student-lecturer interaction through social media. The study also focuses on attitude differences between Croatian and German students.

Keywords: higher education, social media, social networking sites, blended learning, teacher-student interaction

Introduction

Social media and social networks changed the way we communicate and interact with our friends and peers. They also changed the way we consume media content. Social media gave us an opportunity to become contributors and creators of digital content. Just a decade ago, during the emerging phase, social media platforms were considered a novelty and their commercial value was still questionable, at least outside the IT industry. However, a growing user base and saturation of traditional mass media resulted in further commercial exploitation of social media platforms. According to eMarketer (2015), social network ad spending reached $23.68 billion worldwide in 2015. Marketers are shifting their budget from declining traditional media, such as print and TV, toward more dynamic and interactive digital media, such as social media and mobile platforms (RSO Consulting, 2014).

Social media also became relevant in academia. With widespread adoption among students, social media has huge potential as a communication and education tool (e.g. Ellefsen, 2016; Fasae and Adegbilero-Iwari, 2016; Sheldon, 2015; Draskovic, Caic and Kustrak, 2013; Dabbagh and Kitsantas, 2011). In overall, educators are aware of social media's benefits and high adoption rates (Moran, Seaman and Tinti-Kane, 2011). However, there are also some reservations and challenges preventing full adoption of social media for lecturer-student engagement, such as differing opinions about social media's role in the higher education environment and the rather informal nature of social media (Draskovic, Caic and Kustrak, 2013; Madge et al., 2009).

The aim of this study is to provide further analysis of the nature of lecturer-student interaction through social media. Furthermore, this study investigates and compares potential differences in social media use between Croatian and German students in academia.

Social media and higher education: a literature review

We will first define social media to establish a platform for further understanding its role in facilitating learning process. Social media could be defined as a group of Internet platforms build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). According to Bryer and Zavatarro (2011), social media gather various technologies including blogs, wikis, networking platforms (social networks), virtual worlds and media sharing tools that serve social purposes with the emphasis on social interactions facilitation, collaboration possibilities and deliberation across stakeholders. As the authors suggest, social media in the educational context has a wide variety of implementation and use both in terms of outcomes and media through which it can be facilitated. Additionally, different social media platforms contributes differently to the learning experience. For example, wikis being tool for collaboration as opposed to blogs that are more focused on authorship (Bryer and Zavatarro, 2011). However, each of the social media platforms that can be used in an educational environment should focus on integrating and contextualizing knowledge in the most efficient way.

What some scholars emphasize is the contemporary susceptibility of social media with constructivist learning theory and a learner-centered model. This approach focuses on learning as a social process in which one constructs the knowledge, as opposed to simply gaining it through the traditional model of learning (Duffy and Cunningham, 1996). George Siemens (2005) in his article on a learning theory in the digital age has further explained the existing learning theories in the context of social media, thus explaining that, as opposed to traditional view, learning does not happen inside the person. Rather, numerous connections are important to facilitate the process. Therefore, Siemens has proposed the new learning theory view called connectivism that relies on the following principles (2005, p7):

- Learning and knowledge rests in diversity of opinions.
- Learning is a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources.
- Learning may reside in non-human appliances.
- Capacity to know more is more critical than what is currently known.
- Nurturing and maintaining connections is needed to facilitate continual learning.
- Ability to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts is a core skill.

- Currency (accurate, up-to-date knowledge) is the intent of all connectivist learning activities.
- Decision-making is itself a learning process. Choosing what to learn and the meaning of incoming information is seen through the lens of a shifting reality. While there is a right answer now, it may be wrong tomorrow due to alterations in the information climate affecting the decision.

Concisely, connectivism could be considered a networked social learning (Duke, Harper and Johnston, 2013). In this context, the interactions and collaboration that social media can provide in the learning process will contribute to knowledge construction through meaningful and smart connections, contextualization and synthesis of learning problems. It can also contribute to the more efficient assessment of learning outcomes. Moreover, social media places students into familiar surroundings and helps advance information literacy and metacognitive development (King, 2011). The fact that communication through social media often times requires interpretation of presented or acquired data makes participation and collaboration an important aspect of learning.

With Facebook exceeding 1.5 billion active users and many other platforms with hundreds of millions of users (Statista, 2016a), social media should be considered a mainstream communication platform in the developed world. Social media is an integral part of both our professional and our private lives. Additionally, social media likely gained popularity as an important communication and educational tool within higher education in response to the high adoption rate among students and its potential role in improving student participation (Draskovic, Caic and Kustrak, 2013). It could be argued that social media platforms present educational, ethical, economic, and revolutionary changes in the organization and structure of the higher education system worldwide (MeabonBartow, 2014). Indeed, the support for using social media platforms within the higher education environment is currently growing (Ellefsen, 2016; Fasae and Adegbilero-Iwari, 2016; Taylor, McGrath-Champ and Clarkeburn, 2012; Kassens-Noor, 2012).

According to Foroughi (2011, p 3), the learning environment could benefit from the application of social media for the lecturer-student interraction:

- *Learning-related benefits*: facilitation of collaborative learning, development of independent learning skills, problem solving, team work, reflective learning, responsive feedback from instructors, overcoming geographic isolation, peer-to-peer support/feedback, visibility of students work, integration of multimedia assets, and the creation of informal relations between educators and students.
- *Social benefits for students*: increased engagement in course material, development of a sense of community and transferable skills that enhance student employability, increased sense of achievement, control, and ownership of their work.
- *Benefits for institutions of higher education*: increased cross-institutional collaborations, support and community building outside the course environment, development of communities of practice, increased student enrolment and retention.

Although social media introduced more active ways of learning for students, sometimes it seems that instructors do not share same level of enthusiasm due to concern that less formal communication via social media might erode their authority (Draskovic, Caic and

Kustrak, 2013). Furthermore, utilisation of social media as a teaching and communication tool requires additional effort and proper level of computer literacy. Many of today's students are highly proficient in their use of digital media (Bodle, 2011). On the other hand, the overall level of digital literacy and competency of faculty still requires some improvement and more systematic approach to the teacher education (Tømte et al. 2015; Krumsvik, 2014; Krumsvik, 2008).

To address the problems of student collaboration, engagement and interaction, many higher education institutions use e-learning platforms known as Course Management Systems (CMS) to ensure a more satisfactory and meaningful experience. Facilitating student participation is not only a requirement in a contemporary classroom due to technological changes, but it is strongly linked to learning outcomes. However, usage of CMS, although appealing to lecturers due to its controlled collaborative features that such closed systems enable, is not always efficient in terms of true collaboration and the sharing that social media facilitates (Bryer and Chen, 2012). In addition, CMS as a learning tool cannot be entirely considered in the context of social media and its benefits in learning/teaching environment because it is essentially an online translation of traditional brick-and-mortar classroom surroundings where students are treated as information receivers and not as information co-creators (McLoughlin and Lee, 2008).

Social media is also important through virtual communication or what can be called a computer-mediated communication (CMC). Regarding this particular channel, Mazer, Murphy and Simonds (2007) argue that "the use of CMC in the instructional context could ultimately have a positive effect on the student-teacher relationship, which can lead to more positive student outcomes. Additionally, these findings may offer an explanation with regard to communication between students and their teachers." In this particular article, the authors discussed the teacher-disclosure through Facebook (i.e. the amount of information that an instructor discloses to students) and the impact on student motivation, learning and classroom climate. They found a positive correlation, meaning that higher disclosure enhances mentioned factors. This is important because not only it provides a valuable insight for instructors in terms of whether their students might view such activity as positive, but it also provides instructors with a certain power of creating their digital image strategically, which is usually harder to achieve in face-to-face communication. Lecturer's presence on Facebook can therefore not only enhance student motivation and learning, but also help them brand themselves in a strategic way.

As many studies suggest (e.g. Ellefsen, 2016; Fasae and Adegbilero-Iwari, 2016; Sheldon, 2015; Draskovic, Caic and Kustrak, 2013; Pestek, Kadic-Maglajlic and Nozica, 2012; Dabbagh and Kitsantas, 2011), social media has potential as an educational tool that could improve student motivation and in-class participation levels. However, use and implementation of social media in the classroom depends on both student and instructor. Unfortunately, instructors typically share rather conservative attitudes towards using both social media and contemporary technology, and prefer using more traditional media (Mayberry et al., 2012; Roblyer et al., 2010). This gap between lecturers and students and their perseptions of social media's role in higher education (Draskovic, Caic and Kustrak, 2013) could be bridged with better understanding of student motivation and preferences toward social media use for educational purposes.

Methodology

As the literature review suggests, there is great potential for social media as an educational tool in higher education. However, there are also certain obstacles restricting its adoption rate among both lecturers and students. The main goal of this study is to further explore student motivation for social media use in the context of lecturer-student interaction. As a follow-up of the qualitative research phase which provides an overview of both lecturers and students perspectives on the social media (Draskovic, Caic and Kustrak, 2013), this study focuses on the student side of the story. In order to detect possible student's country of residency related specifics that could affect the social media adoption rate or the way students use social media (e.g. IT infrastructure, culture, university rules and regulations), the research was simultaneously conducted in Croatia and Germany during the fall semester of 2015. In both cases, the survey was conducted on a convenience sample. The survey was administered online to participants and their participation was voluntary. The sample is comprised of 81 students residing in Croatia and of 84 students residing in Germany. The respondents' age is between 18 and 30; 63.6% identified as male and 36.4% female.

Based on the secondary research and findings from the preceding qualitative study (Draskovic, Caic and Kustrak, 2013), the following hypotheses were developed:

- H1: Both Croatian and German students use social media on daily basis;
- H2: Students are open to using social media for educational purposes;
- H3: Students prefer to use social media for communication with their lecturers;
- H4: There are differences in attitudes toward lecturer-student interaction through social media among Croatian and German students.

Research results

The participants answered a questionnaire that surveyed their use of and access to social media, as well as their platform to access. The majority of respondents used different social media platforms. Only 4.2% of the respondents were not social media users, which reduced our sample size to 158 respondents. The majority (90.4%) used social media on a daily basis. With regards to technology and social media access options, there are no significant differences among Croatian and German students. In both cases, students most commonly accessed social media through their smart phones and laptops (Figure 1).

There are no major differences in motives to use social media among Croatian and German students. Staying in touch with friends and abreast of current events were the most popular choices, with the scores of 71.5% and 70.3% respectively. Among the respondents, Facebook is the most popular social media platform (91.1%), followed by YouTube (82.3%), Instagram (59.5%) and Skype (59.5%), with similar preferences among Croatian and German students.

In overall, only 25.9% of respondents communicated with their lecturers through social media (Figure 2). However, 34.2% of respondents did not communicate with their lecturers through social media but expressed willingness to do so in the future. Surprisingly, German students communicated less with their lecturers (12.0%) than their

Croatian counterparts (38.3%) and were also less prepared to change that behaviour in the future (16.9% vs. 32.1%).

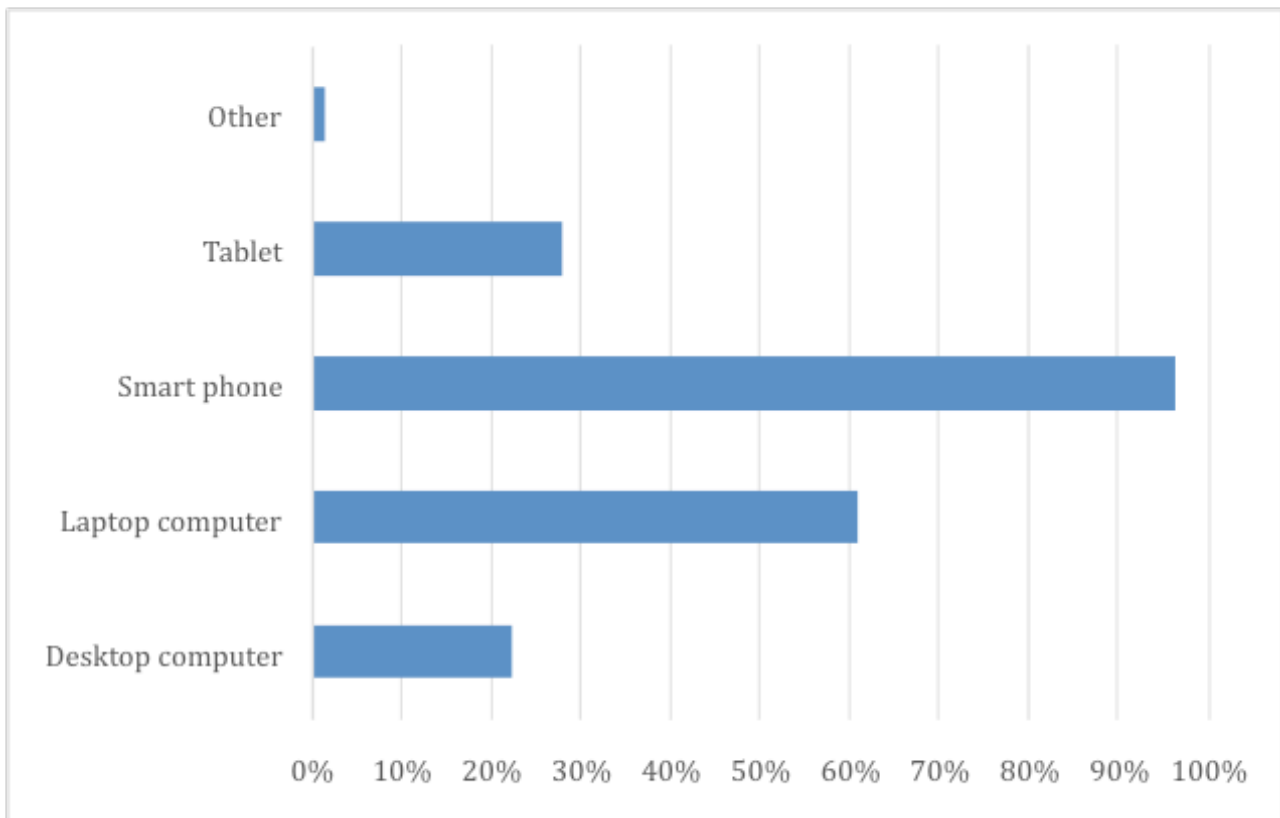**Figure 1: Social media access (n.b. multiple answers were possible)**
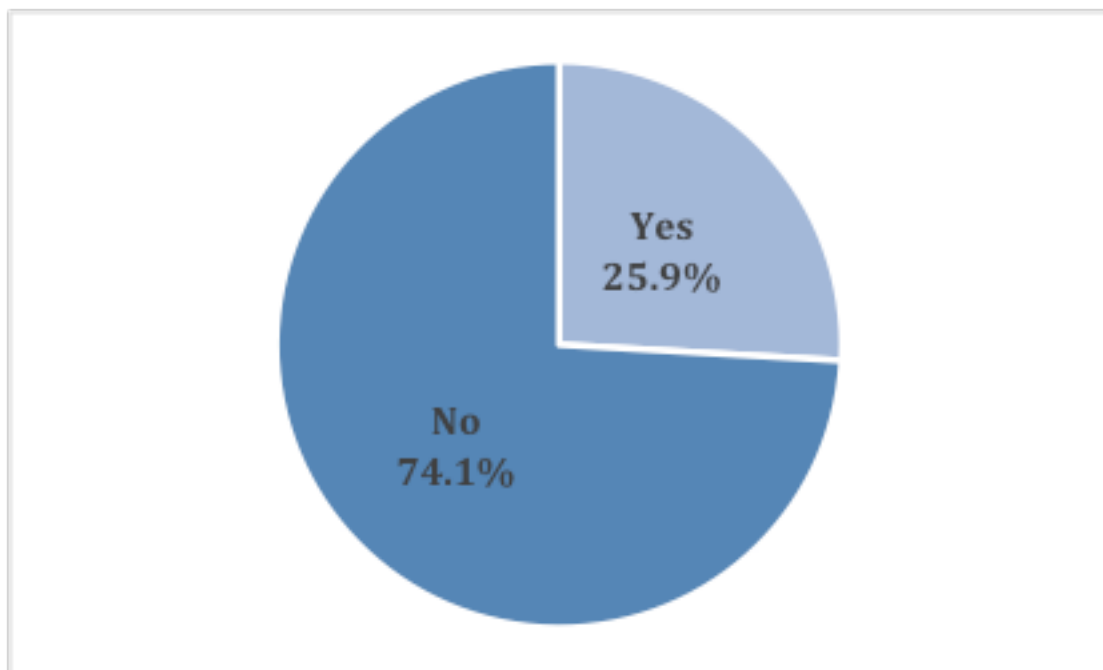

**Figure 2: Students communicating with their lecturers through social media**

In most cases, respondents used social media for official communication with their lecturers (53.7%), to gather course-related information (46.3%) and to stay in touch after graduation (39%). When it comes to students' attitudes toward various aspects of voluntarily interaction through social media in the context of higher education, the respondents are quite heterogeneous (Figure 3). Furthermore, the majority of students took a neutral stance. Obviously, there is some lack of motivation on the student side.

**Figure 3: Students' overall opinion about the communication with lecturers via social media**
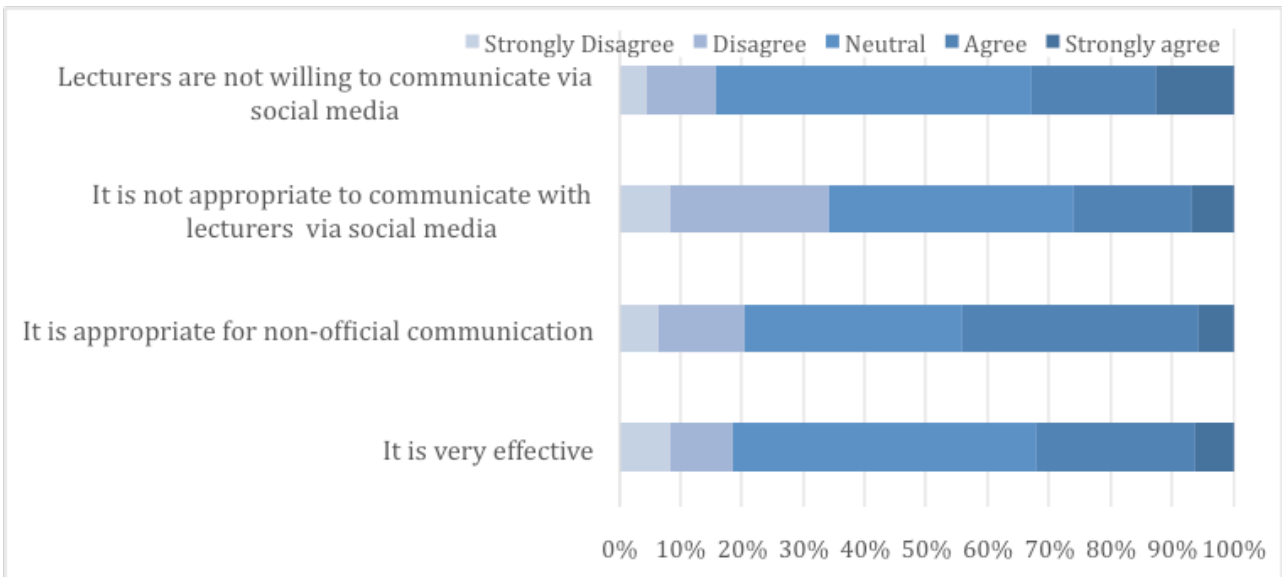
If the initiative to use social media originates from the course lecturer, students have a much more positive attitude (Figure 4). In most cases, below 10% of respondents are not prepared to participate. Overall, there are no major differences among Croatian and German students.

Figure 4: Students' level of participation if the lecturer suggests use of some social media
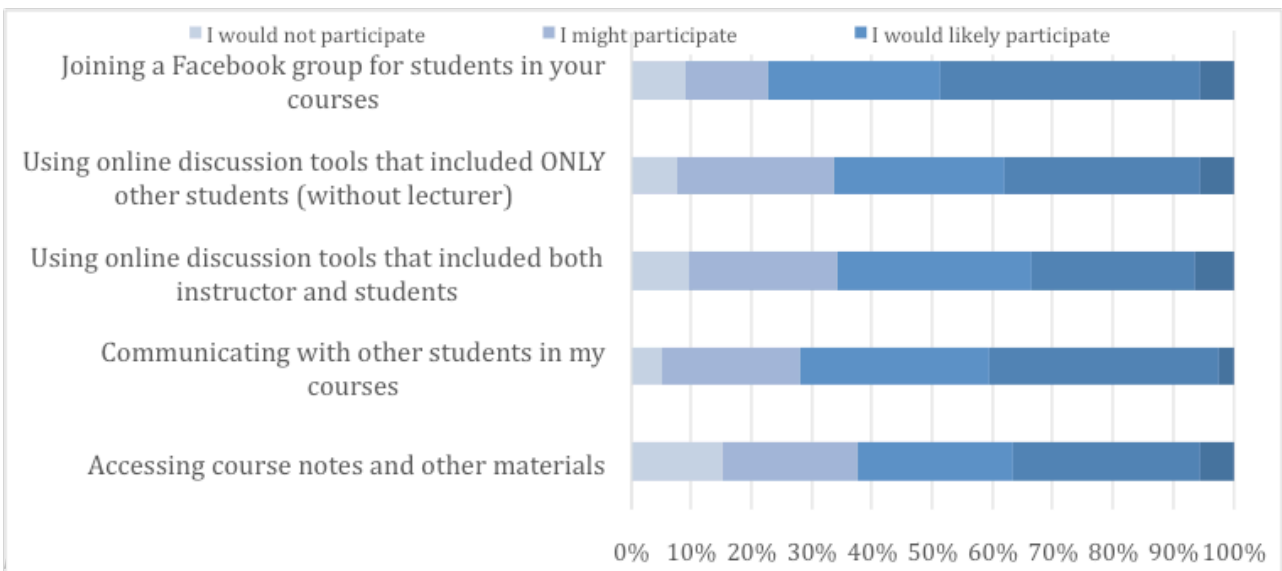
In general, respondents had a mostly positive opinion about the potential use of social media within higher education (Figure 5). Respondents mostly agreed and strongly agreed (63.3%) that social media can be a useful tool within a course. Furthermore, the majority of respondents (58.8%) considered social media a tool that could improve communication between lecturers and students. Additionally, almost three quarters of respondents (74%) believed social media could also improve communication between students enrolled to the same course. Although the overall optimism toward the use of social media for educational purpose was quite high, the majority of respondents indicated they would like to keep the existing online platforms used by their universities (e.g. WebCT, Moodle, BlackBoard, MyCourses). Again, response was consistent among Croatian and German students, so there were no significant differences.

Figure 5: Overall student opinion about using social media as an academic tool
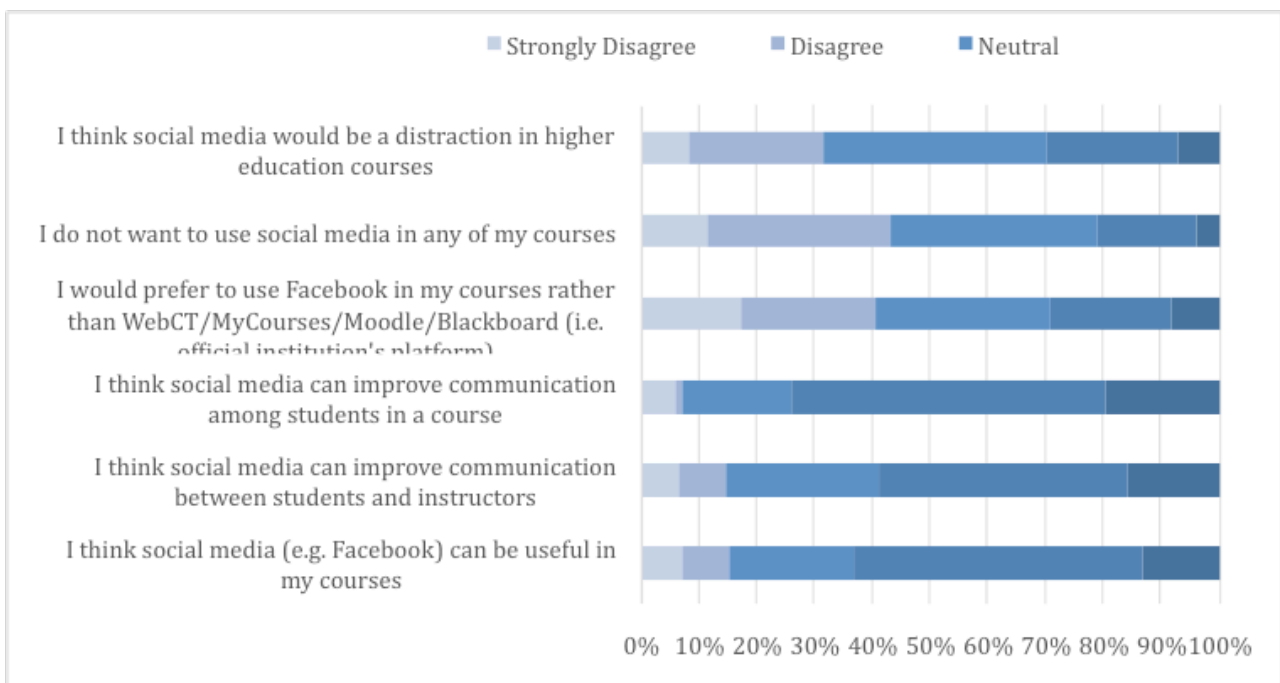
Discussion

Our results show that students use social media frequently and Facebook is the most popular platform. As expected, both German and Croatian students use social media on a daily basis, which supports H1. The fact that most students accessed social media via their smart phones and laptops is consistent with global trends. It also supports the logic to shift marketing budgets toward increasing promotion on digital and mobile platforms (Statista, 2016b), and shows a high level of computer literacy.

We found that social media use is similar among German and Croatian students, and that a smaller portion of students used social media solely for communication purposes. Our findings suggest there are a significant number of students who are currently not communicating with lecturers using social media in academia, but are willing to do it in the future. This shows that students see social media as a platform of further social engagement that can, in terms of the higher-education ecosystem, translate this engagement to benefit both the learning experience and institution.

When it comes to student openness in usage of social media for educational purposes, results were somewhat heterogeneous. Overall opinion towards communication with lecturers was neutral, but if the initiative to engage on social media was coming from the lecturer, attitudes were more positive. H2 can therefore be accepted with emphasis that lecturers should serve as initial motivators for student engagement, which is consistent with the literature.

H3 can be accepted since students had mostly positive attitude towards the usage of social media within the course. They consider social media as a useful tool that can increase the level of communication with the lecturers. However, regardless of general attitude students still prefer to keep communication via CMS as well, placing social media as desirable secondary platform for communication and engagement. Moreover, German students stated not only that they communicated less with lecturers via social media but are more unwilling to do it in the future. This can be explained through the lens of cultural norms as German educational institutions are more formal or different attitudes toward lecturer's authority. This aspect should be addressed in future studies.
There were no significant differences in attitudes toward lecturer-student interaction through social media found among Croatian and German students. Therefore, H4 is not accepted.

Conclusion

Our research suggests that students use social media frequently and have positive attitudes to integrating social media in education. Lecturers should serve as primary motivators for students to participate and communicate via social media for educational purposes. Since students prefer CMS for educational and communication purposes in academia, they should continue to be used. This study also reveals that there are no significant differences in social media use and preferences among Croatian and German students.

The study has some limitations. One of the limitations is the sample size, together with a sampling technique. With the relatively small sample size and a sample that may not be representative of the entire population, the study may be limited in generalization making about the entire population. Therefore, the findings should be considered as indicative. Further, in future studies more higher education institutions from different countries should participate to increase the level of objectivity and provide results that can be reported on larger scale.

The use of social media in education is an interesting and desirable research topic because, as literature also suggests, educational institutions should become more connected with students on all possible touch points and use social media to engage students in more interactive learning. As this study indicates, students have some constrains in lecturers' engagement through social media and they are also not very excited about voluntarily usage of social media within a course. However, if a lecturer suggests social media usage for educational purposes, students have quite positive attitudes towards it. Obviously, further studies should be conducted to explore how to increase student motivation to use social media in the learning process. Nevertheless, lecturers' adoption rate and willingness to use social media as an educational tool also requires some additional attention among researchers.

References

Bodle, (2011) Social Learning with Social Media: Expanding and Extending the Communication Studies Classroom. In: Wankel, C. ed. Teaching Arts and Science with the New Social Media. Emerald Group Publishing.

Bryer, T. A.and Chen, B. (2012) Investigating Instructional Strategies for Using Social Media in Formal and Informal Learning. The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp 87-104.

Bryer, T. A. and Zavattaro, S. (2011) Social media and public administration: Theoretical dimensions and introduction to symposium. Administrative Theory & Praxis, Vol. 33, No. 3, pp 325-240

Dabbagh, N. and Kitsantas, A. (2011) Personal Learning Environments, social media, and self-regulated learning: A natural formula for connecting formal and informal learning. The Internet and Higher Education, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp 3-8.

Draskovic, N., Caic, M. and Kustrak, A. (2013) Croatian perspective(s) on the lecturer-student interaction through social media. International Journal of Management Cases, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp 331-339.

Duffy, T. M. and Cunningham, D. J. (1996) Constructivism: Implications for the Design and Delivery of 400 Instruction. In D. H. Jonassen ed. Handbook of Research for Educational Communications and Technology. NY: Macmillan Library Reference.

Duke, B., Harper, G. and Johnston, M. (2013) Connectivism as a Digital Age Learning Theory. The International HETL Review, special issue, pp 4-13.

eMarketer (2015) Social Network Ad Spending to Hit $23.68 Billion Worldwide in 2015 [Online]. Available from: http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Social-Network-Ad-Spending-Hit-2368-Billion-Worldwide-2015/1012357 [Accessed: 20 February 2016].

Ellefsen, L. (2016) An Investigation into Perceptions of Facebook-use in Higher Education. International Journal of Higher Education, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp 160-172.

Fasae, J.K. and Adegbilero-Iwari, I. (2016) Use of social media by science students in public universities in Southwest Nigeria. The Electronic Library, Vol. 34, No. 2, pp 213-222.

Foroughi, A. (2011) A Research Framework for Evaluating the Effectiveness of Implementation of Social Media in Higher Education. Online Journal of Workforce Education and Development, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 2-12.

Kaplan, A. M. andHaenlein, M. (2010)Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. Business Horizons, Vol. 53, No. 1, pp 59-68.

Kassens-Noor, E. (2012) Twitter as a teaching practice to enhance active and informal learning in higher education: The case of sustainable tweets. Active Learning in Higher Education, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp 9-21.

King, R. (2011) Metacognition: Information Literacy and Web 2.0 as an Instructional Tool. Currents in Teaching and Learning , Vol. 3, No. 2, pp 22-32.

Krumsvik, R. J. (2008) Situated learning and teachers' digital competence. Education and Information Technologies, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp 279-290.

Krumsvik, R. J. (2014) Teacher educators' digital competence. Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, Vol. 58, No. 3, pp 269-280.

Madge, C., Meek, J., Wellens, J. and Hooley, T. (2009) Facebook, social integration and informal learning at university: 'It is more for socialising and talking to friends about work than for actually doing work'. Learning, Media and Technology, Vol. 34, No. 2, pp 141-155.

Mazer, J.P., Murphy R.E. and Simonds C.J. (2007) I'll See You On "Facebook": The Effects of Computer-Mediated Teacher Self-Disclosure on Student Motivation, Affective Learning, and Classroom Climate. Communication Education, Vol 56, No.1, pp 1-17.
McLoughlin, C. and Lee, M. J. W. (2008) Future Learning Landscapes: Transforming Pedagogy through Social Software. Innovate: Journal of Online Education, Vol. 4, No. 5, Article 1.

Meabon Bartow, S. (2014) Teaching with Social Media: Disrupting Present Day Public Education. Educational Studies, Vol. 50, No. 1, pp 36-64.

Moran, M., Seaman, J. and Tinti-Kane, H. (2011) Teaching, Learning, and Sharing: How Today's Higher Education Faculty Use Social Media. Pearson Learning Solutions and Babson Survey Research Group.

Pestek, A., Kadic-Maglajlic, S. and Nozica, M. (2012) Implications of Web 2.0 Usage in Higher Education. International Journal of Management Cases, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp 3-12.

Roblyer, M., McDaniel, M., Webb, M., Herman, J., & Witty, J. V. (2010) Findings on Facebook in higher education: A comparison of college faculty and student use and perceptions of social networking sites. Internet and Higher Education, Vol. 13, No.3, pp 134-140.

RSO Consulting (2014) Global Ad Spend in 2015 [Online]. Available from: http://www.rso-consulting.com/global-ad-spend-in-2015 [Accessed: 20 February 2016].
Sheldon, P. (2015) Understanding students' reasons and gender differences in adding faculty as Facebook friends. Computers in Human Behavior, Vol. 53 (December), pp 58-62.

Siemens, G. (2005) Connectivism: A Learning Theory for the Digital Age. International Journal of InstructionalTechnology and Distance Learning, Vol. 2, No.1. pp 3-10.

Statista (2016a) Leading social networks worldwide as of January 2016 [Online]. Available from:http://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/ [Accessed: 21 February 2016].

Statista (2016b) Change in global advertising spending between 2015 and 2018, by medium (in billion U.S. dollars) [Online]. Available from:http://www.statista.com/

statistics/269977/global-advertising-expenditure-by-medium/ [Accessed: 21 February 2016].

Taylor, L., McGrath-Champ, S. AndClarkeburn, H. (2012) Supporting student self-study: The educational design of podcasts in a collaborative learning context. Active Learning in Higher Education, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp 77-90.

Tømte, C., Enochsson, A-B., Buskqvist, U. and Kårstein, A. (2015) Educating online student teachers to master professional digital competence: The TPACK-framework goes online. Computers & Education, Vol. 84 (May), pp 26-35.