CONCEIÇÃO MARIA OLIVEIRA CUNHA

LIFESTYLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP: THE CASE OF SMALL RURAL TOURISM ENTERPRISES.

Field: Tourism

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Abstract:

High expectations have been placed on entrepreneurship and on small businesses as a means of regeneration of many rural economies. Tourism is one of the sectors that can contribute to, and benefit from, the entrepreneurial dynamics created in these territories. Although the economic and social contributions of small rural tourism businesses are increasingly studied and recognized, the role of the owners / managers is not clear, particularly regarding “lifestyle” entrepreneurship. The aim of this research is to contribute to a better understanding of “lifestyle” entrepreneurs, their profile, their motivations and, mainly, their business management practices, also including an understanding of the consequences of the way of management on business success. A qualitative in-depth research was undertaken, using the case study. This study was conducted in the Alto Alentejo, a region which has significant tourism potential. Eight entrepreneurs of small tourism accommodation units in rural areas, were interviewed. The interviews were complemented with data from other sources, namely interviews with guests, direct observation and diverse documentation. The collected data was processed adopting a categorical approach. A content analysis was performed, taking into account the most relevant theoretical frameworks previously reviewed.

How my research is having impact:

This thesis results indicate different behaviors in management practices within a group of entrepreneurs clearly associated to “lifestyle” characteristics. These entrepreneurs also demonstrated higher levels of satisfaction with their business and life choices, which apparently contributes to the success of their endeavors. Lifestyle tourism entrepreneurs were not investigated in Portugal, previously.