

IS THERE EVIDENCE OF A EUROPEAN LIFESTYLE ENTREPRENEUR IN TOURISM?

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Abstract: *Entrepreneurship is a very important field for research, due to its contribution to development and growth. Moreover, investigating particular features of entrepreneurs in different sectors would be an important point to further policies to fostering entrepreneurship. This paper investigates the specific traits of entrepreneurship in tourism, particularly questioning of the evidence of a different type of entrepreneur in tourism. As literature proposes the model of a "lifestyle entrepreneur" in tourism, we focus on testing this hypothesis by using the data available in EUROSTAT database on "Enterprises managed by the founder". Based on evaluating empirical data that would support this idea, we find the conclusion that there is not enough evidence to support the idea of a more family-motivated and not only profit-oriented entrepreneur in tourism.*

Key words: tourism entrepreneur; lifestyle entrepreneur; tourism; EU and Romania

JEL Classification: M13, L26

1. Introduction

The nature of entrepreneurship, the entrepreneur's attributes and personality traits have been extensively studied in the last century, but the variety of approaches, methods and influences express a lot about the impossibility of consensus in this regard. Ever since the first systematic research on entrepreneurship, it has been associated with development. Thus, the entrepreneur was considered as an intermediary combining goods and services demanded on the market (Cantillon 1730, 1959), as risk undertaker (Say 1880, 2001) or capitalist-entrepreneur employing production factors, assuming risks and carefully analyzing the market developments (Turgot), because his/her entire business is based on anticipating consumers' desires to whom the production results are intended. Classics (e.g. Smith, Ricardo or Mill) are more succinct, they rather see the entrepreneur in terms of "business management", even if Mill shows that entrepreneurship requires "special qualities". The importance of entrepreneurship was first officially recognized by Alfred Marshall, who stated that the organization is the coordinating factor of productive inputs and the entrepreneur is the leading factor within the organization. Marshall shows that qualities associated with a good entrepreneur are rare and limited, "so large and numerous that very few people can accumulate in a truly effective way" (Burnet 2000). This contractor is the employer of human resources, a leader of others, but their deep business knowledge, to take bold risks, continued to seek opportunities that lead to lower costs. The economist most associated with entrepreneurship theory is Joseph Schumpeter (Formaini 2001), who considered that the entrepreneur does not necessarily discover things or goods, but exploit in an innovative way things that have already been invented, so he or she makes a "creative destruction" and brings up new industries, while obsolete industries retire or disappear.

Frank Knight, addressing entrepreneurship theory, makes a clear distinction between risk and uncertainty, and consider that the role of entrepreneur is to assume uncertainty about these events and even to protect the other shareholders of firm effects of the event. Later, Knight insists that entrepreneurs are owners of the company (*residual claimants*) and thus they are entitled to profit. For Kirzner, businesses suffer from an "utter ignorance", they

simply do not know what useful information are available and the contractor, always alert, discover and exploit new opportunities and removes a part of its "utter ignorance" (Iversen et al 2008). For Kirzner, the entrepreneur is a pure governor, who has no property. Gilder believes that the real economy is the creation of entrepreneur and entrepreneurial activity and not multinational corporations, economic policy and political compromises, which suppress simple and creative energy and enthusiasm of individual entrepreneurs. Gilder calls often irrational entrepreneurship as a process, carried on by "orphans and outcasts" conducted in a hostile environment. Schultz argues that entrepreneurship is in every aspect of human existence, and student and housewife are entrepreneurs they reallocate their time and try to use it better for learning activities or household. Casson tried to meet the definitions of Schumpeter and Knight by affirming the idea that the entrepreneur is that person trained to make decisions. Mark Casson defines the entrepreneur as someone who has different skills that allow him/her to make value judgments for the intelligent use of scarce resources, make difficult decisions on supply and demand forecasting under uncertainty, and is able to claim as a reward profit. William Baumol considers the entrepreneur as assuming two functions: the Schumpeterian innovator and the modern manager (Aidis 2003). Baumol argues that the entrepreneur does not disappear and reappear, the number of productive and unproductive entrepreneurs change if there are some motivational structures. An entrepreneur may own or not a business, may be employed or not in a productive activity, but the defining factor is the "innovative behaviour".

However, the entrepreneurial behaviour is not driven only by rational decision-making structures, does not aim only development at any price; there are other explanations, non-economic, that should be approached to understand the entrepreneurial process, i.e. those typical characteristics and personality traits, such as creativity, risk undertaking, innovation and pro-active behaviour that can be observed in different social, political or economic environment (Timmons, 1994). Thus, according to Morrison (2006), the various entrepreneurial hypostases such as lifestyle, social and family relationships may indicate that there is often a clear orientation towards non-economic reasons. There is no doubt that a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship itself is not sufficient to motivate a person to develop a business. However, the intention to create a business occurs only when positive attitude towards entrepreneurship (Koh, 1996).

2. The "lifestyle entrepreneur": some literature

The importance of entrepreneurship for tourism and leisure industry is very special, as revealed by numerous authors, such as: Thomas (1998, 2000), Morrison et al (1998), Getz (2004), Buhalis and Main (1998). These activities are based on entrepreneurial spirit and activism of SMEs. Tourism and leisure have always attracted a large number of various entrepreneurs, but not always growth oriented, both concerning the business itself, and their own skills and knowledge. Entrepreneurial activity in tourism, hospitality and leisure has been often perceived more from tourists' perspective than from a business perspective. Images of idyllic beaches, spectacular mountain landscapes etc. have often been identified as one of the main reasons for which future tourism business owners have left their jobs or residences in cities to set up tourist establishments. The picture of their existence as entrepreneurs in places they have dreamed before eclipsed the fatigue of solving current problems, difficulties and required managerial decisions. Often the desire to enjoy the perceived quality of life, a certain lifestyle and economic status has led to ignore the real business. Thus, the entrepreneurial decision, taken on the basis of psychological determinants, without any experience or training, quickly led to failure, to the rapid consumption of savings collected in earlier career of the entrepreneur (Peters, Frehse, Buhalis 2009).

Components often approached in defining the profile of small business owners, managers and entrepreneurs in tourism are related to age and gender (Ateljevic et al 1999; Szivas, E. 2001, Ahmad 2005), education (Glancey and Pettigrew 1997; Avcikurt 2003), work experience (Ateljevic et al 1999; Szivas, E. 2001), marital status (Getz and Carlsen, 2000), and motivational impulses can be added.

According to the mentioned authors, the dominant small business owners / managers / entrepreneurs are middle-aged (30-45 years) or more over 45 years. Most are married (Getz and Carlsen, 2000) and as such, small businesses are majority owned and managed by men (Morrison, Breen and Ali 2003, Avcikurt 2003), although researchers like Getz and Carlsen are reluctant to the male domination. However, Ahmad (2005) believes that male owners and entrepreneurs dominate in net proportion (81%), especially in small firms. This can be an expression of traditional society influences, where the man is, at least formally, head of the family and the decision maker (Mastura Jaafar et al 2010). In terms of formal education of entrepreneurs and business owners, the data are more inconsistent. In Australia, entrepreneurs with higher education comprise only one third of total (Getz and Carlsen, 2000), or even less, while in European countries it seems to be a balance between people with secondary studies and university graduates (Glancey and Pettigrew, 1997). Both are still haunted by the fact that most types of studies completed at whatever level, is significantly different from the requirements of the profession (technical studies, language, etc.) and should be supplemented by further stages of their studies and training courses in tourism.

Given the ease of entry into this industry, many owners / managers are reported to have different types of occupations and experience before venturing into the tourism sector (Ateljevic et al 1999; Szivas, 2001). In New Zealand and the UK prior work experience in tourism and hospitality industry is not particularly representative, i.e. about one third of the entrepreneurs said they had previous experience in this field, while the most common previous experience is related to agriculture, retail, education, marketing, constructions (Ateljevic et al 1999; Szivas 2001).

According to Dewhurst et al. (2007), there are two conflicting ideas about the need for training in the hospitality sector. One line suggests that owners / managers do not need training because they know how to manage their business better than anyone else. However, other line recognizes very specific gaps in knowledge. Either unwilling or because deemed sufficiently trained in this profession without education or specialized courses, as revealed by Schroeder (2003) who reports a low involvement in training or development in the tourism business.

The entrepreneurial profile comprises, according to Glancey and Pettigrew (1997), the motivations that led into the business:

- on one hand, there are "push" factors, such as dismissal, uncertainty on the current job and the need for additional revenue;
- on the other hand, "pull" factors such as the desire to be their own boss, the expectations for high profit levels, business opportunities valorisation, or retirement.

Another defining aspect of the entrepreneurial profile directly related with the motivational factors is the position of the entrepreneurs concerning the business future growth. The literature on entrepreneurship and small business is divided between opinions arguing for a clear overlap between entrepreneurs and small business owners, and opinions pointing out the important differences between them. The most relevant and strong distinction here is the entrepreneurs' orientation to business growth, as opposed to small business owners who want to maintain the *statu quo*. Authors like Timmons (2004) and Nieman (2001) see entrepreneurship as a business launch (exploiting an opportunity), followed by growth and development on a specific area, while small business owners start a business, reinforce and develop it to a certain stage, where they lose availability, ability, entrepreneurial

intuition. For Trevisan and Matulella (1994) or Grundling and Steynberg (2008), the difference between the two categories is given by an essential feature of the entrepreneur, i.e. the inventiveness, which is found in considerable lower proportions in the case of small business owners. Crijns and Ooghe (1997) add to this the dichotomy between favouring the use of internal resources (in the case of small owners) versus the external resources (in the case of entrepreneurs), or the local and limited vision (in the case of small owners) vs. the global, expansion based vision (in the case of entrepreneurs), or the survival perspective, the refuse to undertake more risks after the business has reached the ideal size (in the case of small owners) vs. vigorously pursuing success (in the case of entrepreneurs).

Many researchers agree that small business owners do not see the increase of the organization as one of their main objectives (Hankinson, Bartlett and Ducheneaut, 1997). Reijonan (2008) found that small business owners are not growth oriented (in terms of increased turnover and employment), they rather prefer to keep the business in the developing stage, and remain in waiting (Getz and Peterson 2004; Hollick and Braun, 2005; Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000).

Thus, the entrepreneurs see opportunities where small business owners see risks, recommended to be avoided, often related to business growth factors, such as cash flow management, company size, the uncertainty of entering new markets, the lack of confidence in the ability of the staff to assume new responsibilities.

In Australia, Bransgrove and King (1996) found that the main objectives of the small business owners, both from rural and urban areas, are the challenge, ambition, business opportunities, long term lifestyle and financial gain. According to Getz and Carlsen (2000), 34% of the respondents suggested that an attractive lifestyle is the main reason for going into business, followed by business and investment opportunities. Glancey and Pettigrew (1997) found that the behaviour of the majority of the sample analyzed (65%), adheres to the "pull" factors. This provides evidence to classify them as opportunistic entrepreneurs. Most studies cited above, and many others trying to identify specific entrepreneurial business features and characteristics of the entrepreneurial personality, have identified features such as: the desire to succeed, self achievement, willingness to assume risks, independence, innovation, self confidence, ability to learn from failure. Morrison and Thomas (1999) suggest that key elements of entrepreneurship (including tourism business) should include: initiating change, creative combination of resources, entrepreneurial learning (continuous), innovation and creativity, the accumulation of essential and priority information, alertness and opportunity, relationship management, maintenance of effective teams and networks, fast action, vision and strategic orientation. However, some of these features seem to be reflected, in the tourism business sector, in a lower proportion than the average for entrepreneurs, and here we refer particularly to innovation and risk undertaking (Litzinger, 1965). However, tourism entrepreneurs believe they can control everything, they have an excessive self-confidence and independence (Schroeder, 2003), they are highly motivated and eager for autonomy (Lerner and Haber, 2000).

In the case of tourism entrepreneurs, sharing lifestyle is listed sometimes as main motivation. Let us remind that, according to Burns (2001), "Lifestyle firms are businesses set up primarily either to undertake an activity the owner manager enjoys or to achieve a level of activity that provides adequate income". Lifestyle entrepreneurship in tourism relies on unique features, acting rather like factors limiting the business expansion, such as:

- priority given to lifestyle versus improving the customer service (Peters, Frehse, Buhalis 2009);
- irrational management, under-utilisation of resources and decisions ignoring the investment efficiency criteria (Peters, Frehse, Buhalis 2009);

- limited range of new products;
- limited availability to IT&C (Buhalis and Main, 1998), to assessing the emerging opportunities in IT&C (Paraskevas and Buhalis, 2002);
- reluctance to accept foreign coaching;
- motivated by business survival and ensuring sufficient income to maintain a comfortable lifestyle for themselves and their families (Komppula, 2004);
- little interest in training personnel, maintaining connections with professional organizations in the field;
- aversion control, refusal to accept new business associates and venture capital,
- increased dependence to distribution partners, conservatives and reticent for new partnerships, even if old network provide decreasing returns (Weiermair, 2001; Buhalis, 2000; Bastakis et al, 2004).

Moreover, Shaw and Williams (2004) consider that the tourism entrepreneur is different than in other economic sectors; tourism attracts lifestyle entrepreneurs due to the easy access into the business, as there are not high levels of human capital and investment needed, respectively not necessary professional licensing or formalized education, and due to largely transferable skills from other sectors.

3. The "lifestyle entrepreneur" and its profile: the data

In order to empirically test the literature findings concerning the lifestyle entrepreneur in tourism, we used the dataset "Enterprises managed by the founder", available in Eurostat database. We select from this database the data regarding the start-up motivation, start-up difficulties, education and previous professional experience and other information relevant to confirm the hypothesis of a different type of entrepreneur in tourism, more "lifestyle" and family oriented. We use the data available for European Union, for both NACE H sector – Hotel and restaurants (Hotels and restaurants) and NACE Industry and services, excluding public administration and management activities of holding companies, for some comparison. Available data are for the year 2005.

First, we can address the *motivations* for business start-up, to investigate whether there are significant differences in motivations for the Hotels and restaurants sector versus general sector Industry and services. For EU as a whole and for both two sectors (Hotels and restaurants and Industry and services), the top 3 motivators to start up a business are the same, i.e. respectively: "the desire to be one's own boss", "the prospect of making more money", and "the desire for new challenges". There are also the same rankings for those motivations related to life-style entrepreneurship, i.e. "combining work and private life" and "desire to make a living from a hobby activity", ranked no. 5 respectively no. 8. Moreover, the motivation "desire to be one's own boss" – related to "lifestyle entrepreneurship" is ranked by EU entrepreneurs as the first motivation to start up a business, both in the hotel and restaurants sector and in the general industry and services sector.

In the case of Romania, the top 3 motivations are the same, even not in the same order, while motivations "combining work and private life" and "desire to make a living from a hobby activity" are ranked no. 4 respectively no. 6.

The next figures reveal the whole picture about the motivations for starting-up a business in EU and Romania.

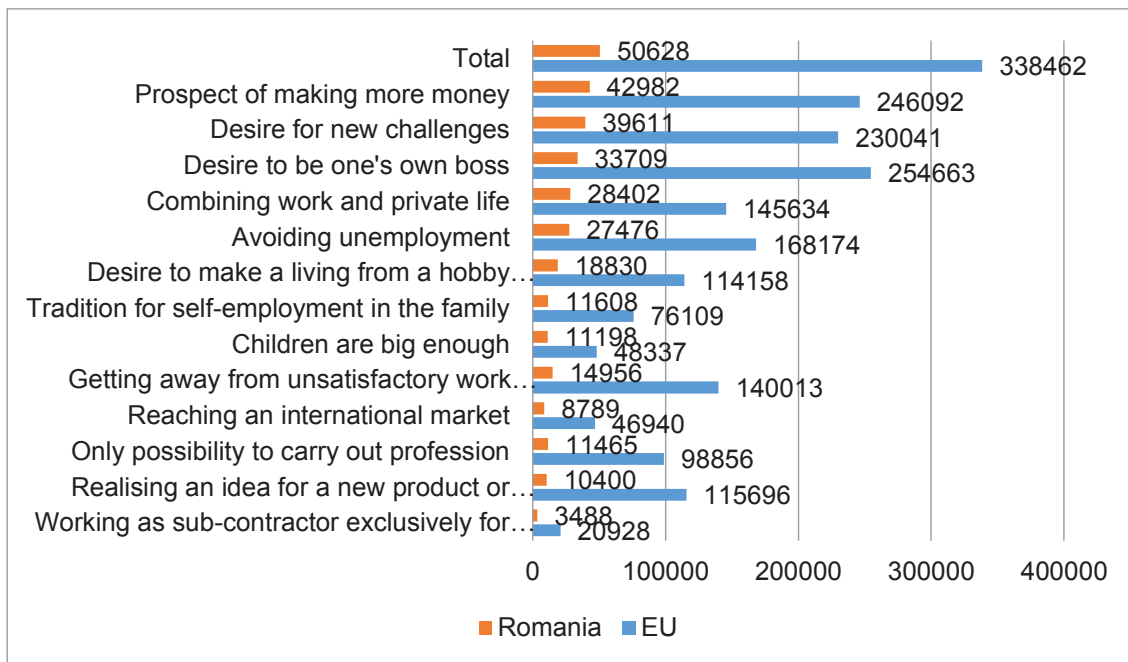


Figure 1: Motivations to start up a business, industry and services sector, EU and Romania

Source: own construction based on dataset

It is very interesting to find that the most nominated motivations to start up a business in hotels and restaurants sector (see Figure 1), both in EU and Romania, are very much like for the general industry and services. There are practically the same top 3 motivations and the rankings for those motivations related to life-style entrepreneurship, i.e. “combining work and private life” and “desire to make a living from a hobby activity”. They are ranked no. 5 respectively no. 8 in the EU case, and no. 4 respectively no. 6 in the case of Romania. Moreover, the motivation “desire to be one’s own boss” – related to “lifestyle entrepreneurship” is ranked by EU entrepreneurs as the first motivation to start up a business, both in general industry and services sector, and in the hotels and restaurants sector.

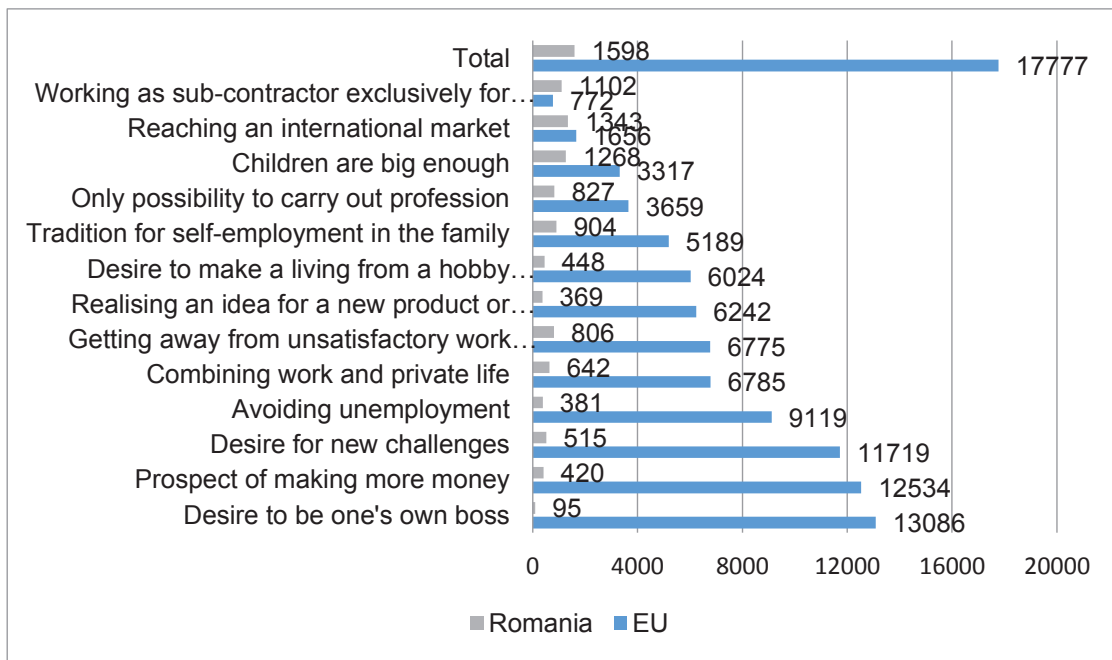


Figure 2: Motivations to start up a business, hotels and restaurants sector, EU and Romania

Source: own construction based on dataset

Another issue to support the idea of "lifestyle entrepreneurship" in tourism could be related to the *financing sources to business start-up*. As Peters, Frehse and Buhalis (2009, p. 397) states, "Sometimes this is financed with savings from property or previous careers", we could expect that 'own funds and savings' and 'financial assistance from family or friends' could be more often used to start-up financing in tourism than in other sectors. However, in the case of hotels and restaurants sector, "own funds and savings" was indicated by 73% of the respondents as main financing sources, "financial assistance from family or friends" by 39% of the respondents, while for the general industry and services sector, the figures were 85%, respectively 26%.

Concerning the *start-up difficulties*, the option "to get adequate personnel" was indicated by 45% of the European entrepreneurs in tourism, while by only 28% of the general industry and services entrepreneurs. So, contrary to the expectations, finding suitable personnel in tourism is more difficult than in others sector, at least at the start-up stage.

More individual and family-related start-up difficulties, i.e. "To be alone as an entrepreneur" and "To get backing from spouse or family" were mentioned by 41%, respectively 22% of the tourism entrepreneurs, while for the general sector industry and services the figures were very similar: 42% and 18% (contrary to the expectations, even more Hotels and restaurants entrepreneurs mentioned getting backing from spouse or family as start-up difficulty). Moreover, when listing impediments to developing the business activity, in the Hotels and restaurants sector 39.12% state combining family and work, while only 36.22% in the case of industry and services.

Entrepreneurship in tourism is sometimes related to *low skills of personnel* and lower levels of human capital. As figures reveal, 56% of the entrepreneurs in Hotels and restaurants have no previous branch experience, while 37% for industry and services; 73% of the entrepreneurs in Hotels and restaurants have no previous experience running an enterprise, while 76% for industry and services.

As for the *educational background*, in Hotels and restaurants sector there is significant lower level of qualifications, as in Hotels and restaurants, 32% of the staff has educational

background of ISCED 1 or 2 level, 50% ISCED 3, and only 8% ISCED 5 or 6, while for the general sector industry and services, 28% has ISCED 1 or 2, 42% ISCED 3, and 19% ISCED 5 or 6.

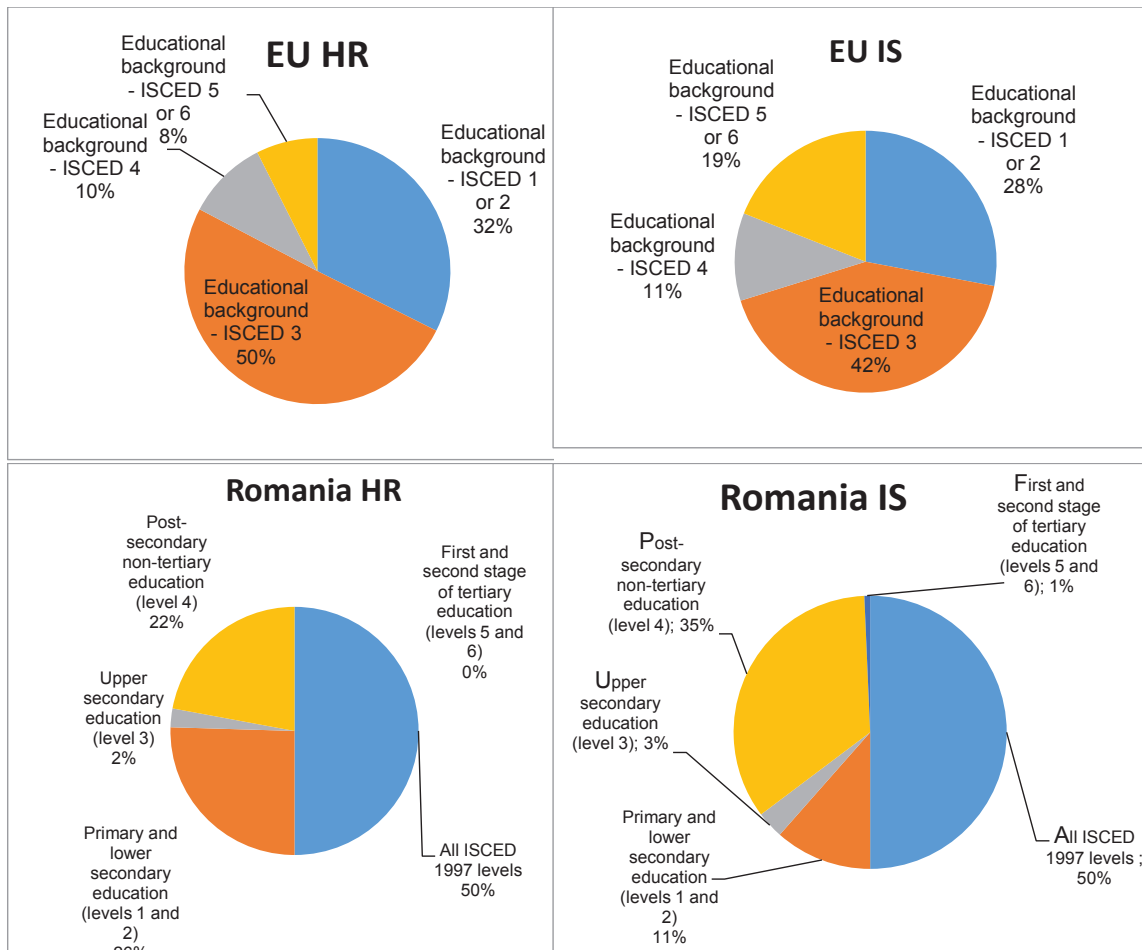


Figure 3: Educational background, EU, Hotels and restaurants versus Industry and services

Source: own construction based on dataset

Lifestyle entrepreneurs are often describes as more family-oriented, or “family-first” entrepreneurs, using the expression of Getz and Carlson (2000). They are more driven by non-economic motives, more family oriented, more interested in the quality of life and leisure.

As the next figure shows, family and friends are *source of advice* for 52% of the Hotels and restaurants entrepreneurs (compared to only 46% for Industry and services sector), but the whole picture is here:

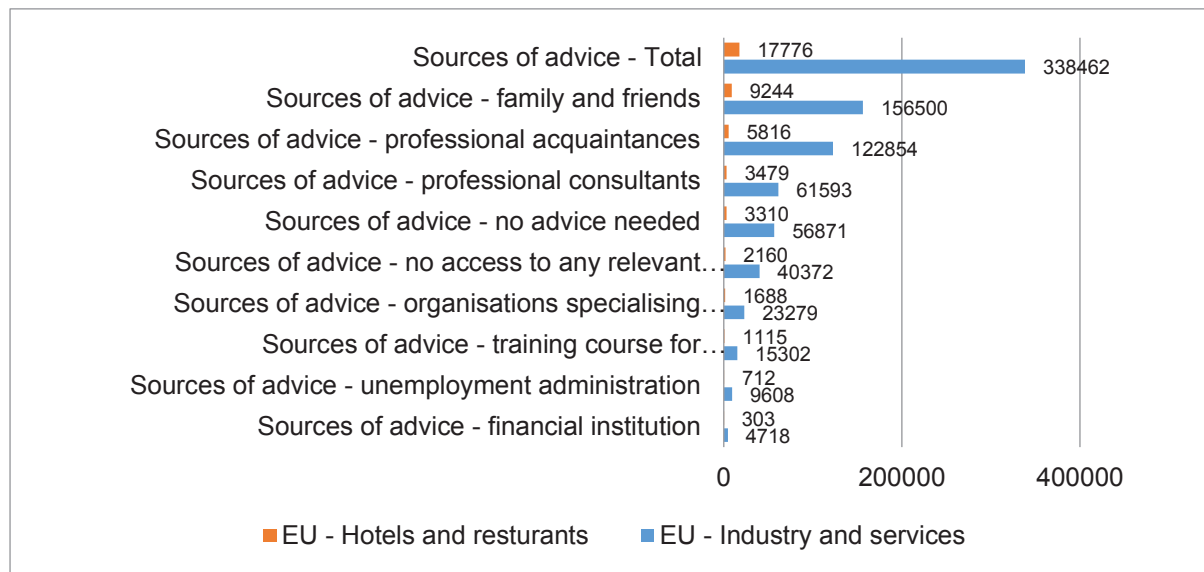


Figure 4: Sources of advice, EU, Hotels and restaurants versus Industry and services
Source: own construction based on dataset

Finally, the relative non-profit orientation is another feature of lifestyle entrepreneurs, who are satisfied with lower levels of profit if non-profit goal are achieved. As figures show, there are no significant differences between sectors when it comes to *judgement of profitability*: 21.75% of the entrepreneurs in Hotels and restaurants consider as "poor" the profitability of their business (against 21% in the industry and services sector), 32.65% as "good" (against 35% in industry and services) and 43% as "barely sufficient" (against 40%)

4. Conclusions

Lifestyle entrepreneurs and their presence in tourism is described in literature as a more life and leisure-oriented, family-oriented, motivated not only by profit and growth, investing in business as a consequence of their large previous experience as consumer.

The figures, however, confirm only partially this behaviour in the case of entrepreneurs in hotels and restaurants, compared to general industry and services sector. When it comes to motivations, financing sources for start-up, family-related difficulties or source of advice, and judgement of profitability, virtually there is no difference that could sustain the idea of a different style of entrepreneur in tourism versus other industry and services sector. Of course, there are considerable limitations and impediments to draw final conclusions, the figures we analysed keeping their relevance in the framework and with the limitations of the database itself.

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