

THESIS

Dorothee Bohn 2013

**NO ORDINARY BUSINESS:
LIFESTYLE ENTREPRENEURS AND THEIR
TOURISM PRODUCTS**

Insights from Finnish Lapland



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**DEGREE PROGRAMME IN TOURISM AND
HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT**

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Thesis

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2013

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This thesis is an exploratory journey into the relationship between lifestyle entrepreneurs and their tourism products with a regional focus on Finnish Lapland. Lifestyle entrepreneurship in tourism is characteristically associated with owner-operators who are motivated by pursuing a certain way of life rather than by a strong market or profit ethos. So far, lifestyle entrepreneurship has not been explicitly discussed in relation to the tourism product and vice versa. For conceptualizing the tourism product, I draw upon the socio-cultural approach to tourism products.

The qualitative study was divided to provide both, a practical as well as a theoretical outlook on lifestyle entrepreneurship in relation to tourism products. The empirical data consists of five thematic in depth-interviews with lifestyle entrepreneurs operating in Finnish Lapland, supplemented by online documentary material of the corresponding tourism firms' websites. The data was analysed in an inductive and exploratory Applied Thematic Analysis (ATA).

From a socio-cultural perspective, tourism products can be conceived in terms of performance. The theoretical findings suggest that the tourism product serves as a platform for the lifestyle entrepreneurs to 'live', perform and communicate not only their way of live choices but also their identity. This tourism product performance takes place in simultaneous production and consumption cycles with social interaction between hosts and guests at its heart.

The practically oriented results indicate that networking, a well developed yet personalized website and customer relationships are central for lifestyle entrepreneurs in marketing their tourism products. Lifestyle entrepreneurs are part of various networks, which do not only grant product visibility but are also a meeting point for socializing and generating ideas. Lifestyle entrepreneurs' websites characteristically portray the strong bond between producers and product. Besides, lifestyle entrepreneurs are well connected to their customers during the actual performance of the tourism product plus in pre-purchase and post-purchase stages.

In sum, the core of lifestyle entrepreneurs' tourism products and the value-rendering ingredient is social interaction between hosts and guests and it is in the tourism product, where the 'lifestyle' suffix of entrepreneurship is played out.

Key words Lifestyle Entrepreneurship, Tourism Product, Finnish Lapland, Socio-Cultural Approach to Tourism Products

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1 INTRODUCTION

Travelling, voyaging, globetrotting or just 'doing plain mass tourism' is a significant component of our contemporary consumer culture. Leisure and business mobility is a taken for granted ritual, allowing us to enunciate personal well-being, education and status. However, to express a certain lifestyle cannot only be achieved through touristic consumption but also through touristic production. The so-called tourism lifestyle firm is an exceptional phenomenon in entrepreneurship as business operations are not primarily motivated by a strong market or profit ethos. Instead, it is more important for the lifestyle entrepreneurs to pursue a desired way of life (Williams–Shaw–Greenwood 1989; Ateljevic–Doorne 2000).

This thesis is an exploratory journey into the relationship between lifestyle entrepreneurs and their tourism products with a regional focus on Finnish Lapland. So far, lifestyle entrepreneurship has not been explicitly discussed in relation to the tourism product and vice versa. In conceptualizing the tourism product, I draw upon the socio-cultural approach to tourism products (García-Rosell et al. 2007) as it offers means to point out the dynamic and socio-culturally determined nature of a tourism firm's offerings.

It is the aim of my thesis to provide a theoretical as well as a practical outlook on the relationship of lifestyle entrepreneurs and their tourism products. I am looking into aforesaid liaison through the following research questions:

- How do lifestyle entrepreneurs' tourism products relate to their own lives?
- How are lifestyle entrepreneurs' tourism products simultaneously produced and consumed?
- How do lifestyle entrepreneurs market their tourism products?

This thesis project is commissioned and I would like to demonstrate that not only a traditional business study can deliver results for a commissioning firm but valuable insights can also arise from a qualitative research approach.

First, Finnish Lapland as a tourist destination is portrayed, mainly from the point of view of local tourism governing, regard is given to aspects of tourism product development and entrepreneurship and the commissioner of my thesis project is introduced. The ensuing literature review frames the theoretical scene for lifestyle entrepreneurship and the tourism product. The following data generation and analysis chapter illuminates the qualitative research process and finally the research questions are answered and the results are discussed and concluded in the consecutive chapters.

2 SETTING THE SCENE

2.1 Tourism Sector in Finnish Lapland

Finnish Lapland is a 100 369 km² wide area in the northern periphery with a sparse population density of two people per km² on average (Lapin liitto 2010–2011). The region has undergone a transition at the beginning of the 1960s from self-sustaining livelihoods to a market economy. This development does not only imply economic restructurings in terms of declining primary production and the rise of the service sector but also cultural, social and environmental changes. (Hakkarainen–Tuulentie 2008, 3.)

Since the 1980s, tourism has become a spearhead sector in Lapland's service industry. At the end of 2011, 2,3 million overnight stays were registered in the region and the direct income through tourism was estimated at 600 million euros and 5000 man-years of labor (Lapland in Figures 2012-2013). Tourism development is steered by a sector-specific and frequently updated tourism strategy. Lapland's tourism strategy 2011–2014 delineates a joint development course, defines the focus areas of public support, guided by the vision: 'Lapland - pure LIFE FORCE near you. Lapland will be the leading destination for sustainable nature and experience tourism in Europe in 2020' (Lapland's tourism strategy 2011, 26–27). This strategy focuses strongly on numerical growth and infrastructural enlargement. The quantitative objectives mentioned in the paper aim at increasing tourism incomes by a three-fold up to 1,5 Billion euros per year and 10 000 man-years of labor in the next two decades (Lapland's tourism strategy 2011, 5). This aspired growth is based on international inbound tourism, since the Finnish population does not allow for any significant increase in domestic travel (Lapland's tourism strategy 2011, 38). The predominant geographical markets for Lapland are the UK, central and southern European countries in addition to Russia (Lapland's tourism strategy 2011, 9).

Lapland as such is not a single destination. In the early 2000s, a centre-based tourism development strategy has been adopted with the large centers

being Levi, Ylläs, Saariselkä, Rovaniemi and Pyhä-Luosto and smaller destinations are Kilpisjärvi, Suomu, Inari, Posio, Salla, Kemi-Tornio and Muonio (Lapland's tourism strategy 2011, 14). In terms of tourism, Kuusamo can be listed as a Lappish destination, even though the area belongs officially to the province of Oulu but joint recently Lapland's marketing and central European tour operators have been selling Kuusamo as a Lappish destination for a few years already.



Figure 1. Map of Lapland's Larger Tourism Centers (Lapland Log Cabins 2013)

According to the tourism planning authorities, this centre-based development strategy has proven successful not only in terms of generating revenues but also in bringing benefits and well-being to the local population (Lapland's tourism strategy 2011, 5, 14). Given the increasing numbers of overnight stays, local and international investments in touristic infrastructure, the tourism centre development strategy has surely contributed to numerical growth. Other voices, however, point out the risks of tourism centre development, leading to a serial reproduction of resorts with similar touristic infrastructure and offerings (see Saarinen 2001). The long-term sustainability of those homogenized facilities is questionable, since constant attraction upgrading and investments are required but no immobile destination assets

are created, which cannot be immediately copied elsewhere (Cooper–Hall 2008, 209–210). Furthermore, the Lappish ski resorts are affected most by seasonality, with the peak in utilization from December to April and desert-like conditions during summertime. As a result, no fulltime employment is established; work is seasonal and based on temporary labor migration. However, local tourism planning authorities foster the growth of tourism centers in Lapland and large infrastructure investments are being made, especially in facility construction (see Lapland's tourism strategy 2011).

Besides, Lappish tourism is confronted with conflicts between different industries, such as mining, forestry and energy production versus tourism. Central in this dispute is the environmental aesthetics, which tourism is dependent on. The recently launched umbrella brand for Lapland- Above ordinary tries to serve as an image-maker for different sectors and thus uniting them. The aim of this regional brand is both internal and external marketing in creating a target vision and brand image allowing for identification. Tourism, the local administration, the educational sector and different industry branches are represented together in this brand. (Lapland.fi 2013.)

The predominant themes in Lapland's tourism are Santa Claus and winter related tourism. Diversification and seasonality reducing efforts are made by tourism planning authorities in form of fostering theme-based product development. Those themes center, beside Christmas and winter, on well-being, cultural tourism and the use of national parks (Lapland's tourism strategy 2011, 45 ff). Tourism planners see this theme based development strategy beneficial for marketing, for better quality and development control and financing can be allocated in a more proficient way (Lapland's tourism strategy 2011, 45).

Nature is a strong image of Lapland in tourism marketing and very much emphasized in the newly created brand (see Lapland.fi 2013). Idyllic images of northern lights, pure white snow, romantic wilderness and unspoiled and

people-free landscapes dominate the photographic repertoire (e.g. OnlyInLapland 2013). The notion of nature is also a re-occurring key theme in Lapland's current tourism strategy, where its pureness and beauty is seen as a major asset but as a resource for most of the tourism development efforts as well.

The main providers of tourism are the slightly over one thousand SMTEs in Finnish Lapland (Lapland's tourism strategy 2011, 45). The strategy document names also, even though parenthetically, the importance of promoting entrepreneurship. A focal interest is given to networking and business partnerships between tourism leader businesses and SMTEs plus promoting tourism entrepreneurship as such (Lapland's tourism strategy 2011, 37). Indeed, local tourism educational institutions offer several entrepreneurship courses for their students and local governmental organizations support people financially as well as advisory in realizing entrepreneurial plans.

2.2 About the Commissioner

The commissioner of this thesis project, Kaisa Alatalo, has her professional background in teaching marketing and tourism related courses at the University of Applied Sciences. She is currently establishing a lifestyle oriented tourism firm, offering cultural round-trips through Finnish Lapland for small groups. Alatalo plans to take her guests on a journey to experience Lappish culture, events, people, cuisine and places. One underlying principle of this trip is experiencing social togetherness. This tourism product is not bound to any season and can be conducted throughout the year. Furthermore, this product is rather unique in Lapland, contributing to the diversification of local tourism. Concerning the intended customers, she focuses on 'the modern humanists', the target group for Finland that was set out by the Finnish Tourism Board (MEK) in a large-scale research in 2012. Those modern humanists have already seen the world's metropolises and seek safe but pleasurable, effortless vacations. They are distinguishable by

an ethical, environmentally friendly and socially aware lifestyle with values centering on self-development and quality of life. Modern humanists are not a geographically bound target group but fall more under a psychographic characterization. (Hietasaari 2012.)

Alatalo's tourism product is a networked offering as the journey, she plans to do with her customers, entails several firms' tourism products. She is very interested in distancing herself, respectively her firm, from conventional Lappish tourism products, which are all too often 'winter wonderland' related, falling more in the category of mass-tourism. Accordingly, Alatalo seeks to operate in the niche sector by offering unusual tourism products. Those desired products are supplied by other lifestyle firms all over Finnish Lapland.

In a nutshell, Alatalo's business operates in a synthesis of cultural globalization and local differentiation plus in a globalized tourism sector, where product innovations are fast paced and everything can be copied within a short time (Hall-Williams 2008). The compulsory technology and infrastructure enabling travelling as well as the target group's ideological orientation are subject to global, macro developments. The value of Alatalo's tourism product, however, is sustained on the micro level through local differentiation. This special touristic offering arises in between cultural variety, discursive authenticity, local traditions, globally recognizable narratives and most of all, out of people's way of life.

My thesis delivers insights into the relationship between lifestyle entrepreneurs and their tourism products. I am looking into how lifestyle entrepreneurs way of life is connected to their tourism products, how they interact with their customers and how they market their tourism products. Those results might be helpful for Alatalo when cooperating and negotiating with other lifestyle firms and some of the research results are directly applicable for Alatalo concerning marketing and product development.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW: (LIFESTYLE) ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE TOURISM PRODUCT

3.1 Entrepreneurship, Tourism and Lifestyle

3.1.1 Entrepreneurship, Research and the Tourism Sector

Much of the modern thought about entrepreneurship derives from Schumpeter (1934), who introduced the entrepreneur as a 'creative destructor' of the economic demand and supply equilibrium (Hall–Williams 2008, 202). He characterized the entrepreneur as an individual who innovates, whether on the level of firm organization, in product or service development, in extracting raw materials more efficiently, in rearranging modes of production, in developing novel networks or in opening up new market segments (Peters–Frehse–Buhalis 2009, 395). However, those entrepreneurial innovations disrupt the balance of demand and supply, leading to a destruction of established organizational and economic relationships or formations (Hall–Williams 2008, 202). This 'creative destruction', as Schumpeter termed it, is seen as the driving force that sustains economic growth in capitalism (Arena–Romani 2002). Thus, not only governments regard entrepreneurial activity as important for the broader economy (Lee-Ross–Lashley 2009, 13) as it is relevant in introducing innovations in times of economic change (Hall–Williams 2008, 203, 207) but entrepreneurs are also socially dignified heroes, like Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Walt Disney, Coco Chanel or Mark Zuckerberg.

Entrepreneurship has been studied for more than a century by various disciplines (Ateljevic–Li 2009, 22), with economics being the dominating approach, followed by sociology, anthropology, history, ecology and psychology (Peters et al. 2009, 395). Especially the personal traits and entrepreneurial characteristics research gained popularity during the second half of the last century (Peters et al. 2009, 395) with studies originating mainly from the US (Schiebel 2005, 288). Arising from this context, terms like creativity, risk-taking, proactiveness (Timmons 1994) in addition to locus of control, problem-solving activities and social initiative (Schiebel 2005, 287)

were observed as immanent attributes of entrepreneurs. Nonetheless, the local environment plus the social system provide structural conditions and opportunities for entrepreneurial activity on individual, collective or institutional levels (Ateljevic–Li 2009, 24).

Kibedi (1979) raised the issue of entrepreneurship in tourism research and the subject has gained some momentum, still Ateljevic and Li (2009, 31) note that entrepreneurship in tourism remains understudied, even though tourism, hospitality and leisure industries are principally based on entrepreneurial activities (Morrison–Rimington–Williams 1999, 24). As McKercher (1999, 427) observes ‘the defining moment in most tourism destinations can be attributed to the actions of rogues who actualised its tourism potential’. Indeed, there are various examples in Finnish Lapland where individual entrepreneurs contributed to the rise of a destination, for example Päivikki Palosaari who is the founder of the restaurant and hotel chain Hullu Poro in Levi.

The tourism and hospitality sector is characterized by a dual economic structure with one pole being market determining transnational companies, such as airlines, hotel chains or tour operators and the opposite pole being small, medium-sized or micro enterprises (SMTEs) (Shaw–Williams 2004, 55), which are numerically predominant (Page–Forer–Lawton 1999; Lee–Ross–Lashley 2009, 49). The term entrepreneurship is generally linked to or used synonymously for SMTEs (Lee–Ross–Lashley 2009, 9), although some scholars declare that only a handful of small or micro businesses can be called truly entrepreneurial (Ateljevic–Li 2009, 23). However, various studies emphasize the significance of small and micro-sized firms for destination development and competitiveness (Johns–Mattsson 2005; Novelli–Schmitz–Spencer 2005), for employment creation (Wanhill 2000), for sustainable tourism (Fullera–Buultjens–Cummings 2005; Middleton 2001) and for being able to serve the post-tourist in experimenting with niche markets and introducing innovations (Hall–Williams 2008, 214; Ateljevic–Doorne 2000).

One controversially discussed offshoot of micro enterprises in tourism is the lifestyle firm, where business operations are rather determined by personal values and way of life choices than by economic growth strategies and profit making (Williams–Shaw–Greenwood 1989; Ateljevic–Doorne 2000). With respect to those particular circumstances, the common notion of entrepreneurship cannot be applied to lifestyle firms as will be elucidated in the next section.

3.1.2 Lifestyle Entrepreneurship in Tourism

Williams, Shaw and Greenwood (1989) initially observed the phenomenon of lifestyle entrepreneurship in tourism among micro firms in Cornwall's seaside resorts. Due to the low entry barriers of tourism, specifically the limited amount of capital needed and low skill or experience requirements, mostly former tourists opened micro-firms, such as guesthouses or kiosks. Those entrepreneurs are not primarily motivated to operate the business by reasons of profits but by socio-cultural factors (Williams et al. 1989, 1650).

The centrality of way of life motives in running a small tourism company has been confirmed in a number of studies (Peters et al. 2009, 397) and the lifestyle attribute of tourism firms has been further developed in different conceptual as well as perspectival contexts through a variety of research methodologies. Rather than building upon the traditional entrepreneurial maxim of profit maximization, competitiveness, market orientation and business expansion, the definitions of lifestyle entrepreneurship in tourism emphasize the magnitude of personal life aspirations and circumstances of the owner-operators.

- [Lifestyle entrepreneurs] are likely to be concerned with survival, and maintaining sufficient income to ensure that the business provides them and their family with a satisfactory level of funds to enable enjoyment of their chosen life-style (Morrison et al. 1999, 13).
- Lifestyle entrepreneurs combine their own leisure interest, personal beliefs, values and way of life with a tourism business (Ateljevic–Doorne 2000).
- Lifestyle suffix is multifaceted, context dependent, determined by socially constructed values and meanings that the entrepreneurs have selected for themselves or have been forced upon them (Morrison et al. 2008).

Beside material economic factors, locational, familial, personal, experiential and technological key variables determine the business operations, respectively the attached value systems of lifestyle entrepreneurs as well (Morrison et al. 2008). Those incitements are fluid in nature as they develop over time with the life course of the entrepreneurs (Marchant–Mottiar 2011, 28). However, the notion of lifestyle entrepreneurship is western-centric in the sense that research is predominantly undertaken in developed economies in Europe, North America or Oceania whilst lifestyle entrepreneurship in developing economies remains to be investigated what could lead to differentiated findings and conceptualizations. Shaw (2004, 126) remarks:

The growth of such entrepreneurs is a relatively recent phenomenon and appears to be a direct response to the niche markets provided by the changes in tourism consumption associated with postmodernism.

Lifestyle entrepreneurs can be found in industry branches such as farm and rural tourism in Finland (Komppula 2004), bed and breakfast accommodation (Hall–Rusher 2004) along with adventure and outdoor activities (Ateljevic–Doorne 2000) in New Zealand, surf tourism in Ireland (Marchant–Mottiar 2011), horse-based tourism in Iceland (Helgadóttir–Sigurdardóttir 2008) or combinations of diverse businesses, such as an art gallery mixed with a commercial home in southern Sweden (Andersson Cederholm–Hultman 2010).

Lifestyle entrepreneurship in tourism is mostly discussed in studies focusing on profit versus non-profit rationale of small business owner-operators (Marchant–Mottiar 2011, 5). In other words, the perceived dichotomy

between yield orientation and lifestyle motivation plus the resulting implications for the individual firm as well as for tourism destinations is central in the relevant literature. Shaw and Williams (1998) draw a distinction between constrained and non-constrained entrepreneurship. Non-constrained entrepreneurs are characteristically associated with retirement migrants, who have little desire to develop their firm, lack business experience plus expertise and entrepreneurial activities are therefore limited. Those entrepreneurs represent the 'purist' lifestyle entrepreneur, as the business exists only to facilitate a desired way of life (Marchant–Mottiar 2011, 5). Constrained entrepreneurs are generally younger, draw from a more professional background, aspire economic well-being mixed with lifestyle concerns and intentions, thus a potential for the firm's development is given. (Shaw–Williams 2004, 102.)

This conceptualization by Shaw and Williams (1998) suggests two poles for entrepreneurial activity, while Dewhurst's and Horobin's (1998) model proposes a continuum for small business owners as being in between commercial goals and lifestyle orientation. Figure 2 depicts entrepreneurs operating in between commercially oriented goals and lifestyle-oriented goals and between commercially oriented strategies for success and lifestyle-oriented strategies for success. For those business owners who are lifestyle-oriented, 'their business success might best be measured in terms of a continuing ability to perpetuate their chosen lifestyle' (Dewhurst–Horobin 1998, 30).

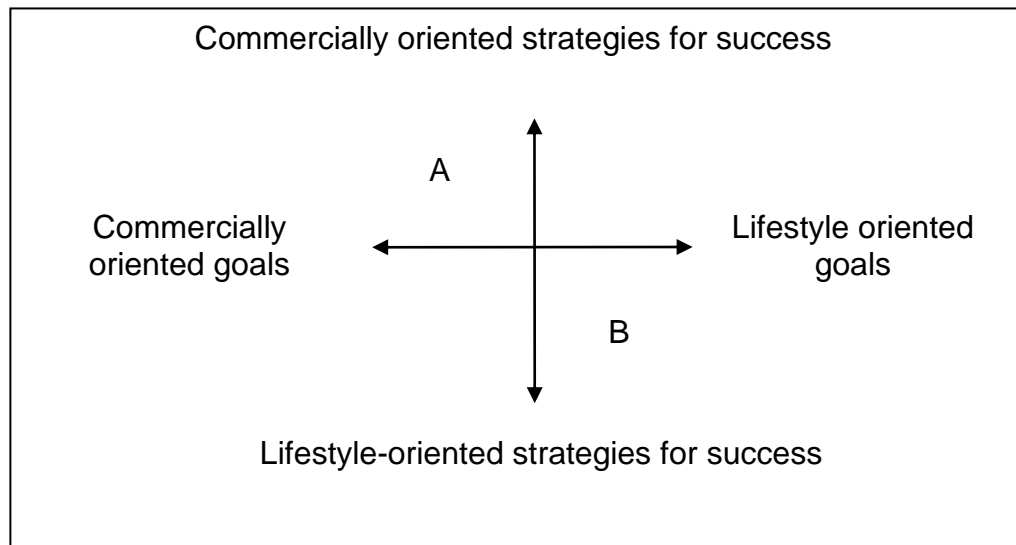


Figure 2. Model of Owner-Manager Tendencies (Dewhurst–Horobin 1998, 32)

Two studies, which empirically explore this dichotomy of lifestyle versus commercial orientation among small tourism business owners' are the papers by Hall and Rusher (2004) and Komppula (2004). Hall and Rusher (2004) explore the attitudes and operational decision making of owner-managers in the bed and breakfast sector in New Zealand. They find that profits and a strong business philosophy are balanced against the owners' motivation of enjoying a good lifestyle and thus both issues are equally important. Nevertheless, lifestyle is a strategic business objective for those entrepreneurs (Hall–Rusher 2004, 94). Komppula (2004) examines the intentions of growth and determinants of success among rural tourism entrepreneurs in Finland. Aspirations of business expansion are moderate due to risk anticipation and success is rather measured in terms of time for family and hobbies, sufficient income, interesting occupation, the opportunity to work from home and in the countryside than in becoming rich.

The notion of lifestyle entrepreneurship is also distinguished for being significant on the destination level in positive as well as in negative connotations. Hollick and Braun (2005) conclude that non-constrained lifestyle firms with a low skill base, insufficient performance excellence in product and service delivery along with a lack in planning and managerial

expertise might have a negative, cumulative impact on the visitor's experience of the destination as a whole. This underscoring in business and visitor management might result in endangering the economic and socio-cultural stability of tourism places. Dewhurst and Horobin (1998, 33) mention that lifestyle entrepreneurs 'may not be capable of long-term survival: this in turn could serve to jeopardize seriously both the economic health and social fabric of those communities, resorts and regions which are becoming increasingly reliant upon tourism and hospitality related activities'. Peters, Frehse and Buhalis (2009, 397–398) list common attributes found in the body of tourism lifestyle entrepreneurship literature:

- Motivated by quality of life rather than growth
- Main priority is life style rather than customer service
- Underutilization of resources and capital investment
- Irrational management and non return-on-investment based decision making
- Limited marketing and product development expertise and activities
- Under- utilization of information and communication technologies (Buhalis – Main 1998)
- Reluctance to accept professional advice or external involvement
- Low education and training on management
- Are not fully aware of quality management techniques (Morrison–Thomas 1999)
- Low involvement within industry growth and industry structures
- Distance from lobby organizations
- Unwillingness to let go or to sell their ventures
- Low innovation and unwillingness to cooperate (Weiermair 2001)
- High dependency on distribution partners for their earnings- even when this is detrimental to profitability and competitiveness (Buhalis 2000)
- Questionable economic sustainability as a result of peripherally, distance from the economic core and sparseness of population (Nilsson et al. 2005)

Other studies, such as the incremental paper by Ateljevic and Doorne (2000) cover the opposite perspective in stating the instrumental position of lifestyle firms in introducing innovative niche tourism products and stimulating regional development through a balance of economic performance and sustainability of socio-cultural and environmental values. Also Merchant and

Mottiar (2011, 28) emphasize the positive effect of lifestyle entrepreneurs in their study of surf tourism providers in Ireland as resort rejuvenators and key actors in local communities.

Concerning the public policy sphere, studies related to lifestyle tourism entrepreneurship accentuate the necessity to include lifestyle objectives as a significant element in policy decision-making (see Hollick–Braun 2005; Mottiar 2007). Moreover, Hall and Risher (2004) point out the importance of incorporating lifestyle goals within development models of entrepreneurship processes in tourism as those objectives are essential in understanding small business performance plus entrepreneurial success in addition to the spatial dimension of lifestyle and amenity factors as location determinants of tourism ventures.

A number of studies addresses lifestyle entrepreneurship beyond the economic orientation of the owner-managers. Mottiar (2007) explores inter-firm relationships and finds in her study in Westport, Ireland that lifestyle firms tend to engage more often in informal or non-legally bound cooperation than in formal collaboration as those companies are 'not seen as a part of the established business community' and do not even aspire to belong to this establishment (Mottiar 2007). Helgadóttir and Sigurdardóttir (2008) thematize horse-based tourism in Iceland and conclude that the entrepreneurs base their business on their knowledge about horses and horsemanship rather than on knowledge of the tourism and hospitality industry. Andersson Cederholm–Hultman (2010) investigate the role of intimacy in negotiating commercial relationships in lifestyle entrepreneurship on the example of a B&B owner in Sweden.

Those studies point to the significance of the socio-cultural embeddedness of lifestyle entrepreneurs. Ateljevic and Doorne (2000) take on this issue of cultural context in their study among micro-firms in New Zealand. They look into lifestyle entrepreneurship from organizational, market, cultural and industry related perspectives and conclude that:

A growing number of small-firm owners elect to 'stay within the fence' in order to preserve both their quality of life in their socioenvironmental contexts and their 'niche' market position catering for travelers similarly seeking out alternative paradigms and ideological values (Ateljevic–Doorne 2000, 388).

Those entrepreneurs follow a highly personal or individual organizational structure, the market position attracts rather the post-modern traveler segment instead of the stereotypical mass-tourist, cultural-community values encompass egalitarianism and the business philosophy centres on reciprocity and quality of life. Ateljevic and Doorne (2000, 389) continue with an interesting remark:

The search to distance themselves from a 'suffocating' market environment has provided a niche opportunity to simultaneously engage with that market on their own terms and to sustain their businesses in socioeconomic terms. (...) the innovative and creative attributes of these individuals closely resemble Schumpeter's observation of entrepreneurs as dynamic elements in the economy, despite their efforts to limit the growth of their own businesses.

An intrinsic difference between lifestyle firms in tourism and micro firms in other economic sectors is the intertwined relation of consumption and production (Shaw and Williams 2004, 99). Particularly lifestyle entrepreneurs consume 'the very same product that they are producing, that is, tourism' (Williams et al. 1989, 1650) embedded in places, experiences and activities (Ateljevic–Doorne 2004, 286). Ateljevic and Doorne (2004, 287) take this notion forward and 'thus the production process, while having a profound impact on future growth and development within the tourism industry, is largely a reflection of the entrepreneur's consumption'. This view possesses that producers can be seen as consumers and vice versa what is rooted in endless cycles of re-consumption. As a result, tourism is neither production nor consumption driven but evolves out of consent of producers and consumers within a geographical context. (Ateljevic–Doorne 2004, 298.)

The review of tourism lifestyle entrepreneurship literature reveals the idiosyncrasy of the concept, which occurs inside a socio-cultural-economic-environmental reference frame (Morrison et al. 2008) and in interrelated

cycles of production and consumption. The dynamic nature of the lifestyle firm has to be stressed as so-called lifestyle motives and traditional business reasoning may coexist (see Hall–Rusher 2004) or lifestyle motives might be replaced by a more commercial business approach (Marchant–Mottiar 2011, 28).

3.2 The Tourism Product

3.2.1 Tourism: Producing and Consuming Products or Services?

Even though the tourism and leisure sector is generally considered as a service industry, the relevant literature refers to the term ‘product’ instead of ‘service’ when pertaining to touristic firm or destination offerings (Komppula 2001, 2). A ‘product’ is usually the tangible and materialized output of manufacturing industries, where production and consumption are detached from each other. Conversely, service terminology is frequently applied when describing the characteristics of tourism ‘products’, like intangibility, perishability, heterogeneity and synchronic production and consumption (Lumsdon 1997, 139). Lumsdon (1997, 139) suggests that the usage of the term product in the context of tourism is debatable since ‘it is difficult [...] to conceive that the provision of holidays can be equated to the marketing of heavy capital plant, or white or brown goods’.

Cooper and Hall (2008, 4–5) argue that tourism as a service sector is based on a complex assemblage of infrastructure and physical resources, which are indeed tangible with significant impacts on the locale. These actualities provide the setting for the experience, the tourist is purchasing (Cooper–Hall 2008, 5) and a tourism product is therefore ‘a particular set of commodified tourism experiences’ (Cooper–Hall 2008, 11). Due to the requirements of commodification and the prevalent perception of tourism as an industry, the term product has become widely accepted in the literature amended by the concepts of service marketing to recognize the involvement of tangible as well as intangible aspects in tourism. Thus, the overall product, a tourist

consumes during a trip can be depicted as a sum of different firm offerings, places, communities and social interactions. Accordingly, not only the providers of the tourism product influence the experience of the tourist, but all the encounters, impressions and moments make up the touristic experience (Hall 2005, 171–172). Touristic consumption includes therefore private as well as public goods, where private refers to a firm's assets and public means everything that is external to a firm's reach, such as cultural heritage, public safety, infrastructure, brand image and environmental aesthetics (Rigall-I-Torrent–Fluvia 2011).

Figure 3 depicts the multiple nature of the tourism product. The tourist trip as a whole entails several discernible stages of tourism products, which are made up by various firms' offerings. The innermost cylinder is the service product, arising out of social interaction, followed by the business product provided by an individual firm. The sum of all those products are embedded in the destination product.

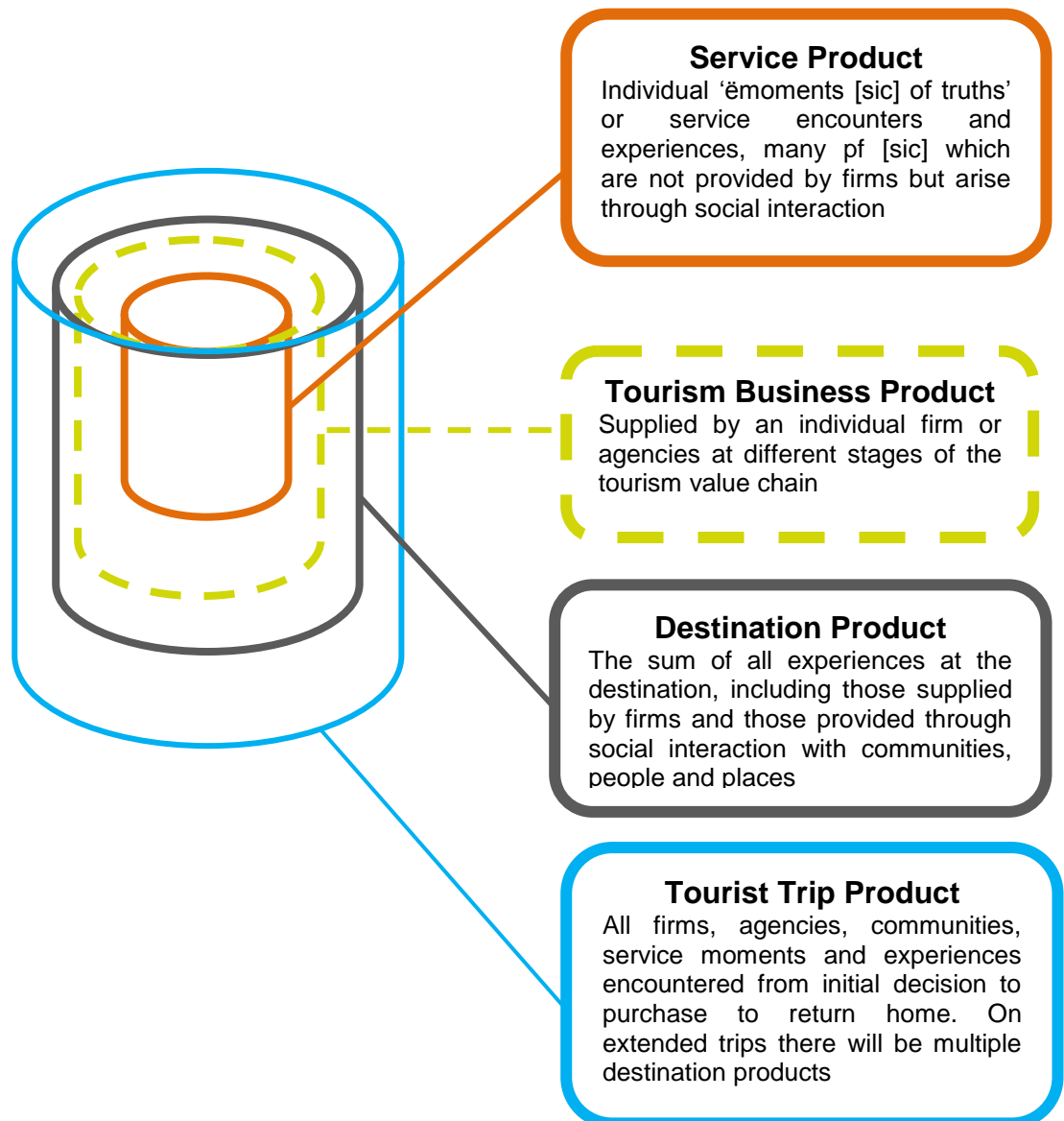


Figure 3. What does the Tourist Consume? The Multiple Nature of the Tourism Product (Hall 2005, 174)

Besides the consensus that the tourism product incorporates production and consumption in space and time, there are three main theoretical approaches distinguishable in tourism literature of how to conceptualize the tourism product, namely the production-centric, the consumer-centric and the socio-cultural approach (Kylänen et al. 2009).

3.2.2 Production-Centric Approach

The production-centered approach to tourism products embraces marketing and managerial viewpoints and is applied on destination as well as on discrete company level. This conceptual vision takes its cue from an economic exchange where customer benefits are swapped for financial gains within particular socio-political, environmental, technological and economic settings (Cooper–Hall 2008, 26).

The inspiring point of departure for the production-oriented tourism product conceptualization lies in the goods marketing related work of Kotler (1984), who differentiates the core product, the augmented product and the facilitating product as elements that constitute the product as a whole (Middleton 1995, 334). Kotler (1984, 463) defines a product as:

Anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use, or consumption that might satisfy a want or need. It includes physical objects, services, persons, places, organizations, and ideas.

Thus, product decisions are subsumed under the marketing mix that includes also price, place and promotion. Those four marketing P's are constantly altered and adapted in order to satisfy the needs and desires of customers (Middleton–Clarke 2001, 122). Middleton (1995) draws a distinction between the specific product, which refers to the offer of an individual firm and the total product, which embraces the tourist's complete trip experience. The latter expands horizontally as customers and tour operators act as product manufacturers (Middleton–Clarke 2001, 124) and consist of five components: destination attractions, destination facilities, accessibility, images and price (Middleton–Clarke 2001, 125). The specific product develops vertically, as business operations and processes are organized around the needs of the target customers, (Middleton–Clarke 2001, 124) and is made up by:

- The core product that is the essential customer benefit, designed to satisfy the identified needs of the desired target market.
- The formal product that is the specific offer stating what a customer will receive for his or her money.
- The augmented product that comprises all the forms of added value, producers may assemble into their formal product offers for granting a greater attractiveness and distinction towards competitors.

Similar component product models were developed by Sasser, Olsen and Wyckoff (1978) who propose that a service product consists of facilitating goods, explicit intangibles and implicit intangibles. Yet another variation is suggested by Lewis and Chambers (1989, 36), where a tourism product is formed of goods, environment and services. The product can be contemplated on three levels: the formal product is what the tourist believes one is purchasing, the core product is what the tourists are actually buying and the augmented product is the core product in combination with all other value-adding features and benefits that the producer provides.

These component tourism product models emphasize that all composing elements can be designed, matched and packaged in different ways for meeting customer demands (Middleton–Clarke 2001, 122). Products are therefore engineered bundles, comprised of tangible and intangible ingredients, which offer some activity at a destination, satisfying the identified needs of target customers (Middleton–Clarke 2001, 135). Smith (1994, 584) remarks:

While the components model has an intuitive appeal, it fails to adequately describe the structure of the tourism product and how that product is produced.

As a response, Smith (1994) brought up his often-cited layered generic model that represents a managerial position. Generic 'refers to the conceptual commodity produced by an industry (...) and a generic product will take a wide variety of real forms, but each form of the same generic product will provide the same function' (Smith 1994, 582). In the case of tourism, the generic product is the facilitation of travel related activities (Smith

1994, 582). Smith's (1994) model, depicted in Figure 4, names the elements of the tourism product plus the underlying processes by which those constituents are assembled, including the notion of human experience and the dimension of empirical measurability for estimating the economic magnitude of tourism (Smith 1994, 587). Thus, Smith singles out product inputs, which generate touristic experiential outputs in form of customer satisfaction and benefits and 'ideally, tourism products meet marketplace demands, are produced cost-efficiently, and are based on the wise use of the cultural and natural resources of the destination' (Smith 1994, 582).

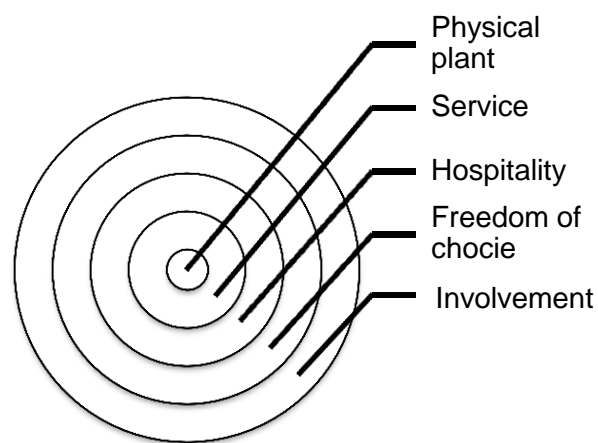


Figure 4. The Generic Tourism Product (Smith 1994, 587)

Those five concentric circles compose the tourism product. The sequence of elements from the inner to the outer circle is correlated with declining managerial control, increasing customer involvement, increasing intangibility and decreasing empirically measurability (Smith 1994, 587).

This model is substantially critiqued for its one-dimensional view on the tourism product as a series of inputs, neglecting the ecological, socio-cultural and economic outputs, which are indeed of importance. In addition, the underlying complex dynamics of demand and supply are not considered. (Lumsdon 1997, 141; Saraniemi–Kylänen 2011, 135.)

Another production-oriented conceptualization of the tourism product are lifecycle models (PLC). Since gaining popularity in the 1960s, the PLC is a cornerstone theory of modern business strategy and marketing thought, illustrating the evolution of a product. The PLC draws on the analogy of a living organism, as products pass through the stages of introduction, growth, maturity and decline what implies that products ultimately have a limited life span. (Walle 1998, 158.) The ensuing lifecycle curve is usually s-shaped and each stage of the lifecycle is hypothesized to require different marketing and management strategies (Cooper 1995, 342). However, significant criticism is concerned with the application of the product lifecycle in the context tourism, since it is extremely difficult to operationalize. Cooper (1998, 347–348) emphasizes the poor empirical validation of the shape and length of the product phases making it an insufficient planning device. Standardized marketing actions are inflexible in addition to their questionable value and the PLC assumes a homogenous market although different customer segments produce naturally different shaped PLC curves.

3.2.3 Consumer-Centric Approach

The production-oriented approach ascribes only peripheral importance to the interaction between producer and consumer even though the objective of the tourism product is said to be the valorization of customer value. Moreover, aforementioned view construes the idea of co-creation as a mere consumer act of choosing holiday package components, such as meals, flights, hotel rooms or activities individually instead of purchasing everything pre-packaged (see Middleton et al 2009, 130–131). Conversely, Lumsdon (1997, 142) argues that profound consumer value can only be delivered if service interactions are internal to a product model. The consumer-centric tourism product framework treats the service relation between customer and provider as fundamental. Hence, Lumsdon (1997, 142–143) presents his modified framework in Figure 5, where the core of the tourism offering is the service encounter, which conveys mainly intangible, sensual and psychological benefits, facilitated by various tangible elements. This core service offering

occurs in the intersection of a tourism firm's physical evidence, processes and people.

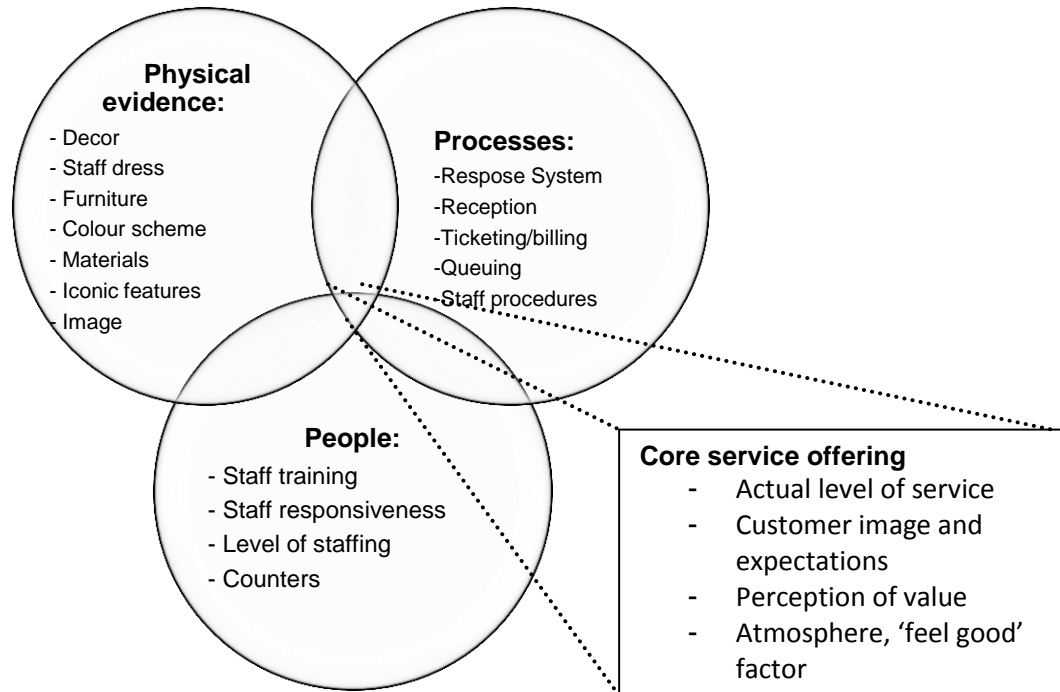


Figure 5. The Tourism Offering: A Modified Framework (Lumsdon 1997, 142)

The notion of customer centrality is taken forward, e.g., by Komppula (2005) who draws upon the service marketing literature and the layered service model by Edvardsson and Olsson (1999) plus the dimension of experience (see Pine–Gilmore 1999). She argues that the service concept, the service process and the service system create the prerequisites of a tourist's experiences. The service concept refers to the customer's needs and how these needs are to be satisfied. The service process depicts a chain of service modules and activities that make up the service. The service system, or the customer-oriented product, is composed by resources, such as staff, physical environment, organizational structure and customers that are contained by the service modules, which are assembled carefully for performing the service concept. (Komppula 2005.) Ergo, Komppula (2005) defines a tourism product as:

An experience based on his/her [a tourist's] subjective evaluation, which has a certain price and which is the outcome of a process, where the customer exploits the services of those who offer them by taking part in the production process of the service him/herself.

Although the consumer-centric product framework assists in identifying key elements in production and consumption, it fails to transmit the dynamic nature of tourism. Saraniemi and Kylänen (2011, 137) argue that even if the customer-centric approach differs from the production-oriented view in the sense of modeling, philosophically they are akin. Both build on a traditional exchange-based view, a dualism of consumers and producers along with an array of neutralizing models that consist of an amalgamation of resources, activities and experiences.

Furthermore, both conceptualizations act on the assumption of customers and producers as behaviorally consistent and rational choice makers (Saraniemi–Kylänen 2011, 137). Thus, their actions can be explained, predicted and modeled, what is to a great extent illusory as people behave irrationally, emotionally, spontaneously and are often not individual decision makers but rely on group dynamics and conduct themselves in relation to others. By portraying the customer as an individual, consuming places, people and events according to his or her needs and wants, the social nature of the place is entirely neglected (Saraniemi–Kylänen 2011, 137). The political aspects inherent to tourism products are also overlooked. Products do not occur in a vacuum, neither are they shaped only by customer demand. Regional as well as national tourism organizations and governmental agencies play a decisive role in facilitating the creation of tourism products by granting funds and financial incentives for certain product types, which are identified as suitable for the regional setting (UNWTO 2011; see Lapland's tourism strategy 2011-2014). Usually tourism strategy papers name those desired products, nevertheless, it is important to note that the underlying decision processes are based on power structures, human relationships and economic interests, with a quintessential question for comprehension being 'who benefits?' (see Hall 1994, 12–14) from that particular development.

The existing body of tourism literature has devoted little attention to the producers of the tourism product. They are, as already mentioned, regarded as rational beings, which are able to distance themselves after working time emotionally as well as physically from their occupations (Walle 1998, 48). Technical models with the claim to depict the tourism product objectively leave out the human dimension as well as the spatial particularities, which are indeed the key factors in every touristic activity.

3.2.4 Socio-Cultural Approach

The cultural turn along with post-Fordism offer novel perspectives and insights in human consumption and production activities. The cultural turn in social sciences accentuates the socially constitutive dimension of cultural processes and is concerned with the meanings, people ascribe to events, objects or actions (Moisander–Valtonen 2006, 4). Humans and their actions are socio-culturally and historically bound and the 'self-reliant, personally independent individual' is regarded as a myth as Moisander and Valtonen (2006, 2000) point out:

Moreover, this view of the subject as a stable core self with an essential human nature that is responsible for its moral judgments and behavioral choices is likely to hide the interests and power relations through which this 'self' is continuously being constructed and governed. It may therefore sustain the particular configurations and relations of power that are at work in forming and shaping the subjectivity of individuals in different contexts.

Post-Fordism refers to the alteration of economies of scale, including standardized, industrialized production, hierarchical management and a narrow product range to economies of scope, characterized by product customization, high levels of product diversification and flexible management (Debbage–Ioannides 2004, 103; Hall 1994). A typical Fordist tourism product would be a package tour whereas backpacking trips can be labeled as post-

Fordist. Those two paradigmatic shifts had a vital influence on tourism studies, as contributors of social theoretization and critical analysis.

Tourism studies were dominated by applied approaches that positioned tourism as a primarily economic activity and its study as a medium for developing and supporting industry related actions. As a result, the conceptual development of tourist studies has been perceived as fragmented, theoretically thin, conservatist and narrow because development efforts focused mainly on the economic dimension of tourism. (Saarinen 2001, 27.) New winds of thought were introduced by tourism geographers (see Hall 1994; Hall 2005; Saarinen 2001; Ateljevic–Doorne 2004; Debbage–Ioannides 2004) who regard the economy, space and place as cultural and social formations (Ateljevic–Doorne 2004, 291; Saarinen 2001), furrowed by capitalistic production and consumption, creating power structures. This social theoretization is generally labeled as the cultural turn in social sciences studies.

The socio-cultural approach to tourism products is the mental child of this cultural turn in tourist studies, drawing upon the rich field of critical approaches, tourism geography, the cultural approach to marketing (e.g. Moisander–Valtonen 2006), practice theory (e.g. Warde 2005) and the idea to conceive tourism in terms of performance (e.g. Edensor 2001). The cultural approach to marketing considers market place actions not only in terms of economic transactions but also as expressions of contemporary cultures, institutions and lifestyles. Thus, the cultural approach is concerned with processes of how different market actors make use of products and services as cultural artifacts (Moisander–Valtonen 2006, 2). Those streams provide a differentiated outlook on the tourism product, away from standardized and static modeling or 'supply meets demand views' towards the understanding of cultural meanings and human relationships embedded in tourism and its products (García-Rosell et al. 2007, 447). Through this lens, a tourism product can be defined as a 'seamless combination of local culture, consumption culture, and production culture that are inseparably connected' (García-Rosell et al. 2007, 454). A tourism product is therefore a

socio-cultural and historical artifact albeit dynamic in nature, representing how market place actors make sense of, reproduce and create their lived social world and fill it with meanings.

The tourism product and tourism product development are no longer divided, as the socio-cultural approach emphasizes that tourism products are subject to a constantly ongoing process of production and consumption and hence, it is questionable if a product can be conceived as ever ready (García-Rosell et al. 2007, 449). Consequently, tourism product development means not only the creation of new products, but refers to the redesign of existing products, reaching from incremental changes to radical innovations as well as to processes of how a products are evaluated, purchased, consumed, and negotiated (Kylänen et al. 2009, 7). Furthermore, the scientific gaze is extended towards understanding the tourism product in terms of firms' operational processes, taking place in multicultural, communal, local and global settings (García-Rosell et al. 2007, 449). Thus, the tourism product occurs in an inseparable intersection of the local, the global, the producer and the consumer where stakeholders, like local people, authorities or interest groups have a crucial role and are embedded in living and dynamic cultures (García-Rosell et al. 2007, 453) as illustrated in Figure 6.

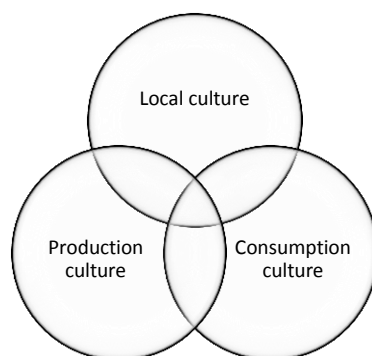


Figure 6. The Intertwined Nature of Tourism Products (García-Rosell et al. 2007, 453)

3.2.5 A Juxtaposition

There exists a gap in the relevant lifestyle entrepreneurship literature as the tourism product is only superficially addressed. Most of the lifestyle entrepreneurship discussion evolved around the economic orientation of the entrepreneurs but little has been studied concerning what 'lifestyle' means in the context of a tourism firm. In turn, conventional tourism product literature concentrates with its conceptualizations mainly on large enterprises, where the tourism product is a construct external to its producers and oriented in customer demand, global competition, issues of economic profitability and technological innovations.

When tourism product definitions are contrasted with those of lifestyle entrepreneurship, an explicit discrepancy is apparent, derived from different conceptions and preconditions of the two concepts as shown in Figure 7. Lifestyle entrepreneurship is intrinsically producer centered, driven by non-economic values and the pursuit of a certain way of life. The rhetoric plus the philosophical framework, which are used in traditional tourism product conceptualizations, seem to contradict those of lifestyle entrepreneurship. The socio-cultural approach appears to offer better means for investigating the relationship between lifestyle entrepreneurs and their tourism products since the product is conceived as a construct arising in the intersection of particular spatial and social circumstances (García-Rosell et al. 2007) and not as a neutral entity without social roots.

Figure 7. Tourism Product-Lifestyle Entrepreneurship Juxtaposition

Tourism Product

Production-oriented approach

Smith (1994, 582): Ideally, tourism products meet marketplace demands, are produced cost-efficiently, and are based on the wise use of the cultural and natural resources of the destination.

Middleton – Clarke (2001, 89): [The tourism product is] the perceived benefits provided to meet the customer's needs and wants, quality of service received, and the value for money.

Xu (2009, 607): In any industry, a product is developed to meet the needs of potential customers. The development of the tourism industry has triggered the development of tourism products. In the relevant literature, there is no consensus definition of a tourism product, but there is a common understanding that such a product must appeal to travelers seeking either business or leisure activities.

Customer-oriented approach

Komppula (2005): [The tourism product is] an experience based on his/her [a tourist's] subjective evaluation, which has a certain price and which is the outcome of a process, where the customer exploits the services of those who offer them by taking part in the production process of the service him/herself.

- Demand and consumption driven perception of the tourism product
- Emphasis on technical product elements and quantitative aspects
- Market-driven product development
- Negotiation of the product through place, price and service quality
- Producer/ consumer dualism
- Exchange based view → touristic experiences for financial gains

Socio-cultural approach

García-Rosell et al (2007, 454): [A tourism product is a] seamless combination of local culture, consumption culture, and production culture that are inseparably connected.

The tourism product occurs in an inseparable intersection of the local, the global, the producer and the consumer where stakeholders, like local people, authorities or interest groups have a crucial role and are embedded in living and dynamic cultures (García-Rosell et al. 2007, 453).

Lifestyle Entrepreneurship

- (Morrison et al. (1999, 13): [Lifestyle entrepreneurs] are likely to be concerned with survival, and maintaining sufficient income to ensure that the business provides them and their family with a satisfactory level of funds to enable enjoyment of their chosen life-style.
- (Ateljevic–Doorne (2000): Lifestyle entrepreneurs combine their own leisure interest, personal believes, values and way of life with a tourism business.
- (Morrison et al. 2008): Lifestyle suffix is multifaceted, context dependent, determined by socially constructed values and meanings that the entrepreneurs have selected for themselves or have been forced upon them.

- Tourism product occurs in an interplay or consensus of producers and consumers
- Dissolved production and consumption roles
- Centrality of personal and socio-cultural values
- Importance of qualitative measurements
- Importance of location factors and local conditions
- Socio-cultural-environmental-economic embeddedness
- Discursive in nature

4 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

4.1 Qualitative Research and Paradigmatic Contemplations

I approach this thesis project through a qualitative research. In its simplest, 'qualitative research involves any research that uses data that do not indicate ordinal values' (Nkwi–Nyamong–Ryan 2001, 1). Denzin and Lincoln (1998, 3–4) describe the qualitative researcher as a bricoleur, who selects from the rich array of methods and practices to answer the research questions. The outcome of this endeavor is a bricolage, a multifaceted, collage-like creation, which seeks to comprehend the phenomenon under study profoundly while this bricolage represents also the researcher's biographical situatedness along with his or her image and interpretation of the world. Qualitative approaches seek to study the subject in their natural settings with the attempt to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people ascribe to them. (Denzin–Lincoln 1998, 3–6, 24.) Qualitative inquiry procedures found their way into the field of tourism research, where their recognition and appreciation are constantly rising (Goodson–Philimore 2004).

I chose a qualitative approach for capturing the relationship of lifestyle entrepreneurs and their tourism product since I am interested in the constituting human dimension of this bond. I wanted to know how the entrepreneurs are connected to their tourism product, what it means to them personally and how it creates value for them beyond financial revenues. For generating such data, I conducted thematic in-depth interviews with lifestyle entrepreneurs who operate in Finnish Lapland supplemented by a review of online documentary material of their firm's websites. I want to emphasize the use of the words 'data generation' in opposition to 'data collection' to bring out the constructed and evolving nature of this process (Germann Molz 2013). Data is 'not just out there' and metaphorically waits to be collected as ripe berries. Instead, I as a researcher actively generate the data together with the interviewees and I am subsequently interpreting and processing the data into textual research results. This idea leads to the underlying research paradigm, which is in my case social constructionism. Social constructionist

inquiry holds that social reality is not objective as it is shaped by individual perceptions and the inquiry aim is to explore the complexity of social phenomena and gaining a context-bound, interpretative understanding. Researcher and researched are interacting closely because it is impossible for the researcher to detach him- or herself from the social world and thus, the investigator affects the research setting. (Collis–Hussey 2009, 57.) Therefore, social reality is rather subjective than objective (Collis–Hussey 2009, 57) and a product of historically situated interchanges among people (Gergen 1985, 267). Thus, it is not a given fact that the interviewed entrepreneurs and I are sharing the same ontological stance and views. I as a researcher interpret their reality through my socialized filter or culturally configured glasses. The more similar our lived realities, the better I am able to understand them and interpret their spoken and written statements (Gelter 2013). In consequence, the research results and the created knowledge are subjective and context-bound.

4.2 Background and Research Process

In the following, I address and reflect some of the decisive causes and effects that are embedded in this thesis project. Foremost, the choice of the lifestyle entrepreneurship-tourism product topic is not a coincidence; it is the upshot of the Applied Sciences tourism education I went through for four years. Lifestyle or small and medium sized tourism firm (SMTE) entrepreneurship plus tourism product development were the predominant themes beside sustainability and quality management, running like a golden thread through the majority of our courses.

Besides, my personal ideologies contour this thesis project, respectively the topic. I favor the idea that the modern mass tourism, based on enclavic resort development, long haul flights and overhyped experiences contributing greatly to the environmental destruction of the planet and exploitation of less-privileged people ceases to exist and is instead replaced by the concept of travelling (for detailed discussion see Saarinen 2001). I believe that lifestyle

entrepreneurship can be at least a small means from the supply-side to 'make the tourism industry better' as it emphasizes quality of life where the distinction between work and pleasurable living is abrogated, monetary gains are not the only determining parameters for business success and social togetherness of hosts and guests can evolve.

Furthermore, the commissioner-student relationship did in this case not follow the conventional procedure as this thesis project's purpose was not only the generation of some results for the company but the commissioner provided the chance for me, to explore lifestyle entrepreneurship and the tourism product from a qualitative point of view. Beforehand I did a small market research and product portfolio for Alatalo and this thesis serves as an addition.

Last but not least, my thesis served as a basis for a presentation at the 22nd Nordic Symposium for Tourism and Hospitality Research in Bodø, Norway. For this reason, the literature review is rather extensive because I needed to gain a profound understanding of the existing lifestyle entrepreneur and tourism product literature.

Figure 8 below graphically displays and summarizes the research process of my thesis project.

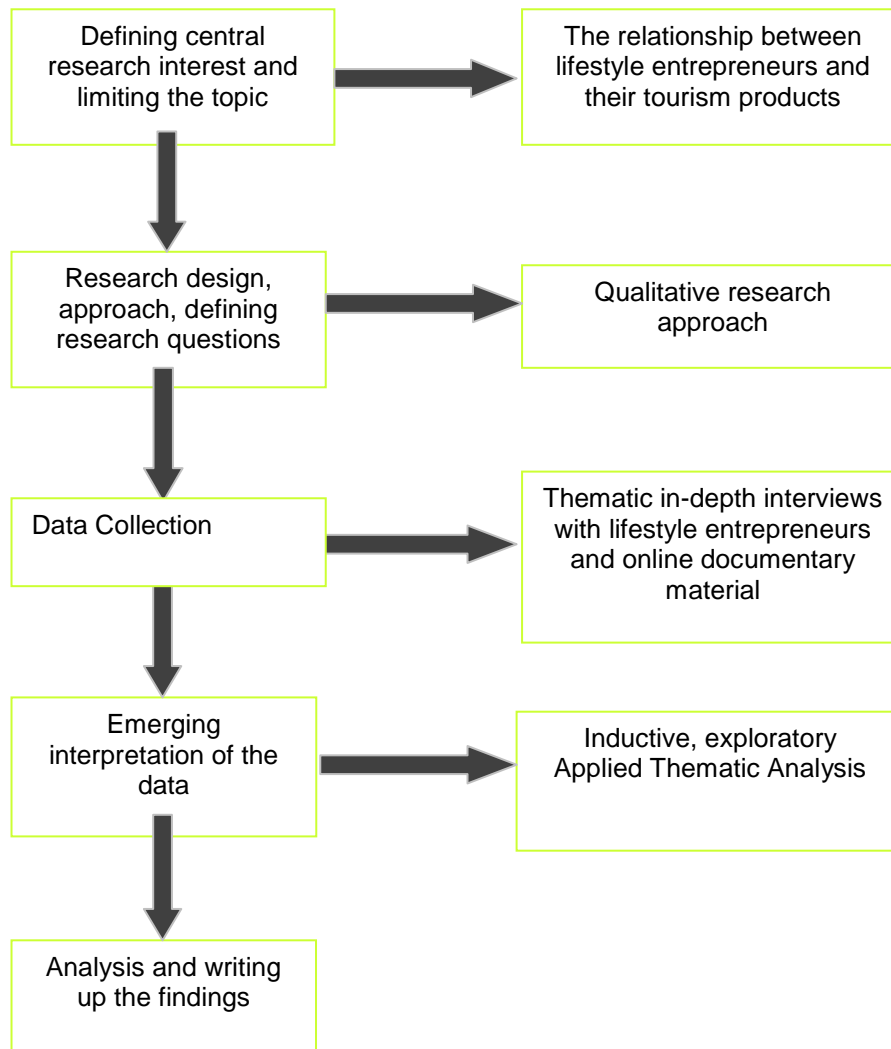


Figure 8. Summary of Research Process

4.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethics or the philosophy of moral engrosses systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behavior (Fieser 2009). As in our daily life, ethics play an indispensable role within academic research, reaching from the design and the inquiry phase to the publishing of the study (Eriksson–Kovalainen 2008, 65).

Regarding my thesis project, ethical contemplations are significant in the relationship between the interviewed entrepreneurs and me in addition to my

understanding of good scientific working manners and the obligation I have towards the commissioner. All the interviewees participated on a voluntary basis (Collis–Hussey 2009, 45) and I informed them during the first contact by email and later on in the face to face interview meeting about the scope and the purpose of my inquiry while guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality (Collis–Hussey 2009, 45). This concept of informed consent is critiqued because it implies that researcher as well as researched are both aware to the same extent of how study results will be used in the future along with potential repercussions. However, this is not a likely condition. (Greenhough 2007.)

My study is not expected to bring any harm or unforeseen ramifications to its involved participants, since a Bachelor thesis' sphere of influence is very narrow without any grave imbalances of power between researcher and researched and my topic does not broach any sensitive areas of human concern. However, I received all the information from the entrepreneurs for free and they will not obtain anything in return. This represents the general dilemma in social sciences where the study participants answer questions or questionnaires and the researcher interprets those responses through his or her socialized and institutionalized lens. Those research results might lead to policies that are beneficial for the study respondent, in most cases however, the research serves merely the career aspirations of the researcher while the researched go away empty-handed. Thus, there is an unfathomable, yet institutionalized ethical predicament in social science research, generally veiled by the premises of 'no direct harm done to the researched' plus 'participation took place on a voluntary basis'.

Concerning the written part of this thesis project, I am aware of the general regulations of academic writing and the avoidance of plagiarism. Finally, I am obliged to the commissioner as the research results should be beneficial and valuable for the company.

4.4 Portraying the Study Participants

The interviewed entrepreneurs are aged between 35 and 55 and their professional backgrounds are in public and private employment with vocational as well as academic education. Some have formal tourism schooling while the most fell into tourism incidentally due to the often-quoted low entry barriers of the industry (e.g. Hollick–Braun 2005). The firms of the study participants are located all over Lapland and one entrepreneur couple spends only the winter season in Lapland and lives otherwise in Germany. They all operate in the activity sector and most of the tourism firms run as a part-time business, and the owner-operators hold down other occupations. The business management philosophy of the interviewees differs as some defend a 'small is beautiful' attitude while others grew their businesses steadily. In one case, the company is newly established and the owner seeks to enlarge the operations for being able to create fulltime employment for himself. Some have a very clear view on the tourism sector in Lapland, engage or follow the regional strategy work and take part in shared marketing or publicly funded projects, whereas others are rather renunciative.

The labor distribution inside the lifestyle firms is organized case specifically as well. The entrepreneurs work either on their own, sometimes the partner is equally engaged as a copreneur (see Barnett–Barnett 1988) while in other companies the whole family, even members outside the nuclear family, are employed. Hired labor force is especially needed during the winter season and one company employs four people during summertime and 24 in winter.

Table 1 below specifies the interviewed lifestyle entrepreneurs' tourism businesses as well as the themes of their tourism products and assigns the abbreviations that are used for direct quotations from the interviews in the findings chapter.

Table 1. Tourism Business and Product Specifications of the Interviewed Lifestyle Entrepreneurs

Abbreviation	Characterization of tourism business
E1	Adventure/nature/outdoor and photography tourism (part-time)
E2	Cultural/ adventure and husky tourism (part-time)
E3	Well-being/ spiritual and retreat tourism (part-time)
E4	Husky tours and accommodation services
E5	Reindeer farm tourism and gastronomic services

4.5 Data Generation and Analysis

4.5.1 Purposive Sampling

A significant choice, determining quality and usability of the obtained data concerns sampling techniques and the retrieval of an evocative sample population (Altinay–Paraskevas 2008, 89). According to Altinay and Paraskevas (2008, 89):

Sampling is the process by which researchers select a representative subset or part of the total population that can be studied for their topic so that they will be able to draw conclusions regarding the entire population.

In qualitative research, sampling aims more at profoundly understanding the observed topic or phenomenon than to be able to draw generalizing conclusions on a larger group of society members. Hence, a common technique for spotting information-rich cases that can illuminate the research questions is purposive sampling, which belongs to the category of non-probability sampling. (Altinay–Paraskevas 2008, 101.) Non-probability sampling can roughly be described as selecting cases according to reasons other than mathematical, statistical or random probability. Regarding

purposive sampling, the researcher opts for cases according to his or her own judgment and particular research interest. (Bloor–Wood 2006, 154.)

Purposive sampling has a regular application within tourism research, embracing a wide range of themes, contexts and methodologies. Exemplary are Marzano and Scott's (2009) case study of power distribution in a destination branding process, Li's (2000) exploration of ethnic tourism practice and sustainable development at Wanuskewin Heritage Park/Canada or Kim and Jamal's (2007) examination of repeating festival participants' experiences in terms of existential authenticity.

Beside the qualitative nature of my thesis project and its aim to gain a deeper insight into the relationship of lifestyle entrepreneurs and their tourism products, pragmatic constraints like limits in time, financial resources and the scope of a Bachelor thesis plus language barriers led to the choice of purposive sampling. I selected the participating entrepreneurs according to their presentation on their webpage with the main criteria being the visibility of a lifestyle orientation of the business owners. The sampling is therefore theoretically grounded in lifestyle entrepreneurship facilitated by the parameter of an evident producer-product bond. I wrote ten emails to those entrepreneurs and five entrepreneurs responded and we met for the interviews. One interview was conducted via Skype.

4.5.2 Thematic In-depth Interviews

The data foundation of this thesis project is generated through thematic in-depth interviews with lifestyle entrepreneurs who operate in Finnish Lapland supplemented by a review of online documents, which are presented on their firms' homepages. Gard McGhee (2012, 365) describes interviewing as a versatile method, embracing a broad range of techniques, ranging from highly structured and standardized closed questions to unstructured and open-ended conversations, often referred to as in-depth interviews. The latter are primarily associated with a qualitative research approach guided by

interpretative paradigms (Gard McGhee 2012, 365) and underpinned by the assumption that individuals hold ascertainable knowledge about the social world that can be shared through verbal communication (Hesse–Biber–Leavy 2011, 94). Therefore, in-depth interviewing is an expedient means of inquiry when research seeks to explore experiences, ideas, thoughts and perceptions that are specific to the interviewees. Hence, the interview process is steered by open ended, broad questions where the interviewed participants communicate the studied issues in their own words. (Gard McGhee 2012, 365.) However, Bloor and Wood (2006, 105) point out that interviews are context-bound, meaning that interviewer and interviewee collaborate to produce a description of the social world. The outcome can consequently not be a neutral account of social facts. Still, reportable qualitative knowledge is created, albeit with limitations in its generalizability.

In-depth interviews are integral in tourism research, Lähdesmäki (2005) explores ethical concerns faced by small nature-based tourism entrepreneurs in their daily business operations.

As for my interviews, I was interested in the relationship between lifestyle entrepreneurs and their tourism products. I defined the framing questions prior to the meetings with the entrepreneurs and the broad themes centered on:

- The personal life-history of the entrepreneur
- The meaning of the tourism product for the entrepreneur
- The nature of the firm's specific tourism product
- The situation of the tourism business
- The significance of the operational environment
- The customer relationship

The adjunct probe questions were designed according to Patton's (1990, 293) matrix presented in Table 2 for a thick thematic coverage. Depending on the arising conversation, I added or modified those questions and in the end, no interview resembled the other due to the spontaneous construction of the situation and the human interaction. All interviews were recorded and later on transcribed verbatim. The length of the conversations varied from 20 minutes

to two hours and the language spoken was English in addition to two interviews, which were conducted in German. I translated the relevant quotations from those German language interviews to English.

Table 2. Matrix of Options for Interview Questions (Patton 1990, 293)

	Past	Present	Future
Behavior/ experience questions			
Opinion/ value questions			
Feeling Questions			
Knowledge questions			
Sensory questions			
Demographic/ background questions			

4.5.3 Online Documentary Material

The World Wide Web is a singular and yet immense container of multimedia documents; let them be text, snapshots, graphics, games, applications or voice recordings. One form of online presence and timely communication are websites, which are essentially made up by multimedia-based and intertextual documents. Intertextuality refers to electronic links that connect and network texts across different web pages. (Flick 2006, 266.) Websites can therefore be analyzed in a scientific manner whilst paying heed to the nonlinearity of online texts and the dynamic nature of the internet as they pose challenges on the research process (Flick 2006, 267).

The rapidly growing amount of online booking sites, consumer review pages, travel communities, forums, travel blogs, microblogs, social media networks or content sharing platforms provide valuable documented insights for tourism research. Germann Molz (2006) explores the websites of round-the-

world travelers, who use their home pages to chronicle the ongoing events of their trips, illustrated through photographs, journal entries, biographical information, maps and itineraries. Those writing travelers make themselves socially available to friends, family and strangers but also accountable for surveillance and monitoring. This interpersonal surveillance implies a dual stance of productive and transformative while also being constraining and oppressive. (Germann Molz 2006.)

Besides approaching the world of travelers, online documents can give also hints about tourism producers. I examined the websites of the interviewed lifestyle entrepreneurs for data supplementing the interviews. I paid attention to the way of how they present themselves in relation to their tourism product. I watched especially the product descriptions, the about us page and images, which gave evidence about the producer-product relationship.

4.5.4 Applied Thematic Analysis

For analyzing my data, I made use of Applied Thematic Analysis (ATA). Thematic analysis is the most commonly used approach to access data in qualitative research. The method allows capturing the complexities of meaning within textual data sets, nevertheless, thematic analysis is characterized by the absence of a consensus concerning its procedure per se. (Guest–MacQueen–Namey 2012, 11, 16.) Tourism studies draw frequently upon this inductive method of analysis, such as McIntosh (2004) in her paper that explores the demand for indigenous tourism plus tourists' motivations, perceptions and experiences of Maori culture in New Zealand. Through thematic analysis five central dimensions in the touristic experience with indigenous peoples, namely gazing, lifestyle, authenticity, personal interaction and informal learning are identified. McIntosh employs those findings and formulates product and sustainable development suggestions intended for indigenous communities.

As a response to the academic discordance beleaguering thematic analysis, Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) coined Applied Thematic Analysis, which offers an integrated approach to data analysis that is applicable to various research projects (Guest et al. 2012, 4). Applied Thematic Analysis is a synthesis of different methodological and theoretical fields and ‘a rigorous, yet inductive, set of procedures designed to identify and examine themes from textual data in a way that is transparent and credible’. Its primary concern is to present the narratives and the experiences of the research participants in an accurate and comprehensive manner. The word ‘applied’ indicates in this case that ATA provides a guide for supporting theory or models by data that have been gathered and analyzed in a systematic and transparent manner, thus the method is a necessary precursor to theory. (Guest et al. 2012, 12, 15–16.) The strength of ATA lies in its focus on unfolding and describing implicit and explicit ideas inside documents in addition to its pragmatic orientation, which moves beyond simply numbering words or phrases. (Guest et al. 2012, 12; 15–16, 18.)

After the familiarization with the raw data, I identified themes, coded those results, recorded them systematically in a codebook and then processed those themes into findings (Guest et al. 2012, 70). I chose ATA as an analysis method because answering my research questions requires interpretation of the data to grasp the underlying meanings what cannot be accomplished by word-based analyses, like classical content analysis. Consequently, I approach my data in an inductive, exploratory and content driven manner (Guest et al. 2012, 7). In exploratory analysis, the emphasis is on what emerges from the interaction between researcher and researched and this content drives the development of codes and the identification of themes (Guest et al. 2012, 36). Analytic categories or specific codes are therefore not predetermined and the exploratory approach is commonly associated with purposive sampling techniques (Guest et al. 2012, 7). This way of entering the gathered textual material is in line with my understanding of qualitative research guided by the chosen interpretative framework.

So far, I have not found ATA as an explicit analysis method in tourism related research projects. I reviewed Google scholar and the two tourism related databases, Elsevier and EbscoHost that I can access through the library website of Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences. This search did not reveal any results, with a potential reason being the newness of ATA as a method of analysis.

5 INSIGHTS INTO THE LIFESTYLE ENTREPRENEUR-TOURISM PRODUCT RELATIONSHIP

5.1 The Heart of Lifestyle Entrepreneurship: The Tourism Product

Conventional tourism literature depicts the tourism product as a neutral commodity, designed for rendering customer satisfaction in exchange for financial revenues. It is a mere economic construct, which makes use of the natural and built environment of a destination facilitated by a servicing human. Beside this, there seems to be no connection between producer and product. (see Middleton–Clarke 2001.)

From a socio-cultural approach to tourism products, the perspective changes, as the tourism product is not only a commodity but also an expression of social, cultural, spatial and personal processes (García-Rosell et al. 2007). This issue becomes especially apparent in the context of lifestyle entrepreneurship. During the interviews and from analyzing the companies' websites, it shone through that the tourism product is much more for the lifestyle entrepreneurs than a sellable entity intended for making profits. There exists a profound and emotional relationship between the lifestyle entrepreneurs and their tourism products and the entrepreneurs themselves are the very basis for the existence and the outline of their tourism products.

Here I want to remark that all the lifestyle enterprises have more than one tourism product, yet all products center around one specific theme what constitutes the essence of all products. Therefore, singular and plural forms of 'tourism product' are used interchangeably throughout this thesis because of stylistic and not of content determining reasons.

This issue of a close producer-product relationship can be best exemplified when examining the life history, the personal background, the desired way of life and the hobbies of the entrepreneurs as the tourism products arise out of this context.

E1 wanted to make a living in a desired destination and turned his hobby, outdoor activities and nature photography into his tourism product offerings. Until now, his business is running part-time but he plans to expand in order to create fulltime employment for himself. E1 explains the origin of his tourism products in the following way:

Initially I didn't come here to start the business, I came here to work on a husky farm to see what winter was like. (...) And once I was here, I finished my time with the huskies and I had met my soon to be wife so I decided to stay. So there is not a lot of work up here, so I started my own company, doing what I like to do. (...) Obviously, with the outdoor stuff, with this snowshoeing and the ski kind of guiding, that's what I like to do, so it kind of focused around that [the tourism products]. (...) [What do you like the most in your products and how did your products develop?] Being outside. I like the motion, I like to be out with people and I like to be outside. I don't like to be stuck inside. (...) I suppose because it was something that I love to do, its what I have been doing all my spare time, taking photos and being out climbing, being out in the nature and then I turned my private life into my business.

E3 and her family owned first a conventional, mass-tourism business and after they sold it, they built up a lifestyle firm, offering spiritually oriented retreat and well-being tourism. It was important for the family to have 'the freedom to do what you believe in' (E3). After working in conventional tourism, the family wanted to engage in a different kind of tourism and on their own terms, sustained by a product range supporting their way of life and values.

They [the tourism products] are part of our every day life and 100 % part of our family values. (...) We could not provide this kind of products, if we don't believe or value them ourselves. (...) Well, it's a true part of us [the tourism product], so probably it is the personality of our family.(...) we want to create that kind of products that we like to produce ourselves because nowadays we are quite strict about it that we are not able to do that kind of products that we don't feel good about it. (...) But I think that our products come nowadays mainly from ourselves, what we are eager to do and what kind of things we are interested in (E3).

Those short sketches illustrate that the tourism products originate directly from the lifestyle entrepreneurs' skills, interests, hobbies and values and are therefore more than mere industry outputs, amalgamating destination resources. However, when looking into the relationship of lifestyle entrepreneurs and their tourism products from a socio-cultural point of view, it becomes also evident that tourism products do not only offer the entrepreneurs means to sustain a living or to gain incomes but through their products, the entrepreneurs can express a desired way of life, including playing out an identity. Indeed the socio-cultural approach emphasizes the performative nature of tourism (García-Rosell et al. 2007). The notion of performance is elaborated in tourism literature from two viewpoints. First, the performance metaphor refers to touristic attractions and destinations, where inauthentic theatre plays are staged for tourists and the 'real life' of local cultures takes place behind the scenes (MacCannell 1999). This idea reflects also in the concept of experience economy coined by Pine and Gilmore (1999). An example par excellence for such a touristic stage is Disneyland. Secondly, tourists perform tourism. Tourists enact intentionally as well as unintentionally certain roles in those staged settings, which are regulated by social norms. Those roles can vary from adapting a stereotyped rule conform behavior, liminal leisure play to even rebellious tourist performances. (Edensor 2001.)

In the case of lifestyle entrepreneurship, the tourism product offers a way for the entrepreneurs to perform a desired role and identity. Especially in the conversation with E5, it became evident how the tourism product serves as a way to express his identity as a reindeer herder. As he emphasizes, reindeer herding is more than an occupation, it is a cultural way of life and deeply rooted in his family's history:

Well my job is to be kind of the host, like all the people who come here, all the groups who come here [to his reindeer farm] I am the man who is telling the stories about the reindeer because it is like I am telling about my own life and about my boys' life and so on and my family's life. (...) Well, let's say that products what is kind of a story about the reindeer year, that is quite important because (...) for me it is so easy because there have been reindeer men in my family so many hundred years. Yeah. And it is so nice to tell something about the grandfather and to talk about my boys and that is the most important for me, that I can tell about my own life and maybe my boys, they are telling about their lives someday.

For the entrepreneur couple E2, the tourism product is a way of adapting and performing a desired role beyond their ordinary everyday life. Their residence is not permanently located in Lapland, they come only during the winter season to a small remote village near Sodankylä to operate their tourism business and live otherwise in Germany where they hold down other non-tourism related occupations. In Lapland, their tourism product is based on husky sled rides, nature and outdoor activities plus cultural tourism. They offer a one-week holiday where the customers stay together with the entrepreneurs in the same cottage and do all the activities the entrepreneurs do. This case represents not only blurred boundaries of being a host for tourists and being self a holidaymaker but in operating their tourism product, the entrepreneurs can play out desired identities in a desired location. When asked about how they see themselves in tourism and perceive their role for the tourists, they did not associate themselves with being tourism entrepreneurs but they expressed their identity as musher and dog handler living in a remote village in harmony with nature. This particular adapted identity is facilitated by a change in consumption behavior as well. When the couple stays in Lapland, they reject using modern everyday technology to emphasize the back to nature way and material minimalism.

Yes, we both have clear positions overall, [the husband] is clearly the boss and the musher and I am clearly the dog handler, the resident idiot. (...) Yes [the village in Lapland] has become our second home, we like the people, we are always happy to make new contacts with the locals. The nature and the temperature and the amount of snow are ideal for dog sledding. We can live there in the back to nature way. No internet, no dish cleaner and we can show the tourists how less you need to live on. (...) The most important thing [in our product] is that we can give the people an impression how amazing the animals [Husky dogs] are and how great it is to live with them. (...) It is always astonishing for us how far modern human has distanced himself from nature. (E3.)

For employees in lifestyle firms, the tourism product offers chances to escape their everyday lives and adapt a complementary role as well. E4 hires up to 24 people during the winter season. Those people are mainly Middle Europeans and spend three month in Lapland to work as husky guides. However, they do not choose the job because of financial reasons since the salaries are not too high as E4 told, but they fancy a balance to their ordinary work life:

But it is this way that a lot of employees live with the thing [the company], really. We have people as employees, the one is now working in university, he is teaching, block lectures and three month a year he is here with us. (...) We have everything [as employees] from a graduated engineer to a doctor.

Moreover, the places where the actual tourism products of the lifestyle entrepreneurs are performed can be conceived as stages (see Edensor 2001). The entrepreneurs select and design a stage, which suits best for performing their chosen way of life. Those stages can be a village, a venue or a certain type of landscape as already adumbrated in the case of E3. They chose a small village and a romantic but simple cottage supporting their identity play. E2 expresses the choice of his stage in juxtaposition to mass tourism. In order to differentiate and distance himself from that, he takes his customers to places, which he thinks are not exploited by and do not represent mass tourism:

Well, I suppose it is because I love what I do and I (?) what I do and I make sure that I my customers are always getting a really good experience and having a great time and I try to take them to places which are a bit different and I don't like the mass tourism kind of thing so I like it nice quiet and I take them out in the woods and this is they have (a nice kind of chew there?), kind of aspect.

The socio-cultural perspective on tourism products reveals that lifestyle entrepreneurs and their tourism products are in a state of intimate correlation. Lifestyle entrepreneurs' tourism products do not only emerge out of their skills and lifestyle aspirations and financially facilitate the owner-operators in maintaining a chosen way of life but their tourism products offer a platform where the entrepreneurs can play out their (desired) identity and perform their lifestyle aspirations. This performance of the tourism product takes place in natural and built environments. Usually tourism literature refers to the firm when addressing the lifestyle orientation of the producers (see Williams et al. 1989; Ateljevic–Doorne 2000). However, the 'lifestyle' suffix of entrepreneurship manifests greatly in the tourism products as it is the actual venue for enacting this chosen way of life and performing an identity.

5.2 Production, Consumption and Social Interaction

A re-occurring theme in the interviews was social interaction between hosts and guests. All the interviewed lifestyle entrepreneurs can be characterized as 'people people'; they have very good social and communication skills plus they enjoy being with their guests. The entrepreneurs told a lot of anecdotes about their customers and often, friendships developed as E2 exemplifies:

There are really wonderful moments [with the customers]... do you want to have an example? (...) Yes it depends very much how the people are themselves. But I must say that even friendships and all that stuff have developed. (...) And of course it needs to be fun. Overall it is great fun for us because otherwise it would be impossible to do for a long time.

The close contact to their customers is an important issue for the entrepreneurs, which they frequently contrast with mass tourism, where is no time and opportunity for profound host-guest interactions as E3 emphasizes:

In my opinion, they [customers] are fed up with mass products (...) [What do your customers enjoy most in the products?] The true experience, extremely small groups and time we spent with them without any hurry.

When further elaborating the metaphor of performance in tourism products in the context of the lifestyle entrepreneurs, it becomes obvious that there is no performance without an audience. Roles or identities as such do not exist, they receive only meaning in an affirmative social context (see Edensor 2001). Indeed, the customers are the indispensable audience for the entrepreneurs' performance as it shines through in E5's statement. In order to play out his cultural identity as a reindeer herder, he needs a receptive and confirmatory audience:

I am the man who is telling the stories about the reindeer because it is like I am telling about my own life and about my boys' life and so on and my family's life. (...) I like being with the people and telling some good stories and see that people are interested about my stories and they are happy. That is nice to make people happy. (...) [What should your products transmit to your clients?] My own personality and of course, even Finnish people they know nothing about the reindeer, what kind of a work, what kind of lifestyle, cause it is more lifestyle than a good business and it is quite important for me that I can tell real things and that they start to understand why we are doing this kind of work because (...) there are different values, like that freedom. (E5.)

However, the overall performance of the tourism product is not single sided as the audience does not stay passive or just only listens and watches the entrepreneurs' acting. The performance of the tourism product as a whole is more complex as it evolves out of an interplay between the lifestyle entrepreneurs and their customers, a constant state of action and reaction. The entrepreneurs' react on the customers and the customers in turn act as well. E3 explains it in the following way:

Because our groups are so small, we take maximum four people and they have to know each other. They feel comfortable about... they feel comfortable to tell us what they would like to have. If they don't like meditation they think it is not their thing to do then we don't do it. We don't have to obey our rules so strictly, we can adapt our operations how the clients feel. (...) They just come to as our guests but we know them quite well and of course because we are a small company, we are able to change some of the things in our products because we are reacting all the time with each customer, we are able to, if we can see from them that they are not happy about something then we will do it like straight away it is like. I don't know, I don't have a word for that but it is reacting in a way but it is kind of sensitive reacting what we are doing with each customer. It's because they participate very closely with our tourist products. So we don't produce them for...we don't produce these products for them but they are also really much involved of producing those experiences for themselves. So they are not passive.

This performative state of action and reaction translates into the notion of simultaneous production and consumption, which holds that lifestyle entrepreneurs do not only produce their product, they consume it together with their customers, who in turn become producers. Thus, acts of production and consumption are not separable from each other anymore as stated by E3 above (see Ateljevic 2000; Ateljevic–Doorne 2004). The lifestyle entrepreneurs and their customers consume and produce together places and experiences based on social interaction between each other.

However, as the metaphor of performance holds, there are different roles between the actors even though they produce and consume in interrelated circuits. For the lifestyle entrepreneurs it is important to consume their desired identity, thus, they draw a clear distinction between them and their customers what becomes obvious when having a look at their rhetoric when they describe themselves. They use the words 'musher and dog handler' or 'reindeer herder' for referring to themselves while the customers are 'tourists' or 'guests'. Furthermore as stated elsewhere, the entrepreneurs set out the stage of the performance in determining the place and the framework of the tourism product. However, the entrepreneurs delineate also which kind of customers they prefer on their stage for performing the tourism product

through simultaneous production and consumption circles with social interaction at its heart. E3 explains it in the following way:

We do it that way that we want to create that kind of products that we like to produce ourselves because nowadays we are quite strict about it that we are not able to do that kind of products that we don't feel good about it. Even though...we have had some requests from some bigger groups, who would like to come to stay with us. They are anxious about the spiritual idea of our company but they see it only as a hocus-pocus way and want to have a lot of drinks and blablabla. We tell them directly that we are not able to take you. Because our, we are not able to offer what you are looking for. Because they are looking for this kind of Lapland baptizing things, it is not what we do. We do totally different things. So we kind of, we also close our own doors from that kind of clients we that we are not eager to have.

When having a look at the specific tourism products of the lifestyle entrepreneurs', it becomes evident that those offerings tend to be rather mundane than extraordinary experiences à la Pine and Gilmore (1999). Even though the entrepreneurs prepare a stage and play out a desired identity, their performance of their products is oriented towards performing the everyday. Their customers' main experience consists of the entrepreneurs' life as E3 mentions:

[Origin of your tourism product?] Everyday nature phenomena and the way of our own life. We have also travelled ourselves a lot and we noticed that some people are interested in everyday life of tourist hosts, they are looking for really authentic products they can participate actively.

This statement reveals that lifestyle entrepreneurs understand the notion of authenticity in an existential manner (see Macaleod 2006; Schouten 2006) and the idea of MacCannell (1999) of inauthentic touristic performance versus real life becomes obsolete. Real life and performance are true to the same extent for the entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the value of the particular tourism product does not emerge out of its material aspects, service quality or price but out of the social interaction between host and guest embedded in simultaneous production and consumption cycles. It is through social interaction, how the meaning of the tourism product is created between the

lifestyle entrepreneurs and their customers. The entrepreneurs see themselves plus their social skills as value rendering elements in the tourism product as well as E1 emphasizes:

The most valuable aspect [in the tourism products]? Well, I suppose it is because I love what I do and I (?) what I do and I make sure that I my customers are always getting a really good experience and having a great time. (...) I think the other value comes from me personally because I am pretty friendly so I make sure that everyone has a good time and it is pretty well xt.

From a socio cultural view on tourism products, the performative notion of tourism can be dissected. In the context of lifestyle entrepreneurs and their customers, tourism products are simultaneously consumed and produced with social interaction being the quintessential condition. This interaction between hosts and guests creates the meaning of the tourism products. The guests affirm the entrepreneurs in their role and in turn, the lifestyle entrepreneurs adapt their performance to their customers, so that they feel well and are able to understand the performance per se. Thus, issues of price, service quality or material product elements become secondary since the product's value lies in social interaction. However, this communication in the tourism product is not based on equality of hosts and guests. The lifestyle entrepreneurs set the stage for performing their tourism products and then they engage with the customers in their own terms.

5.3 Marketing the Tourism Product

5.3.1 Networking

When I analyzed the interviews according to how the tourism product of lifestyle firms is marketed, networking, strong customer relationships and an extensively developed yet personalized website were predominating. Networking and cooperation was an important aspect for the lifestyle

entrepreneurs in their daily operations even though related tourism literature states that lifestyle firm owner-operators are generally reluctant towards cooperation (see Weiermair 2001). The lifestyle entrepreneurs are part in a variety of networks with both, formal and informal cooperation partners and networking is often connected with the notion of friendship. The significance of networking for the entrepreneurs' comes up when I asked them about the issue of competition. None of lifestyle entrepreneurs was overly concerned with competition. Instead, they emphasized the importance of having good cooperation partners as E4 puts it: 'I don't see any competition in that sense, for me it is much more important to have good cooperation partners'.

The interviewed entrepreneurs are habitually part of multilateral networks comprised of (lifestyle) tourism firms. The entrepreneurs know each other's product offerings and recommend other firms if potential customers do not fit to their own firm's products and vice versa as E3 explains:

I think that it is because we have been operating in tourist business for twenty years with my husband, so everybody knows us and they know at the moment what kind of hocus-pocus people we are and what we do. So if they have like two people and they have experienced already everything here and they still ask for something more than they will tell them that aha...go to visit [E3's company]. (...) For example, Finnish people, Finnish clients are quite eager about this, we would like to come there but we don't want to take that part and we don't want to take that part, we would like to go only to sauna and have this outdoor bath. How much does it cost? And then we tell them that you can take only the bath and the sauna but the price will be exact the same than the whole package but then we offer them other companies who like only make sauna products for them.

Furthermore, cooperation happens often on a daily basis with other tourism firm owners who have become friends. The entrepreneurs share a personal connection based on friendship but the business dimension is present for both parties as well. This combination of friendship and business can be fertile for the entrepreneurs in new product development as they share ideas with each other while having also fun. This happens even not only in face-to-face contacts but also in social media networks as E3 outlines:

We do it [networking] daily. We have to do it. It is like automatically it comes. But of course we do network with also our old tour operator contacts and so on. But it is more or less that they have already become friends and we are having fun with our friends. But of course there is always this business perspective for both of us, for us and for them. What we always think that we can do something fun together to make totally different product. But it happens like automatically like every day. If not everywhere else then we do it in Facebook.

Another type of network where the lifestyle entrepreneurs are very active is in special interest or lifestyle networks corresponding to the entrepreneurs own interests. Through those networks, customers and tourism producers might find each other directly as E3 explains:

So it is only individual customers and I think also we are quite well connected with this kind of spiritual people. We are both keen on these things with my husband, so we have quite good networks also from that side. So people they know us quite well what we are doing.

However, some of the lifestyle firms engage also in formal, contractual cooperation with tour operators and travel agencies. Tour operators are seen as controversial cooperation partners. On the one hand, they are necessary but on the other, they represent standardized mass tourism. E5 says:

Then things what I don't like is some tour operators, some local companies, they are making timetables too busy all the time and that's making some kind of frustration for the clients, for the worker, for everybody and I just hope that tourism in Lapland will stay a bit more quiet. It is going a little bit too fast now. We have too big groups, very short timetables and I think that people they are not always happy.

Formal cooperation can take also place with specialized niche travel agencies from all over Europe. This form of cooperation is seen as positive since the travel agencies do not emphasize mass standardization and issues of price. Those travel agencies are more interested to offer a rather unique product to their customers as E4 mentions:

Yes I work together with travel agencies, small ones in Switzerland, in Germany, France, Netherlands and Austria. That works very well, they have the same opinion as I have what tourism should be.

Important for the lifestyle entrepreneurs is marketing cooperation with destination marketing organizations, non-profit organizations or online presence on travel and leisure time websites. E4 describes this cooperation in this way: “you need some partners for being visible”.

We belong to for example we belong to this nature... nature product organization in here in Finland. We do really close operation with the Green Care Association here in Finland. But they have... they are kind of accidents. We didn't plan them but we just got and then we were involved there. And we make lots of things with them. (E3.)

Yes I am working with a few projects and Metsähallitus as well and with the TossiLapi, the local municipality marketing but it has been a huge help, I actually got a few a lot of people have accessed my website through their website which is good. But you are just trying to cooperate with local companies as well, it is a big thing. (E1.)

Overall, the entrepreneurs employ networking on two levels. First they are active in all kinds of networks for advertizing their tourism products and increasing visibility. Secondly, through horizontal networks, often based on friendships, new products are created or ideas for enlarging the product range are shared.

5.3.2 Online Presence and Customer Relationships

The strong relationship of the lifestyle entrepreneurs and their products becomes also visible on the entrepreneurs' websites. The entrepreneurs always explain their relationship to their products in depth on the 'about' us page and they present themselves, their family or partner personally. Beside their strong passion for their tourism product, their own values shine through in the product descriptions and they use often personal pronouns in their

websites' texts. A striking aspect on the lifestyle entrepreneurs' websites is the strong aspiration to differentiate from mass tourism:

We deliberately decided not to modernize everything. We want to be different to the usual tourist centres with their noisy, round the clock activities and commerciality. (Excerpt from E4's webpage)

The entrepreneurs employ two different types of images on their websites: The traditional stylized marketing image, often portraying the clean and pure nature of Finnish Lapland but personal photographs of the producers in relation to their products are presented as well. Overall, the websites of the entrepreneurs are well developed, coherent and they provide an impression of professionalism but also of social warmth and passion for their touristic offering.

Furthermore, price issues are rather secondary in the entrepreneur's web pages. Prices are either not displayed at all or mentioned at the end of the page and in a smaller font. Indeed, price is not an issue between the lifestyle entrepreneurs and their customers. In this regard, entrepreneur E4 mentions that he did not have any repercussions of the last economic crisis, which did hit Finnish tourism quite hard: 'I did not feel anything of the financial crisis; our customers were still travelling and coming to us'.

The website and increasingly social media are very important mediators between the lifestyle entrepreneurs and their customers as E1 mentions: 'Mostly through my website, the website was mostly the main point for contact [with the customers] and through Facebook'. Even the entrepreneurs who work with tour operators and travel agencies receive many direct bookings: 'but we get approximately 40% direct bookings. That is this word of mouth and the internet' (E4). Entrepreneur E2 explains why there are so many direct bookings. It is not so much because of the tourism product in its materiality but the customers chose particularly those lifestyle entrepreneurs' touristic offerings because of the immaterial values, which are displayed on their websites in relation to their tourism products. Furthermore, those clients

appreciate the non-mere-business character of the lifestyle entrepreneurs' tourism products.

And I always ask the people, why they particularly chose us because there a few other companies offering the same (...) and what they actually all say is that it is noticeable on our homepage that the dogs are very important to us and that we don't do it as a mere business or as a firm but simply to show the people, how nice it can be [to live with the dogs]. (E2.)

Beside the homepage, a further yet crucial channel for the lifestyle entrepreneurs is word of mouth. Customers who enjoyed the products not only return but they also advertise the product among their social environment.

And now a lot happens through word of mouth, meaning that if somebody has been with us who really enjoyed it (E2).

We have a lot of guests, yes an awful lot, who return. (...) It is the most important thing for me, when I see that the people return. I mean, they probably do not return in the consecutive year but two or three year later they are back and mostly they bring some friends with them. (E4.)

With respect to returning customers, the lifestyle entrepreneurs mentioned that those returnees actually did not look for new tourism products but they returned because they enjoyed the holiday there and wanted to experience the same again. For this reason, E4 does not believe in huge product changes:

I always thought, yes we have to do something new. Now I have a different attitude. The customers come again, because they did like it. Thus, nothing new but that what they did have.

Customer knowledge and suggestions for tourism product development is frequently mentioned in tourism literature as a valuable asset for tourism firms (see Cooper–Hall 2008). However, when I asked the lifestyle entrepreneurs about product development ideas, they stated that there are not many suggestions made by their customers. E2 explains it with the

customers being so full of new impressions and fascinated by the experience and for this reason, the customers do not suggest much. However, E2's statement below implies a further dimension in the lifestyle entrepreneur-product relationship. The entrepreneurs are quite protective of their own products as they are intimately connected to their own lives.

There are not so many suggestions from the customers. But I think... and the people are often...for some you can feel it, they are so full of new impressions yes, and fascinated. (...) For that reason, I think there are not so many suggestions. It is good this way [that there are not so many suggestions made by the customers] because I mean, I think that we are doing it [operating the business and the tourism products] too long already (...) and we know what we are doing. It would be strange if somebody could just come and tell us what to do. (E2.)

Lifestyle entrepreneurs' websites and social media presence are a vital point for a first contact between producers and customers. It seems that the customers chose the particular company's offering not because of the tourism products' material aspects but because of values, which are shown on the entrepreneurs' websites corresponding to the customers' own values. Customers seem to appreciate the rather personal and non-mere-business style of the homepages. The lifestyle entrepreneurs' websites are professional but they are not sterile marketing pages as their personal relationship to their tourism products is in all cases very much emphasized and issues of price are rather secondary.

Moreover, the lifestyle entrepreneurs' have many returning customers and word of mouth is an important channel for them as well. All the entrepreneurs have a positive outlook on their business as E1 remarks: 'at the moment it is quite bright, I see lots of opportunities'.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Shifting Towards Producer Centrality

The study indicates that lifestyle entrepreneurs and their tourism products are intimately connected. From a socio-cultural point of view, the products emerge from the way of life choices of the entrepreneurs and are the platform where the entrepreneurs can perform their desired lifestyle. Concerning those findings, neither a product- nor a customer-centered approach captures lifestyle entrepreneurs' touristic offering suitably.

The socio-cultural approach to tourism products is not a traditional product model as the two latter ones but more a philosophical way of conceptualizing tourism products in terms of an entity arising out of the consumer's culture, the producer's culture and the operational environment (García-Rosell et al. 2007). However, the intersection between those three stylized circles (see Figure 6) are in a dynamic relation to each other and one can shift in focus to one of those circles. In this sense, the socio-cultural perspective reveals through the lens of lifestyle entrepreneurship a producer-centric outlook on the tourism product. Table 3 points out the major differences between the producer-centric approach in comparison to production- and customer-centric conceptualizations of the tourism product found in the study.

Table 3. Comparison of Product-Centric, Customer-Centric and Producer-Centric Tourism Product Approaches (after Cooper–Hall 2008, 314)

	Product-centric	Customer-centric	Producer-centric
Market orientation	Tourism as an industry, mass market, highly commodified	Tourism partly industrialized, commodified, segmentation according to customer demand/ market diversification	Tourism partly industrialized, processes of de-commodification, niche market orientation
Basic philosophy	Products for whoever will buy, shareholder	Product decisions start with the customer and are	Products are determined by the entrepreneurs,

	satisfaction	focused on present and future customer needs	their production and consumption aspirations and operational environment tourism product arises as a consent of producer and consumer
Tourism product development	Development based on profit reasoning	Development based on customer demand	Development based on entrepreneurs' skills, values and lifestyle aspirations, development through networking
Producer-consumer interactions	Contractual, standardized, generally distant interactions	Standardized service performance, strategically planned by management	Interrelated production and consumption, profound human interactions as basis for the tourism product
Product positioning	Highlight features and advantages of product	Highlight benefits and value to customer	Highlight interactional component of the tourism product and the value that the entrepreneurs create
Performance metrics	Numbers of products, profit per product, market share by brand	Share of customer, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, service climate	Maintain a chosen lifestyle, produce and consume the own tourism product, socio-cultural aspects
Business orientation	Transaction oriented	Relationship oriented	Stakeholder relationship oriented
Selling philosophy	How many customers can we sell to? How many customers can we attract?	How can we most appropriately satisfy each customer by providing as many products and services that are	How can we sell our product without compromising our own values and maintain a chosen lifestyle?

		required to meet their individual needs?	
Customer knowledge	Customer data control mechanism	Customer knowledge a valuable asset	Commercial as well as non-commercial relationships
Product value	For producer: financial profits For consumer: experiences, status, material consumption	For producer: financial profits For consumer: experiences, status, self-creation, expression of lifestyle consumption	For producer and consumer: interrelated production and consumption on the basis of shared values
Success metrics	Quantitative outputs, turnover	Service quality	Social interaction
Underlying idea	Business or economic construct for profits	Exchange medium: lifestyle consumption swapped for financial gains	Socio-cultural construct, mutual meaning creation

This producer-centric approach differs fundamentally from the two latter conceptualizations in how the tourism product per se is understood in relation to its function, its value, its underlying relationships and its market positioning. Putting those notions in a wider context, it becomes evident that this observable development of the tourism product echoes in the evolution of tourism as such what in turn is congruent to a change in contemporary western society from modernity to post-modernity. Product-centric, consumer-centric and producer-centric tourism product approaches reflect a chronology of societal production and consumption processes. In brief, the socially constructed tourism product transformed from an undiversified mass-produced good in modernity to an identity-forming, lifestyle expressing, tailor-made consumer-service playground in post-modernity and is now, at the predicted verge of post-modernity (see Ateljevic 2009) a glocal venue for people who desire experiencing interrelated production and consumption on the basis of shared values and social interaction.

Indeed, production and consumption are generally separated in the production-centric as well as in the consumer-centric approaches and occur more likely simultaneously in the producer-centric approach. It has to be highlighted that all three conceptualizations occur simultaneously since tourism is extremely diverse, fragmented and unevenly developed (see Cooper–Hall 2008, 253–254) plus the boundaries between the approaches are blurry. A touristic trip entails several tourism products (see Figure 3), not only the ones thematized in this thesis report. Thus, a tourist purchases during a journey different types of tourism products, as a seat in an airplane can be considered product-centric while the tourism product provided in the destination by a lifestyle firm might fall in the producer-oriented category.

6.2 Implications for the Commissioner

The findings of this study might be relevant for the commissioning firm first because Kaisa Alatalo's company is itself lifestyle motivated and secondly, her tourism product, cultural round trips through Finnish Lapland, is composed by product offerings of other lifestyle firms. Thus, the research results might contribute some hints in how to market her tourism product and illustrate the issues, which might be important to consider in cooperating with other lifestyle firms.

The theoretical part of the research evidences, that the actual value of the tourism product lies not in its material aspects but in the social interaction between hosts and guests. Furthermore, the entrepreneurs and their social skills are a vital part in giving the tourism product a heart and a soul. As a business strategy, however, such conditions are difficult to create as they evolve processual over time and are somewhat dependent on virtues of hosts and guests. Consequently, Alatalo's tourism product will require much so-called 'emotional labor' since she will be all the time together with her guests during the journey through Finnish Lapland. In turn, the emotional

aspect in the tourism product might lead to returning customers, positive word of mouth and grant the fundament for relationship marketing.

The practical part of this thesis shows that lifestyle entrepreneurs in the activity sector are quite well connected with their customers, in pre-purchase, in the actual phase of interaction and in post-purchase phases. Social media and a well developed, yet personalized website are essential for the entrepreneurs as the most customers found them directly. The study indicates that purchase decisions are made because of the visibility of a strong bond between lifestyle entrepreneur and tourism product, pointing again to the significance of immaterial values. Furthermore, the image portfolio used by the entrepreneurs is a mix of traditional marketing photos and more the personal snapshot type, where one could feel the close connection of producer and product.

Lifestyle entrepreneurs take part in various networks. Being present in a variety of networks is not only vital for the entrepreneurs in terms of market visibility but through horizontal networks based on friendship, also new products and ideas can evolve. Overall, the study signifies that the market success of lifestyle firms can be found in those three components: networking, online presence and social interaction with their customers.

As stated previously, Alatalo's tourism product is a networked product. From the vantage point of cooperation, it is necessary for Kaisa Alatalo to understand her partners. The product is essential for the entrepreneurs in living and expressing their chosen way of life and playing out a desired identity. Consequently, an important matter for the entrepreneurs is often to consume their product in the same time as they produce it. This close bond between the tourism product and their own lives plus their desire to consume the product as well create a state where the entrepreneurs are very protective of their products, manifesting in a 'love it or leave it' attitude. Furthermore, service quality is not understood in the sense of serving the customer and a long distance between host and guest but more in terms of profound and close interaction.

Moreover, the study insinuates a shift from production- and customer-centric tourism product approaches towards a producer-centric one in the context of lifestyle entrepreneurial firms. With respect to marketing, this notion might be of avail for Alatalo when she composes the product descriptions of her firm's offerings. A personal note in Alatalo's online presence, referring to homepage and different type of social media, is quite important. Moreover, in explicitly mentioning whom the customers will meet in the tourism products, not only a personal touch is given to the product depiction but it renders also uniqueness. Those lifestyle entrepreneurs can only be met in Finnish Lapland and Alatalo is the intermediary between those entrepreneurs and the customers. The issue of uniqueness is significant in tourism, as products and innovations in general are subject to quick imitation (Hall–Williams 2008). Table 4 summarizes the suggestions arising from this thesis and adds a few further hints for the commissioner.

Table 4. Suggestions for the Commissioner

Website and Online Presence	Cooperation and Networking	Tourism Product (Development)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search engine optimization • Linking own website to other tourism related pages (high visibility) • Personal style of writing website texts • Mix of professional and personal photos • Own values (not too strong but visible) • No strong business character and sterile marketing • No prices or when more hidden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking strongly recommended • Horizontal as well as vertical networking • Maybe cooperation with very small and specialized TA's • Develop business with friends and include social exchange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product should entail mundane as well as extraordinary elements • It is mainly a 'social product' → warm interaction with customers • Product should be more than gazing (doing, feeling, seeing, smelling) • Use the body as a way of experiencing tourism • Present product partners as humans worth

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick response to customer requests • Keep in contact with customers and commercial friendships 		<p>meeting and not as facilitators → renders uniqueness to the products</p>
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An example for this application of producer centrality is the Visit Inari page. On this website, visit Inari does not only present activities, accommodation and general information about the destination but provides also an extensive description of a few tourism lifestyle entrepreneurs, who are worth meeting and who are able to deliver a unique tourism product. Figure 9 are screenshots from this website and the close relationship between entrepreneurs and products is noticeable in the photographs. Those personalities can be only met in the specific destination and nowhere else in the world what makes the product somewhat inimitable. (see Visit Inari 2013.)





ESKO AARNIO

Hi, I'm Esko, your guide from the village of Inari into nature and back again. We'll be there as soon as we depart. The journey can be done on Fjord horses, skis, canoes or rubber boat. A laidback, unreserved pace with good food - and there it is! I have a temperament similar to the docile Fjord horses, come and get to know me! In addition to Finnish, I also speak English and German.



PETRI MATTUS

Being a reindeer herder, I have the best office in the world, the vast wilderness - where I feel myself at home. You can't get qualifications to become a reindeer herder; rather it is a way of life that is learned from a very young age. I inherited the reindeer herder occupation and learned the trade from my father who is an Inari Sámi. Reindeer husbandry is more than just a profession for me; it is the way of life for my whole family. I enjoy fishing on the mountain lakes and streams. On an autumn trip, you may also be able to hunt for willow grouse or the golden plover of the swamps, the

Figure 8. Meet the People in Inari (Visit Inari 2013)

It is the human dimension, which sets lifestyle entrepreneurship and the products arising out of this context apart from the conventional tourism sector. Furthermore, the interviewed lifestyle entrepreneurs' tourism products are not so different to other firm's offerings but through the person of the entrepreneur, those products gain their difference to other market offerings.

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Summary of the Study

It was my aim to explore the relationship between lifestyle entrepreneurs and their tourism products in Finnish Lapland from a theoretical as well as from a practical point of view. I approached the tourism product from a socio-cultural perspective.

By answering the first research question, how do lifestyle entrepreneurs' tourism products relate to their own lives, it becomes obvious that the entrepreneurs' live is the basis for their tourism products. Furthermore, it is in the tourism product, where the entrepreneurs can 'live', perform and communicate their way of live choices. Thus, the concept of lifestyle entrepreneurship manifests greatly in the tourism product. The entrepreneurs' skills, hobbies and personal preferences determine the product as such. However, from a socio-cultural perspective, the performative nature of tourism products is palpable. The tourism product offers the entrepreneurs the chance to play out a desired way of live, which goes hand in hand with a desired identity. Thus, tourism enables the performance of a desired role, not only for the tourists as usually acknowledged (see Edensor 2001) but also for the lifestyle entrepreneurs.

This issue relates closely to the second research question asking how are lifestyle entrepreneurs' tourism products simultaneously produced and consumed? From the perspective of performance, the entrepreneurs consume their desired role in the tourism product. For playing out this role, they need an audience in form of customers. However, the customers do not stay passive, they act as well and hence take part in the production of the tourism product. As a result, production and consumption are inseparably connected. The quintessence of those production and consumption circuits (Ateljevic 2000) is social interaction between hosts and guests. This social interaction renders the tourism product not only a 'heart and a soul' but

becomes the most important value of the product. Material product aspects, service quality or price are secondary.

From the viewpoint of the third research question asking about how lifestyle entrepreneurs' tourism product is marketed, three issues can be detected. First, taking part in all kinds of horizontal and vertical networks is essential for the entrepreneurs, not only in enhancing the company's visibility but also in developing products and ideas with other firms. Secondly, the website is a crucial meeting place for producers and customers. The customers however find the companies and it seems that they appreciate not only the personal style of the lifestyle entrepreneurs' web pages but base their purchase decision on the visibility of the non-mere business relationship between producer and product. As the second research question already revealed, social interaction is vital in those tourism products. Lifestyle entrepreneurs seem to have a very good contact to their clients not only during the performance of the tourism product but also in pre- and post-purchase stages.

In conclusion, the thesis has proven the eligibility of the socio-cultural approach to tourism products especially in the context of lifestyle entrepreneurship. Through the socio-cultural approach, the performative nature of tourism products can be discovered. It can be stated that lifestyle entrepreneurs' tourism product performance is intrinsically social while the conventional staged tourism à la Pine and Gilmore (1999) is rather anti-social as it divides producers from consumers plus alienates the producers from their products while its only meaning is the creation of financial revenues. In this sense, lifestyle entrepreneurs' tourism products are no ordinary business!

7.2 Limitations

From the point of view of social constructionism, which is the underlying paradigm of this thesis project, the study results are 'one' possible

interpretation of the gathered data and not 'the' interpretation as it is assumed in positivism. Given this premise, the qualitative research methods plus the sample size of five interviews, the accustomed research criteria of validity and reliability become obsolete (see Guba–Lincoln 1998, 203, 210). The study's results are entirely depended on my interpretation. Another researcher would probably come to other findings, as the interpretation of qualitative material is heavily reliant on personal biases, capabilities and aspirations. Caution should be given to a generalization of the study's results upon a wider population, since the sample size covers only five interviews and depicts not the entire variety of lifestyle entrepreneurship in Finnish Lapland. I focused only on activity providers and results might be also different when examining for example the accommodation and catering sector. Furthermore, the research results can never be tested according to their ultimate validity since they are a mere social constructs. Finally, my thesis has to be seen as a context-bound momentary upshot in space and time.

However, qualitative and interpretative research can be legitimated through the concepts of trustworthiness and authenticity, which convey credibility (Guba–Lincoln 1998, 210). Credibility refers to the 'confidence in the truth of the findings, including an accurate understanding of the context' (Ulin–Robinson–Trolley 2005, 25). This notion holds that the researcher does his or her best to comprehend and to depict the subject matter under investigation from an emic viewpoint and acknowledges own biases. Prerequisites for doing so are fairness and a profound educational background. Education refers here to familiarity with the body of relevant literature as well as to being able to understand others and different ways of human behavior. (see Guba–Lincoln 1998, 210, 211.) In my case the results gain credibility through their cross-confirmability with the body of existing tourism literature on lifestyle entrepreneurship.

Though I believe in line with Moisander and Valtonen (2006, 26) that a prerequisite for the evaluation of qualitative research reports based on a social constructionist paradigm is a reader, who is critical, reflective and

questions text all the time while reading instead of accepting given content as self-evident and absolute. Texts should be seen as an outcome or discourse of social structures in space and time. In this sense, disagree with, challenge, debate, reconsider, ponder on and scrutinize the thesis at hand.

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