



LIFESTYLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN TECHNOLOGY START-UPS: THE CASE OF “PIRI” MOBILE APPLICATION

DOI: 10.17261/Pressacademia.2017.489

JMML-V.4-ISS.3-2017(9)-p.271-278

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To cite this document

Esen, A. and T.E. Iscioglu. (2017). Lifestyle entrepreneurship in technology start-ups: the case of “Piri” mobile application. Journal of Management, Marketing and Logistics (JMML), V.4, Iss.3, p.271-278

Permenant link to this document: <http://doi.org/10.17261/Pressacademia.2017.489>

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ABSTRACT

Purpose- Lifestyle entrepreneur is attributed to those business owners who have an aspiration for self-management and independence but with an emphasis on their quality of life with respect to their livelihood. In line with their lifestyles, these entrepreneurs are mostly motivated by the factors such as balance between work and family life, sufficient and comfortable living, freedom and flexibility rather than economic drives, such as enormous financial gains or business growth.

Methodology- Lifestyle entrepreneurship has long been associated with tourism or hospitality domain, especially with accomodation, bed & breakfast or guest house services. Acknowledging that the term is used for entrepreneurs who establish a business corresponding with their lifestyle, with the motivating factor of achieving better life quality and being their own boss, this study aims to build on existing lifestyle entrepreneurship conceptualization by transferring it to a technology start-up, simply by taking Piri mobile application as a case study.

Findings- Piri is an audio walk tour application that allows users to listen to the stories of cities from the tour guides as the users take one- or two-hour tours. It is developed by an entrepreneur who quitted professional business life because of challenging colleagues and demanding bosses, traveled all around the world for two years and created Piri as he returned back to homeland. An in-depth interview held with the entrepreneur of Piri revealed that lifestyle entrepreneurship of a technology start-up might be considered as a constrained lifestyle entrepreneurship where the entrepreneur has strong economic or growth motives but constrained by the desire of a particular lifestyle.

Conclusion- Results of the study indicate that lifestyle entrepreneurship can be observed in knowledge-intensive industries. Our specific case study on a mobile application developer showed that, technology start-ups may serve as means of self-realization, self-reflection, freedom, flexibility and social impact for entrepreneurs in addition to economic benefits. The findings of the study provide managerial and marketing implications for technology start-ups.

Keywords: Lifestyle entrepreneurship, technology start-up, innovation, marketing.

JEL Codes: L26, M13, M31

1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship involves the recognition of opportunities as well as the assembly of resources to exploit them, and entrepreneurs are people who can see the commercial value within these opportunities (Alvarez and Busenitz, 2001; Shane and Venkatraman, 2000). Research shows that, in recent decades entrepreneurship has occurred at significantly higher rates and entrepreneurship has become a suitable career identity for many people (Gartner and Shane, 1995; Thornton,

1999). Although a significant body of existing literature focuses on the economic determinants and benefits of entrepreneurship, non-economic determinants of entrepreneurship such as legitimacy, social mobility or psychological factors have increasingly been considered in recent research (McKay, 2001; Morrison, 2006). These studies posit that a growing number of individuals establish new ventures to suit their own lifestyle. In this sense, lifestyle entrepreneurship has become a popular concept since the term is linked to a business model where the entrepreneur generates income through pursuing a preferred style of life without compromising the work-life balance (Andrews et al., 2001).

The aim of this study is to explore lifestyle entrepreneurship, a concept which has been mostly associated with the tourism and hospitality domains, from the perspective of technology start-ups. The results of the study will shed light on the dynamics of a sector in Turkey that has significant growth potential. According to OECD's Digital Economy Outlook 2015 Report, Turkey was ranked second in the world for use of high-speed mobile broadband networks via smart phones (OECD, 2015). There are 42 million active social media users in Turkey of which over 27 million people use Facebook daily, over 12 million people use Instagram at least once a month and Twitter has over 11 million users (TTA-Turkey, 2016).

This study will contribute to the current understanding on lifestyle entrepreneurship by providing an analysis of the motivations and behaviors of technology start-up entrepreneurs and the degree to which they are linked to the current characteristics of the lifestyle entrepreneurship concept. The paper is organized as follows: In the first part of the paper, we present a review of literature on lifestyle entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship in the technology domain. Additionally, we provide a framework that integrates various aspects of lifestyle entrepreneurship with motivations of mobile application entrepreneurs. In the second part of the paper, we provide detailed information on the case of the mobile application, Piri. We, then, analyze the motive and the nature of such entrepreneurial activity, relating these to lifestyle entrepreneurship. In the final section, we discuss managerial and marketing-related implications.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will provide an overview of research in lifestyle entrepreneurship and will relate certain aspects of the concept to entrepreneurial motivations and behaviors in technology start-ups.

2.1. Lifestyle Entrepreneurship

Lifestyle entrepreneur is attributed to those business owners who have an aspiration for self-management and independence but with an emphasis on their quality of life with respect to their means of income generation. Lifestyle entrepreneurs can be defined as "individuals who own and operate businesses closely aligned with their personal values, interests and passions" (Marcketti et al., 2006, p.241). According to Morrison (2006), "the primary concern (of a lifestyle entrepreneur) is to provide a sufficient and comfortable living to maintain a selected way of life' (p.198). Opposite to growth-oriented entrepreneurs, lifestyle entrepreneurs primarily start their businesses to undertake an activity they enjoy or to perform an economic activity to provide adequate income (Peters et al., 2009). Thus, personal satisfaction (Claire 2012), improving knowledge and friendship (Tucker and Lynch 2004), the desire to be his/her own boss (Lashley and Rowson 2010), self-affirmation (Lynch 2005; Sweeney and Lynch 2009) and the ability to balance work and family responsibilities (Lynch 1998), have all been identified as other motivations for lifestyle entrepreneurship. Table 1 summarizes the basic characteristics of lifestyle entrepreneurs.

Shaw and Williams (1998) have classified lifestyle entrepreneurs into two distinct groups: the constrained lifestyle entrepreneur and the non-constrained lifestyle entrepreneur. The constrained lifestyle entrepreneur is younger with strong economic motives; however they are constrained by the desire for a particular lifestyle. The non-constrained lifestyle entrepreneur is driven by a desire to be their own boss and to live in a particular location.

The high number of lifestyle entrepreneurs among tourism and hospitality firms has made it an attractive research topic in these domains (Lynch, 2005). However, there are also studies highlighting lifestyle entrepreneurs in other areas such as jewellery design, furniture design and coffee retail (Marcketti et al, 2006). Although lifestyle entrepreneurship has been an area of interest for many scholars in the small business and tourism domains, as Allardyce (2015) puts it, the topic is at the early stages of entrepreneurial research.

Table 1: Basic Characteristics of Lifestyle Entrepreneurs

Valuing a decent living doing something one enjoys
Aligning entrepreneurial activity to fit with personal circumstances and style of life
Making money from a hobby
Prioritising personal over business goals

Not being growth motivated
Defining primary concern as providing a sufficient and comfortable living to maintain a selected way of life
Searching for a flexible work schedule
Respecting balance between family and work

Source adapted from: Claire (2012) and Morrison (2006)

2.2. Mobile Applications Industry and Lifestyle Ent

'(1) instead of physical capital and labor, knowledge has become the driving force of economic growth; (2) individuals rather than firms are the leading factor in new knowledge creation; (3) as opposed to large conglomerates, small and new firms play the dominant role in transferring newly created knowledge to marketable goods; (4) traditional industrial policy, with antitrust laws and small business protection, has been replaced by a much broader entrepreneurship policy aiming to promote individuals and to enable high-growth potential start-ups' (p.10).

In line with the rise of the knowledge-intensive entrepreneurial activity, the mobile applications industry has shown a tremendous growth in the last decade (Bresnahan et al., 2015). As Bresnahan et al. (2015) put it, 'by successfully recombining existing information technologies with new innovations, (new mobile development platforms) have spurred a positive feedback loop of consumer adoption of mobile devices and firm entry into a wide variety of applications, or "apps." (p.233)'.

The mobile application industry has attracted the attention of a new generation of entrepreneurs since developing new products in this industry requires relatively less investment and time. According to Tiawut (2013), 'a typical mobile application requires, on average, three developers and three months of development time' (p.1028). Although it is easy to establish a start-up, maintaining competitiveness in the mobile application industry is challenging. Application developers have to use novel and unique ways in the design of new products to enable consumers apply multiple features of their mobile device, such as GPS, camera and communications (Yin et al., 2014). In addition to the application itself, how it is priced, communicated and commercialized are also very important to create consumer desire. For the pricing of an application, various strategies are advised such as in-app advertising, in-app purchasing, freemium or sponsorship (Kanada, 2015). To create awareness and increase the number of downloads, prelaunch and after launch activities as well as using appropriate communication tools especially on digital platforms are also suggested (Dholakiya, 2015). Therefore, mobile entrepreneurs should not be seen as individuals pursuing an easy-to-achieve career goal considering both the development and commercialization stages of an application.

In addition to the traditional motivation of 'seeking and exploiting opportunities', entrepreneurs of technologically innovative new ventures are driven by self-fulfillment and self-realization motives as well (BarNir, 2012). The reasons for mobile entrepreneurs to start new businesses resemble similarities with motivations of constrained lifestyle entrepreneurs as defined by Shaw and Williams (1998). Table 2 is developed to demonstrate these similarities.

Table 2: Mobile Entrepreneurs and Constrained Lifestyle Entrepreneurship

Characteristic of Constrained Lifestyle Entrepreneur	Mobile entrepreneur
Young age	Entrepreneurs in technology start-ups are relatively younger
Strong economic motives	Entrepreneurs in this domain are seeking and exploiting opportunities for economic gains
Desire for a particular lifestyle	Motives such as self-fulfillment, flexible working conditions, livelihood through doing something one enjoys are among reasons for starting business

Source adapted from: Shaw and Williams (1998)

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Case study methodology is a well established and widely recognized research method in social sciences, as it inspects a real life contemporary phenomenon (e.g. Eisenhardt, 1989; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1994). Additionally, because the study of lifestyle entrepreneurship requires exploring the experiences of entrepreneurs which would be difficult to identify

with numbers and statistical analysis, qualitative research is undertaken. More specifically, this research is developed based on a deductive qualitative case study, where the accumulated knowledge on lifestyle entrepreneurship is applied to a new situation. Therefore, the case developed in here aims to both confirm and develop an existing conceptualization of lifestyle entrepreneurship, but in an area with limited examples. For this purpose, a semi-structured interview, which lasted two hours, was held with the entrepreneur of a technology start-up.

The case study has been carried out on the basis of the instructions suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) for single case studies. Although single case studies have been criticised because of their inability to deliver generalising conclusions (Tellis 1997), a single case could be considered adequate if it meets established objectives for the study. The objective of this study is to understand the motivations and behaviors of technology start-up entrepreneurs and thus if lifestyle entrepreneurship can be transferred to domains other than tourism and hospitality. To this end, the research question is to what extent technology start-up entrepreneurs can be associated with the characteristics of the lifestyle entrepreneurship.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. About Piri

Piri is a smart phone application that provides information about the history and culture of the places traveled through, telling the stories of the buildings one might even have not noticed before. As this walking audio tour guides users on the way of the selected tours, two historian-travellers tell enjoyable stories out of history. Currently, the application includes four rotated tours in some of Istanbul's historical districts, one in Edirne, one in Kars and another one in Konya. Other interesting places in Anatolia and various foreign cities like Amsterdam and London, as well as an English version of the application, will be added in near future.

Piri's rich content comes from its unique guides: the most preferred tour guide of Turkey and a Turkologist share the stories that no one knew about those places. One of Turkey's best sound producers has created the audible content in a way that the tours' music and sound effects reflect the soul of the particular space. Due to location-based technology and maps developed, Piri tours are transformed into continuous and valuable experiences. When considering all of these, Piri offers a unique experience with very premium content at affordable prices. The application can be downloaded free of charge but each tour has a cost. An in-app advertising is not preferred because the entrepreneur wants this valuable experience to be uninterrupted for users.

The Piri team tried out tours with different user groups before commercializing the application. The experience of these groups allowed them to be the first to spread word-of-mouth about Piri when it was launched in November, 2016. Number of downloads reached to 10.000 in the first week of the launch. Currently there are more than 55.000 users and it is anticipated that the number will rapidly move towards a hundred. The team wants to spread this new understanding of travelguide from Turkey to the whole world. By 2020 they aim to reach 10 million travelers all over the world.

Piri brings a digital experience with a physical experience. Thus, communication strategies are planned in a similar way, where target people are informed through app stores, search engines and social media. On the other hand, one of the biggest banks of Turkey sponsors Piri and the credit card owners of that bank can download the tours without any cost. One of Turkey's biggest GSM operators and airlines will be other sponsors of the application.

4.2. Lifestyle Entrepreneurship of a Technology Start-up

Piri is established by an entrepreneur, who took undergraduate and graduate degrees from Middle East Technical University and Bogazici University, the two leading universities of Turkey. He worked for a multinational technology company for five years and fulfilled various assignments in Africa and Middle East. Because of challenging colleagues and demanding bosses, he had a sudden decision of resigning from his duty and traveled all around the world for two years, have been to 26 countries and more than a hundred cities. In general, the entrepreneur definitely believes Piri reflects his own way of life, because it is a business that combines learning and traveling.

Having the opportunity to see the most magnificent places of the world, the entrepreneur witnessed that many people who visited these places were taking an instagram photo and then leaving the area. He realized that when one does not get to know the story of the moment, he can not connect with that geography and its past. As he recalls, the impact of the cities he visited with a good guide has always been more impressive. Then he started to think how this experience can be offered with the easiest and most convenient conditions. After he returned back to homeland, he started to work full time for Young Guru Academy (YGA), for which he became a volunteer in 2009 before he took the world tour. YGA is a non-profit organization which cultivates selfless leaders to realize the dream of a brighter future for the younger generations and raises those volunteers as selfless leaders with social responsibilities (YGA, n.d). It embraces the standpoint that mission without a hearty vision is denegation and this leads them to be best for the world, instead of being best in the world. After starting full time for YGA, the entrepreneur has acted as the project leader and developed Piri application as a joint

project of YGA. Although there are similar value propositions around the world, the entrepreneur and other YGA volunteers created Piri as a unique application with its content authenticity, production quality, location based technologies and partner ecosystem. Since YGA motivates graduates to develop projects with a socially responsible nature, he believes Piri serves to this objective by reaching a wider audience who cannot afford a tour guide and helping them become more acquainted with their own culture or different cultures. Seeing culture as a societal glue that keeps people together, the entrepreneur believes Piri also helps sustaining cultural identity.

In line with the philosophy of YGA, the entrepreneur defines success as the creation of environments in which “achievement altogether” is the ultimate goal and where people can witness the correct role models. Putting what he learnt in YGA into action, the entrepreneur has the pride of doing something that he enjoys for living and thus the actualization of his self. Doing all of these in a way that improves one another, he believes it is very valuable to work in an environment where ideas can be developed freely. Rather than owning beautiful houses or cars as a result of his success, he embraces the travelers’ minimalist lifestyle. Although he does not consider to earn for himself, he admits that Piri was established with economic motivations because economic sustainability is an important factor for ensuring that innovations and the philosophy of “achievement altogether” can be realized. In fact, in addition to the economic motivation, the main motivating factor of the establishment of Piri appears to be achieving success altogether, with other volunteers and graduates of YGA.

When working for a technology company, the entrepreneur of Piri believed that professional life does not offer a balance between work and private life. He thought working as an employee and fulfilling the required responsibilities is something that had to be done because it was compulsory and it steals from one’s private life. According to him, being an entrepreneur and working together with a group of people looking in the same direction and who are in search of doing something meaningful, do not necessitate a distinction between work and private life. As he states, it is such a precious experience that, he does not desire to balance these two different lives as the two concepts are naturally intertwined in his lifestyle as a mobile entrepreneur; that is, he enjoys what he does for a living.

The entrepreneur works with a small, young and dynamic team. Although he dreams of opening offices in different countries and thus enlarging the team in the future, currently Piri remains as a small business. He considers providing job opportunities to big-hearted leaders who have low ego as another socially responsible aspect of Piri.

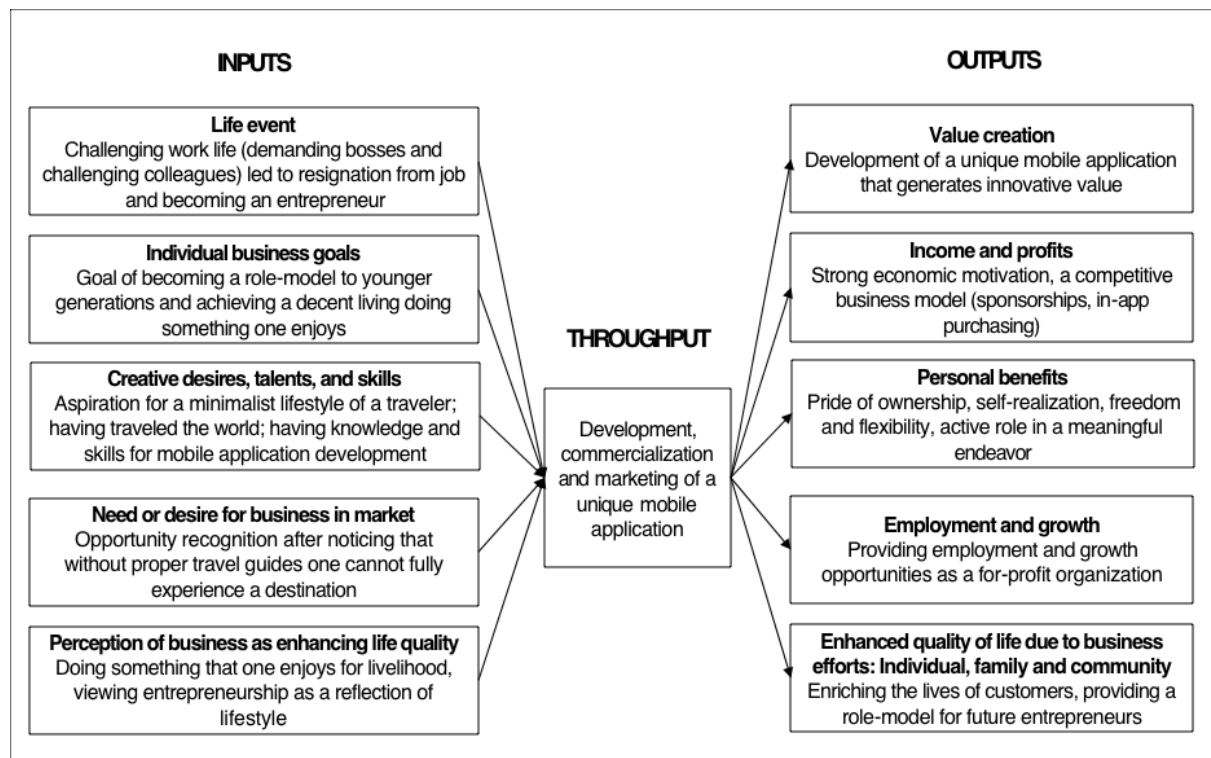
4.3. Discussion

Our findings on the motivations and behavior of the entrepreneur of Piri are congruent with findings of extant literature on lifestyle entrepreneurship. The challenges that the entrepreneur previously experienced as an employee, such as demanding bosses and competitive colleagues, served as a trigger for entrepreneurial activity (Marcketti et al., 2006). The entrepreneur chose to develop a mobile application that serves as a comprehensive travelguide in order to do something he enjoys doing (Sweeney and Lynch, 2009), as he was a traveler himself. The entrepreneurial activity provided freedom and flexibility (Claire, 2012), away from previous employment structures towards being his own boss (Sweeney and Lynch, 2009). The entrepreneur’s relationship with YGA, his vision of “achievement altogether”, and his desire to be a role-model for younger entrepreneurs reflect his aspirations for giving back to society (Henricks, 2002). Therefore, the motivations for Piri seems to be connected to personal and psychological rewards, more than economic motivations, as it is the case in lifestyle entrepreneurship. On the other hand, one of the motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurship, seeking a balance between family life and work commitments (Lynch, 1998), may not apply to this case because the entrepreneur in fact does not need to distinguish them.

Considering the entrepreneur’s opinion that economic motivations are vital to ensure the development of innovations, the entrepreneurs of technology start-ups can be conceptualized as constrained entrepreneurs. As stated in the previous section, the constrained entrepreneur is younger with strong economic motives, but constrained by the desire for a particular lifestyle as well as the business, whereas the non-constrained entrepreneur is driven by a desire to be their own boss and to live in a particular location (Shaw and Williams, 1998).

The entrepreneur, however, did not lose his business perspective as he was alert to need and opportunities, and recognized the need for an easy-to-use travel guide which served as a mobile application enriching the customer experience through utilization of technology. He turned this opportunity into a profit-generating business with growth potential. This is in line with Marcketti et al.’s (2006) proposition that lifestyle entrepreneurs do not ignore the entrepreneurial perspective that influences their alertness to needs and opportunities in the market. We adapted the framework of lifestyle entrepreneurship developed by Marcketti et al. (2006) to summarize our findings in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Mobile Application Developer as a Lifestyle Entrepreneur.



Adapted from Marcketti et al. (2006).

5. CONCLUSION

Lifestyle entrepreneurship remains an underresearched area where there is need for further theory development and empirical research. This qualitative study highlighted the concept of lifestyle entrepreneurship and provided insight regarding its reflections in the mobile applications industry. Findings of the study provide information on the motivations and behaviors of entrepreneurs of technology start-up entrepreneurs and the degree to which they are linked to the current characteristics of the lifestyle entrepreneurship concept. Results of the study indicate that lifestyle entrepreneurship can be observed in knowledge-intensive industries. Our specific case study on a mobile application developer showed that, technology start-ups may serve as means of self-realization, self-reflection, freedom, flexibility and social impact for entrepreneurs in addition to economic benefits.

Although it provides a better understanding of how lifestyle entrepreneurship can be transferred to a new research field, this study has its limitation: the usage of a single case study. Despite its widespread acceptance, case study research, as an interpretive methodology, is more prone to subjective reporting and lack of generalizability (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994). Therefore, to further analyze the dynamics of lifestyle entrepreneurship in technology start-ups, multiple cases should be analyzed. Additionally, future research should focus on case studies from a longitudinal perspective since the nature of entrepreneurship may change throughout the course of an entrepreneur's life (Gibb and Ritchie, 1982).

In addition to building upon the current conceptualization of lifestyle entrepreneurship, this study also serves as a case to demonstrate marketing actions of a mobile application. From the value creation and design of the product to its pricing and communication, Piri is a good example to show different marketing activities may be required particular to mobile applications.

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