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# Understanding Lifestyle Tourism Entrepreneurs and Digging Beneath the Issue of Profits: Profiling Surf Tourism Lifestyle Entrepreneurs in Ireland

Ben Marchant

*Dublin Institute of Technology*

Ziene Mottiar

*Dublin Institute of Technology, [ziene.mottiar@dit.ie](mailto:ziene.mottiar@dit.ie)*

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**Understanding Lifestyle entrepreneurs and digging beneath the issue of profits:  
Profiling surf tourism lifestyle entrepreneurs in Ireland.**

**Abstract-**

An area of particular interest for those researching in tourism entrepreneurship has been lifestyle entrepreneurs. Lifestyle entrepreneurs are primarily motivated by the need to succeed at living a certain quality of life by maintaining an income which allows them to survive (Deakins & Freel, 2006).

The dichotomy between entrepreneurs who develop businesses for profit and those who are motivated by lifestyle has formed the basis of much discussion about lifestyle entrepreneurs in the literature. Shaw & Williams (1998) have conceptualised two groups of lifestyle entrepreneurs constrained and non-constrained. This paper contributes to our understanding of lifestyle entrepreneurs by presenting six case studies of surf tourism lifestyle entrepreneurs to investigate common themes and characteristics.

This paper investigates lifestyle entrepreneurs in Ireland who have established surf businesses in the West of Ireland. Key questions posed include: are there commonalities between these entrepreneurs in terms of their background, both in terms of their business and private lives? Why did they embark on this particular entrepreneurial journey? How do they inter-relate with other local entrepreneurs? What are their visions for the future of

their business? Has the business grown in size over time from how they first envisioned it? Have their original lifestyle goals shifted?

The empirical research, which comprises of in-depth interviews, provides rich data which brings us beyond the single issue of whether profits are a key motivation. By studying lifestyle entrepreneurs as a group on their own (rather than trying to compare them with regular entrepreneurs) we are free to investigate beyond the traditional constructs of business research which focuses primarily on profits, strategy and operations. In so doing we are able to add to knowledge regarding this already identified important group of tourism entrepreneurs. Findings show the importance of past travel experiences and that motives do change over time.

**Key words** – Lifestyle Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurship, Tourism, surf tourism, Ireland.

## **Introduction**

An area of particular interest for those researching in tourism entrepreneurship has been lifestyle entrepreneurs. This is primarily due to the fact that there is an identified preponderance of lifestyle entrepreneurs among tourism firms. Thomas *et al.* (1997) examining motivations for owners of tourism businesses, found a consistent level of importance being attached to 'lifestyle' variables such as living in the area, being their own boss and doing interesting work. Of 1,300 small tourism businesses examined in the study, some 80% gave prominence to these non-economic motives. Similarly Dewhurst and Horobin (1998) examined small businesses in Yorkshire and discovered that owners of SMEs in tourism were twice as motivated by non-economic motivations as economic ones in starting their business. These results were corroborated by Morrison *et al.* (1999) who pointed to the importance of lifestyle motives.

In 2000 Ateljevic & Doorne's research examined lifestyle entrepreneurs in the New Zealand tourism industry and they identified a close correspondence between socio-political ideology and the lack of interest in economic and business growth opportunities, particularly where these led to large-scale mass tourism. They identified the entrepreneurs' desire to stay 'within the fence' and examined how some groups went out of their way to maintain the business at what they felt was a level which allowed them to maintain a 'lifestyle'. This has implications for destinations, product development and enterprise development. With a high level of this type of entrepreneur and the recognition

that such entrepreneurs can have an impact on tourism destinations it is a vital area of concern. This paper will discuss key elements of the literature on Lifestyle Entrepreneurship, present the methodology which was employed, followed by the case studies of the lifestyle entrepreneurs. Common themes are then explored before conclusions are drawn.

## **Literature Review**

Lifestyle entrepreneurs are primarily motivated by the need to succeed at living a certain quality of life by maintaining an income which allows them to survive (Deakins & Freel, 2006). It is this survival element which marks them out from traditional entrepreneurs who desire to grow and expand their businesses, achieve growth and become a medium or large sized company. These non-economic motives are highlighted in a variety of early studies (Dewhurst and Horobin 1998, Kuratko and Hodgetts 1998, Shaw & Williams 1998, Morrison *et al.* 1999, Morrison 2001, Thomas 2004).

Lifestyle proprietors were investigated by Morrison (2001) who defined them as '*an individual who has a multiple set of goals associated with their business. Profitability in their business operations will be only one of these goals*' (p.17). Kaplan (2003) defines lifestyle entrepreneurs as individuals who design the entrepreneurial activity around their preferred lifestyle and personal circumstances. This definition is direct in identifying the entrepreneurial activity as a means to sustain a lifestyle. Bolton & Thompson, (2003) further narrow this by defining lifestyle entrepreneurship as where business goals are

secondary to personal ones. This shows the true allegiance of the lifestyle entrepreneur. Heelas and Morris (1992) see lifestyle entrepreneurs as seeking to shape a lifestyle, not in order to conform to social conventions but in the hope of personal happiness and improved quality of life. Note that these three definitions have removed any economic wording in favour of quality of life and personal circumstances. Kuratko and Hodgetts (1998, pp.362) summarise: *'neither large sales nor profits are deemed important beyond providing a sufficient and comfortable living for the entrepreneur'*.

It is this dichotomy between entrepreneurs who develop businesses for profit and those who are motivated by lifestyle which has formed the basis of much discussion about lifestyle entrepreneurs in the literature. There has also been a recognition that not all lifestyle entrepreneurs are the same and Shaw and Williams (1998) have conceptualised the ideas of constrained and non-constrained entrepreneurs. *'Non-entrepreneurs'* are usually driven primarily by a desire to live in an area rather than entrepreneurial reasons. The entrepreneurial business gives them the means to support themselves in the location. They are also motivated to be their own boss and often have little business experience. This could be considered the 'purist' lifestyle entrepreneur existence in that the entrepreneur is purely in business to sustain the lifestyle. Expansion is not of interest nor are economic motives beyond providing an income sufficient to maintain the lifestyle. This group is often characterised by ageing owners or retirees with a lack of business experience and *'entrepreneurial activity was extremely limited'* (Shaw & Williams 2004, p.102).

At the other extreme are '*constrained-entrepreneurs*'. These entrepreneurs are characterised by a majority of younger entrepreneurs who, whilst they may have little business experience, have professional backgrounds and exhibit a strong link between lifestyle and economic motives. They are different from non-entrepreneurs in that they are willing to grow the business given the right training and support and are 'constrained' by their desire for a certain lifestyle as well as the business.

While the Shaw and Williams (1998) research is a welcome effort at conceptualisation of lifestyle entrepreneurs, and some efforts have been made to deal with issues other than profit motives. (e.g. Di Domenico (2003) and Mottiar (2007)), the focus of the literature remains on the non-profit attributes of this type of entrepreneur. There are however a broad range of issues which are of interest regarding lifestyle entrepreneurs to examine. This paper represents an in-depth investigation into a group of lifestyle entrepreneurs to enrich our knowledge and understanding of these types of entrepreneurs and to bring us beyond the single issue of not having profit motives.

This research investigates lifestyle entrepreneurs in Ireland who have established surf businesses in the West of Ireland. Key questions posed include: are there commonalities between these entrepreneurs in terms of their background, both in terms of their business and private lives? Why did they embark on this particular entrepreneurial journey? How do they inter-relate with other local entrepreneurs? What are their visions for the future of their business? Has the business grown in size over time from how they first envisioned it? Have their original lifestyle goals shifted?

The empirical research, which comprises of in-depth interviews, provides rich data which brings us beyond the single issue of whether profits are a key motivation. By studying lifestyle entrepreneurs as a group on their own (rather than trying to compare them with regular entrepreneurs) we are free to investigate beyond the traditional constructs of business research which focuses primarily on profits, strategy and operations. In so doing we are able to add to knowledge regarding this already identified important group of tourism entrepreneurs.

## **Methodology**

In preparation for this study and in conducting the literature review it became apparent that lifestyle entrepreneurs operate in varied business environments with varying requirements, motivations and goals. It quickly became obvious that a quantitative study would not take into account the sheer diversity of businesses and would result in a huge amount of data. Instead, a qualitative approach was required which examined a range of different businesses to ascertain how lifestyle entrepreneurs operate. With this in mind the case study approach became the obvious choice for a more detailed examination.

An exploratory trip to the northwest of Ireland in August 2008 confirmed that there are a number of surf tourism businesses which fulfilled this brief, giving the potential for a good spread of data. In the first phase of research key informants including the secretary of the national surfing body, a national and a regional tourism official were interviewed.

Local knowledge was also gleaned from informal discussions with surfers, businesses and local people living in the area.

Following the exploratory trip it was decided to undertake a collective (or multiple) case study (Creswell 2007, Yin 2009) in order to best understand the dynamics associated with different regions or areas. Two case study areas were selected along the west coast of Ireland based upon a regional concentration of the subject area – surf tourism entrepreneurs. These were Bundoran, County Donegal and Lahinch, County Clare. Following from the field research, a with-in case analysis was conducted on each case study leading to the identification of common themes which transcend the cases (Yin, 2003). A cross-case analysis was then used to further examine the data.

Individual entrepreneurs were interviewed in the various locations. Interviews were in-depth and semi-structured. All the surf tourism businesses in each location were approached and those matching the characteristics of a lifestyle entrepreneur were interviewed. Attention was paid to the reasons for setting up the business, how it developed and on changes of scope, scale and direction. Key informants in each area were also interviewed and detailed field notes were kept which included observations from field trips and a digital photographic record. Data was analysed from the field notes, transcriptions of interviews, photographs and observations. This allowed for easy comparison of themes identified from interviews and the sorting of data.

Each case study was treated as a separate entity and was completed in isolation from the others before comparison of themes from each study commenced. However the case study method (such as questions) was adapted as the process evolved. This allowed it to adapt to unforeseen circumstances not anticipated before entry into the field.

Within each case a general overview of the area is given from a tourism, business and geographic point of view to give the reader a good idea of the context. Then the various businesses are laid out as mini-studies in themselves. Pseudonyms have been used in the profiles of entrepreneurs presented below.

Profile of Lifestyle surf entrepreneurs

### **Bundoran**

Bundoran is a tourist town on the North-West coast in the county of Donegal. It had a population of 1,968 at the last census (2006). The town has a strong tourism trade through its many hotels, holiday homes, facilities, events and beaches. There are a large amount of holiday homes due to government tax incentives which produced a building boom in the last two decades.

Bundoran benefits from a number of excellent surfing locations in its immediate vicinity guaranteeing waves suitable for beginners in almost all conditions. As a result surfing has become a strong tourism industry with a number of new businesses starting up. Bundoran hosted the European surfing championships in 1985 but the first business to exploit the surfing market did not open until 1989, later opening a full retail outlet

devoted to surfing in 1994. The first lessons were offered by an adventure centre which opened in 1999.

Interviews were conducted with three of the four surf school businesses in the town. The fourth business is a commercial adventure centre and is not run by a lifestyle entrepreneur.

**Bundoran 1** – In its fifth year of business this was the first surf school to open in Bundoran after the Adventure Centre and the first to be opened by lifestyle entrepreneurs. Operating year round it also offers accommodation in its adjoining surf lodge in both dorm style accommodation and private rooms B&B style. It is priced at the budget end of the market and can sleep up to 24 people. They also have 2 self-catering apartments which they rent out. It is located opposite one of the biggest nightclubs in the town at the North end of the Main Street and close to all facilities. Lessons are twice daily (10am and 2pm) during peak season and at weekends at other times. The school can accommodate up to 64 students in a day and reaches capacity on busy weekends. They also run kids camps at cost for children who have been surfing before. They have 5 vehicles on the road to run students to and from the surf. The business employs 6-7 instructors, some part and some full time.

The business was originally begun by an unhappy but successful landscape gardener (Bob) and his friend in order to provide them with seasonal work so that they could travel

several times a year. It now incorporates a thriving surf school, two surf shops, a hostel and kids club.

**Bundoran 2** –With major plans for expansion into other sport tourism areas such as kayaking and cycling, this is a young dynamic company run by a husband (Bill) and wife team with their best friend. The two males run the surf school and have known each other since the age of four. They were born and reared in Bundoran.

Bill and his wife opened the hostel first in 2006 with a bank loan. With his friend, Bill opened the surf school shortly afterwards. This was originally seen as a subsidiary that would augment the hostel but it has enjoyed explosive growth to the point where it accounts for up to 93% of the takings for the two businesses. They can operate up to eight classes at any one time and they opened another surf school in a nearby location in 2009. The hostel is quite small and regularly reaches capacity. As such Bill has become something of a local booking agent having booked up to 28 separate properties out in the town on busy weekends.

They market themselves primarily towards beginners with the focus on enjoyment rather than serious training but are now offering advanced courses in conjunction with **Bundoran 3** due to opportunities presented through former students.

**Bundoran 3** – Owned and operated by a former surf pro (Brian) this business provides advanced tuition as well as beginner lessons to small groups with a maximum of three per lesson (the maximum group size for a lesson in Ireland is eight). He uses video analysis and advanced techniques to teach students and is still a sponsored surfer, preferring big wave surfing to competition.

The entrepreneurs' family were the first to sell surfing equipment in the town, a business that was started mainly to give the family access to equipment which was extremely scarce in the country at the time. Along with his wife he still operates the shop which has recently expanded. He is actively constricting the surf coaching business as he prefers to teach small groups despite the opportunity to grow the business using his name. He was one of the stars of a 2008 theatrical surf film, based in Ireland, which achieved some commercial success. Other entrepreneurs in the study commented that he would be able to considerably scale up the business by taking on staff. He regularly turns away business sending it to other competitors in the town with whom he collaborates from time to time.

### **Lahinch**

Lahinch is located in county Claire on the West Coast of Ireland with a small permanent population of just over 600. It has an excellent surf break on its town beach which is perfect for beginners and a number of businesses have grown in the town focused on surfing. In 2009 during peak season the surf schools can accommodate 160 students per day with a further 100 rentals. The town was renowned for its golfing which is now in

decline and the town is actively fostering surfing as a tourism generator, despite some resistance. Interviews were carried out with all three surf schools in the town. These are lifestyle entrepreneurs at various stages of development.

**Lahinch 1** – One of the oldest surf business in the town is owned and operated by a husband (Joe) and wife team who emigrated from England to Ireland with the aim of starting this type of business. They identified Lahinch as a potential surfing spot working various jobs until they had amassed sufficient capital to begin trading in 2000. They initially operated a surf school, later adding a shop in 2002. The couple own and operate the business full time but have recently opened a recording studio which they operate from their house.

**Lahinch 2** – Operating from a van in the car park and a mobile phone, this is business development at its most basic but most profitable. The operator (John) spent ten years working in an adventure centre, reaching managerial level before he decided that what he really liked doing was working directly with people rather than the management. He returned to college in his late 20's to do a geography degree and a masters. He opened in Lahinch in 2006 in a part time capacity moving to full time in 2009. He operates an equipment rental service and a surf school catering specifically for people who want to develop beyond beginner level (although he does cater for this market too). There is a focus on small class sizes, the use of video analysis and competition development, similar to **Bundoran 3**. He mentioned that he could go down the expansion route like other

Lahinch surf schools but he has decided to continue on the smaller route for the moment. He is enjoying modest business growth and holds the highest levels of qualification in surf coaching in Ireland currently and is qualified to train instructors at an advanced level. He is considering employing an instructor for the 2010 summer season. His business operates year round and he has run camps outside of Lahinch in places like Bundoran. He has a wife and small child.

**Lahinch 3** – The largest school in the town was started by a former electronic engineer with a background in computers (Jim). A three-time Irish national surf champion Jim had been surfing since the age of ten. He started the surf school with just thirteen boards in the summer of 2002 with no expectation of it becoming a full time job. In the first year he operated out of a camper van on the sea front before moving into a hut in the car park eventually adding a shop in 2008. He currently employs two full-time and up to thirty-five seasonal part time staff.

### **Findings and Analysis**

These entrepreneurs are from a variety of backgrounds and are in a variety of stages of growth yet many exhibited similar characteristics and backgrounds. During profiling these similarities became extremely evident especially as they existed across the range of businesses and in multiple locations. Interviewees would often use similar language in answers and exhibited similar attitudes. As a whole the group could be said to belong to

the 'Constrained' entrepreneur school of Shaw & Williams classification although some shared characteristics associated with the Non-entrepreneur school, namely a desire to live in the location.

### **1. People people**

All were extremely good communicators, "people people" as it is sometimes phrased. Their interactions with customers was a pleasure rather than a chore and all were extremely affable, many knowing the names of students attending their courses who may have been in town for only a day or two. They often talked about the need to interact with people as being a reason to be in business.

Bob gave this as one of the main motivations in setting up the business. His previous business as a landscape gardener was a solitary occupation and he craved human interaction. During the interview a group of pre-teen children arrived for a kids club session that was being run by the company (at a loss). He knew the name of each of the children and individual anecdotes that showed that he was interested in them. He clearly enjoyed the interaction and was proud of them attaining new skills on the water.

Bill commented on it immediately when asked about why he got into this area noting '*I qualified as a civil engineer but I never worked in it because it's boring ... I'm more of a people person*'.

Brian deals with the serious surfers as well as beginners. From our discussion it became evident that he enjoyed the personnel aspect of the business, intentionally keeping class sizes small to allow him to focus on the individuals. That morning he had been teaching two young children to surf on a local beach and was very proud of the fact that they had managed to catch a wave in their first lesson.

Lahinch entrepreneurs were similar. Joe gave off a very strong business vibe but clearly enjoyed interacting with customers. John was sitting in his van watching people who had rented boards from him surfing when approached. These people returned the boards during the interview, which paused while he dealt with them and the researcher observed that his level of interest in them was very apparent. Despite them not paying for tuition he took time to talk to each one individually about things he had noticed from watching them. *'Put your back foot further back, centre your balance point'* etc etc. The reason he gave for starting the business was that he wanted to get back to teaching. He preferred being an instructor to being a manager.

It is clear that all of these entrepreneurs valued the personal interaction that their businesses provided them with and that they enjoyed this element of their business role.

## **2. Round the world trips**

The commonality of having travelled extensively was an unexpected discovery from the interviews but one which was repeated frequently by participants as a source of inspiration.

Bob travelled to Indonesia where he lived for a year shortly after finishing school. When he returned he started working as a landscape gardener, a business he started in order to provide funds for travelling and surfing and so that he would be able to take time off when he needed it. However apart from the solitary aspect of the job he decided that the surf business offered him better prospects to travel, even though he made more money gardening. The ability to travel was continually brought up as a major motivation in his business and in particular his love for Indonesia which he had already visited ten times since the start of the year at the time of the interview in August 2009. He deliberately sought out a partner for the business so that one could surf/travel whilst the other worked.

Bill and his wife initially decided to open the business following a round the world trip which they took as a career break at the age of 29. They had seen firsthand the standard of hostels around the world and thought that they could replicate it. In particular they noted that some hostels had very poor customer service something that they felt they could improve on. After the trip they got married and went to South America for 10 weeks honeymoon returning to open the business in August 2006. The trip away directly influenced the decision to open the business, something that was reinforced upon their return. He commented that before they

went away the surf scene was very small in Ireland but on his return *'it seemed like every car had a surf board on the roof'*.

Brian had travelled extensively as a pro surfer from 1990-97. After he stopped competing he continued to travel from 1998 to 2001 touring the world. His wife is Australian and he met her on his travels. He returned to Bundoran to take over the families surf shop from his sister.

Joe had been a member of the British Surf team in a part time capacity and had worked in various industries from computers to wetsuits. He had moved from Devon and Cornwall to Ireland with his wife and children to pursue the dream of opening a surf business in Ireland in 2000.

Jim had travelled extensively as a surfer visiting many countries including a driving trip from California to Panama. Whilst it was no longer a major motivation, (he considered the Irish surf to be first rate), it had been a large part of his past and was very much linked to surfing in his mind.

The common trend of travelling before and while running their businesses is clear and it also seems that in many cases their ideas for these businesses stemmed from their experiences during their travels. These businesses allowed them to build upon their knowledge and experience and also for some facilitated their desires to continue to travel.

### 3. Educated backgrounds

Shaw & Williams model for constrained entrepreneurs points to an educated background. Bill, his two colleagues, Brian, John and Jim all have not only professional backgrounds but also college qualifications. Interestingly the entrepreneurs which were most constrained in their business models, **Bundoran 3** (Brian) and **Lahinch 2** (John) went back to college deliberately to gain qualifications in business before opening when they were in their late 20's. Brian took a two year course in Leisure and business management while John holds a degree in geography and masters in business.

Jim qualified as an electronic engineer and had worked in computers for five years prior to starting the business. He had gone back to it over the winter of the first years trading but realised that he wanted to try the surf school full-time. **Bundoran 2** are all highly qualified university graduates with several years experience in other areas prior to starting the business. Bill is a qualified civil engineer with a background in computers. His wife worked as a chartered surveyor (and still does consultancy work) and his friend holds a Masters in Applied Physics. All three have a background working for major international companies.

### 4. Location

All of these entrepreneurs commented that location was one of the main driving factors for their business. The desire to live in the area triggered the need for them to create employment for themselves due to the lack of opportunities in the area.

Bob had settled in the area specifically for the surfing and had changed careers to allow him to do this more often, acknowledging a reduction in pay would result.

For the three entrepreneurs behind **Bundoran 2** they had no other option for employment in the area. As Bill stated

*‘When I came back you know I said maybe we should work for a year or two, but you know there were just no jobs up here. It would have involved moving back to Dublin and paying the big rent so we jumped through the hoops, we did have a financial back bone so to speak. My preference would have been to work actually, it was option B. In hindsight it was the best thing to do because you just have to go for it. If you are waiting around for the right time you’ll never do it.’*

His reasons for wanting to return to Bundoran, after years living in other parts of the country, took a bit more investigation. When probed he replied *‘The surf actually.’*

This surprised him as initially he had said that he set up the business to make money, he had not considered that the driving force behind the business was to live and surf in Bundoran which he continually referred to as a surfing mecca.

Brian similarly had grown up in the town (indeed he had a close friendship with Bill dating back to early childhood) and had not considered living anywhere else despite his wife being from Australia.

Joe and his family had relocated from the UK specifically to set up a surf business. The suggestion from the interview was that they had carried out very little research in Ireland other than there were no other operators doing what he wanted to do. The UK was already highly developed and commercial. He saw Ireland as an undiscovered country.

Jim was aware of Lahinch as a good surfing spot. Similarly John had identified Lahinch as an area of interest early on in his decision in where to operate. His reasons were mainly commercial, there was already a large group of surfers who frequented the beach and a ready-made group of graduate beginners. A native of the East of Ireland though, a major determination in the type of business he set up was his love of the West coast.

##### **5. Change in motivations over time**

All of the businesses identified admitted to changes in their business goals and motivations over time. Their core business model at start-up had focused on the lifestyle element but often circumstances had altered how they ran their business and many had grown either in response to demand or by accident which had resulted in temporary relegation of the lifestyle motives. For many what had started out as a small business had now become a multi-faceted organisation with many different products and services

**Bundoran 1** had initially started as a surf school but now incorporated 2 shops, a hostel and self-catering apartments as well. It was expansion by opportunity rather than planning, something that they readily admitted too. Bob still got to travel extensively

(one of his core motives when setting up the business) but admitted that he was consciously constraining the business now as it had become too big and was impacting on his lifestyle aims. Growth was not of interest to him at start-up but was something that he had embraced for a while, particularly after acquiring the premises. Similarly **Bundoran 2** was growing at a phenomenal rate. Initially started as a hostel it now incorporates the surf school, a second location and has plans for expansion into other sports. When Bill set up the business it was to allow him and his wife to live in Bundoran and to surf. As the hostel became successful he saw an opportunity to open the surf school but also to go into business with his best friend (allowing him to live in Bundoran and surf too). Bill commented that he had not been surfing in seven weeks when interviewed in high summer, something that went completely against his lifestyle motives. However he noted that he gets to surf all winter when it is quiet and that (significantly) he enjoyed running and expanding the business. He was interested in growing and expanding the business and also in getting involved in local politics. **Bundoran 3** is deliberately constraining the surf school yet Brian has recently gone against his original ideas of conducting all the lessons himself and has hired some other instructors. This is allowing him more time for his lifestyle but goes against his original business model.

**Lahinch 1** had undergone various contractions and expansions. Joe had taken a step back during the major economic boom in Ireland but recently had found himself more and more involved again as the recession took hold. He had also seen a shift in priorities as he got older for another reason. He now has problems with his knees and back which reduces the amount of time he can spend surfing. As a result of this his motives had

shifted somewhat. While he still enjoyed surfing and it was a key component of his lifestyle, he was more focused on the business and had also recently opened a recording studio. Music is a hobby and with his children grown up and out of the family home he is in a position to explore other opportunities.

John who operates **Lahinch 2** had recently had a child and was planning on taking on an extra instructor in 2010 to help to generate more revenue and allow him more time off to meet his changing personnel needs. His personal motives had changed dramatically in response to becoming a father.

Lastly Jim had gone through an extraordinary period of change. Despite only being in operation for eight years he now employed up to thirty-five part-time staff and identified a number of changes in how he had viewed the business. When he started his business the main aim was to surf, he had not anticipated being able to turn it into a full time occupation. However as the business progressed it grew significantly and he became very focussed on the financial side of things. But over time this had changed again and he took a step back after 4-5 years, employing a full-time manager to take care of it.

*'I kind of let X run it for a while but now because it's kind of grown again and I've got married, I'm fully involved now but I don't teach. I just kind of co-ordinate. X manages it.'*

His business is one of the largest in the town and one of his major motivations now is to provide employment to locals. He currently employs two full-time but hopes to grow it to four.

*'I guess for a while it would have been about money but for now it's certainly not about money. It's just the aim for me financially is just to pay myself a wage and then yeah hopefully because of the recession I hope to employ people. That's the aim.'*

Jim's business was started with purely lifestyle goals. He had sought to get away from the computer world and an office in order to allow him to surf and spend more time in the outdoors. In the first year the business was very simple but over the next few years he grew the business in response to demand. That reduced the amount of time he could devote to surfing. After a while he took time out for them business but had recently returned to operations but in a more relaxed role which allowed him more personal time.

Overall it is clear that a combination of changes in personal life and changes in the market have resulted in these entrepreneurs altering their level and type of involvement in the business and the key objectives that dominate. It is apparent that rather than entrepreneurial and lifestyle motives being static they can change considerably.

## **6. Interaction with other businesses.**

Hall (2004, p. 176), commenting on lifestyle entrepreneurs in food and wine clusters in New Zealand, points out that these producers *'are often at the forefront of product and service innovation in these rural regions and also substantially add to the diversity of the region and therefore its attractiveness'*. He notes that larger operators may not look favourably on these smaller companies. In his study he did find evidence of co-operation but this was not the norm. Mottiar (2007) investigating inter-firm interactions among

lifestyle entrepreneurs in Westport found that such entrepreneurs tend not to participate in formal cooperation although they do engage in informal co-operation with local firms.

All three businesses in Bundoran interacted with each other on a regular basis. The two bigger schools **Bundoran 1 & 2** spoke about lending each other instructors to help out from time to time and sending guests to each others hostels if they were full. **Bundoran 3** actively works with **Bundoran 2** teaching advanced classes. All three come together to run a large surf festival for charity every year and at numerous other events during the year.

**Bundoran 2** has become a booking agent for many properties in the town providing custom to many B&B and guesthouses when his own property is full. Bill mentioned that he has run for the town council in local elections, narrowly missing out on a seat, and he plans on running again. He is actively involved in the chamber of commerce.

Similarly Joe had run for town council in Lahinch (unsuccessfully) and works closely with the chamber of commerce and business organisations.

The three Lahinch businesses were also very involved with each other. **Lahinch 1** offered introductions to both of the other businesses and each spoke well of the other, even when they were in competition. Two of **Lahinch 3's** former employees now ran surf businesses in the town. In fact **Lahinch 2** had decided to set up himself while

working for **Lahinch 3**. Another former employee had set up a surf equipment rental business but he talked positively about them despite being in direct competition.

All three also collaborated with other local businesses such as lifeguards, t-shirt printers, pubs and restaurants and were very much involved in the local community.

Joe did comment on a minority within the local community (mainly B&B owners) who wanted to maintain Lahinch as a seasonal resort, operating for the summer season only. They do not want a twelve month business. These B&B owners match the non-entrepreneur model (Shaw & Williams, 1998).

## **Conclusion**

These profiles of lifestyle entrepreneurs help us to dig beneath the surface and explore the characteristics, motives and backgrounds of these individual entrepreneurs. Why such knowledge matters is because it informs academics and policy makers understanding of this type of entrepreneur.

The literature has often noted the desire to move to live in a particular place or the wish to escape the life that they have and this is re-affirmed in the case of these lifestyle entrepreneurs. However this research also adds a new element which is the relevance of past experience of travel. In some cases the travel facilitated experiences that influences individuals decisions about what they wanted to do with their lives, or gave the opportunity of developing a hobby such as surfing. In other cases experiencing something

as a holidaymaker made individuals aware of the potential for offering the same service or product back home. So in many ways travel has been a catalyst for their entrepreneurial journey.

Much entrepreneurship research focuses on traits of entrepreneurs and this paper has shown that these lifestyle entrepreneurs have some traits in common: that of being good communicators and enjoying interacting with people and having high levels of education. Being aware of these two factors is important for policy makers who wish to influence these entrepreneurs. Furthermore these attributes can provide potential benefits for the local destinations. For example it was noted that in Bundoran these local entrepreneurs come together to run a large surf festival for charity every year and some entrepreneurs are actively involved in local chambers of commerce, business organisations and are very much involved in the local community. Activities such as these represent a positive contribution to the local destination, area and community.

The final key finding is how these businesses have grown and developed over time. In some cases entrepreneurs made definite decisions about whether they wanted to expand their business or stay small but in other cases it was the external environment which created opportunities which could not be ignored which led to business development.. At the time of the study Ireland has just come to the end of a decade of rapid economic growth and surf tourism has grown exponentially This rapid demand resulted in some entrepreneurs growing their businesses although they had not initially intended to take this strategy This shows the importance of contextualising any analysis of entrepreneurial

motives as not only are they influenced by personal desires, they are also strongly affected by the external environment. It is also important to note that individual motivations change over time so for example the entrepreneur in Lahinch who is now intending expanding the business as he needs to provide for a family or Jim who has experienced a number of different roles in the business from teaching surfing to taking a less active role in the business to now managing the business rather than engaging in teaching. As life changes so to do motivations and desires and this is something that further research will explore.

The key contribution of this paper is to provide detailed discussion of a variety of lifestyle entrepreneurs and through these profiles develop a clear insight into this type of entrepreneur. Gaining such knowledge is imperative for researchers and policy makers as they move forward in analysing this group. From an Irish perspective these entrepreneurs are playing a key role in resort rejuvenation and it is vital that their motivations and desires are understood. From the perspective of the literature on lifestyle entrepreneurs this research deepens our understanding of this group. It shows the commonalities between this set of lifestyle entrepreneurs who are well educated, were attracted to their chosen locations specifically, were often motivated or influenced by their experiences during extended travel, and that their motivations can change over time.

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