



How do hospitality entrepreneurs use their social networks to access resources? Evidence from the lifecycle of small hospitality enterprises



Rivanda Meira Teixeira^{a,*}, Tales Andreassi^b, Mehmet Ali Köseoglu^c, Fevzi Okumus^d

^a Federal University of Paraná, Brazil

^b Fundação Getulio Vargas (EAESP), São Paulo, Brazil

^c School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong SAR

^d Rosen College of Hospitality Management, University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Entrepreneurship

Social networks

Resources

Small hospitality enterprises

ABSTRACT

This study investigates entrepreneurs' use of social networks to access resources during the conception, start-up, and consolidation stages of small enterprises in the hospitality industry in Sergipe State, Brazil. This study analyzes four cases of small hotel ventures, employing cross-case analyses to identify the patterns, similarities, and differences between the cases. The study findings highlight that, in the start-up stage, entrepreneurs access fewer resources, utilizing only family and friends, primarily as moral support. In the consolidation stage, entrepreneurs rely more on their weak links, accessing them with greater frequency. Mobilizing social networks is a dynamic process, and how entrepreneurs use these networks changes throughout the business-creation process. This is one of the first studies on how entrepreneurs use their social networks, especially in a developing economy.

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a key concept in building and gaining sustainable competitive advantages (Baert et al., 2016; Miller and Le Breton-Miller, 2017), as there is an important relationship between entrepreneurship and a firm's performance, growth, innovation, and networks (Fadda and Sørensen, 2017; Kallmuenzer, 2018; de Lange and Dodds, 2017; Schuckerts et al., 2018; Servantie et al., 2016; Volery and Mazzarol, 2015). More specifically, networks, which are defined as “a specific set of linkages between a defined set of actors with the characteristic that the linkages as a whole may be used to interpret the social behavior of the actors involved” (Lechner et al., 2006, p. 517), play a crucial role in the success of entrepreneurship.

Scholars have investigated the role of entrepreneurs in networks, and the role of networks in an entrepreneur's firm performance, growth, or innovation (Miller and Le Breton-Miller, 2017) by focusing on case studies of large manufacturing companies in developed countries (Ulhøi, 2005) and small businesses (Hernández-Carrión et al., 2017). However, understanding the nature of the industries involved (McGahan and Porter, 1997), developing countries' characteristics (Bamiatzi et al., 2016), and the industry lifecycle (Karniouchina et al., 2013) is critical when formulating and implementing strategies and

managing the lifecycle of entrepreneurship. It is not clear which networks entrepreneurs use, or how entrepreneurs use their social networks to access resources during the lifecycle of their enterprises in the hospitality and tourism (H&T) industry. As unique features of the H&T industry, such as the inseparability of customer participation in the service process, simultaneity, perishability, intangibility, heterogeneity, cost structure, and labor intensity (Chen, 2018; Gronroos, 2007) the literature needs more studies focusing on resource dependency and network theory (Strobl and Kronenberg, 2016). This study also offers solutions to the many small business owners who have faced problems managing their networks effectively (Hernández-Carrión et al., 2017).

Several previous studies (Hallak et al., 2015; Yazici et al., 2016) have addressed entrepreneurship in the H&T industry by focusing on the antecedents of entrepreneurship, such as the characteristics of entrepreneurs, including demographics (Badulescu et al., 2014; Chen and Elston, 2013); entrepreneurs' motivations (Ahmad et al., 2014); the outcomes of firm growth (Hallak et al., 2014); and destination development (Lundberg et al., 2014). More specifically, several studies (Ahmad et al., 2014; Bosworth and Farrell, 2011; Carlbäck, 2012; Komppula, 2014) have discussed the role networks play relevant to entrepreneurship activities in the H&T industry. Three studies have discussed the networks of entrepreneurs or managers in the H&T

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: rivandateixeira@gmail.com (R.M. Teixeira), tandreassi@gmail.com (T. Andreassi), Mehmetali.koseoglu@polyu.edu.hk, trmaliktr@yahoo.com (M.A. Köseoglu), fevzi.okumus@ucf.edu (F. Okumus).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.01.006>

Received 4 December 2017; Received in revised form 22 December 2018; Accepted 7 January 2019

Available online 15 January 2019

0278-4319/ © 2019 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

industry (Ahmad, 2005; Hsu et al., 2015; Strobl and Kronenberg, 2016), while two others have examined the relationship between entrepreneurial networks and supply communities in eTourism (Buhalis and Molinaroli, 2002; Molinari and Buhalis, 2003). Although Strobl and Kronenberg (2016) evaluated network formation and structure during the lifecycle of hospitality enterprises in Austria, previous studies have not addressed how entrepreneurs of small businesses or family businesses use their social networks to access resources during the lifecycle of H&T enterprises in emerging economies, such as Brazil. Hypothesizing that answers will help entrepreneurs manage their networks effectively, and will allow scholars to minimize the gap in the literature, the present study addresses the following questions:

- What are the strong and weak ties in the social networks of small business entrepreneurs in the H&T industry during the lifecycle (conception, start-up, and consolidation stages) of their enterprises?
- What resources do hospitality entrepreneurs access via these strong and weak ties?
- How do hospitality entrepreneurs use these strong and weak ties?

This article comprises four sections. First, a literature review examines entrepreneurial social networks, the use of social networks during the different stages of the business, and an overview of studies related to entrepreneurial social networks in the H&T industry. The second section explains the research methodology employed in this study. Third, the study's findings are presented and discussed. The final section highlights various conclusions, study limitations, and opportunities for future research.

2. Literature review

2.1. Entrepreneurial social networks

In the literature, entrepreneurial social networks have been examined from several different perspectives. For example, Granovetter (1973) defined networks as systems composed of knots or ties, and the connections between them that, in the social sciences, are represented by social subjects (individuals, groups, organizations) connected by some type of relationship. Tie strength, which can be weak or strong, is a quantifiable property that characterizes the link between two nodes. These ties involve a linear combination of time, emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocal services. Strong ties exist within a group with long-lasting relationships, such as family members and a small group of internal advisors to the business owner. These relationships are often based on trust. Weak ties have a shorter lifespan and involve minimal contact, less trust, and more relationship ambiguity.

Johannisson (1998) and Li (2008) separate networks into personal networks and business networks. Personal networks are relationships centered on the entrepreneur as a person, whereas business or organizational networks relate to various business initiatives and tasks. According to Dubini and Aldrich (2002), a personal network consists of all the people with whom an entrepreneur has direct links (or, for some purposes, indirect links). Greve and Salaff (2003) emphasize that to meet their needs, entrepreneurs seek decision-making help from those closest to them, such as friends and family, rather than those who are more distantly connected to them.

Vissa's (2011) study posits that an entrepreneur's intentions when forming relationships involve a matching process using criteria that include both social aspects (similarity in language, caste, and occupation) and task priorities (task complementarity). This view is important because entrepreneurs often employ their personal networks to form new economic exchange ties. When forming interpersonal ties, the quality of this matching process helps determine the selection of exchange partners for their ventures. These findings reveal that entrepreneurs have a greater chance of initiating an economic exchange relationship when their interpersonal ties match well on task

complementarity or language similarity. Vissa's analysis of the effects of this interaction indicates that task complementarity is more important than language similarity.

2.2. Social networks during different stages of the business

Chu (1996) identifies three stages in the development of a business: pre-start-up, start-up, and maturity. In the pre-start-up stage, potential entrepreneurs seek advice, financial resources, and moral support from their families, friends, and business associates. The start-up phase is the period during which entrepreneurs establish their companies, and their network extends to partners (if any), teams, buyers, and company suppliers. The business enters the maturity stage after it has survived for over five years; at this point, the entrepreneurs begin to expand their network with professional services, organizations, and government agencies. Vasconcelos et al. (2007) emphasize that social embeddedness has been used heavily in the field of entrepreneurship and that during the creation and evolution of new businesses, entrepreneurs tend to mobilize their relationship network to access resources. Understanding entrepreneurship as an evolutionary process, Vasconcelos et al. (2007) observed that relationships are more frequently used to gain access to simple and complex resources during the start-up and evolution of a business. The mobilization of these relationships is contingent on the degree of complexity of the relevant resources.

At the beginning of a new venture, social networks are a crucial asset for entrepreneurs struggling to achieve a place within competitive markets. In other words, during the process of creating a business, individuals mobilize their personal network to obtain resources (physical resources, information, emotional support, capital, and business contacts) that help transform their business visions and plans into reality (Birley, 1985; Johannisson, 1998). According to Brush et al. (2001), attracting appropriate resources to a new venture is one of the greatest challenges entrepreneurs face. An unestablished business with no reputation or track-record of results encourages potential suppliers to perceive a greater likelihood of risk. Mobilizing personal relationships involves the social construction of activities (Granovetter, 1973) and the dependence of individuals on their networks to obtain resources (Aldrich et al., 1989; Dubini and Aldrich, 2002; Hansen, 1995).

This study uses Borges et al.'s (2005) venture creation model. The model involves four stages: initiation, preparation, start-up, and consolidation. The initiation stage involves identifying business opportunities, reflecting on and developing a business idea, and deciding to set up the business. In the preparation stage, entrepreneurs concentrate on preparing their business plan, conducting market research, obtaining financial resources, and building their team. The start-up stage considers the legal procedures involved with opening the business, along with testing the entrepreneur's dedication to the business, organizing installations and equipment, developing the first products and services, hiring employees, and obtaining the first clients. The consolidation stage considers marketing and sales activities, determining the point of equilibrium, planning, and administrating the business. For simplification, three stages of the venture process were considered when analyzing entrepreneurial social networks: conception, start-up, and consolidation. The initiation and preparation stages of Borges et al.'s (2005) model were grouped into a single stage (conception), wherein the activities involving identifying business opportunities and developing ideas were joined with the activities involving preparing the business plan, doing market research, and obtaining financial resources. This simplification was adopted because small businesses rarely document activities linked to developing business plans and performing market research.

2.3. Entrepreneurial social networks research in the H&T industry

Several studies related to networking in the H&T industry have been completed. According to Ahmad (2005), these studies have generally

addressed a variety of functions for H&T firms. The functions included marketing strategies (Bilgihan et al., 2016; Nusair et al., 2017; Zamani, 2016), networking with NGOs (Strauß, 2015), online networking (Ying et al., 2016), social networking technologies (Germann Molz, 2013), sustainable planning (Barrutia and Echebarria, 2015), innovation (Novelli et al., 2006; Sørensen, 2007), and social networking tourism (French et al., 2017). For example, Ahmad (2005) investigated the networks of owner-managers in chalet accommodation firms in Malaysia. He found that these networks include family and ethnic linkages. Informal ties are common, and the purpose of networking is to exchange ideas, advice, and help. Beritelli (2011) investigated how actors chose to cooperate in a European Alpine tourism destination. He found that cooperation among the prominent actors at the destination depends on relationship-based items rather than happening on an institutional level. Local social networks play critical roles when determining the likelihood of cooperation. Hsu et al. (2012) identified how the patterns and effects of managerial ties differ among state-owned, domestic private, and foreign firms in economy hotel chains in China. They found that managers of firms with different ownership types use different network tie combinations and differ in the extent to which they can benefit from managerial ties. Strobl and Peters (2013) examined the destination governance processes of four alpine tourism companies. Their study indicated that higher network density and tie strength generate a stronger group orientation and more informal governance channels.

Hsu et al. (2015) looked at entrepreneurs' strategies for acquiring intangible resources through network ties at the different development stages of new firms operating Chinese economy hotel chains. They indicated that entrepreneurs used a mixture of strong and weak ties in the early start-up stage, relied on strong ties in the establishment stage, and did not value network ties in the final growth stage, using only weak business ties, instead. Strobl and Kronenberg (2016) investigated the dynamics of entrepreneurial networks during the lifecycle of a hospitality enterprise. They highlighted that hospitality entrepreneurs prefer strong ties throughout the enterprise lifecycle, often transitioning from one family generation to the next. Changes in the competitive environment act as important triggers of alternative or new network configurations.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sampling procedure

Teixeira (2005) conducted a study of 30 hospitality businesses in Sergipe State, Brazil (Aracaju is the capital and main tourist destination). This study indicated that a majority of small and micro-sized hotel businesses in Sergipe, Brazil are recent, having begun in the mid-1980s. Small hotel enterprises in Sergipe have a very simple operational structure, involving only owners and employees. The majority of these businesses are family-owned. The entrepreneurs of these hospitality businesses were concentrated among three age groups: 30 s, 40 s, and 50 s, with the 40 s age group being slightly larger. 33.3% of state-owned hotels were operated by entrepreneurial women. The level of education of those running hotel businesses in Sergipe is relatively high, with more than 50% of respondents having completed an undergraduate degree, and an additional 30% having a high school diploma or technical course certification. It is worth mentioning that, of these graduates, only 3.3% took tourism courses, and none of the entrepreneurs were trained in hospitality. The number of entrepreneurs with previous experience in tourism was also relatively small, with only 20% having previously operated family-owned hotels or restaurants.

The present study employed the multiple case study approach following Yin (2010). The multiple case study approach is more credible and convincing when drawing and finalizing research findings. According to Eisenhardt (1989), it is difficult to determine an exact number of cases, and that it is ideal to add cases when theoretical

saturation is perceived, i.e., when researchers find that the phenomenon in question has been seen before or that incremental learning is minimal. Theoretical saturation may also be combined with the availability of resources and time—factors that can influence the search for or closure of new cases. The present study examines four small businesses in the tourist sector of Aracaju, the capital of Sergipe State in Brazil. The researchers believed four case studies would allow them to reach data saturation for this investigation, as previous studies used five cases (Yazici et al., 2016). Another criterion, accessibility, was considered, as only the entrepreneurs of companies that permitted access to the researcher were interviewed. The four hospitality companies studied are referred to in this text as *Guest House*, *Hotel A*, *Hotel B*, and *Hotel C*.

3.2. Data collection

This study is exploratory and qualitative in nature. According to Saunders (2011), exploratory studies seek to answer a question about what is happening. For Creswell (2013), qualitative inquiry involves questions and local data collection, with researchers then interpreting the meaning of the data. Data collection with the entrepreneurs of the companies in Aracaju utilized semi-structured scripted interviews. Data were collected in March and April 2015, after the January and February Brazilian high season.

The interviewed entrepreneurs had already opened their businesses and were currently managing them. The researchers chose small hospitality companies because the owners were generally at the front-end of the business and company founders were often accessible. The recorded interviews lasted approximately one hour for each company and were later transcribed. Each case was described individually following the logical sequence for each analysis element of each stage, looking both at the interviews and the company site. To ensure construct validity, after each evaluation, the interviewee reviewed the draft and confirmed whether it was correct. Although interviews are an essential source of information in a case study, Yin (2010) recommends corroborating the data with other sources, such as document analysis. Company websites and advertising materials were used to verify the interview information; this is provided in the Appendix (online supplement).

3.3. Interview questions

In this study, a mixed model (Laville and Dionne, 1999) was used to identify the presence of predetermined elements. The researchers considered all the significant elements, even if it meant broadening the scope of the categories. The interview questions were developed from the analytical categories and analysis elements presented in Table 1.

3.4. Data analysis

According to Patton (2005), researchers must attempt to understand and describe what people say and identify patterns and integrate the different sources of data before data analysis and interpretation. The present study follows Miles et al. (2013), as both the deductive (theory-driven) and inductive approaches were utilized for data collection. As noted by Yin (2010), the deductive approach in case studies uses a previously established theory to compare empirical results. In this study, the entrepreneurial social networks theory (Strobl and Kronenberg, 2016) was analyzed and compared with the present study's findings. This approach is the primary vehicle for generalizing the results obtained from multiple case studies. After completing the deductive approach, the inductive approach (Miles et al., 2013) was employed. In this stage, the collected data were analyzed using open coding to identify new patterns and find additional patterns between similarities and differences. Each analysis is followed by a cross-case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989) seeking to discover patterns between cases,

Table 1
Analytical categories and analysis elements.

Analytical Categories	Analysis Elements
Types of ties in conception, start-up and consolidation of business (Granovetter, 1973)	<i>Strong ties (links)</i> : formed through personal networks such as family, friends, former colleagues. <i>Weak ties (links)</i> : formed through business networks that stem from business relationships, including banks, consultants, clients, and suppliers.
Resources accessed during conception, start-up and consolidation of businesses (Birley, 1985; Borges et al., 2005; Chu, 1996; Johannisson, 1998; Vasconcelos et al., 2007)	<i>Social resources</i> : emotional, moral and technical support; identification of new business opportunities and threats; reputation; legitimacy; relationship of trust; source of ideas and information; advice; sharing of knowledge and experiences among actors; recommendations of suppliers, clients and employees; acquired or strengthened skills. <i>Financial resources</i> : loans and financing; budget; seeking investments; application of resources; fixed costs (raw materials and suppliers, equipment, rent, and employees). <i>Physical resources</i> : raw materials and input, machinery and equipment, vehicles, real estate, and physical location.

and clearly defining their similarities and differences. Afterward, a comparative case analysis was developed for each element and stage. This study does not aim to utilize statistical generalizations, and any application of the sampling logic would be misguided. Case studies should not be used to assess the incidence of phenomena (Yin, 2010). In this study, the content was analyzed without using software particularly useful for finding predetermined categories, as the aim was to establish patterns between similarities and differences within an interpretative perspective, and because the present research used a deductive approach to analyze the cases. The generalization in this study is analytical, adopting existing theory to define categories and analysis elements.

4. Findings

4.1. Entrepreneur profiles and enterprise demographics

The entrepreneurs involved in the sampled hospitality businesses began their enterprises between the ages of 21–43 (Table 2). The *Guest House* owner, the only female among the respondents, started her venture because her husband’s job with a multinational company involved frequent transfers, and she wanted to generate a second income for her family. The three *Hotel* entrepreneurs had previous experience as civil servants, and the *Guest House* owner had once worked as a receptionist at a trading company.

Table 3 presents a summary of the enterprise demographics. According to the business size classification of the Brazilian Service for Support for Small and Micro Businesses (SEBRAE, 2011), *Hotel A* is classified as medium-sized, with 65 employees. The other sampled hospitality enterprises considered in this study are small: *Guest House* has 10 employees, while *Hotels B* and *C* have 30 and 45 employees, respectively. As in Teixeira (2005), all the enterprises had very simple organizational structures with only two or three levels.

4.2. Entrepreneurial social networks

Based on the types of ties and resources accessed during conception, start-up, and consolidation, a cross-case analysis was conducted for each stage.

4.2.1. Conception stage

The ties utilized to acquire social resources, such as identifying

business opportunities, and obtaining information, advice, and recommendations for suppliers and clients are considered in this stage.

4.2.1.1. *Strong ties and resources accessed during the conception of a business.* During the business conception stage, identifying a business opportunity was observed in several forms. In the case of *Hotel A*, the father of the entrepreneur was responsible for identifying a good business opportunity; the family owned a hotel in another state. The initial idea of creating the hotel came from the entrepreneur’s father, as follows:

My father always had this dream, right? It’s what I always tell people. It’s more a dream of my father than my dream. And it’s really cool because, like that, I took the idea together with him, at that moment. I have two other brothers who have followed other paths, but I am proud to have accomplished this project.

The optimal business opportunity concerning the *Guest House* entrepreneur was identified by a friend of the family, another entrepreneur in the tourism sector who revealed the advantages the sector offered at the time. A combination of various factors led to the entrepreneur opening the guest house, as she describes below:

At the time, there were hardly any guests here. I did market research, more personal, without any technical criteria, and I saw that there were almost none. We had the land because I had lived here before. I [had been away for] five years. We came back here and decided to think of something, and the idea of the guest house came up.

The entrepreneur of *Hotel C* had previous experience as an entrepreneur in other sectors. He identified the opportunity to open his hotel when visualizing the prospective growth of the tourism sector in the town. His previous business experiences were also an important part of his decision-making.

I had the perspective of tourism growth in Aracaju, and since I already worked in restaurants and in the area of lodging, at a motel, I looked for something that I thought was close to the experience I already had.

Regarding their training and preparation, the entrepreneur of *Guest House* sought support from family and friends already active in the sector. *Hotel B* also counted on friends and family members, who, besides offering moral support, provided him with information and advice relevant to the sector.

Table 2
Entrepreneur profiles.

Enterprise	Gender	Age	Education	Previous work experience
Guest House	Female	55	Graduate of Social Work	Employee in commerce sector
Hotel A	Male	34	Graduate of Business	Public sector
Hotel B	Male	66	Graduate of Agricultural Engineering	Public sector
Hotel C	Male	44	Technician in agribusiness	Public sector and Entrepreneur

Table 3
Enterprise demographics.

Enterprise	Year start	Employees	Rooms	Clients	Family in Business	Organizational Levels
Guest House	1997	10	31	Majority business	daughter	2
Hotel A	2002	65	118	Majority business	wife and father	3
Hotel B	1997	30	44	Majority business	niece	3
Hotel C	2009	45	54	Majority leisure	wife	4

Table 4
Strong ties and resources accessed during the conception of the businesses.

Enterprise	Strong Ties	Resources
Guest House	Friend, founder of the business Husband	Social Identification of business opportunity Moral support Information on the sector Physical Family-owned land
Hotel A	Father of entrepreneur Family and friends	Social Identification of business opportunity Moral support Financial Own resources Physical Land
Hotel B	Family (wife and brother-in-law) Family and friends	Social Moral support from family and friends Skills learned and developed with the help of friends already working in the hotel sector Financial Own resources from the sale of a company that the entrepreneur owned and land Resources of partners Resources of a family member Physical Family-owned land
Hotel C	Wife Family and friends	Social Moral support Guidance on the business Financial Own resources Physical Acquisition of land

I already had a great intimacy with these friends. . . who were already in the sector. . . So, I looked for information of who was already in the sector. . . There was a friend that we were always talking to [who gave] full support, but I also had encouragement, always with that speech that Aracaju was poor in terms of [what] hotels offer.

All entrepreneurs used their financial resources, and those of partners and family members, to establish their businesses. Concerning physical resources, all the owners built their enterprises on land owned by their families. The owner of *Hotel C* acquired land with his resources to build his hotel. *Table 4* shows the strong ties and resources used by the entrepreneurs during the conception stage.

Table 5
Weak ties and resources accessed during the conception of the businesses.

Enterprise	Weak ties	Resources
Guest House	Hired builder Municipal government agencies Fire department	Social Technical support during preparation of the architectural project Permission to operate from government agencies (municipal government) and fire department
Hotel A	Financial institution Hired engineer and architects	Social Technical support for the architectural project Financial Financing from a financial institution
Hotel B	Consultants Brazilian Service for Support for Small and Micro Businesses Financial institutions	Social Information on the sector Consultants to guide the entrepreneur through the establishment of his business Financial Financing
Hotel C	Brazilian Service for Support for Small and Micro Businesses Municipal Planning Secretariat Financial institutions Hired manager	Social Consultancy for creating the brand, name and uniform. Legal procedures for the issue of documents and building permits Guidance for purchasing equipment and furniture Financial Financing to cover 20% of the investment Physical Equipment and furnishing

4.2.1.2. Weak ties and resources accessed during the conception of a business. For *Hotel B*, the combination of a family-owned plot of land on the beach and the attractiveness of a bank-offered interest rate proved fundamental to the entrepreneur’s decision.

I think the issue of credit was decisive for us to build the hotel. You already had the land plot, and the official bank had an attractive interest, so you matched one thing with another.

When seeking guidance for the architectural project, the entrepreneurs of *Guest House* and *Hotels A* and *B* turned to builders, engineers, and architects. The owner of *Hotel B* sought advice from his bank, which offered credit to fund the project. The owners of *Hotels B* and *C* sought consultancy and guidance from the Brazilian Service for Support for Small and Micro Businesses, and *Hotels A* and *B* hired independent consultants.

Hotel C’s entrepreneur sought financing from a bank to build the hotel and purchase furniture and equipment, while *Hotels A* and *B* used this resource only during the construction phase. *Hotel B*’s owner organized his business plan with the assistance of Brazilian Service for Support for Small and Micro Businesses to better obtain financing from his bank.

Hotel C’s owner prepared his financial plan, in which he defined his clientele, outlined his operations, and described how the hotel would be run. Some public planning, construction, and environmental agencies were researched regarding licenses for construction and documentation for project implementation.

In fact, what we had was in the construction phase. The public service is very bureaucratic, and there were difficulties, even for project approval, before starting the construction; it’s been almost a year just struggling with it.

Table 5 shows the weak ties and resources accessed during the conception stage.

4.2.2. Start-up stage

During the start-up stage, the researchers analyzed how networks were used during the legal procedures necessary for opening the business, how facilities and equipment were organized, how employees were hired, and how the first clients were attracted.

4.2.2.1. *Strong ties and resources accessed during the start-up stage.* During the start-up stage, *Hotels A* and *C* had family support related to the legal procedures concerning opening their companies. For the owner of *Hotel A*, support was provided by the entrepreneur's father, an experienced businessman. The entrepreneur of *Hotel C* received support from his sister-in-law, who had a degree in accounting. In this stage, the entrepreneur also counted on the moral support of his wife, who was responsible for the purchasing sector. He stated, "My wife and her sister were very important in this stage, with moral support and practical help in the accounting and start of the business."

None of the entrepreneurs sought guidance or support when purchasing materials and equipment. The *Guest House* entrepreneur acknowledges that she made her decisions based on her experiences as a housewife. After the guest house opened, however, the entrepreneur's husband was transferred to another state, which generated a feeling of insecurity because she was alone in front of the business. She said, "Then I cried a lot, I cried a lot, because I felt very lost, because before he helped me every day and now it had to be over the phone, which is not the same thing." To attract her first clients, the *Guest House* entrepreneur was helped by a friend who owned a hotel, and who recommended the *Guest House* when his hotel was full. Family members helped the owners of *Hotels B* and *C*. *Table 6* shows the strong ties and resources relevant during the start-up stage.

4.2.2.2. *Weak ties and resources accessed during the start-up stage.* The *Hotels* and *Guest House* entrepreneurs received guidance from accountants. *Hotel B's* entrepreneur received additional support from public agencies, such as the Brazilian Tourism Institute and the Sergipe State Tourism Company. To hire employees, all entrepreneurs analyzed curricula vitae and received recommendations from other entrepreneurs in the sector, with preference given to experienced workers in all cases. The owner of *Hotel A* was supported by the Sergipe State Workers' Center, a state agency that provides space for recruiting and selecting employees.

Since we did not have space to make the staff selection, the support center provided us [with] the auditorium and everything else, so that we could, at that moment, do the selection process, talk to people, and sort everything [out]. So, it was an interesting moment of government support at that time.

When hiring their employees, the owners of *Hotels B* and *C* relied on the recommendations of other entrepreneurs in the hotel sector. The owner of *Hotel B* hired workers from a hotel that closed while *Hotel B* was hiring. The entrepreneur also had the support of his employees, who provided contact information for the clients of hotels they had previously worked at.

We have already picked up staff from a hotel that closed down; the manager has already come from another hotel. So, I already had a

client file of people he knew, a lot of people follow through personal knowledge, so our beginning was based on this experience of the manager and the staff.

The entrepreneurs of *Guest House* and *Hotels B* and *C* hired experienced employees and trusted managers. To attract their first clients, they relied on employees who were already experienced professionals in the sector, and who had lists of former clients that could be contacted. To attract more clients, the owner of *Hotel A* sent his team to fairs and events. The Brazilian Association of Hotel Industries, Brazilian Service for Support for Small and Micro Businesses, and the Brazilian Tourism Institute offered the owner of *Hotel C* advertising support for his company. *Table 7* shows the weak ties and resources used during the start-up stage.

4.2.3. *Consolidation stage*

At the consolidation stage, the researchers analyzed the networks and resources accessed by the entrepreneurs related to marketing and sales to determine the point of equilibrium that facilitated planning and business administration.

4.2.3.1. *Strong ties and resources during consolidation.* All the entrepreneurs stated that they continue to count on the moral support of family and friends. The *Guest House* entrepreneur commented that, at the consolidation stage, she no longer had help from other people. She also had to deal with friends criticizing her for not taking a vacation.

People would only say, and say to this day: you're crazy, you're in prison. Because I do not leave here, I'm here from Sunday to Sunday, I never got a vacation. To be honest, I do not feel that way, or [feel like this is] a punishment unless I get sick, because I'm here, people leave, I have a great pleasure being here dealing with people, doing what I do.

Regarding planning and business administration activities, all the entrepreneurs highlighted their direct or indirect contact with family and friends. For example, at this stage, *Hotel A* needed to expand the hotel because the entrepreneur's father wanted the opportunity to have a larger hotel.

The project was ready. Ready to approve everything right, we only had to adapt to a hotel, but then the rooms were a little big, [and we] had a lot of help from the architect.

The *Guest House* owner's daughter supports the business, as she helps with the enterprise's business administration. The entrepreneur's husband also provides guidance, despite working for another company. The strong ties and resources accessed during consolidation are shown in *Table 8*.

4.2.3.2. *Weak ties and resources during consolidation.* The entrepreneur of *Hotel B* received support from the Brazilian Service for Support for

Table 6
Strong ties and resources accessed during the start-up stage.

Enterprise	Strong ties	Resources
Guest House	Family (husband and daughter)	Social
	Friend, founder of the business	
Hotel A	Father	Financial
	Family	Social
Hotel B	Family (wife)	Social
	Family and friends	
Hotel C	Wife and sister-in-law	Social
	Family and friends	

Table 7
Weak ties and resources accessed during start-up.

Enterprise	Weak ties	Resources
Guest House	Hired accountant Suppliers Employees Clients	Social Guidance on legal procedures for opening the company Contact with new suppliers, beginning with a first supplier Learning from employees with experience in the hotel sector Recommending the guest house to family and friends
Hotel A	Hired accountant Hired consultant Sergipe State Workers' Support Center	Social Guidance for complying with legal obligations concerning the opening of the business Guidance for the functioning of the financial sector and staff Guidance for the construction of the hotel and the purchase of equipment and materials Recommendation of suppliers Support for the recruitment and selection of staff Reserving space for recruitment and selection
Hotel B	Manager and employees Brazilian Association of Hotel Industries Brazilian Tourism Institute Sergipe State Tourism Company	Social Support during the implementation of the hotel Moral support Guidance on legal procedures for opening the company
Hotel C	Entrepreneurs in the tourism sector Sergipe State Tourism Company Brazilian Association of Hotel Industries Brazilian Service for Support for Small and Micro Businesses	Social Recommendation of employees through contacts. Help with creating marketing and advertising material

Small and Micro Businesses and highlights the creation of the Quality Seal for hotels. Regarding the planning and administration of the business, the entrepreneur of *Hotel B* counts on similar support services when he requires help and guidance. The entrepreneur of *Hotel B* also mentioned that his staff provides support concerning business management, and this helps maintain low employee turnover.

Concerning marketing and sales, all the entrepreneurs highlighted the importance of partnering with tour operators and travel agencies. The *Guest House* entrepreneur stated that she had the support of her clients regarding recommending the guest house to family members and friends traveling to Sergipe State. The owner of *Hotel C* uses his relationship with agencies like the Sergipe State Tourism Company and Aracaju Tourism Foundation to advertise the company. He highlighted the importance of maintaining a good relationship with travel agents and tour operators, as they are the ones who “sell” the hotel’s services.

The Brazilian Service for Support for Small and Micro Businesses is an important partner when it comes to staff training, as it offers courses and consultancy services in several fields, as well as offering guidance in the professionalization of several services. The National Commercial Learning Service helps with training and improvement courses for the employees of *Guest House* and *Hotels B* and *C*. *Hotel B* relies on the Brazilian Association of Travel Agents for courses, as well as the Sergipe State Tourism Company and the Brazilian Association of Hotel Industries. *Hotel C*'s entrepreneur also highlights the importance of participation in programs for specific events, such as the World Cup, alongside the Ministry of Tourism and State Tourism Bureau, which are responsible for this publicity. [Table 9](#) shows the weak ties and resources accessed during the consolidation stage.

Table 8
Strong ties and resources during consolidation.

Enterprise	Strong ties	Resources
Guest House	Family (husband and daughter)	Social Moral support Business management guidance Application of knowledge in the financial and administrative sector
Hotel A	Family (parents and wife)	Social Help with business management and planning. Help to purchase materials and with decoration Help in the operational and governance sector
Hotel B	Family (wife) Amigos	Social Help with business management Moral support
Hotel C	Family (wife) Family and friends	Social Moral support Help with internal consultancy and training

5. Discussion and conclusions

The present study evaluated how social networks are used to obtain resources during the conception, start-up, and consolidation stages of hotels and guest houses in Aracaju, Sergipe State, Brazil. There is limited empirical evidence on the entrepreneurial social networks of small hospitality firms in developing countries. The research findings indicate that, in the start-up stage, entrepreneurs accessed fewer resources. They primarily relied on family and friends for moral support. In the consolidation stage, entrepreneurs relied more on their weak links, accessing them with greater frequency. Mobilizing social networks is a dynamic process; entrepreneurs use them for reasons that change throughout the creation process. This study contributes to the literature by attempting to explain the influence of resource dependency theory, entrepreneurship, social networks, network management, and the socioemotional wealth approach in family firms ([Berrone et al., 2012](#)), small firms, family businesses, and H&T via micro-level approaches.

5.1. Theoretical implications

This study shows that in the conception stage, the evaluated entrepreneurs were supported by resources from strong ties, i.e., family, friends, and colleagues were involved in identifying the optimal business opportunity, and offered moral support, information, and advice. At this stage, the entrepreneurs also had support from their weak ties, including agents that typically help new businesses, such as bankers, consultants, and accountants; these weak ties provided knowledge on the sector and, in some cases, also provided financial resources. During the start-up stage, the entrepreneurs sought fewer resources from their personal network of family and friends; these strong ties mainly

Table 9
Weak ties and resources during consolidation.

Enterprise	Weak ties	Resources	
Guest House	Suppliers Clients Brazilian Service for Support for Small and Micro Businesses National Commercial Learning Service Travel agencies and tour operators	Social	Maintenance of network of contacts with suppliers Support from clients to divulge the business, recommending the guest house to family and friends Offering of lectures and improvement courses Free consultancy Training and improvement of staff Partnership with travel agencies and tour operators
Hotel A	Partner Bank Tour operators	Social Financial	Access to different sectors of the population Investment of financial resources in the business Refinancing in agreement with the bank Building of the second phase of the hotel
Hotel B	Staff Employees National Commercial Learning Service Sergipe State Tourism Company Brazilian Association of Hotel Industries Brazilian Service for Support for Small and Micro Businesses Agencies and Tour operators	Physical Social	Maintenance of staff since inauguration Attending business fairs, events, courses and conferences Training courses Classification of hotels with a Quality Seal Partnerships with accredited tour operators and agencies.
Hotel C	Tour operators and travel agencies Ministry of Tourism Sergipe State Tourism Company Aracaju Tourism Foundation Brazilian Association of Hotel Industries National Commercial Learning Service Brazilian Service for Support for Small and Micro Businesses	Social	Advertising the hotel to clients Offer of incentive programs Refresher courses and programs for entrepreneurs Offer of training and courses

provided moral support. The entrepreneurs began to interact more with contacts in their business or organizational networks. The resources they sought were guidance regarding the legal procedures involved in opening their companies, recommendations for suppliers and employees, help in marketing their businesses, and information on the sector. These professional networks served as a communication channel because the entrepreneurs required specific knowledge to solve their problems, something that friends and relatives generally could not provide. Similar behaviors were observed during the consolidation stage, but entrepreneurs also became more dependent on their weak ties during that time. In this phase, they sought training courses for themselves and their employees to keep their teams up to date on the services they were expected to provide. The entrepreneurs continued to use their strong ties with family and friends, mainly for moral support, but also for advice and information.

This study outlines several key points. First, the researchers found that small-firm entrepreneurs use both formal (i.e., banks, accountants, and lawyers) and informal networks (i.e., family, friends, and business contacts) to access resources during their entrepreneurship (Birley, 1985). Second, as indicated by Corrêa and Teixeira (2015), the researchers found that the networks of small-firm entrepreneurs have both weak and strong ties. The strong ties involved informal networks, including family, friends, and colleagues, whereas the weak ties involved public and private companies, and individual donors and collaborators. Strong ties were seen as key resources in practically every stage of the new venture. However, these sources are apparently limited. This indicates that the present study contributes to one of the dimensions of the socioemotional wealth approach in family firms (Berrone et al., 2012). This dimension relates to binding social ties, referring to kinship ties generated by closed networks, including collective social capital, relational trust, feelings of closeness and interpersonal solidarity, and reciprocal bonds (Berrone et al., 2012). On the other hand, as indicated in the social network literature related to family business tourism, family businesses use their ties to cooperate and overcome their size disadvantages (Kallmuenzer and Peters, 2018).

Third, the present study also indicates that the process of mobilizing relationships to access resources is dynamic and that the need for resources changes throughout the business creation process. This finding

builds on previous studies of social networks by Ducci and Teixeira (2010, 2011), which found that the relationships formed in the creation and development stages evolved and were strengthened as the entrepreneurs succeeded in proving their reliability. The research findings further suggest that in these two stages of the business, the social networks of entrepreneurs enable access to different resources that make a significant impact on their trajectory and results.

Fourth, the present study's findings indicate that small firms in intensely competitive environments use their informal networks to accomplish entrepreneurial processes rather than their formal networks. They typically use these networks to access social resources rather than financial and physical resources. This is consistent with the study by Hernández-Carrión et al. (2017) that found that when competitive intensity in the sector is high, entrepreneurs typically use their personal networks to access resources for improving their economic performance, as personal networks offer secure support.

Fifth, the present study emphasizes that entrepreneurial personality and background are crucial to the growth of firms (Hernández-Carrión et al., 2017; Lee and Tsang, 2001; Witt, 2004). This study's findings demonstrate that the younger entrepreneurs sought resources such as support, information, and advice from family and friends, whereas the more experienced ones sought help from family members, agencies that provide support for entrepreneurs, and other entrepreneurs in the tourism sector.

Finally, the literature on business networks points out that corporate social networks are positively related to a company's performance or, to be more specific, the survival and future growth of a new business depend on them (Aldrich et al., 1987; Greve and Salaff, 2003; Johannisson, 1986; Ostgaard and Birley, 1996). Birley (1985) states that social networks are very important in the early entrepreneurial process and discusses the types of networks that should be developed as proactively as the strategic and functional needs developed by the organization. Aldrich and Zimmer (1986) suggested a social network perspective to explain why some people are more successful than others in business creation and development, regardless of personal and sociocultural factors. This study highlights the importance of the social capital generated by an entrepreneur's social networks, in the context of supporting the entrepreneur. The present study contributes to the

literature by examining the use of entrepreneurial social network concepts in the context of companies in the H&T industry. It also offers theoretical implications on how the development of entrepreneurs' social networks can contribute to accessing resources and their social capital.

5.2. Practical implications

This study offers several practical implications. [Stam et al. \(2014\)](#) found that weak ties and network diversity in small firms were positively related to performance. The research findings of the current study indicate that weak ties are usually found in the formal networks of entrepreneurs and that the diversity of the strong ties in the network is limited. Consequently, entrepreneurs should proactively take advantage of the activities offered by institutions. They should organize special gatherings to increase the strength of the weak ties ([Ahmad, 2005](#)). Government agencies may provide programs for small firms, and travel or tourism associations often offer development programs. Small-firm entrepreneurs should consider taking advantage of these opportunities to improve, diversify, and strengthen their networks.

Second, the researchers observed that small-firm entrepreneurs have weak ties with clients. This is a significant barrier. Entrepreneurs should focus on customer relationship management activities based on their unique structure instead of copying the customer relationship management activities of large companies. Finally, though entrepreneurs access resources related to operations management, human resources, and marketing functions, they have weak ties with the people helping with operational issues. Entrepreneurs should find ways to strengthen these weak ties, allowing them to manage their firms more efficiently and productively.

5.3. Limitations and future research

This study has several limitations. First, the study's sample involved small firms that identified as family businesses. Future studies can collect data from firms of other sizes or types, such as hotels, travel agencies, and airlines. Second, the researchers collected the data from a single region in Brazil. Future studies may repeat the study by collecting data from different countries and comparing the results to gain a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the relationships involved. Third, there may be bias or subjectivity in the analysis and research findings, as the data of this study were generated via the researchers' observations. The researchers employed a qualitative research approach by collecting data through in-depth interviews; as a result, the research findings may not be generalized ([Lambros, 2012](#)). Fourth, the researchers only analyzed four cases. Future studies can analyze more. Fifth, this study did not consider networks related to publicity, reservations, and client feedback. Future studies may choose to analyze these issues. Finally, when the researchers evaluated the results, they did not consider cultural issues. Future studies can be utilized to address the effect of cultural differences.

From [Li's \(2008\)](#) review on entrepreneurship research in the H&T context, entrepreneurial social networks remain understudied. The researchers suggest that H&T scholars should increase research collaboration with scholars in the entrepreneurship field to explore new themes and adopt new theories. When a solid theoretical base has been established, empirical studies will test and validate entrepreneurship theories in the H&T field. Future research can investigate entrepreneurial networks from different perspectives, such as how these networks could affect innovation in H&T firms; how social capital is formed in these networks; and the structure, content, and governance of these networks. The researchers suggest that future researchers carry out longitudinal studies and collect larger datasets from large tourism firms. Research on entrepreneurial social networks must inform both academics and H&T management practitioners regarding how to encourage entrepreneurs to use network ties and resources to launch

successful new ventures, and how to understand the ways these ties and resources influence performance and competitive capabilities.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary material related to this article can be found, in the online version, at doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.01.006>.

References

- Ahmad, G., 2005. Small firm owner-managers' networks in tourism and hospitality. *Int. J. Bus. Soc.* 6, 37.
- Ahmad, S.Z., Jabeen, F., Khan, M., 2014. Entrepreneurs choice in business venture: motivations for choosing home-stay accommodation businesses in Peninsular Malaysia. *Int. J. Hosp. Manage.* 36, 31–40.
- Aldrich, H.R., Rosen, B., Woodward, W., 1987. The impact of social networks on business foundations and profit: a longitudinal study. In: Churchil, J. (Ed.), *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research*. P. Babson College., Wellesley, MA, pp. 154–168.
- Aldrich, H., Reese, P., Dubini, P., 1989. *Woman on the verge of a breakthrough: networking among entrepreneurs and United States*. Entrepreneurship and Regional Development. Routledge, Oxford.
- Aldrich, H., Zimmer, C., 1986. Entrepreneurship through social networks. In: Sexton, D.L., Smilor, R.W. (Eds.), *The Art and Science of Entrepreneurship*. Ballinger, Cambridge, pp. 3–23.
- Badulescu, A., Badulescu, D., Bac, D., Sipoș-Gug, S., 2014. Attitudes and intentions of business master students towards sustainable tourism and entrepreneurship. *Amfitreatu Econ.* 16, 1110.
- Baert, C., Meuleman, M., Debruyne, M., Wright, M., 2016. Portfolio entrepreneurship and resource orchestration. *Strateg. Entrep. J.* 10, 346–370.
- Bamiatzi, V., Bozok, K., Cavusgil, S.T., Hult, G.T.M., 2016. Revisiting the firm, industry, and country effects on profitability under recessionary and expansion periods: a multilevel analysis. *Strateg. Manage. J.* 37, 1448–1471.
- Barrutia, J.M., Echebarria, C., 2015. Factors affecting the attitude of tourism-destination local authorities towards sustainable planning tools in a networking context: the Balearic Sustainability Network. *J. Sustain. Tour.* 23, 207–233.
- Beritelli, P., 2011. Cooperation among prominent actors in a tourist destination. *Ann. Tour. Res.* 38, 607–629.
- Berrone, P., Cruz, C., Gomez-Mejia, L.R., 2012. Socioemotional wealth in family firms: theoretical dimensions, assessment approaches, and agenda for future research. *Fam. Bus. Rev.* 25, 258–279.
- Bilgihan, A., Barreda, A., Okumus, F., Nusair, K., 2016. Consumer perception of knowledge-sharing in travel-related Online Social Networks. *Tour. Manage.* 52, 287–296.
- Birley, S., 1985. The role of networks in the entrepreneurial process. *J. Bus. Ventur.* 1, 107–117.
- Borges, C.V., Simard, G., Filion, L.J., 2005. *Venture Creation Processes in Quebec: Research Findings 2004-2005*. HEC Montréal, Chaire d'entrepreneuriat Rogers-J.-A.-Bombardier.
- Bosworth, G., Farrell, H., 2011. Tourism entrepreneurs in Northumberland. *Ann. Tour. Res.* 38, 1474–1494.
- Brush, C.G., Greene, P.G., Hart, M.M., 2001. From initial idea to unique advantage: the entrepreneurial challenge of constructing a resource base. *Acad. Manage. Exec.* 15, 64–78.
- Buhalis, D., Molinari, E., 2002. Entrepreneurial networks and supply communities in the Italian eTourism. *Inf. Technol. Tour.* 5, 175–184.
- Carlback, M., 2012. Strategic entrepreneurship in the hotel industry: the role of chain affiliation. *Scand. J. Hosp. Tour.* 12, 349–372.
- Chen, X., 2018. Multidimensional study of hospitality and the host-guest paradigm in China. *Int. J. Contemp. Hosp. Manage.* 30 (1), 495–513.
- Chen, S.C., Elston, J.A., 2013. Entrepreneurial motives and characteristics: an analysis of small restaurant owners. *Int. J. Hosp. Manage.* 35, 294–305.
- Chu, P., 1996. Social network models of overseas Chinese entrepreneurship: the experience in Hong Kong and Canada. *Can. J. Admin. Sci./Revue Canadienne des Sciences de l'Administration* 13, 358–365.
- Corrêa, R.O., Teixeira, R.M., 2015. Redes sociais empreendedoras para obtenção de recursos e legitimação organizacional: estudo de caso de casos múltiplos com empreendedores sociais. *Revista de Administração Mackenzie* 16, 62.
- Creswell, J.W., 2013. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage publications.
- de Lange, D., Dodds, R., 2017. Increasing sustainable tourism through social entrepreneurship. *Int. J. Contemp. Hosp. Manage.* 29 (7), 1977–2002.
- Dubini, P., Aldrich, H., 2002. Personal and extended networks are central to the entrepreneurial process. *Entrepreneurship: Crit. Perspect. Bus. Manage.* 217–228.
- Ducci, N.P.C., Teixeira, R.M., 2010. Articulação de Redes Sociais por Empreendedores na Formação do Capital Social: um estudo de caso de uma empresa do setor de turismo do interior do Paraná. *Rev. Tur. Em Análise* 21, 165–189.
- Ducci, C.N.P., Teixeira, M.R., 2011. *As Redes Sociais Dos Empreendedores Na Formação Do Capital Social: Um Estudo De Casos Múltiplos Em Municípios Do Norte Pioneiro No Estado Do Paraná*. Cadernos Ebape, BR, pp. 9.
- Eisenhardt, K.M., 1989. Building theories from case study research. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* 14, 532–550.
- Fadda, N., Sørensen, J.F.L., 2017. The importance of destination attractiveness and entrepreneurial orientation in explaining firm performance in the Sardinian accommodation sector. *Int. J. Contemp. Hosp. Manage.* 29 (6), 1684–1702.

- French, A.M., Luo, X., Bose, R., 2017. Toward a holistic understanding of continued use of social networking tourism: a mixed-methods approach. *Inf. Manag.* 54, 802–813.
- Germann Molz, J., 2013. Social networking technologies and the moral economy of alternative tourism: the case of couchsurfing.org. *Ann. Tour. Res.* 43, 210–230.
- Granovetter, M.S., 1973. The strength of weak ties. *Am. J. Sociol.* 78, 1360–1380.
- Greve, A., Salaff, J.W., 2003. Social networks and entrepreneurship. *Entrep. Theory Pract.* 28, 1–22.
- Gronroos, C., 2007. *Service Management and Marketing: Customer Management in Service Competition*. John Wiley, New Jersey.
- Hallak, R., Assaker, G., O'Connor, P., 2014. Are family and nonfamily tourism businesses different? An examination of the entrepreneurial self-efficacy–Entrepreneurial performance relationship. *J. Hosp. Tour. Res.* 38, 388–413.
- Hallak, R., Assaker, G., Lee, C., 2015. Tourism entrepreneurship performance: the effects of place identity, self-efficacy, and gender. *J. Travel. Res.* 54, 36–51.
- Hansen, E.L., 1995. Entrepreneurial networks and new organization growth. *Entrep. Theory Pract.* 19, 7–20.
- Hernández-Carrión, C., Camarero-Izquierdo, C., Gutiérrez-Cillán, J., 2017. Entrepreneurs' social capital and the economic performance of small businesses: the moderating role of competitive intensity and entrepreneurs' experience. *Strateg. Entrep. J.* 11, 61–89.
- Hsu, C.H.C., Liu, Z., Huang, S., 2012. Managerial ties in economy hotel chains in China: comparison of different ownership types during entrepreneurial processes. *Int. J. Contemp. Hosp. Manage.* 24, 477–495.
- Hsu, C.H.C., Liu, Z., Huang, S., 2015. Acquiring intangible resources through entrepreneurs' network ties: a study of Chinese economy hotel chains. *Cornell Hosp. Q.* 56, 273–284.
- Johannisson, B., 1986. Network strategies: management, technology, and change. *Int. Small Bus. J.* 5 (1), 19–30.
- Johannisson, B., 1998. Personal networks in emerging knowledge-based firms: spatial and functional patterns. *Entrep. Reg. Dev.* 10, 297–312.
- Kallmuenzer, A., 2018. Exploring drivers of innovation in hospitality family firms. *Int. J. Contemp. Hosp. Manage.* <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-04-2017-0242>.
- Kallmuenzer, A., Peters, M., 2018. Entrepreneurial behaviour, firm size and financial performance: the case of rural tourism family firms. *Tour. Recreat. Res.* 43, 2–14.
- Karniouchina, E.V., Carson, S.J., Short, J.C., Ketchen, D.J., 2013. Extending the firm vs. industry debate: Does industry life cycle stage matter? *Strateg. Manage. J.* 34, 1010–1018.
- Komppula, R., 2014. The role of individual entrepreneurs in the development of competitiveness for a rural tourism destination – a case study. *Tour. Manag.* 40, 361–371.
- Lambros, G., 2012. Competitive intelligence in Greek furniture retailing: a qualitative approach. *Euromed J. Bus.* 7, 224–242.
- Laville, C., Dionne, J., 1999. *A construção do saber: manual de metodologia da pesquisa em ciências humanas*. UFMG, Artmed.
- Lee, D.Y., Tsang, E.W.K., 2001. The effects of entrepreneurial personality, background and network activities on venture growth*. *J. Manage. Stud.* 38, 583–602.
- Li, L., 2008. A review of entrepreneurship research published in the hospitality and tourism management journals. *Tour. Manage.* 29, 1013–1022.
- Lundberg, C., Fredman, P., Wall-Reinius, S., 2014. Going for the green? The role of money among nature-based tourism entrepreneurs. *Curr. Issues Tour.* 17, 373–380.
- McGahan, A.M., Porter, M.E., 1997. How Much Does Industry Matter, Really? *Strateg. Manage. J.* 18, 15–30.
- Miller, D., Le Breton-Miller, I., 2017. Underdog entrepreneurs: a model of challenge-based entrepreneurship. *Entrep. Theory Pract.* 41, 7–17.
- Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M., Saldana, J., 2013. *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Sage.
- Molinari, E., Buhalis, D., 2003. Entrepreneurial networks in Italian eTourism. In: Frew, A.J., M.H.P.O.C (Eds.), *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism*. Springer, New York, pp. 96–104.
- Novelli, M., Schmitz, B., Spencer, T., 2006. Networks, clusters and innovation in tourism: a UK experience. *Tour. Manag.* 27, 1141–1152.
- Nusair, K., Hua, N., Ozturk, A., Butt, I., 2017. A theoretical framework of electronic word-of-mouth against the backdrop of social networking websites. *J. Travel Tour. Mark.* 34, 653–665.
- Ostgaard, T.O., Birley, S., 1996. New venture growth and personal networks. *J. Bus. Res.* 36 (1), 37–50.
- Patton, M.Q., 2005. *Qualitative Research*. Wiley Online Library.
- Saunders, M.N., 2011. *Research Methods for Business Students, 5/e*. Pearson Education, India.
- Schuckerts, M., Kim, T.T., Paek, S., Lee, G., 2018. Motivate to innovate: How authentic and transformational leaders influence employees' psychological capital and service innovation behavior. *Int. J. Contemp. Hosp. Manage.* 30 (2), 776–796.
- SEBRAE, 2010. *DIEESE. Anuário do trabalho na micro e pequena empresa: 2010–2011*. Sebrae/Dieese, São Paulo.
- Servantie, V., Cabrol, M., Guieu, G., Boissin, J.-P., 2016. Is international entrepreneurship a field? A bibliometric analysis of the literature (1989–2015). *J. Int. Entrep.* 14, 168–212.
- Sørensen, F., 2007. The geographies of social networks and innovation in tourism. *Tour. Geogr.* 9, 22–48.
- Stam, W., Arzlaniyan, S., Elfring, T., 2014. Social capital of entrepreneurs and small firm performance: a meta-analysis of contextual and methodological moderators. *J. Bus. Ventur.* 29, 152–173.
- Strauß, S., 2015. Alliances across ideologies: networking with NGOs in a tourism dispute in Northern Bali. *Asia Pacific J. Anthropol.* 16, 123–140.
- Strobl, A., Kronenberg, C., 2016. Entrepreneurial networks across the business life cycle: the case of Alpine hospitality entrepreneurs. *Int. J. Contemp. Hosp. Manage.* 28, 1177–1203.
- Strobl, A., Peters, M., 2013. Entrepreneurial reputation in destination networks. *Ann. Tour. Res.* 40, 59–82.
- Teixeira, Rivanda Meira, 2005. *Diagnóstico de Pequenos Negócios Hoteleiros em Sergipe*. In: TRIGO, Godói, Luis Gonzaga (Eds.), *Análises Regionais e Globais do Turismo Brasileiro*. Roca, São Paulo.
- Ulhøi, J.P., 2005. The social dimensions of entrepreneurship. *Technovation* 25, 939–946.
- Vasconcelos, G.M.Rd., Rezende, S.F.L., Guimarães, Ld.O., Fachin, R.C., 2007. *Mobilizando relacionamentos e acessando recursos na criação e evolução de novos negócios*. *Organ. Soc.* 14, 113–134.
- Vissa, B., 2011. A matching theory of entrepreneurs' tie formation intentions and initiation of economic exchange. *Acad. Manag. J.* 54, 137–158.
- Volery, T., Mazzarol, T., 2015. The evolution of the small business and entrepreneurship field: a bibliometric investigation of articles published in the. *Int. Small Bus. J.* 33, 374–396.
- Witt, P., 2004. Entrepreneurs' networks and the success of start-ups. *Entrep. Reg. Dev.* 16, 391–412.
- Yazici, S., Köseoglu, M.A., Okumus, F., 2016. Identification of growth factors for small firms: evidence from hotel companies on an island. *J. Organ. Chang. Manage.* 29, 994–1029.
- Yin, R., 2010. *Estudo De Caso. Planejamento E Métodos*. Bookmann, Porto Alegre.
- Ying, T., Norman, W.C., Zhou, Y., 2016. Online networking in the tourism industry: a webometrics and hyperlink network analysis. *J. Travel. Res.* 55, 16–33.
- Zamani, S.Z., 2016. Examining the role of marketing models based on social networking in the tourism industry in Iran. *Int. J. Hum. Cult. Stud. (IJHCS)* 1155–1168 ISSN 2356-5926 2.