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# Attracting and Retaining Creative Tourism Entrepreneurs

## Abstract

Creative tourism entrepreneurs play an essential role in the competitiveness and innovation of a tourist destination. Moreover, they are more likely to find sustainable practices in their small-scale business than in large companies. However, despite this importance, the study of these entrepreneurs needs more attention, in particular knowledge about the factors that attract and retain them in a given destination. Thus, this research aims to identify the factors that are most valued by creative tourism entrepreneurs in relation to the characteristics of the destination. Based on a sample of 115 creative tourism entrepreneurs, we ran a two-step cluster analysis. The results showed that the most important factors were entrepreneurial culture, access to the market (tourists, visitors, etc.), creative atmosphere, quality of life and level of cooperation. The results also allowed us to identify two different segments of entrepreneurs: balanced and prospectors, which show different attitudes regarding the attraction factors and the willingness to stay in the destination. In the conclusion, the practical implications for destination management are discussed.

**Keywords:** Lifestyle entrepreneurship; creative atmosphere; local development; destination management.

## 1. Introduction

Creative tourism entrepreneurs (CTEs) “are mostly operated by creative people, such as artists and lifestyle entrepreneurs and, therefore, the concepts and the development of creative tourism are always seen from the supply-led perspective” (Tan, Tan, & Luh, 2015, p. 982). By other words, CTEs can be defined as business owners who run a tourism related business mainly oriented to develop the creative dimension of both them and the tourists. CTEs also enjoy creativity and wish to make a living from their passions, where tourism represent a source of income (Richards & Wilson, 2006). The businesses managed by CTEs represent a significant part of the firms in the tourism sector (Dias et al., 2020a). They are also viewed by policy makers as the lifeblood of destination innovation and much more likely to develop more sustainable business practices than large companies (Dias et al., 2021a). Furthermore, they increase tourist satisfaction, as the CTEs become a facilitator empowering the participator self-development by allowing a more participative experience (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Ross, Saxena, Correia, & Deutz, 2017a). The importance from an economic point of view is related to job creation, acquisition from local suppliers and the establishment of capital in the tourist destination.

Despite this importance, academic attention to these entrepreneurs has been limited (Dias et al., 2020a), especially in relation to the entrepreneurs’ attraction and retention factors (Dias et al., 2021a; Dias & Silva, 2021). Moreover, the traditional models derived from business theory cannot simply be imported because CTEs businesses are not run exclusively on economic criteria.

One CTE can be defined as one that operates a creative business in a manner that incorporates non-financial factors (Richards, 2011; Thomas, Shaw & Page, 2011). In addition, these entrepreneurs make decisions based on lifestyle and quality of life criteria (Cooper, 2105), local development or environmental sustainability criteria.

Within this framework, the study of CTEs is essential, on the one hand, to promote the competitiveness of a tourist destination and, on the other hand, to contribute so that research on entrepreneurship in tourism can have its own knowledge base and not borrowed from other areas of science. The theme of entrepreneurship in tourism has been centered on the individual as an object of study, leaving a broad field to explore related with the contextual factors that influence their business decisions. In particular, given the importance of these entrepreneurs for the competitiveness of the destination, the existing research related with the CTEs attraction and retention factors is still underexplored. On this vein, this research has as its central objective to know the contextual factors that contribute to the attraction and retention of CTEs in a determined destination.

This study contributes by extending existing knowledge about CTEs decision making process. It goes beyond the recognition of a balance between economic and non-economic indicators in their business management, identifying the importance and hierarchy of these same indicators. Another contribution is related to the identification of two types of entrepreneurs the balanced and the prospectors that show a different attitude both in terms of the attraction factors of a tourism destination and the place attachment.

This article is structured as follows. In the following section the literature review is conducted, identifying the contextual factors referred to in the literature. Section 3 describes the methodology based on a survey to a sample of CTEs. The section 4 presents the results, which are discussed in the next section. Finally the conclusions, limitations and avenues for future research are debated.

## **2. Theoretical underpinnings**

The study of entrepreneurship in tourism cannot be dissociated from the characteristics of the place (Yachin, 2019), comprising the socio-cultural and economic dimensions of tourism destination (Fu et al., 2019; Korsgaard, Müller, & Tanvig, 2015). On the one hand, the place represents the basis for the competitiveness of these entrepreneurs (Hoarau, 2014), because it provides an identity, a source of inspiration and the knowledge base for the realization of experiences (Shaw & Williams, 2009; Sun, Xu, Köseoglu, & Okumus, 2019). Furthermore, the link to place is essential to obtain the stakeholders and community involvement (Sofield, Guia, & Specht, 2017), and plays an important role on the tourism entrepreneurial performance (Hallak, Brown, & Lindsay, 2012). On the other hand, it supports the differentiation of experiences related to the cultural environment of a specific place (Tan et al., 2015), avoiding focusing on mass solutions (Richards, 2011). Instead, CTEs deliver creative practices combining production, consumption and place (De Bruin & Jelincic, 2016; Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003). For research purposes the place or destination attraction dimensions will be divided in three main areas: lifestyle, market and economic, and infrastructures. Table 1 summarizes this framework.

### **2.1. Lifestyle place attractions**

Frequently, for CTEs, the decision to locate the business does not assume the same rationality as in other sectors (Morrison, 2006), relying on preferences about quality of life or natural environment (Sun & Xu, 2019), and not the proximity to the market or suppliers (Arias & Cruz, 2019). As such, the criteria by which they run their business are not necessarily profit-oriented (Komppula, 2004; Lampel & Germain, 2016). Instead they are searching for creative spaces with an entrepreneurial culture (Hoarau, 2014), innovative context (Weidenfeld, Williams, & Butler, 2010), stimulating atmospheres (Richards, 2011), and with a minimal market dimension (Sun & Hu, 2019) that allows making a living from their skills. Richards and Wilson (2006) enumerate several topics concerning the power of attraction of a 'creative, vibrant atmosphere': (i) is the sum of creativity and social capital, contributing to the self-development of local residents and tourists; (ii) contributes to an economy based on signs and symbols; (iii) preserves culture identity; and, develop cultural clusters and creative quarters. This atmosphere boosts the appearance of unexpected creating new challenges and opportunities that can be integrated in CTEs experiences (García-Rosell, Haanpää, & Janhunen, 2019). Creative experiences involve co-creation between tourist and entrepreneur in the sphere of the emotional and spiritual, following a certain lifestyle in a specific creative atmosphere (Richards & Marques, 2012). Thus, the most meaningful spaces for entrepreneurs have a greater capacity for person attachment (Lewicka, 2011).

The essential question is what this 'meaningful space' consists of. With the rapid evolution of creative tourism as a reflection of the growth of clients seeking immersive experiences, there is a demand from CTEs to connect to creative networks (Richards & Marques, 2012). As Drake (2003) says, there are three ways for a place to contribute to the creative potential of entrepreneurs: (i) as a source of visual stimulation; (ii) as a source of inspiration arising from social and cultural activity; (iii) as a catalyst for creativity due to the reputation and tradition of the destination brand.

## **2.2. Market and economic attractions**

In addition to stimulating the creative capacity of entrepreneurs, the size and nature of local markets and the availability of expertise are also important factors to consider attracting and retaining CTEs (Drake, 2003). Furthermore, the place needs to provide a minimum volume of tourists or customers so that the business is sustainable and the CTEs can pursue the desired lifestyle. One of the important aspects is related to the marketing and communication capacity of the destination. On the one hand, it must be able to attract an adequate number of tourists to make the business viable (Su et al., 2020). On the other hand, marketing should be appropriate for creative activity, not consistent with mass tourism approaches and should take into account the authenticity of experiences and a quality service (Zhang & Xie, 2018). Even the network of entities and entrepreneurs that contribute to the achievement of destination marketing will only be successful if they incorporate the values promoted by the CTEs (Thomas et al., 2011).

Given that creative tourists are more experienced, they tend to actively search for unique, immersive experiences that provide them with effective learning (Zhang & Xie, 2018). Thus, marketing efforts can even have negative consequences because promoting exclusive locations can lead to the loss of much of their appeal for many visitors (Maitland, 2010). Instead marketing must be subtler to target specific market segments and involve CTEs and tourists in experience co-creation (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). In this sense, cooperation between the destination

management organization and the private sector is essential for a concerted marketing and promotion strategy (Dias et al., 2020b; Komppula, 2014), where there is common ground based on themes and narratives, contributing to the placemaking (Richards, & Wilson, 2006). Other authors recognize a more important role, where entrepreneurs are key drivers of development and capable to transform locations into tourism destinations (Ryan, Mottiar, & Quinn, 2012).

### 2.3. Infrastructure attractions

The destination where CTEs develop their business is not chosen solely by economic criteria (Thomas et al., 2011). Since the boundary between personal life and business is weak (Wang, Li, & Xu, 2019b), the destination also corresponds to where they live. The political dimension is essential to convey to these entrepreneurs an image of dynamism and direction for the future (Richards, & Wilson, 2006). As such, destination managers and municipalities play an important role as developers and key enablers in creative tourism projects (Remoaldo & Cadima-Ribeiro, 2019).

To achieve this, destination managers and municipalities must create an environment conducive to business development to attract entrepreneurs to the region (Komppula, 2014), by addressing traditional factors such as production costs, housing and transport, the existence of public infrastructure and intellectual capital (Clare, 2013; Drake, 2003).

**Table 1.** Elements of the place that influence the attraction of entrepreneurs

Element	Items	Authors
Market/Economic	Geographic location	Clare (2013), Drake (2003)
	Access to resources (natural, raw materials, specialized suppliers ...).	Drake (2003)
	Access to the market (tourists, visitors, etc.)	Zhang and Xie (2018).
	Local authorities' incentive policy (subsidies, fiscal incentives, etc.).	Komppula (2014)
	Marketing done to attract visitors to this place.	Komppula (2014), Thomas et al. (2011), Zhang and Xie (2018)
	Dimension of the locality	Drake (2003)
	Potential for future development	Drake (2003)
	Taxes and rates	Komppula (2013), Komppula (2014)
Lifestyle	Quality of life	Sun and Xu (2019)
	Entrepreneurial culture	Hoarau (2014), Maitland (2010), Park, Choi, and Lee (2019), Richards and Wilson (2006)
	Creative atmosphere in this place.	Richards (2011), Richards and Wilson (2006), Ryan, Mottiar and Quinn (2012),

	Network of alliances or contacts that promote cooperation	Tan et al. (2015), Weidenfeld, et al. (2010) Czernek (2017), Richards and Marques (2012), Yachin (2019)
Infrastructure	Existence of complementary institutions (schools, cultural centers, etc.)	Drake (2003)
	Quality of public and private services (health, transport, etc.).	Drake (2003), Thomas et al. (2011)

### 3. Method

In order to identify the contextual factors that contribute to attract and retain CTEs, a study was conducted with a sample of 115 Portuguese and Spanish entrepreneurs who fulfilled the following characteristics: (i) have a creative tourism related business; (ii) independently run business (not part of larger chains or franchising networks). These criteria come from Bosworth and Farrell (2011), Morrison (2006), and Richards (2011). Considering that there is no official listing identifying the total CTEs in both countries, a convenience or non-probabilistic sampling was used. The CTEs were invited to participate in the study in tourism entrepreneurship meetings. After obtaining their consent to participate, informants were requested to respond an internet based-questionnaire.

The measures of place attachment, innovativeness, willingness to stay, and satisfaction with life were adapted from existing scales. As such, place attachment and willingness to stay measures were adapted from Lalli, M (1992). Each scale consisted of a four item scale. Innovativeness was measured using a Kropp, Lindsay, and Shoham's (2006) four item scale. To measure satisfaction with life we used Pavot and Diener (2009) five item scale. Respondents were asked to indicate the degree of agreement with the items using a Likert-type scale from 1 (Totally disagree) to 7 (Totally agree). Given the exploratory nature of this research, no valid scales were found to measure contextual indicators. As such, the questionnaire was built on indicators identified in the literature review. For the final version the author conducted a content validity by consulting three tourism academics. Subsequently, a pre-test was performed using five CTE to validate wording and adequacy to respondents' profile. Table 2 describes the sample.

**Table 2.** Sample descriptives

Gender	66% male 34% female
Age	7.5% < 30 years old 12.5% 30-40 years old 25.6% 40-50 years old 44.4% 50-60 years old 10% > 60 years old
Place of origin	62% autochthonous 38% come from other locations

The questionnaire included the respondents' socio-demographic information, a second section measuring place attachment, innovativeness, willingness to stay, and satisfaction with life, and a third section asking 14 topics identified in the literature review. In this case, respondents were asked to indicate «What attracts you to this place (neighborhood, town, city)? Indicate to what extent this place attracts you or deviate to develop your activity» on a scale ranging from -3 = Deviate a lot, 0 = Does not deviate or attract, 3 = Attracts a lot. Table 3 presents the items list.

**Table 3.** Survey contextual items

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Geographic location
Access to resources (natural, raw materials, specialized suppliers ...).
Access to the market (tourists, visitors, etc.)
Local authorities' incentive policy (subsidies, fiscal incentives, etc.).
Marketing done to attract visitors to this place.
Dimension of the locality
Potential for future development
Taxes and rates
Quality of life
Entrepreneurial culture
Creative atmosphere in this place.
Network of alliances or contacts that promote cooperation
Existence of complementary institutions (schools, cultural centers, etc.)
Quality of public and private services (health, transport, etc.).

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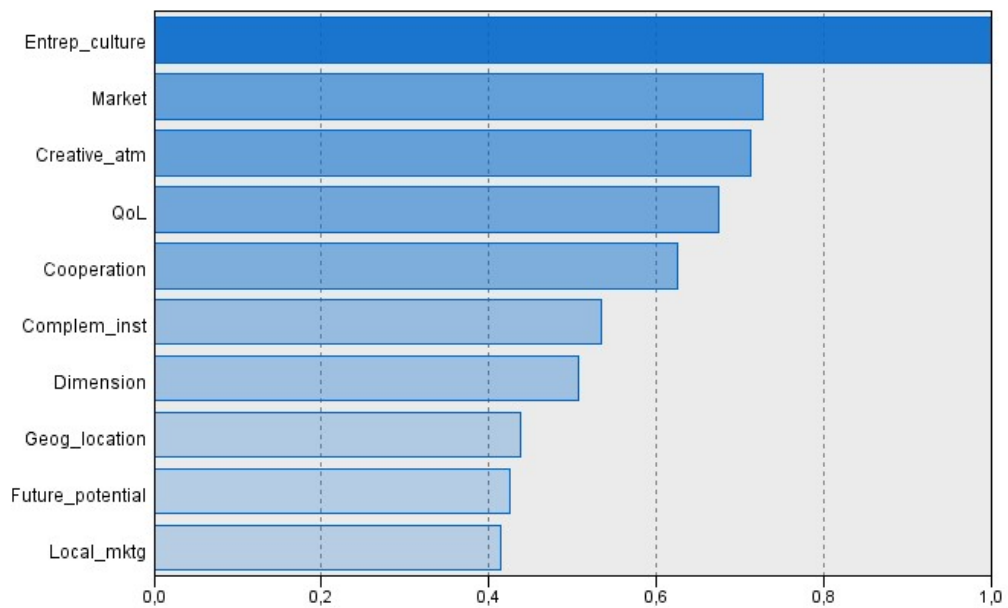
Considering the objectives established for this research, a cluster analysis was determined to be the best approach. This technique has been extensively used in tourism research (c.f. Brida, Osti, & Barquet, 2010; Vareiro, Remoaldo, & Cadima Ribeiro, 2013). As an exploratory data analysis tool, this technique allows to group similar observations in clusters using the measured values of several contextual variables for each entrepreneur. The data was processed using two step cluster analyzed of SPSS version 26.

#### 4. Results

The results of the study provide a ranking of predictors. Figure 1 shows the order of importance. The indicators excluded by the models were: access to resources, policy of incentives of the authorities, taxes and rates, and quality of public and private services.

The most important predictor is the existence in the destination of an entrepreneurial culture, followed by access to the market (tourists, visitors, etc.), creative atmosphere, quality of life and level of cooperation. All these indicators are over 0.6. A second group of predictors, with values between 0.4 and 0.6, includes the existence of complementary institutions, the size of the destination, geographical location, future potential and local marketing.

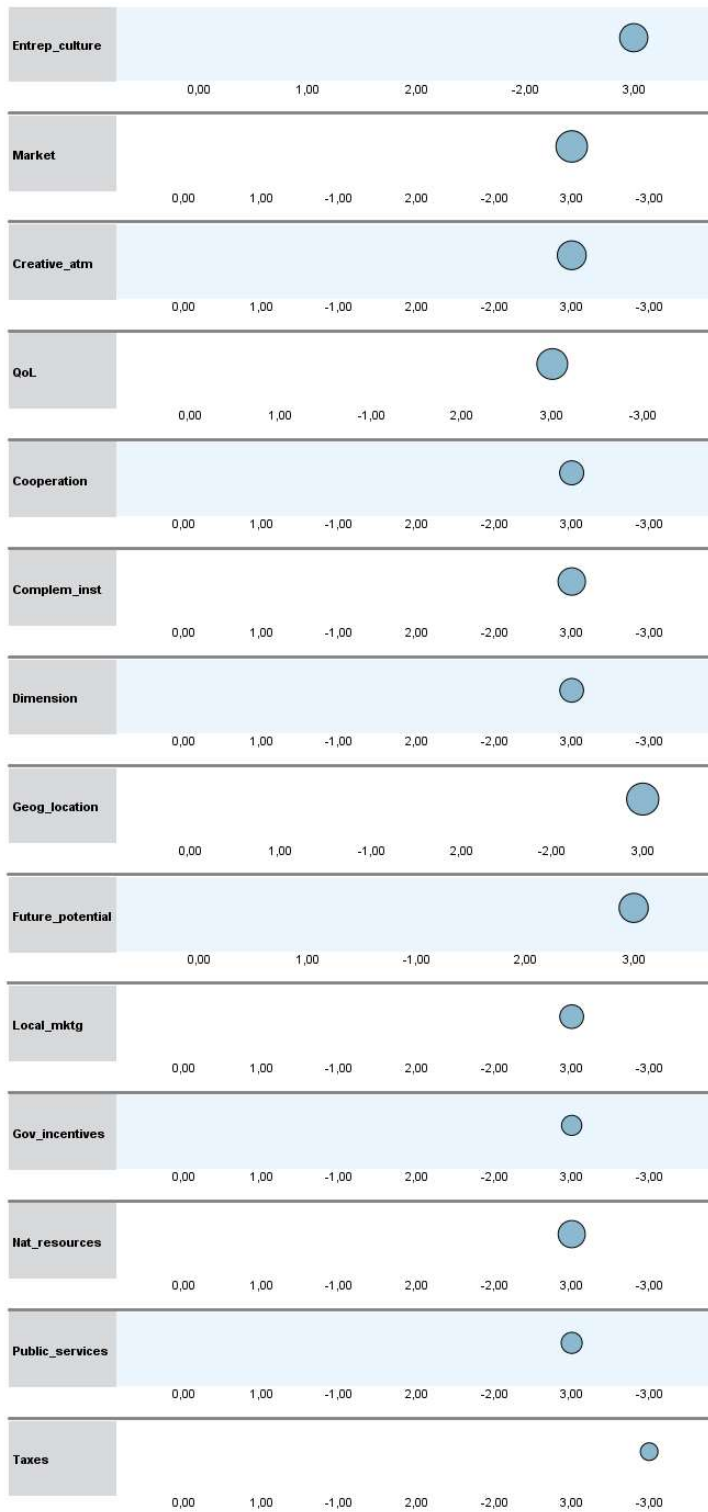
**Figure 1.** Predictor importance



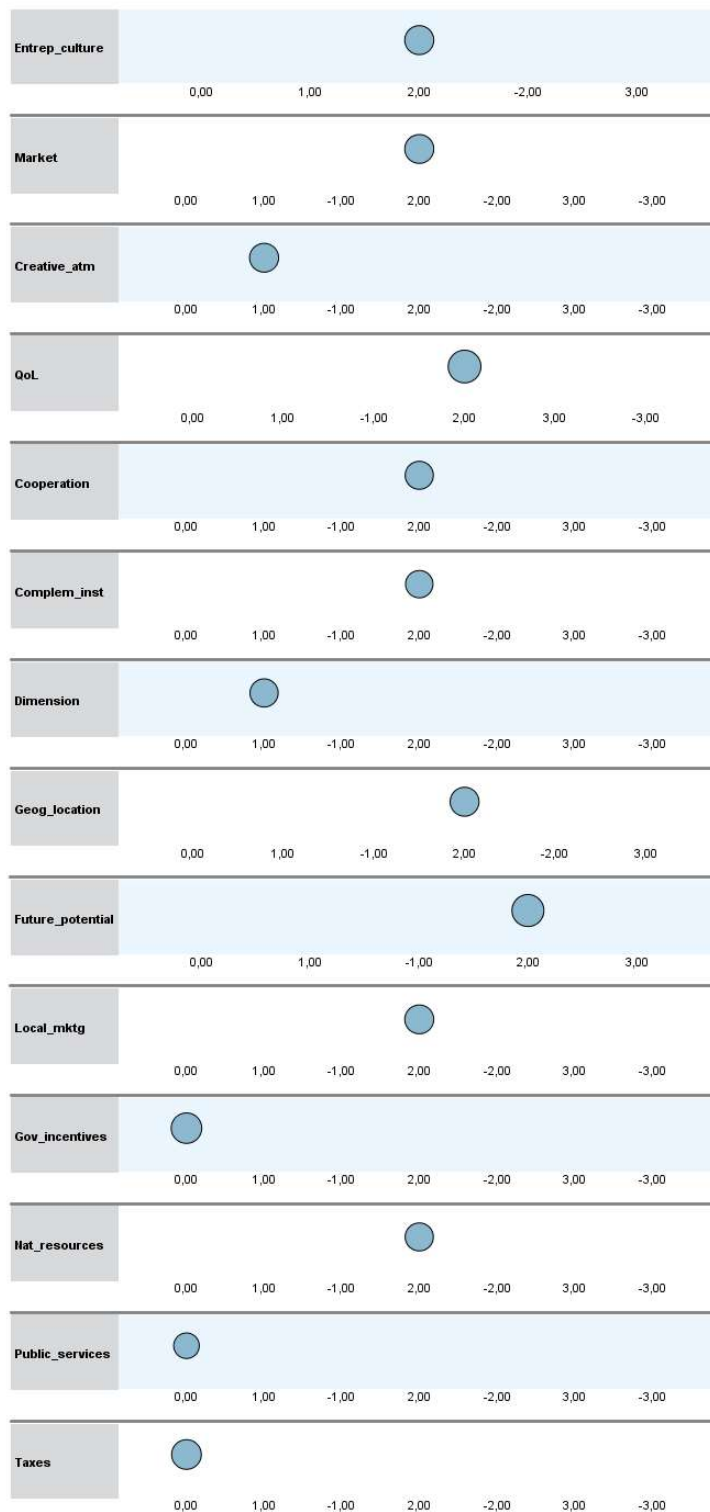
According to the results, two clusters were identified. Cluster 1 and 2 results are presented in figure 2 and Figure 3, respectively. Although the ranking is the same, the respondents in both groups gave different importance to the attraction factors. Cluster 1 showed that maximum importance was given to the factors, revealing a strong sensitivity to both lifestyle and market or business factors. The maximum response option (3) of this cluster occurred in 63% of the respondents in relation to entrepreneurial culture, 78.5% in market access, 66.2% in the creative atmosphere and 75.2% in quality of life. 85% of the respondents identified geographical location as very important. In Cluster 2 we see a drop in importance of factors such as creative atmosphere, locality size or government incentives. In regard to the four main factors identified in this cluster it was found that 36% responded 2 in relation to entrepreneurial culture, 36% indicated 2 in market access, 46% responded 1 in the creative atmosphere and 34% gave 2 in quality of life.



**Figure 2.** Cluster 1 comparison



**Figure 3. Cluster 2 comparison**



It was also examined how both clusters behaved in terms of the key variables for the tourism destination competitiveness. Specifically, differences in place attachment, innovativeness, willingness to stay and satisfaction with life were analyzed. Table 4 summarizes the results.

**Table 4.** Place attachment, innovation, willingness to stay and satisfaction with life means, Cronbach's alpha and standard deviation

	Cronbach Alpha	Cluster 1	Cluster 2
Place attachment	0.918	6.46 (0.92)	6.00 (1.37)
Innovativeness	0.815	6.29 (1.06)	6.00 (0.90)
Willingness to stay	0.887	4.52 (0.73)	3.80 (1.07)
Satisfaction with life	0.752	6.02 (1.31)	5.34 (1.24)

Although the values of place attachment and innovativeness are close, there is a significant difference regarding satisfaction with life, and particularly willingness to stay.

## 5. Discussion

The predictors' hierarchy shows very interesting results. It focuses on a set of indicators associated with CTEs. It reveals that these entrepreneurs value a combination of indicators associated with their lifestyle (entrepreneurial culture, creative atmosphere, quality of life and degree of cooperation) with business indicators followed by (access to the market). Although this balance is acknowledged in previous studies (c.f. Fu et al., 2019; Sun & Xu, 2019; Dias et al., 2021b), the importance and hierarchy represent a contribution of this study.

The second group of indicators, of less importance, refers mainly to market or business factor such as destination size, geographical location, future potential and local marketing. A more detailed analysis of both groups shows that the first is more lifestyle-related and the second more business-oriented. This fact reveals the importance of quality of life and the entrepreneurial and creative environment of a space in the decisions of CTEs, showing that they are not as profit-oriented as other entrepreneurs in other branches of activity (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Shaw & Williams, 2004).

The analysis of the results of the clusters allows the identification of two types of CTEs. The first group, which we call *balanced*, presents itself as much more judicious regarding attraction factors, which result from a combination of lifestyle-related factors with market or economic factors. These entrepreneurs are seeking to balance lifestyle goals with business-oriented objectives. Previous research had identified this group (c.f. Su, Bredvold & Skålen, 2016; Zhang & Cai, 2020; Thomas et al, 2011). For example, Wang, Hung and Huang (2019a) analyzed the dynamics of these entrepreneurs, looking at patterns of change from a lifestyle orientation to a business orientation and vice versa. This research advances this knowledge by identifying specific factors in this balance such as the existence in the tourism destination of an entrepreneurial culture, creative atmosphere and quality of life, which are lifestyle related with market access and geographical location which are business-oriented.

As argued by Yachin (2019), entrepreneurial activity cannot be dissociated from the context. It can thus be noted that entrepreneurs in this group have a high degree of place

attachment and innovation, and that these two dimensions are associated as claimed by Fu et al. (2019). Local identity also plays an essential role in differentiation from large companies (Bredvold & Skálén, 2016). According to the literature, the place has an essential role in the competitiveness of CTEs since it represents the resource and knowledge base (Kibler, Fink & Lang, 2015) and provides greater proximity to local stakeholders, which facilitates the process of co-creating experiences (García-Rosell, Haanpää, & Janhunen, 2019).

One important finding is related to the significant importance regarding satisfaction with life and, in particular, the willingness to stay. This feature distinguishes both groups. The first group, despite being more demanding about the factors that attract entrepreneurs to a tourism destination, also reveal a greater intention to stay in the place and are more satisfied with their life. In addition, although the difference is small, this group has a higher level of innovative capacity and identification with the place. This finding is important because it focuses the attention of the tourist destination decision makers on a group that is better aligned with the local promotion strategy. CTEs may conflict with what is intended by official entities, because by having their own agenda and interests, they may generate positioning and communication problems (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Dawson, Fountain, & Cohen, 2011; Einermann, Mattson & Carson, 2019).

The second group meets the profile of the tendentially less innovative identified by Ioannides and Petersen (2003). We designate this group of *prospectors*, since they tend to value less contextual factors and, simultaneously, lower willingness to stay and satisfaction with life. Although they are CTEs, they give less importance to factors such as creative atmosphere or locality size. We are facing entrepreneurs who correspond to a category that is oriented to capitalize on opportunities (Hjalager, Kwiatkowski, & Østervig, 2018). For these entrepreneurs, tourism is an interesting option due to the low entry barriers, such as low investment or the lower qualifications required (cooper, 2015), and for this reason they have little business experience (Marchant & Mottiar, 2011). Prospectors give less importance to the characteristics of the place. Of the main predictors identified, little relevance is given to factors such as creative atmosphere and entrepreneurial culture.

This study complements the findings from previous research regarding the role the context on willingness to stay. In fact, Dias et al. (2021a) showed that willingness to stay was only influenced by the context through the mediating effect of community attachment. The current study adds the importance of innovativeness which was lower in this group of entrepreneurs. As such, the potential of the place to develop their creative potential seems to be important for their willingness to stay. Furthermore, Dias and Silva (2021) also showed that self-efficacy represents an important condition for the willingness to stay. They showed that reduced willingness to stay is associated with a low relationship with the place and the community. This finding can be also linked to other research in relation to the availability of other entrepreneurs that can contribute to stimulate the entrepreneur's creativity. In this vein, social capital seems important for developing tourism businesses, as found by Dias et al. (2022).

## **6. Conclusion**

This study aims to deepen the existing knowledge on the factors of attraction and retention of CTEs. Through the analysis of the importance of the various indicators, this study has made it possible to realize that the balance between economic and non-economic indicators in CTEs

business management, gives primacy to factors associated with lifestyle over economic ones. Two types of entrepreneurs were also identified: the balanced ones that are more demanding in relation to destination quality in a broad set of parameters but are more willing to stay when they are satisfied with the place, and the prospectors with less demand in relation to the parameters, but also less willing to stay in a place. The identification of these groups reveals itself as a contribution of this research, extending the existing knowledge with regard to the priorities and criteria for the choice of the CTEs.

This research also has important practical implications. Firstly, for destinations wishing to develop creative tourism projects, it is very important to foster activities that favour the development of a creative atmosphere and an entrepreneurial culture. It is not a question of resorting to traditional models of fostering entrepreneurship applicable to large companies or entrepreneurs in other sectors of activity, more business-oriented, but something that is in line with the values and lifestyle of the CTEs (Wang, et al., 2019b). To this end, it is important to geographically demarcate the neighborhood or location chosen for the project as suggested by Richards and Wilson (2006). Next, it is essential to work on the vibrant character of this atmosphere, namely through events and festivities, the more spontaneous the better.

Simultaneously, the identification of two types of entrepreneurs is important because it focuses the attention of the tourist destination decision makers on a group that is better aligned with the local promotion strategy. It is known that the CTEs follow their own objectives and values, not always aligned with what is intended by the entities that manage the destination, and may generate problems of positioning and communication (Eimermann, Mattson & Carson, 2019). Thus, destination managers can focus their attention on retaining entrepreneurs by creating favorable conditions both in terms of quality of life and in showing their ability to attract tourists who value creative tourism activities.

Regarding future studies recommendations, we first suggest the test of personal characteristics with the tested models, like gender, place of origin or age. We especially highlight the influence of age in willingness to stay. In fact, half of our sample is composed of participants with more than 50 years of age. This points to the attraction power of tourism for entrepreneurs related to creative or lifestyle aims. This study goals did not pursue testing this variable since we were linking with existing theory on creative entrepreneurship regarding the attraction power of a place, not the entrepreneurs' characteristics. However, this suggests a very interesting path for future research.

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