

# Talent in hospitality entrepreneurship

## A conceptualization and research agenda

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to develop an integrative conceptual framework of the “talented hospitality entrepreneur”. In doing so, the authors address the current lack of understanding of talent at the individual entrepreneurial level and the lack of integration between the talent and entrepreneurship literatures and specifically consider the hospitality context.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This conceptual paper systematically synthesizes the extant literature and links key concepts within talent management, entrepreneurship, hospitality and human resource management to develop a model of the talented hospitality entrepreneur.

**Findings** – Seven propositions emerge from the literature synthesis, and the integrative conceptual model is developed to define the individual antecedents of the talented hospitality entrepreneur and their outcomes for success.

**Originality/value** – To date, understanding of the individual level of talent has been neglected in the management literature. The quandary is that the extant literature on talent has focused on the management of talent at an organizational level, while the entrepreneurship literature has concentrated on spatial macro-level effects. Further, the notion of talent in hospitality literature remains underexplored. Adopting an inclusive view of talent, the authors offer a new integrative framework explaining the constituencies of talent for hospitality entrepreneurs and an associated research agenda.

**Keywords** Entrepreneurs, Careers, Talent, Future of work, Hospitality, Changing job landscape

**Paper type** Research paper

### 1. Introduction

Talent is the backbone of the hospitality industry (Baum, 2008a; D’Annunzio-Green, 2008; Deery and Jago, 2015; Watson, 2008). Talent in the hospitality sector is needed to lead and motivate staff, to develop, innovate and commercialize new services and products, understand international and domestic markets, manage seasonality, co-create value, provide service quality, be hospitable, manage emotional labor whilst ensuring customer satisfaction and positive word-of mouth, and in summary, to set and renew strategic



capabilities to remain competitive. Although the extant literature suggests talent implies the superior mastery and exceptional quality of abilities, skills, personality, motivation and knowledge, placing a talent in the top 10 per cent relative to their peers (Gagné, 2000; Silzer and Church, 2009; Vinkhuyzen *et al.*, 2009), what it means to have and be a talent remains obscure and vague.

Talent is usually defined from an organization-bound perspective and evaluated relative to organizational demands (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen, 2016; Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013). Human resource management (HRM) researchers typically focus on investigating how to attract and retain talent within larger organizations (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). An under-researched area in the literature is an individual-level understanding of talent – including abilities, behaviors, competencies and motivations as relevant in certain domains (Dries, 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen, 2016). Instead of arguing that only *very few* people are talented—the *exclusive* definition of talent (Gagné, 2000) that prevails in the extant HRM literature, we align with the *inclusive* definition and argue that *every* individual can be talented in a specific area of work (Buckingham and Vosburgh, 2001; Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Meyers and Van Woerkom, 2014) if given the opportunity to hone their capabilities.

This paper proposes that in addition to an organization-bound view of talent, an individual-level entrepreneurial understanding of talent in hospitality is needed as studies predict that there will be more self-employment in light of the changing job landscape. Rapidly evolving technologies and new ways of organizing work will ultimately lead to changing occupations (Arntz *et al.*, 2016; Nedelkoska and Quintini, 2018). Therefore, within the hospitality sector, with its low barriers to entry (Singal, 2015), individuals will have increasing interest in seeking entrepreneurial opportunities for more self-managed careers that are not tied to organizations (Ravenelle, 2017).

Against this background, and accounting for an overall gap in understanding of talent at the individual level (Ross, 2013; Tansley, 2011), the paper posits that it is essential to view hospitality entrepreneurs from a talent-perspective for three major reasons. First, workforce research has been traditionally neglected in hospitality journals (Baum, 2015), and HRM and leadership issues such as identifying, managing and retaining talent remain unaddressed for hospitality businesses (Deery and Jago, 2015). Moreover, general HRM and leadership research mainly addresses large organizations, whereas the majority of hospitality businesses are micro or small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Peters *et al.*, 2018).

Second, it is known from the management literature that talented people are the most successful people in their respective areas and talents have certain abilities and behaviors to perform tasks more successfully than their peers (Gagné, 2000, 2004; Vinkhuyzen *et al.*, 2009). However, the literature review for this paper shows there is little understanding of what constitutes talent in respect of individual hospitality entrepreneurs. Specifically, it is unknown what talent means in relation to starting a hospitality business, and being a talent, i.e. a successful hospitality entrepreneur. We further argue that the hospitality work environment needs to be understood as this context posits unique challenges (e.g. hospitableness, emotional labor, seasonality and co-creation of customer experiences) that affect talent and entrepreneurial success in this sector.

Third, as already noted, it is also the contention of this paper that the phenomenon of talent needs to be understood in light of the changing job landscape in hospitality, including technological advancements and new work arrangements. To date, very little is known about what this means for entrepreneurship talent – and what it takes for talent in hospitality to realize new opportunities and develop new successful hospitality enterprises.

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This study responds to these research gaps by proposing a linking framework detailed later in this paper. The paper is organized as follows; section two outlines the methodology, section three draws on different disciplines to define talent and discusses various limitations of the concept, in section four we proceed to discuss spacial-macro level perspectives of talent in respect of the entrepreneurship literature. Section five contextualizes the meaning of talent for hospitality, section six shows how the job landscape has changed and details the future of work in hospitality. In section seven, the integrative conceptual framework emerges from a synthesis of the notion of talent within the talent, entrepreneurship, hospitality and HRM literature. Seven propositions are proposed for hospitality researchers to progress the field and our understanding of the “talented hospitality entrepreneur”.

## 2. Methodology

With the aim of developing an integrative conceptual framework to define the talented hospitality entrepreneur, a wide-ranging, systematic synthesis of the literature was conducted to underpin this framework. The method chosen was a narrative literature review, which is best suited to synthesize specific knowledge related to a specific research aim (Baumeister and Leary, 1997; Cronin *et al.*, 2008). Narrative reviews are conducted with the aim to develop, interpret and critique – in our case the phenomenon of the talented hospitality entrepreneur. Greenhalgh *et al.* (2018, p. 3) suggest that “the narrative review, (.) deals in plausible truth. Its goal is an authoritative argument, based on informed wisdom that is convincing to an audience of fellow experts”.

We conducted a three-step process to establish the final body of peer-reviewed, academic articles considered in this review, which were published over a 20 year period (1998-2018). In step one, we determined the search terms. With our working definition of talent as above-average ability and innate characteristics that make individuals who possess, develop, and use these perform above average in a given performance domain (Gagné, 2000; Nijs *et al.*, 2014), we determined the terms “talent”, “entrepreneur” and “hospitality” were appropriate search terms. In step two, we narrowed the scope of the research domains to include four core research areas including the talent, HRM, hospitality, and entrepreneurship domains. The search further revealed that discussion of the individual level of talent frequently occurred in the creative arts, sports, as well as the education and psychology literatures. Thus, to achieve a deeper understanding of the notion of talent at the individual level, relevant research from these fields was also synthesized.

In step three, we selected appropriate search databases to provide comprehensive coverage of the multiple research domains. Initially, to gain a broad overview, the Scopus database was searched based on its high-quality publications, user-friendliness and convenient sorting and ranking features (Mongeon and Paul-Hus, 2016). We then searched Google Scholar as a web-based academic search engine, which is typically used in literature reviews to screen the first 50-100 publications, and included doctoral and master theses (Haddaway *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, we searched Science Direct to complement the search, and focus on publications from highly ranked quality journal outlets (as referenced from the 2016 Australian Business Deans Council journal ranking list). Finally, with the goal of selecting only those articles that would be truly informative to the literature review, we evaluated the scope of each paper. In particular, the abstracts and keywords were reviewed with irrelevant studies discarded from further consideration.

## 3. Talent

Based on the articles reviewed, it is clear that the extant literature commonly links talent with being successful and high performing (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen, 2016). An

individual is considered a talent, when he/she possesses, develops, and uses the exceptional characteristics “to display exceptionally high performance in a domain that requires special skills and training” (Simonton, 1999, p. 436). Success stems from a person’s intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgement, attitude, character and drive. It also includes his or her ability to “learn and grow” (Michaels *et al.*, 2001, p. 12). Talented individuals have exceptional skills and expertise in a certain domain (Gagné, 2004; Vinkhuyzen *et al.*, 2009) that comes as the result of a combination of high performance and high potential. Gagné (2000, p. 67) notes that:

[...] the term “talent” designates the superior mastery of systematically developed abilities (or skills) and knowledge in at least one field of human activity, to a degree that places an individual within the top 10% of age peers who are (or have been) active in that field.

Authors within HRM note that research interest in understanding talent has only gained momentum since the phrase the “war of talent” was created (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). The increased interest in talent management in a larger organizational context comes with a shift from a traditional operation-focused HRM paradigm to a more strategic view, where talented employees and managers are viewed as a key competitive advantage (Ashton and Morton, 2005; Collings and Mellahi, 2009). Despite burgeoning research interest, only a minority of studies provide an explicit definition of talent, which leads to a certain vagueness of the term in the HRM literature (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen, 2016).

As we will show in this section, the wide variation about the meaning of talent found in the literature can be grouped into two approaches: the first is to view talent as an object (“having” talent) and is based on personal *characteristics* such as an above-average innate giftedness, whereas the second is to view talent as a subject (“being” a talented person), referring to *persons* who are classified as talents by employers, such as people possessing special skills or abilities to fill decisive positions (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013). Further compounding this definitional vagueness are differences across cultures; talent is described as innate giftedness in European languages (e.g. French, German, Russian) whereas talent refers to both innate giftedness and learned ability in Asian countries (e.g. Japan) (Tansley, 2011). Subsequently, *having talent* and *being a talented person* might therefore be a culture-bound construct.

Overall, it is clear that the HRM literature views talent as almost exclusively organization-bound. Following the approach of talent as a subject, i.e. “being” a talented person, we find organizations demonstrating either an inclusive perspective on talent (including all employees) or an exclusive perspective (defining an elite subset of employees). Being talented is mostly defined as an exclusive group in practice. That is, aligned to the latter perspective, employers select talented employees by means of their significance to the organization (so-called A-positions such as managers, professionals, engineers, knowledge workers) or those who have demonstrated high potential/performance that allows them to make optimal contributions to the organization (so-called A-players) (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen, 2016).

Thus, the key focus of HRM is the management of talent. Talent management is often conceptualized within the human capital construct implying that talent in an organization is both valuable (i.e. pivotal to the organization’s core business and enhancing its competitive advantage) and unique (i.e. difficult to replace) (Lepak and Snell, 1999). For example, large organizations will assume organizational accountability for career management and select talent for intra-organizational mobility, internal development and other formalized career management practices (Dries *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, the focus not only lies on organizational-bound definitions of talent but these are also contextualized to large HRM

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departments and multinational firms in relation to identifying, assessing, recruiting, retaining and promoting talent (Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013). With this concentration on large organizations, little is known about what defines talent and how talent can be managed in micro, SME and entrepreneurial contexts and definitions of talent in relation to entrepreneurship remain largely absent from the literature.

Despite the importance of understanding talent relative to organizational settings within the HRM domain, the individual-level perspective of talent – “having talent” – remains underdeveloped and the epistemological foundations of the notion of talent appear to be limited. This void in a deeper understanding of talent is surprising, given its importance in the respective HRM literature; e.g. knowledge about individual talent is necessary in implementing a range of HR practices (Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Dries, 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen, 2016). Reasons for this gap in understanding talent in the HRM literature might be explained by the quandary that “research on TM [talent management] has been lagging behind businesses in offering vision and leadership in this field” (Al Ariss *et al.*, 2014, p. 173).

The hospitality literature also offers very limited insights and an overall lack of understanding of what constitutes individual talent in hospitality. Yet, there appears to be a growing interest in managing and attracting talent (Gröschl, 2011), understanding role demands for general managers (Bharwani and Talib, 2017) and retaining talent in hospitality (Christensen Hughes and Rog, 2008). However, a void exists in understanding how learned abilities and innate characteristics of talent can be conceptualized for the hospitality sector. This gap might be rooted in the overall lack of interest in workforce and enabler studies in the field (Baum, 2015; Zehrer *et al.*, 2014).

Drawing on literature from other disciplines such as creative arts, sports, education and psychology, the notion of talent is also defined as “giftedness”, “innate talent” “inherent ability potential”, “intelligence” and “skilled and high ability” (Baker and Wattie, 2018; Gardner, 2000) and typically associated with commitment and motivation (Weiss and Mackay, 2009). For example, artistic talent is a mix of an individual’s inborn exceptional talent and the development of that talent:

The potential for exceptional talent in a domain is likely to be inborn. This is not meant to diminish in any way the years of hard work that go into developing a talent, because without effort potential remains just potential (Milbrath, 1998, p. 13).

Talent develops when these natural abilities are transformed through systematic learning and practice. Thus, a talented person is always gifted, but a gifted person does not necessarily develop a talent and display exceptionally high performance of it (Simonton, 1999).

At this stage in the discussion of talent, limitations of the concept need to be highlighted. One limitation is that some studies argue that only a few people are talented Gagné’s (2000) and positing an *exclusive* definition of talent, which is often prevailing in the HRM literature as presented above. However, critics of this *exclusive* view propose an *inclusive* perspective on talent; instead they argue that every individual can become a talent and has the potential to become excellent in a specific domain; subsequently, specific talents can be productively applied at work (Buckingham and Vosburgh, 2001; Peterson and Seligman, 2004). According to this *inclusive* definition, these talents need to be identified and can be made use of by placing individuals in positions that allow them to play to and develop their strengths (Meyers and Van Woerkom, 2014).

Further, research suggests that there is a curvilinear relation between high giftedness or intelligence and the transfer of this giftedness into practice. For example, Simonton (2000)

notes that an overly high IQ can hinder individuals in accomplishing certain tasks, as expert knowledge might not be understood by others (e.g. colleagues, peers, customers). “A mathematical physicist can afford to be understood by only a handful of experts; a politician, entrepreneur, commander, or religious leader cannot” (Simonton, 2000, p. 112). Further, talent does not always lead to high performance, e.g. talented persons can become disengaged when unsatisfied with their jobs or the organization and too much individual talent can hinder team performance (Swaab *et al.*, 2014).

In the following, we focus on the individual level of talent, as the organizational context is less relevant within the entrepreneurship domain. We define talent broadly as a set of knowledge, skills, abilities, personality characteristics, cognitive abilities or motivation (Silzer and Church, 2009) that leads to above-average performance as an entrepreneur. Hence, we follow an *inclusive* talent definition while assuming that performance outcomes will differ between entrepreneurs due to differences in external conditions. Such environmental catalysts include the milieu, people in the immediate environment, the measures offered to develop abilities and formative events (Gagné, 2000). Thus, “having” talent implies that entrepreneurs’ talent and the work context need to fit, suggestive that talent is not always transferable from one organizational context to another and is relative rather than absolute (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013).

#### 4. Entrepreneurship and talent

In reviewing the entrepreneurship literature, we note that it commonly discusses talent from a macro-spatial perspective, neglecting fuller understanding of the individual-level characteristics and competencies of entrepreneurs. For example, talent is proposed as a stimulant for regional innovation and talent systems for local economies (Lawton Smith *et al.*, 2005). Talent is discussed in light of transforming regions and the importance of talent in driving entrepreneurial activity in local economies (Lawton Smith *et al.*, 2005; Venkataraman, 2004). Acs *et al.* (2016) detail how public policy programs are used to attract entrepreneurial talent. Structural aspects of talent management are considered, too; for example, how talent flows between countries (Carr *et al.*, 2005) and how talented expat-entrepreneurs are attracted to return to their home country (Wang and Liu, 2016). Implications that arise from these studies are clear in terms of advising regions to create talent systems (Cooke, 2007).

Firstly, in terms of their abilities, behaviors and competencies, successful entrepreneurs discover and act on opportunities (Phillips and Tracey, 2007), have the ability to learn from failure (Cope, 2011), are calculated risk-takers (Koh, 1996) and promote constant innovation (Zhao, 2005). Interestingly, the ability to manage risk in the entrepreneurship literature is almost uniquely related to financial risk; behaviors and abilities to manage psychological, career-related or social risks (e.g. family relationships) remain largely ignored (Frederick and Kuratko, 2010). Other entrepreneurial competencies cited as key capabilities leading to entrepreneurial success include conceptual, analytical and negotiation skills (Hynes and Richardson, 2007). More specifically, entrepreneurial competencies include strategic planning, product development, marketing, financial acumen, HRM, business development, accounting, customer relationship management, quality management, and leadership (Mitchelmore and Rowley, 2013).

Secondly, there are a range of *innate personality traits* attributed to successful entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurial process “which includes recognition of an opportunity, its evaluation, and development *per se*” (Ardichvili *et al.*, 2003, p. 118). In this regard, creativity is a key characteristic of entrepreneurs allowing them to detect opportunities where others see none (Ardichvili *et al.*, 2003; Weinberger *et al.*, 2018). Wiklund *et al.* (2018) consider



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impulsivity as a positive antecedent of creativity, leading to spontaneous ideas and creative impulses. Further, the extant literature posits that a high tolerance for ambiguity and a strong need for achievement (Koh, 1996) are also traits associated with entrepreneurs, combined with a greater need for autonomy and independence (Schjoedt, 2009), high levels of self-efficacy and self-confidence (Fuller *et al.*, 2018), resilience (Krueger and Brazeal, 1994), high levels of optimism and a commitment towards themselves and their business (Timmons, 1999).

Critically, it should be recognized that entrepreneurs are not a homogenous group. Schoar (2010) highlights that “much less effort has been devoted to studying the actual entrepreneurs who are agents of change and the heterogeneity among these individuals” (p. 58). She goes on to provide robust evidence to support a divide between subsistence and transformational entrepreneurs, noting the former typically possess less education and run very small businesses as an alternative to unemployment, whilst the latter group, characterized by higher levels of educational outcomes and greater tolerance levels to risk-taking, are rarer in establishing and growing large businesses that go on to provide significant employment opportunities for others. Schoar (2010) is critical of many entrepreneurial policy initiatives that assume a smooth evolution from subsistence to transformational entrepreneurship, with her work indicating that only a small minority of subsistence entrepreneurs make this transition.

Historically, economic success and business growth were viewed as the key outcomes of entrepreneurial success (Bygrave and Hofer, 1992; Kodithuwakku and Rosa, 2002; Wennekers and Thurik, 1999). Yet, more recently, the entrepreneurship literature has emphasized broader outcomes. For example, Flanagan *et al.* (2018) suggest cooperative competition or cooptation as a success factor and Hlady-Rispal and Servantie (2018) propose success through social value creation and social entrepreneurship. Further, with the growing recognition of well-being and mental health, scholars posit that psychological well-being has become equally important for successful entrepreneurs (Nikolaev *et al.*, 2019; Rauch *et al.*, 2018). The next section of the paper moves to situate studies of entrepreneurship relative to hospitality as a sector and hospitality work.

## 5. The uniqueness of hospitality entrepreneurship

Like the literature on talent, Fu *et al.* (2019) argue that industry context may affect the outcomes of entrepreneurial activities, hence the importance of understanding sector-based considerations of entrepreneurship in hospitality. This leads us to question what learned abilities, behaviors, competencies and innate personality traits might be more salient for entrepreneurial success in hospitality as opposed to other industry settings.

We contend that the trait of hospitableness, which forms the cornerstone of the hospitality industry (Bratton and Waton, 2018; Lashley, 2018), is one such differentiator inherently required by talented hospitality entrepreneurs. While hospitality refers to the relationship between hosts and guests regardless of setting (private or commercial), with its religious and historical roots as a moral obligation to host strangers (Lee-Ross and Lashley, 2009) – hospitableness, in its pure form, is akin to altruism (Ramdhony and D’Annunzio-Green, 2018). Being hospitable represents freely given care to guests in light of the absence of an ulterior motive, though these motives have been recognized as existing on a continuum with self-interested motives (e.g. personal gain) at the other extreme (Lashley, 2015). Telfer’s (2000) examination of the philosophy of hospitableness reveals the nuances of the concept and calls into question whether a commercial host can ever truly be hospitable in light of the guest not being invited by the host (as in the case of private settings) and paying for their service. She goes on to argue that if the motives for practicing hospitality are appropriate (i.e.

stemming predominantly from wanting to please others rather than self or reciprocal in nature) then a commercial host could be said to be hospitable.

Whilst not explicitly referencing talent or entrepreneurship, Telfer (2000, p. 48) does note that “attributing the trait of hospitableness to a person describes them as going beyond the average”, which is a benchmark beyond normal that is often attributed to talents and entrepreneurs. Lee-Ross and Lashley (2009, p. 175) also highlight that hospitableness “can provide a model for staff training as well as service quality definition and management which can build a genuine competitive advantage for hospitality entrepreneurs”. Finally, in the only work to our knowledge that explicitly discusses hospitableness in respect of the emergent talent management literature, Ramdhony and D’Annunzio-Green (2018) suggest that the trait is a unique talent in respect of the hospitality and tourism sectors, that is both innate and can be learned. Mirroring Lee-Ross and Lashley’s (2009) view, Ramdhony and D’Annunzio-Green (2018) note the competitive advantages of nurturing hospitableness as a talent but note that the practice of doing so might lead to the commodification of hospitableness in commercial hospitality settings. The authors go on to propose a framework for organizations to leverage hospitableness across the talent management process (sourcing, nurturing, rewarding and embedding) as opposed to the focus of the current paper on the talented hospitality entrepreneur at an individual level.

Akin to the findings of the wider body of entrepreneurship literature, hospitality entrepreneurs are not homogenous in type. Recognizing the dominance of SMEs in the sector, Lee-Ross and Lashley (2009) highlight that many of hospitality businesses (e.g. cafes, pubs and bars) are run by lifestyle entrepreneurs who may represent family businesses and are focused on making a reasonable wage but not pursuing exponential growth or huge profits. Instead their motives are “primarily based in a desire to live in a particular location, or to enjoy more personal control over work, or to avoid labour market problems” (Lee-Ross and Lashley, 2009, p. 58). Often this cohort has no formal hospitality training and the industry’s inherently low barriers facilitate their entry into the sector. Fu *et al.*’s (2019) review of the hospitality and tourism entrepreneurship literature published between 1995 and 2016 supports the bifurcation between lifestyle and growth-oriented entrepreneurs, with the latter group being more economically motivated, risk tolerant and creative. The divide between these two types and some of their similar patterns mirrors to a large degree Schoar’s (2010) transformational and subsistence typology.

Regardless of type, hospitality entrepreneurs contend with the willingness and ability of themselves and, if applicable, their employees to deliver the hospitableness required to fulfill or exceed guest expectations. High levels of hospitableness need to be maintained despite the high variability of hospitality services tailored to individual customer demands. Challenges also come from the necessity of simultaneously juggling strategic aspects of business development and operational, front-line customer service. These demands require that hospitality entrepreneurs be flexible, demonstrate high levels of emotional intelligence, and have the ability to manage emotional labor (Moreo *et al.*, 2019). Bratton and Waton (2018) point out that managing emotional labor poses a key challenge in the hospitality workplace and that failure to adequately do so ultimately leads to high employee turnover. While employee turnover is inevitable in any industry, this is especially high in the hospitality industry, where wages are commonly low and career structures usually poor or non-existent (Baum, 2008b).

Another contextual challenge for hospitality entrepreneurs is posed by the seasonality of the tourism and hospitality sector, which is viewed as a hallmark of the industry. As tourism ebbs and flows with seasons, efforts to reduce the magnitude of such variation on hospitality demand have been attempted in regions that rely heavily on visitation during



limited seasons; this remains a challenge even as destinations attempt to shift demand (Saito and Romão, 2018). At an employee level, these characteristics place pressure on the stability of their earnings throughout the year; however, for hospitality entrepreneurs, such conditions magnify the need for calculated risk-taking and abilities to operate in conditions of ambiguity and uncertainty (Koh, 1996).

In an industry that caters to the enjoyment of its guests, the hospitality workforce is necessarily one that works unsocial hours. Correspondingly, the hospitality entrepreneur must suit these hours, balancing the management of their business during profitable periods with their own quality of life (Morrison, 2006). In pursuing this balance, hospitality entrepreneurs seek to protect their mental well-being that has been found to be imperative for their motivation and success (Peters *et al.*, 2018; Rowson and Lashley, 2012). However, a corresponding lack of work-life balance may induce sales of hospitality businesses in the face of competing demands (Andringa *et al.*, 2016).

The nature of hospitality means that hospitality organizations are often the co-creators of the experience with their guests (Mistilis *et al.*, 2014). This intrinsic linkage between hospitality entrepreneurs and their guests is a key contributor to customer experience, job satisfaction of the hospitality workforce, and the overall sustainability of destinations (Fu *et al.*, 2019). As a result, co-creation determines customer satisfaction that can enhance the collective competitiveness of a destination (Mistilis *et al.*, 2014). To further add to the contextual factors affecting hospitality entrepreneurship that are beyond the full control of entrepreneurs, Skokic *et al.* (2016) reiterate that socio-cultural and political contexts affecting their businesses have significant spheres of influence on their decision-making. Recognizing that talent, entrepreneurship and hospitality work is influenced by the changing job landscape, the next section of the paper focuses on this topic.

## 6. The job landscape has changed – the future of work in hospitality

The changing job landscape is another development that needs to be considered as influencing entrepreneurial talent within the hospitality sector. Computerization, artificial intelligence, automation, robots and the gig economy are likely to disrupt the nature of work across industries and occupations in that single job-tasks or even whole occupations will be automated by technology (Arntz *et al.*, 2016; Frey and Osborne, 2013; Müller, 2016; Nedelkoska and Quintini, 2018; Ravenelle, 2017). Most likely, the jobs created in this new environment will require a more complex skill set than those being lost, though a counter view of the gig economy platforms such as Airbnb suggests that the technology is “creating a disposable workforce [...] with inferior labour market practices” (Spencer, 2018, p. 7). Little is known, however, about how these digital capabilities are transforming entrepreneurship (Güneş and Bahçivan, 2018).

For the hospitality sector, a recent report commissioned by the OECD, puts forward a strong argument that it is less susceptible to job replacement through automation, as tasks that include social intelligence, maintaining effective social relationships, understanding cultural sensitivity, and handling ambiguous customer service encounters are difficult to automate (Nedelkoska and Quintini, 2018). Solnet *et al.* (2016, p. 222), in their analysis of trends affecting future hotel workers over a 15 to 25-year timeframe, found partial support for this supposition but ultimately also concluded “there will be fewer hotel jobs, with a firm core and periphery of hotel workers, the former highly valued and the latter largely just-in-time, transferable and disposable”. The authors did not extend their analysis to consider the potential role of hospitality entrepreneurs over the period of their imagined future. Hence, the extent to which hospitality entrepreneurs might be sheltered and/or benefit from

technology substitution in the future has yet to be established. For that reason, this paper argues that it is necessary to understand talent in this non-organization-bound context.

Regardless of the lack of available evidence as to the future of hospitality entrepreneurship, there is no doubt that the demand for talent in the hospitality industry has diversified. The notion of talent comprises successful self-employed, gig economy and globally mobile entrepreneurs, digital nomads and location-independent entrepreneurs (Müller, 2016) – in addition to traditional employment forms. However, the extent to which this diversification is creating meaningful entrepreneurial opportunities has been questioned. Ravenelle (2017), interviewing a range of gig economy workers including Airbnb hosts and Uber drivers, probed for their views about whether they saw themselves as entrepreneurs or employees. Whilst in Ravenelle's words, these companies seek to "craft an entrepreneurial ethos to convince workers to join" (p. 286), many of those interviewed identified themselves as workers and in some cases, viewed this work as a last resort akin to Schoar's (2010) view of subsistence entrepreneurship. The exception Ravenelle (2017) highlighted were Airbnb hosts who had multiple listings and firmly viewed themselves as being entrepreneurs in the sharing economy. Ahsan (2018), using Uber as an example, also highlights the rhetoric around entrepreneurship in the gig economy using the term "micro-entrepreneurs". The author goes on to argue that whilst drivers have time flexibility, once on shift they are closely monitored by customers and Uber via its algorithm, have no control over setting fares and unlike entrepreneurs in the true sense of the word, cannot co-create and capture the value of their efforts. Burtch *et al.* (2018, p. 5515) found a negative effect on entrepreneurial activity following the entry of Uber into local markets across America suggestive that gig economy platforms "provide necessity-based entrepreneurs with a preference, alternative source of employment". These collective findings suggest the scope for talented hospitality entrepreneurs to profit from existing gig economy platforms may be limited however new platforms expanding the scope of hospitality work may still be created.

Entrepreneurial talent also needs to be viewed in the long-term context of individual career paradigms. Douglas and Shepherd (2002) discuss what differentiates entrepreneurship careers from organizational-bound careers, suggesting three distinguishing attitudes. First, entrepreneurs have a different attitude to work effort, as they are prepared to work harder and for longer hours, and place work before family and personal well-being. Second, they suggest that entrepreneurs have a different attitude towards risk as we have already noted (Fu *et al.*, 2019; Schoar, 2010). Finally, they propose that a key differentiator is a higher need for independence, especially as entrepreneurs usually strive for higher decision-making autonomy (Douglas and Shepherd, 2002).

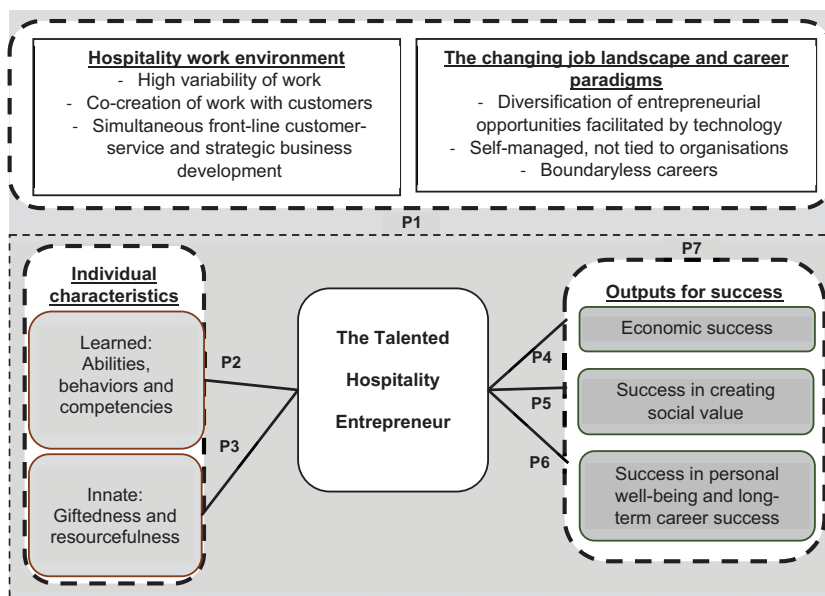
Whereas traditional careers were often aligned to organizations, the so-called modern career path is less structured and predictable (Wiernik and Kostal, 2019). Individuals (e.g. entrepreneurs) act independently from traditional organizational career arrangements (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). As a result of their life and work experience, individuals develop a career identity that can be defined as "a structure of meanings in which the individual links his own motivation, interests and competencies with acceptable work roles" (Meijers, 1998, p. 191). Moreover, modern careers involve varied experiences across jobs, industries and organizations (Clarke, 2013) and are associated with "less loyalty, greater mobility, and less certainty" (Briscoe and Hall, 2006, p. 5), and thus, have been coined boundaryless careers (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996).

Entrepreneurship provides an opportunity to embrace an individual career, allowing entrepreneurs to become aware of their interests, values, strengths and weaknesses; receive information about job opportunities, identify their own career goals; and develop and implement action plans to reach their career goals.

## 7. Propositions

Given the above understanding and knowledge gaps evident in the extant literature on talent and entrepreneurship generally and contextualized to hospitality and the changing job landscape, the linking framework detailed in Figure 1 is proposed to study the talented hospitality entrepreneur. In shaping this study, the framework is based on an adaptation of both the approaches of “having” talent and “being” a talent. Decoupling these approaches from their organization-bound origins, this paper adopts an *inclusive* view of talent. Thus, we conceptualize the talented hospitality entrepreneur as one who possesses exceptional learned and/or innate characteristics, and demonstrates higher potential/performance relative to other hospitality entrepreneurs. In this vein, we generally view subsistence entrepreneurs (Schoar, 2010) and some hospitality lifestyle entrepreneurs (Lee-Ross and Lashley, 2009) as being inherently less talented and/or doing worse in developing their potential and turning it into performance, particularly if these cohorts are operating hospitality platforms or businesses that are not substantially developed or owned by themselves and they are not aggressively pursuing business growth. Flowing from the model, seven propositions are offered to progress the study and definition of talented hospitality entrepreneurs (also included in Figure 1):

Positioned at the top of the model, the areas of literature reviewed in this paper are revisited and from each the key factors informing our understanding of the talented hospitality entrepreneur are distilled. It is not surmised here that all of these will come into play concurrently. Rather, this model provides a framework that researchers might investigate over time to provide an increasingly fuller picture of the externalities and antecedents shaping the talented hospitality entrepreneur and their outcomes. Yet, as the literature review showed for our study, the individual-level perspective of talent is shaped by two key contextual determinants:



**Figure 1.**  
Conceptual model of  
the talented  
hospitality  
entrepreneur

- (1) the hospitality work environment; and
- (2) the overall changing job landscape and career paradigms. Thus, the following proposition is formulated:

*P1.* Talented hospitality entrepreneurs must be cognizant of and adapt accordingly to contextual factors, such as the hospitality work environment and the changing job landscape and career paradigms, which influence the environment in which they grow their businesses.

Drawing upon the talent literature, this framework depicts that the talented hospitality entrepreneur possesses innate factors including giftedness and inner resourcefulness (Gagné, 2000, 2004), which must be practiced and honed over time to obtain mastery through learned behaviors in respect of the talent (Michaels *et al.*, 2001). Relative to the talented hospitality entrepreneur, these characteristics need to be explored to understand the meaning of talent in a hospitality context. Thus, the following propositions are formulated:

*P2.* Talented hospitality entrepreneurs demonstrate outstanding mastery of learned relevant abilities, behaviors and competencies (e.g. managing emotions and emotional labor, being hospitable, discovering and acting on opportunities, the ability to learn from failure and being calculated risk-takers, promoting constant innovation).

*P3.* Talented hospitality entrepreneurs demonstrate innate giftedness and inner resourcefulness (e.g. high levels of hospitableness, high levels of creativity, high tolerance for ambiguity, strong need for achievement, high need for autonomy and independence, high levels of self-efficacy, self-confidence and resilience and higher levels of optimism and a strong commitment towards themselves and the business).

The outcomes of the endeavors of talented hospitality entrepreneurs also require examination. As noted in respect of the broader entrepreneurship literature, success factors for talented entrepreneurs are broadening to encompass measures beyond economic performance (Bygrave and Hofer, 1992; Douglas and Shepherd, 2002). In respect of the model, economic success for entrepreneurs is considered important for them to sustain their business; maintain a certain lifestyle and to potentially grow, innovate and create jobs; and continuously gain financial knowledge, hence it is proposed:

*P4.* Talented hospitality entrepreneurs strive towards economic success.

Yet, this paper argues that with the increase of positive psychology (Youssef and Luthans, 2007), quality of life (Morrison, 2006) and the entrepreneur's higher order needs for social connectedness and social capital (Stam *et al.*, 2014), other factors can complement the traditional focus on economic logic. These individual characteristics need to be considered when defining the talent base of the hospitality entrepreneur. Success is formed through the balance of financial business needs and growth – with private and personal lives (Peters *et al.*, 2018). Success factors include individual well-being that combines the capacity to manage affective states such as negative emotions and mechanisms to tolerate stress (Baron, 2008; Rauch *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, as hospitality entrepreneurs are usually embedded in tourist destinations, individual characteristics that create connectedness and form social capital are key success factors. Above all, the ability of hospitality talent to co-

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create social value with customers is important. Collectively, these factors constitute new measures of entrepreneurial success. Therefore, *P5* is:

*P5.* Talented hospitality entrepreneurs strive towards creation of social value.

The pursuit of entrepreneurship signals a change in career paradigms from a within-organization long-term perspective to one of multiple and/or boundaryless careers in search of quality of life (Peters *et al.*, 2018). Interestingly, this personal aspect of entrepreneurial success is the least discussed in the literature. Hence, this paper suggests that talented hospitality entrepreneurs need to successfully manage their own personal well-being to create long term careers. Subsequently, it is argued that talented hospitality entrepreneurs engage in self-managed careers that resist boundaries and fit into their lifestyle priorities. It is imperative that this is taken into consideration when evaluating the success of a talented hospitality entrepreneur, therefore:

*P6.* Talented hospitality entrepreneurs ensure personal well-being to sustain long-term successful careers.

The final contention presented here is that hospitality entrepreneurs are considered as talented when balancing their personal and individual well-being with the drive to create social value impacts and achieve economic success.

*P7.* Talented hospitality entrepreneurs balance the creation of economic, social value and are successful in maintaining their personal well-being.

Resulting from these seven propositions and addressing the dearth of definitions of talent in respect of entrepreneurship contextualized to the hospitality sector, this paper posits that a definition of what is meant by talent or who defines talent for the talented hospitality entrepreneur includes: innate giftedness and inner resourcefulness, outstanding mastery and learned ability relative to their economic success and success in creating social value for both customers and communities, taking into account the entrepreneur's own well-being and long-term career success.

## 8. Conclusion and future research

Addressing several knowledge gaps in the extant literature, including the lack of integration between the study of talent and entrepreneurship, the need for more research to develop a better understanding of talent at the individual level in different positions and the limited understanding of what constitutes talent in a hospitality context, this paper set out to provide a framework to elucidate the influences shaping the talented hospitality entrepreneur. Informing the emergent model, various areas of literature were drawn upon, including talent, HRM, entrepreneurship and hospitality. From this exercise, it is concluded that in each field important research has been conducted that in part explains aspects of the talented hospitality entrepreneur. However, presented collectively in the one integrated model, drawing upon all literature lens, a fuller understanding is enabled to address the research gaps noted above.

Future studies can adopt a range of research methods and contribute to understanding of talented entrepreneurs in hospitality. Quantitative studies, for example, could examine the seven propositions formulated as a result of this paper. Studies could test antecedent factors, including the innate traits and learned abilities and competencies identified, and how they influence outcome variables (e.g. economic, social and individual success factors). Researchers further could examine potential moderating variables such as gender, age and

education to provide better insights as to the homogeneity of talented hospitality entrepreneurs in response to Schoar's (2010) call for such research.

Follow-up studies can empirically test this model (Figure 1) of the talented hospitality entrepreneur relative to a specific region or tourism destination, or evaluate the contribution to broader regional talent systems. Further, studies can investigate if the conceptualization of the talented hospitality entrepreneur is viewed differently by lifestyle versus growth-oriented hospitality entrepreneurs (Fu *et al.*, 2019). As a result of these quantitative empirical studies, talent metrics can further be deduced to then also generate practical implications. Practical outcomes, such as talent measures, could then be incorporated into overall strategic planning for hospitality enterprises and tourism destinations "to help create the right kind of talent intelligence" (Snell, 2011, p. 16).

Qualitative research paradigms are recommended to better understand the underlying phenomena and processes. It is suggested that case study research designs be adopted to demonstrate how hospitality entrepreneurship talent is attracted by regions and destinations. Action research methods could help to understand and interpret how learned ability and innate giftedness are evaluated – and especially how economic success, social value creation and personal well-being for long-term career success develops. Importantly, future research should put emphasis on the puzzle of balancing economic and social impact with individual well-being. Further, hospitality researchers should gain deeper insights into the unique characteristics of being hospitable as it applies to hospitality talents. For example, as an integral part of the talented hospitality entrepreneur, hospitableness needs to be understood as either an innate personality trait or a learned competency – and how hospitality education providers can stimulate learning outcomes in this respect also needs investigation.

Finally, the seven propositions presented in this paper focus on an individual level understanding of talent. Hence, more qualitative work is required to explore and interpret contextual factors. It is known that talent is perceived differently across cultures (Tansley, 2011), and long-term careers of talent require catalysts including supporting social environments, concrete measures to develop abilities and formative events (Gagné, 2000). Temporal contextual aspects need to be considered, too - as according to lifespan theory, careers, underlying motivation and perceived success changes over the lifespan (Rudolph, 2016). Thus, entrepreneurship careers develop as a "combination and sequence of roles played by a person during the course of a lifetime" (Super, 1980, p. 282). To better understand these contextual elements, ethnographic studies could explore themes and specific catalysts that foster talented entrepreneurs. In view of the hospitality sector's poor image (Deery and Jago, 2015), catalysts that attract entrepreneurial talent need to be identified through empirical research. Concluding, the suggested research avenues will be important for expanding the current limited understanding of talents in respect of hospitality entrepreneurship to better understand these relative to the changing job landscape and the future of hospitality work.

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