

**UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID**

**DISSERTATION**

**STUDENT NAME:  
PAUL REGENWETTER**

**STUDENT NUMBER:  
1601951**

**MODULE:  
DISSERTATION  
SBMA7123D**

**SUPERVISOR:  
DR LOUISE EMANUEL**

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

### **I would like to thank:**

Dr Louise Emanuel, my supervisor for this dissertation. Thank you for your precious guidance and support during various steps of my dissertation. Your help was of immense value to me for the successful accomplishment of my dissertation. I am very grateful to you for this.

My close family. Thank you for your support you have shown me during my accomplishment of this dissertation. Without your help I would not have been able to invest the time necessary for completing this task. Your support was a big motivation for me. I am very grateful to you for this.

My son. Thank you for your understanding and love at your very young age. You allowed me many times to study and showed interest in what I was doing. I am forever thankful to you.

All fitness entrepreneurs who participated in this research. It was a pleasure for me to get to know each one of you and learn from your experience. Without you I would not have been able to accomplish this dissertation. I am grateful to you for this.

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# ENTREPRENEUR MOTIVATION AND PROBLEM-SOLVING QUALITIES

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## ABSTRACT

**Keywords:** entrepreneurship, fitness entrepreneur, motivation, problem-solving quality

**Focus of this research:** This research investigates and studies the motivation of fitness entrepreneurs to start their venture and analyses their problem-solving qualities which helped to overcome business challenges.

**Methodology:** For this paper, a qualitative research has been conducted. The researcher used semi-structured interviews with six fitness entrepreneurs to collect the data. These interviews were then transcribed, coded and reduced to the essential information for this research.

**Findings:** This research found that all the participants had more than one motivation that lead them to become a fitness entrepreneur. A common motivation of all participants was to help people. The two other most common motivations were to use their passion to earn money and independence. The nature of their motivations depended on the individual and their circumstances. It was also found that all participating entrepreneurs had more than one quality that helped in the business-related problem-solving process. The most common problem-solving quality was willingness to learn. Among the six participants, 25 different problem-solving qualities emerged.

**Conclusion:** The results prove that the fitness entrepreneurs in this research were different individuals with differences in their motivation and problem-solving qualities. The single common motivation was to help people with their product. The high number of problem-solving qualities that emerged in this research may prove a multifaceted nature of the problem-solving process in entrepreneurship. The researcher recommends the use of the summary table regrouping the experiences of the participants with the motivation and problem-solving lists as a check-list for areas that have potential to be improved, allowing entrepreneurs to better

prepare themselves for problems that can be encountered in the future and see if they can find further motivations to use positively for their venture.

**Value:** This research hopefully helps the business world, particularly the fitness industry, in the form of knowledge, from the experience of entrepreneurs, about the motivations that drive individuals to become fitness entrepreneurs and their rich qualities helping in the process of solving business related problems.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

Humanity has over the years undergone a big evolution and as it appears, has advanced in many fields. We have now access to many services and products which older generations did not even know of at their time. While we tend to take those services and products for granted, many were made accessible for the public with the help of individuals who put in the effort to make this possible. These people are called entrepreneurs. According to Wickham (2006), the current world is defined by change and entrepreneurs are the individuals who deliver change on the social and economic scale at a very fast speed, they are the people who at their own risk, make the advantages of new products accessible to people on a global level. Entrepreneurs are individuals who put in effort to develop a product that is of value to potential customers with the aim to satisfy them (Drucker, 2007). They exercise one of the oldest professions of humanity by earning money through the business opportunities they discovered (Landström, 2005).

This makes this special kind of individuals very important for humanity. They are key players to create a better reality for society by bringing products and services that can help to achieve this. Among the many comforts people can experience, health and individual well-being are essential ones which are not given freely. Hsieh (2019) found that among its participants, the way in which they regarded their health was for them the most important factor of their life which was consistent over time, however when compared to the satisfaction of other important life factors, it was not the strongest indicator of the satisfaction with their life in general. Lamu & Olsen (2016) define well-being as an advantage people can have to achieve their goals and found that social relations, income and health have an important effect on people's well-being. Health plays an important factor for individuals and seems to add to their well-being, thus providing an opportunity for entrepreneurs to offer products who positively contribute to this effect. This is where the fitness industry plays an important role. It is a well-known fact that human beings should move regularly in order to feel better and avoid many health problems. Public policies around the world have understood that physical exercise positively influences public health (Wicker et al., 2014). Respecting the guidance of the World Health Organisation, Europe recommends for young people and children to be physically active with medium intensity for at least one hour per day and for adults at least thirty minutes. Not moving is one

of the major risks worldwide that can lead to death. On the other hand, being physically active leads to a better psychological comfort and improved health of the muscles (World Health Organization, 2011). Physical fitness contributes to a better health and decrease in anxiety, sleep disorders and depression (Nojavan et al., 2013). Similarly, Wicker et al. (2014) found that the participation in a fitness program positively affected the participants well-being after as little as 4 weeks. Given the knowledge of these facts, it would be logical to assume that people will start immediately to do more physical exercise, which unfortunately does not seem to be that simple as in reality a high number of European citizens do not move enough (World Health Organization, 2011). It is thus in the individual and public interest that people start to move more. This is where entrepreneurs can use the opportunity to create their product which they can sell to the population, inspiring them to exercise more. Fitness entrepreneurs are key players in this encouragement as they offer a product with the focus on the training process (Hemme et al., 2017).

In this context it is important for the population to have fitness entrepreneurs, but they do not simply appear by chance. Something has to lead people towards the profession of entrepreneurship in this particular industry and keep them active there. This is where motivation comes into play as it is a force that pushes people to start a course of action (Wickham, 2006) and plays a crucial role in the process of the creation of an enterprise (Clydesdale, 2010). Shane et al. (2003) wonderfully explain that in order to be able to be successful, entrepreneurs firstly need to possess the motivation to become an entrepreneur, by comparing this process to a game that needs to be played in order to be won. While the entrepreneur pursues his activities in which he may be extremely skilled, the risk remains for him to experience adversities in his business at some time (Toren & Toren, 2011). To be able to successfully continue with his business activities, he then must overcome those challenges, leading to the importance of the problem-solving process. In this process, the goal is to solve the problem (Chevallier, 2016). However, problems are not always solved automatically, they require action to overcome them. According to Chaudhry (1999), problem solvers possess specific qualities that help to solve the faced challenges.

## **1.2. The focus of this study and its aims and objectives**

In the light of all these factors, entrepreneurs who can create the product necessary to improve people's well-being and health are important. Motivation plays an essential part in the formation of fitness entrepreneurs and their abilities to solve problems are essential for their survival as an entrepreneur. Therefore, this research investigates and studies the motivations of fitness entrepreneurs to start their venture and analyses their problem-solving qualities which they used to overcome difficulties they experienced in their business.

The purpose of this research is twofold. Firstly, it will add to existing literature about the motivation of fitness entrepreneurs. Hemme et al. (2017) analysed the pursuit of competitive advantage in fitness entrepreneurs and were able to identify their strong wish to help people with body improvement. The present research will add to that study of fitness entrepreneurs by providing a more detailed insight into the motivations of those individuals to be a fitness entrepreneur. Secondly it will add to the writings of Chaudhry (1999) who identified specific qualities of problem-solvers, by providing a number of problem-solving qualities in the field of fitness entrepreneurs who applied them in real life situations to overcome business-problems.

The aims of this research were:

- to investigate the factors motivating entrepreneurs to start a venture in the fitness industry and maintain it,
- to study the main factors which lead them to become an entrepreneur in this industry
- to investigate the factors that helped them to overcome challenging situations.

The objectives of this research were:

- to analyse the information about their motivation and search for common factors in the entrepreneurs of this industry
- to study the skills which were essential in the problem-solving process
- to analyse those skills and find common skills among the entrepreneurs in this field

- to develop recommendations which could help to improve their motivation and problem-solving qualities.

For the investigation, six different entrepreneurs of the fitness industry have been interviewed with specific questions asking about the factors that awakened their motivation to start and maintain their venture in the fitness industry. They were further asked how they handled and overcame problems in their entrepreneurial activity and which qualities were of utmost importance in this process. After studying the data obtained through the interviews, the researcher looked for common points and differences among the participants motivations and problem-solving qualities.

### **1.3. Structure of the research**

This research is divided into few main sections. It begins with an extensive literature review about the important subjects for this research. This review starts with literature from various authors about the entrepreneur, who is of high importance in this context, to set the foundation for this research. Further information from other authors about the fitness industry presents previous findings about this particular industry to better understand the working environment of the participants. This section then presents findings and information from other authors about the different motivations of entrepreneurs, the qualities important in the problem-solving process and those of successful entrepreneurs.

The literature review is then followed by the methodology section which aims to precisely explain which research method has been adapted and why. In this research, the qualitative methodology, in the form of narrative research, has been applied. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the necessary data in relation to motivation and problem-solving qualities of the six fitness entrepreneurs that participated. The researcher explains in this section the strong points of this particular research method and its appropriateness for the research questions. The exact methodology is explained for the reader to understand fully how this research has been conducted. Attention has also been drawn to the limitations of this research method. This section finishes with a reflection on this methodology.

After the explanation of the methodology, the section of the data analysis firstly presents a short but precise summary of the data of every entrepreneur collected during the interviews. At the end of this section, a table serves as summary of the findings of every interview to highlight the most important points and make them easier to overview for the reader. Two lists make the different motivations and problem-solving qualities that emerged from this study with their frequency easier to overview. These two tables can be of service to entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs in the form of a check list to increase or awaken their motivation and to open their problem-solving perspectives in challenging business situations, allowing for a better preparation to overcome those challenges. In the discussion of this research, the researcher tries to make sense of the collected data by trying to find connections.

#### **1.4. Value of this research**

It is known among psychologists that a person who has learned something will show a different behaviour as a result from an experience that lead to an improvement in that person's way of working. The learning process provides the individual with the skill to think in another way about problems and alter its strategies. The different areas of learning in humans can be classified into three main areas, knowledge for the identification or remembrance of particular information, skills for the capability to accomplish tasks, and understanding which helps in problem-solving (Long et al., 2011). The researcher hopes to be able to help the business world, the fitness industry and if possible also other industries, with this research in the form of new knowledge about the functioning of the motivations that serve as a driving force for entrepreneurs and the rich qualities they have to overcome difficult situations in their business allowing them to progress. Then, this can be used by aspiring and existing entrepreneurs to learn from the experience of the fitness entrepreneurs that participated. Long et al. (2011) explain that human beings have the ability to apply theoretical knowledge which can help when applied. If the findings of this research can be of help to existing and aspiring entrepreneurs to have a better overview and a broader perspective of the motivations that can drive an individual in the creation of his venture and the various problem-solving qualities which can be used as tools to overcome adversities, then the researcher has successfully achieved his goal.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The goal of this research is to study the motivation and problem-solving qualities of fitness entrepreneurs. The researcher presents in this chapter the findings of the main topics of this paper, the entrepreneur, his particular characteristics, the fitness industry, his motivation to become an entrepreneur and his problem-solving qualities in the face of adversities. The aim of this literature review is to clarify the definitions of those terms, provide further information about them and highlight the findings of previous researches. The researcher believes that it is essential to have a profound knowledge about the characteristics of the entrepreneur, his motivation which either pushed or pulled him towards entrepreneurship, and his problem-solving qualities to overcome challenging situations in his profession. These findings will serve as a foundation for this research which aims to add value to existing literature in this field.

### **2.2. Entrepreneur**

The term entrepreneur has firstly been coined in economic literature by Richard Cantillon in the eighteenth century. Nowadays, entrepreneurship is the centre of attention in Economics, Management and Sociology with a potential to become as important in other disciplines such as psychology. There exist a high number of different definitions of the entrepreneur and the differences between non-entrepreneurial and entrepreneurial behaviour is frequently very unclear (Hébert & Link, 2009). Every entrepreneur is a manager but not every manager is an entrepreneur. Their actions are the main factors distinguishing them as an entrepreneur amongst the managers. Entrepreneurs are managing a venture with the aim to make a profit by exploiting opportunities in existing markets or new ones they create. They build or change an organisation by gathering people, resources, money and ideas. One of their key characteristics is innovation which they use to find new ways to create value, and they possess this skill in a higher extent than non-entrepreneurs. This kind of special individuals create change, seek opportunities and play an essential role in triggering economic growth, through increasing competition, producing in a more diverse way and taking advantage of the overflow of knowledge. Unpredictability

and risk are factors they accept. Ownership of the company entrepreneurs work for is no necessity, they are defined by their actions (Burns, 2007; Wickham, 2006). Another key characteristic of entrepreneurs is that they are “getting things done” (Schumpeter, 2003, p.132).

Entrepreneurs undergo a learning process by creating their venture as in that process they create results through discovery, the use of tools and resources (Mitra, 2012). Jain and Ali (2013) argue that education boosts entrepreneurial achievement while fear of failure and unwillingness to take risks block entrepreneurship. It has been found in a study that a lasting relationship between the supplier and customer, client satisfaction and an excellent product distribution and development were the secret of successful entrepreneurs (Poorsoltan, 2003). According to Cui et al. (2016) entrepreneurs can survive in a constantly changing environment if they improve their autonomy and their ability to innovate, to take risks and to react. The economic and social environment play also an important role for the entrepreneur as they will affect the development of the entrepreneur’s talent (Deakins & Freel, 2009). Normal people would not be comfortable to live with the uncertainties and risks which entrepreneurs face (Burns, 2007). Therefore, entrepreneurs are generally perceived to take risks, while in reality the investors are more exposed to the risk than the entrepreneurs, the latter just change uncertainties into risk (Wickham, 2006). Entrepreneurs may have different backgrounds and numerous differences, but they all share one quality, that of having a vision (Toren & Toren, 2011). Kirby (2003) similarly states that besides their innovation and creativity, entrepreneurs have the great quality of making their visions a reality. In this process, motivation is essential. Likewise, Wickham (2006) explains that for realising their vision, entrepreneurs use power, leadership and motivation.

A distinction can be made between five different types of entrepreneurs. The Cantillon Entrepreneur takes responsibility for risk and management of an enterprise with the aim to make the highest possible profit. The Industry-Maker, is an entrepreneur who takes a high risk, works very hard and creates an enterprise which he further develops into an industry leader. The administrative entrepreneur establishes and manages an enterprise in the same way than the Industry-Maker with the exception of not shaping a whole industry. The Independent entrepreneur establishes an enterprise alone from the beginning without other people. The small business-owner has smaller number of sales, profit potential and a more limited outreach

(Webster, 1977). A distinction can also be made between the size of their enterprises which depends on several factors such as the industry or time. What may be considered small in one industry may be big in another one (Deakins & Freel, 2009). Small enterprises have not as many customers than larger enterprises, thus losing customers will have a more devastating effect than with the larger enterprises, which exposes them more to risk (Burns, 2007). According to Wickham (2006) entrepreneurs stand out compared to owners of small businesses through their innovation, potential to expand and strategic goals, but he admits that there exist exemptions of entrepreneurial ventures where those characteristics are not as visible.

### **2.3. The fitness industry**

The fitness industry is a sector of the larger sports industry, made of a number of distinct businesses, amongst others, gyms, supplement companies, clothing, media and magazine, manufacturers of equipment and personal trainers, with the main focus on the training process (Hemme et al., 2017). This industry is experiencing a gradual globalisation (Johansson & Andreasson, 2016). In Europe, it represents a big market, which was able in 2017 to maintain its leading position in the world with a total market volume of EUR 26,6 billion. The industry's revenues in the USA were EUR 24,9 billion in 2016, slightly more than the European football market (Deloitte & Europeactive 2018). In India the fitness industry is experiencing a yearly increase of 19% (Orton, 2017). Similarly, Bharathi and Dinesh (2018) explain that India is a country where the fitness industry seems to experience a very high demand, which is pushed by an increase of health problems encountered by its population and the influence of fashion icons. Gyms and health clubs have developed into a very large global business (Andreasson & Johansson, 2014). The fitness industry is developing quickly and thus entrepreneurs face constant pressure from competition (Lloyd, 2005). On the other hand, Thomson et al. discuss that given the long history of physical exercise, it is difficult for fitness entrepreneurs to innovate. This particular industry depends on the participation and financial means of the consumers, thus affecting income creation of the entrepreneurs (Thomson et al., 2015). Interestingly in Belgium this particular industry seems to have difficulties creating a positive return even if its sales increased (Breesch et al., 2015). The fitness industry is a market that grew a lot over the last years on a global level, which makes this kind of entrepreneurs interesting to study as their work environment is evolving. According to Hemme et al. (2017)

fitness entrepreneurs embody a lot of the specific characteristics of sports entrepreneurs and the sports industry.

## **2.4. Entrepreneur motivation**

### Motivation

Motivation aims to describe why a certain behaviour comes into existence. It examines the reason leading to a specific behaviour in a person (Gorman, 2004), and can be split into three elements, the direction, effort and persistence of a person's actions (Arnold et al., 2005). Motivation is the force which drives people to start a particular course of action of their choice or wish to do so and it thus influences the performance of an enterprise (Wickham, 2006). It helps in achieving goals through rising effectiveness, productivity and efficiency (Forsyth, 2010) and plays an essential role in the creation of an enterprise and the society's opinion on entrepreneurship affects this process (Clydesdale, 2010).

### Push and pull factors

In the domain of entrepreneurship, a distinction is made between two kinds of forces which lead people to become entrepreneurs. These forces are called the pull factors and the push factors. Pull factors pull people towards becoming an entrepreneur as they make this job and its opportunities very attractive, such as independence, creation of wealth, achievement, social status. In this case, entrepreneurship is a personal choice. The push factors on the other hand somehow force people to become entrepreneurs as the option of not becoming an entrepreneur is less interesting. Push factors can be unemployment, unattractive income or barriers to innovation in standard jobs (Wickham, 2006). A study tried to analyse entrepreneurial motivation in terms of those two forces, namely the motivations which are created by attractive conditions and those which are created out of need and found that the motivations of entrepreneurs from Uganda mainly came from pull factors, while both factors influenced those motivations (Eijdenberg & Masurel, 2013). Kirkwood (2009) found in his study that men and women were motivated in a like manner by a mixture of both forces, while men seemed to be

more pushed by experienced unhappiness in their job and women more pulled towards independence for their children.

### Passion as motivation for entrepreneurs

Passion may be understood as a strong motivation to reach a goal (Linstead & Brewis, 2007). In entrepreneurship, passion is influenced by motivation, and if both are right, they can lead to success (Ismail et al., 2016). Passion plays an essential role in entrepreneurship (Cardon et al., 2013). Entrepreneurial passion can be defined as a very positive feeling of entrepreneurs while absorbed into their entrepreneurial pursuits, which forms their commitment for their activity (Tasnim et al., 2014). It is a driving force to the entrepreneur's persistence, innovation and success (Cardon et al., 2017). Passion has the power to create entrepreneurs. It can serve as a force which drives people to transform their passion into a commercial activity. It also helps entrepreneurs to increase their expertise and thus successfully satisfy their clients requests. Passion can also trigger the creation of very special products (Ranfagni & Runfola, 2018). The degree of passion influences the process of creating a business from an initial vision (Toren & Toren, 2011).

While becoming rich may awaken positive feelings in some, passion in entrepreneurs is connected with the positive feelings created during activities in relation to the important roles of the entrepreneur, that of the innovator, creator and developer as this truly approves their self-identity (Cardon et al., 2009). It has been found that passion seems to be connected to entrepreneurial behaviour and personal efficacy and that passion is higher in entrepreneurs who give more importance to the entrepreneurial identity (Murnierks & al., 2014). A study analysed the sources of entrepreneur's passion and found that the majority of the interviewed entrepreneurs had a passion for more than one object. The discovered objects of passion were passion for growth, products, people, inventing, competition and social mission (Cardon et al., 2017).

### Achievement and fulfilment of identity as motivation for entrepreneurs

Achievement is a product of motivation (Bolton & Thompson, 2013). A study found that an entrepreneurial role suits man with a higher achievement motivation (McClelland, 1961). Similarly, Collins et al. found in their study a connection between achievement motivation and entrepreneurial activity and career (Collins et al., 2004). Steward & Roth (2007) found that achievement motivation was higher in entrepreneurs than in managers. Entrepreneurs have a deep longing for achievement, a term whose interpretation differs among entrepreneurs. For some it can be profit, for others it can be the achievement of their ambitions (Lowe & Mariott, 2006). Money is very rarely the main motivation of entrepreneurs, they are rather motivated by the achievement of social, economic and self-developmental needs (Wickham, 2006). Paul Burns (2007) similarly states that money is not the entrepreneurs' main motivation, it is more their need for achievement, which is far higher than in normal owner managers, thus leading to a high self-motivation in entrepreneurs.

Mahto & McDowell (2018) argue that the wish to create a new identity or improve their current identity motivates non-entrepreneurs to become an entrepreneur, a process greatly influenced through environmental exposure to other entrepreneurs. Similarly, Xu & Ruef (2004) found that non-financial motivations of entrepreneurs to start their venture are the fulfillment of their identity and the creation of autonomy.

### Money as motivation of entrepreneurs

For a long time, becoming rich was considered to be the most important motivation of entrepreneurs (Raphael et al., 2001). Wickham (2006) similarly states that the term of entrepreneurship has long been connected with the motivation of creating a profit. A study analysing entrepreneurs in Bengal, India, found that money was their most important motivation (Chaudhuri et al., 2012). Cassar (2007) found that there was a connection between an entrepreneur's wish to create wealth and have business growth, however it was not the main motivation. Another study analysing Kuwaiti female entrepreneurs found that the wish to have added earnings and have sufficient wealth on their own to live amongst others as main motivators to start their venture (Mutairi & Fayez, 2015). A distinction can thus be made between individuals motivated by money to become extremely wealthy and those motivated by

money allowing them to live independently. If, however their main motivation is financial profit, combined with moral withdrawal, the risk of unethical decision increases which can lead to a disaster for the business, its stakeholders and the entrepreneur (Baron et al., 2015).

Not all entrepreneurs seem to be solely motivated by money, some give also importance to the circumstances of this profit, such as producing the best product and thus winning the competition against fellow entrepreneurs (Manish & Sutter, 2016). Kauanui et al. (2010) found that usually entrepreneurs experience satisfaction in their job, with the difference that those directed to a spiritual purpose experienced more happiness in their entrepreneurial role than those mainly focussed on the financial aspect. The spiritual aspect in entrepreneurs represents more the way to a purpose and meaning (Kauanui et al., 2005).

### Independence as motivation of entrepreneurs

Benzing et al. (2009) found in their study that the factors which motivated the surveyed entrepreneurs to start their venture were to seek independence, to rise revenue and receive a job security. Another study discovered that the wish for independence motivated the tested French entrepreneurs, whose goal was to experience sufficient financial gain allowing for this independence (Estay et al., 2013). Similarly, Cassar (2007) found that independence was the main motivation of entrepreneurs. Independence in this context means to be able to take decisions based on personal judgment, be responsible for one's own actions and live on personal efforts, which can be an entrepreneurial motivation for those individuals longing to experience this independence (Shane et al., 2003). Independence in terms of decision making and finance were among the most important factors motivating Kuwaiti female entrepreneurs to start their venture (Mutairi & Fayez, 2015). In Block and Landgraf's research (2016), independence was a positive motivator of part-time entrepreneurs to take the step towards working full-time as an entrepreneur.

### Factors which influence the motivation of entrepreneurs

Research supports the idea that some factors influence the motivation of entrepreneurs. Age seems to play a role in the process of motivation, as a study of social entrepreneurs found that older entrepreneurs were motivated by the employment opportunity which they would generate

for themselves while younger entrepreneurs were motivated to solve a precise social problem (Krstic et al., 2017). Jayawarna et al. (2011) found that entrepreneurs' motivation is influenced by their social experience, more precisely their household, business life and career, and can thus change over time. According to Kirkwood (2009), the circumstances of a country may also affect entrepreneurial motivation to start a venture, while high entrepreneurial countries may have stronger pull factors than those countries with lower levels of entrepreneurship. Cromie (1987) found a difference between the motives amongst women and men, while both had a similar motivation for independence and achievement, men showed a stronger motivation for financial profit while women were motivated to become entrepreneurs in order to better manage their role as a mother while working at the same time.

#### Motivation of fitness entrepreneurs

A study, interviewing eleven fitness entrepreneurs, analysing the process character of entrepreneurship, strategic learning, controlled dependency and social entrepreneurship, found that they had a strong wish to help people by improving their body. All the entrepreneurs in this study proved passion when they replied, giving examples such as a drive for success and making an effort to make their methods better (Hemme et al., 2017).

### **2.5. Entrepreneur problem-solving qualities**

An entrepreneur may be very skilled in what he does, he may perfectly plan his business and do all he can to make everything go smooth, however he won't be immune to facing some kind of difficulties or problems in his business (Toren & Toren, 2011). Qualities allowing to overcome difficult situations will be of advantage to entrepreneurs given that they regularly face hardship without knowing the results (Markman & Baron, 2003).

#### Problem-solving

A problem can be defined on a very basic level as "the difference between some existing situation and some desired situation" (Pounds, 1969, p.5). Arnaud Chevallier (2016) suggests

four steps in the problem-solving process, to frame and then diagnose it, leading to potential solutions which should then be applied. It is important to fully understand the problem before starting to solve it (Thomas et al., 2012). In the problem-solving process, the individual needs to understand and use information, which may be present in various forms. Firstly, the relevant data should be filtered from the irrelevant one. Then new information can be accessed through the combination of information which may appear unrelated. Lastly, the current problems can be related to old ones which have been solved at an earlier stage (Butterworth & Thwaites, 2013). Problem-solving develops thinking skills in individuals (McGregor, 2007). Creativity helps companies to find solutions to problems in a changing environment (Clegg & Birch, 2007). The problem-solving speed and quality of the solution matter (Atuahene-Gima, 2003). The speed at which problems are solved influences competitive advantage (Blauth et al., 2015). Problem-solving speed can be understood as the skill to identify and quickly put into effect many solutions (Atuahene-Gima & Wei, 2010).

Problem solvers have specific qualities which are dominant and help in the process of solving problems, namely leadership, creativity, analytical skills, intuition, critical thinking, team orientation and those individuals are systematic, structured, synthesize and provide information (Chaudhry, 1999). According to Barringer & Ireland (2016), successful entrepreneurs have four main characteristics, focus on the customer and product, passion for the venture, determination in the face of failure and execution intelligence. Wickham (2006) writes that there exist common characteristics regularly found in successful entrepreneurs which they show in their role as an entrepreneur, such as hard-work, creation of goals, self-starting, resilience, confidence, openness to new ideas, determination, yearning for learning, looking for information, search for opportunities, openness for change, responsibility towards others and feeling at ease with their power.

### Innovation as entrepreneur quality to solve problems

Buttner & Gyskiewicz (1993) found that between managers and entrepreneurs, the latter have a more innovative approach to solve problems. There exist cases where encountered difficulties awakened innovative responses in entrepreneurs. Creation of resources and detection of opportunities are frequent qualities of entrepreneurs in difficult situations and insufficient

resources (Hugo & Garnsey, 2005). Innovation is necessary to survive in a changing environment (Clegg & Birch, 2007).

### Lateral thinking as entrepreneur quality to solve problems

Butler suggests lateral thinking as a tool to solve business problems (Butler, 2010). This tool gives insight by restructuring and creating new patterns leading to new ideas (De Bono, 1977). Paul Burns (2007) explains that creativity requires lateral thinking and goes further by stating that “creativity is the soul of entrepreneurship” (Burns, 2007, p.91). Providing creative solutions to difficult situations is a quality of successful entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs need innovation and creativity to create a competitive advantage and survive in the high competition in the worldwide economy. Creativity is a quality they will have to use continually and thus avoid any potential obstructions to creativity, such as being anxious of making an error, following rules without questioning, seeking only one particular answer and many other behaviours taught by society (Kirby, 2003).

### Leadership as entrepreneur quality to solve problems

Leadership is an essential entrepreneurial quality to lead an enterprise towards success. In most cases entrepreneurs need the help of other people, employees of their enterprise and people who are not working within their enterprise such as customers and investors. If the entrepreneur wishes to push his organisation in the success zone, he will need to show leadership and motivate, direct and support all actors involved to help the organisation achieve success (Wickham, 2006). Competition and enterprise growth won't allow the entrepreneur to deal with every operation within the organisation and successfully take important decisions. The entrepreneur will thus have to effectively delegate and be a leader who promotes cooperation and collaboration of his employees leading to increased organisational creativity (Lowe & Marriott, 2006). Leadership can be “defined as the power to focus and direct the organisation” (Wickham, 2006, p.18). Entrepreneurs who are successful leaders stimulate their employee's creativity in the problem-solving process. They also care about their wellbeing and about the enterprise as a whole (Kirby, 2003).

### Opportunity identification or creation as entrepreneur quality to solve problems

Entrepreneurs have the skill to find the necessary resources, be it for problems that need to be solved or new opportunities to exploited. This skill sets entrepreneurs apart from owners of a small business (Bolton & Thompson, 2013). Difficult and risky situations are more likely to be overcome by businessmen through the creation of new solutions than the use of knowledge that exists already (McClelland, 1961). In order to make their ventures successful, entrepreneurs have to create an opportunity. In this process the opportunity has to be identified, assessed and established (Ardichvili et al., 2003). A visionary entrepreneur discovers new opportunities by analysing markets and recognising the most promising opportunity, which is the most likely to produce the highest profit (Read et al., 2011). A study found that self-efficient entrepreneurs created more business opportunities when they identified more uncertainties (Schmitt et al., 2018).

### Perseverance as entrepreneurial quality in problem-solving

Perseverance has been identified as one of the most important qualities leading to success in entrepreneurs. Their perseverance in their vision and positive mentality helped them overcoming unpleasant situations and achieving success (Toren & Toren, 2011). Enterprises experience an increase of competitiveness, uncertainty and change which requires more perseverance. However, the quality of perseverance is reducing in a culture seeking rapid success and immediate gratification. Like runners, enterprising individuals need perseverance in difficult conditions to reach the finish line, which often changes its position in their case with limited knowledge of the road and position of the competition (Van Gelderen, 2011). Muehlfeld et al. (2017) found that subjects with a lot of entrepreneurial experience were more exploratory perseverant than the subjects with no such experience. Entrepreneurs showing perseverance are more likely to be more successful than those who show less of this quality, as the perseverance of the former allows them to perform effectively in adverse situations (Markman & Baron, 2003).

### Intuition as entrepreneurial quality in problem-solving

Intuition may be defined as an unforeseen insight which comes without the person understanding how it came. In real life, entrepreneurs face difficulties appearing in conditions which are not always optimal, such as limited information about the problem to be solved and thus need to be quick in taking a decision. Under such conditions, they are not fully prepared therefore entrepreneurs depending on their intuition can be more successful in the problem-solving and decision-making process. However, many professionals in business prefer relying on rational thinking more than they trust their intuition (Kakkonen, 2005). Andersen (2000) found in his study that organisational performance is connected to intuitive decision-making. Intuition is a helpful quality when decisions have to be taken in the absence of, amongst others, certainty, sufficient facts or enough time (Agor, 1986). The involvement of intuition should however be considered with caution as many entrepreneurs believe intuition to be the force which shaped their decisions while in reality other elements, unknown to them, influenced their decision-making process. This however does not mean that intuition did not play its part in this process too (Blume & Covin, 2011). Intuition can be a very powerful tool, but it can also be very dangerous, as we can underrate its failure. If not checked, it can potentially misguide (Myers, 2010).

### Positive state of mind in the face of adversity

Interestingly entrepreneurs seem to gain knowledge in the problem-solving process and should thus consider experienced adversities as opportunities to build on their existing knowledge. The quality of changing such an unpleasant experience into an opportunity to grow can help the entrepreneur to become more successful. It seems that receiving the newest tools for solving problems is less beneficial for entrepreneurs than directing their attention to this learning process (Young & Sexton, 2003). Successful entrepreneurs take responsibility for their mistakes and learn from them with a positive state of mind, not taking it personal but analysing those mistakes instead in order not to repeat them (Wickham, 2006).

## **2.6 Summary**

While there exist a lot of definitions of the entrepreneur, this individual is a manager who creates or changes an organisation and creates value with the help of his innovation (Wickham, 2006). This literature review brings together various characteristics and definitions of the entrepreneur from different authors. As this study focuses on the fitness entrepreneurs, literature about this industry delivers an overview to better understand this environment. The fitness industry is undergoing a globalisation (Johansson & Andreasson, 2016) and develops at a fast pace putting fitness entrepreneurs under pressure (Lloyd, 2005).

One part of the dissertation focuses on the motivation of fitness entrepreneurs. Previous literature has identified various factors which motivate entrepreneurs in general to choose this particular profession, such as passion, achievement, fulfilment of identity, money and independence. The motivation of fitness entrepreneurs has not been extensively researched so far, however Hemme et al. (2017) found that fitness entrepreneurs had a wish to help people to improve their body.

Another part of this dissertation focusses on the problem-solving qualities of fitness entrepreneurs. The identified literature reveals various qualities which have been identified that help in the problem-solving process. Some of such important qualities were innovation, lateral thinking, leadership, opportunity identification or creation, perseverance, intuition and a positive state of mind.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The researcher presents in this chapter what research method has been adopted to collect the necessary data as well as the reason of this particular selection. The data analysis method, the participant selection and ethics of this research will also be discussed in this chapter. At the end of the present chapter, the researcher draws attention to the limitations of this research strategy and offers an objective reflection on the used methodology.

#### **3.2. Research method selection**

The aim of this research was to collect, investigate and study key information on the motivation of fitness entrepreneurs to start a venture in this specific industry and details about their problem-solving qualities which helped them in overcoming adversities in their venture. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research tries to understand why people act and think in a certain manner, thus seeking replies to the why, how and what. This research sought to find the answer of why and how the entrepreneurs were motivated to start their venture and what problem-solving qualities they possess (Keegan, 2009), thus making a qualitative research most fit for this purpose.

The researcher chose the narrative inquiry as strategy of qualitative research as it appears to be superior to other strategies for this research given that it allows the collection of rich and exclusive data which cannot be obtained from observations, experiments or questionnaires (Lieblich et al., 1998).

For the collection of the qualitative data, interviews proved to be the most advantageous method as the participants could not be observed, nor would a short observation have provided all the necessary information for this study. This allowed the researcher to be in control of the line of questioning and the participants had the possibility to deliver necessary information from their past experiences (Creswell, 2003), making it the most appropriate form to collect data of value

for this study, providing the interviewer with the tools to direct the conversation with the interviewee exactly to the information and experiences that were relevant for this research.

### **3.3. Qualitative research**

Qualitative research analyses in a very detailed manner a specific phenomenon unlike quantitative research, which analyses a specific feature in a big group of individuals (Willig, 2013). The researcher aimed to analyse in detail the motivation and problem-solving qualities of a small group of fitness entrepreneurs, which was possible due to the above-mentioned characteristics of qualitative research. There are several characteristics specific to qualitative research such as, amongst others, several interactive data collection methods involving the people from whom data is collected, the research process develops over the course as situations may change to the researcher's advantage or disadvantage, the collected data will to a certain extent undergo a personal interpretation of the researcher. It is recommended that the researcher conducting a qualitative research should look at the studied phenomenon from a very wide perspective, studying it in its fullness (Creswell, 2003).

In this study, the researcher collected qualitative data in the form of individual interviews and their transcripts. Qualitative data have amongst others as property to include human communication, visual, written or audio, but do not contain measures and counts (Gibbs, 2007).

### **3.4. Validity**

In qualitative research, data analysis is to be conducted before reducing the vast amount of collected data. During the reduction of these data, efforts have been made to lose as little detail as possible. This reduction may bring up the question of validity of the research, in other words, if the research successfully addressed the research question (Willig, 2013). According to Creswell (2003), the role of validity is not so important in qualitative research and he recommends strategies which help in verifying the correctness of the findings, amongst others, to let the participants verify the final report and give a feedback about the accuracy of the findings. The researcher sent the participants the part of the data section which represents their story for verification and feedback. This measure was taken to make sure that the data correctly

represent their story and served as a control tool to avoid personal interpretation from the researcher which would not be in line with the participants personal experience of his own life events.

### **3.5. Narrative inquiry**

The narrative research is the study extracting the necessary data from narrative materials, which can be obtained through interviews. It can be applied to a smaller group with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding about the object of research (Lieblich et al., 1998). The narrative inquiry allowed the researcher to collect the personal stories of the interviewees, thus allowing an insight into more complicated subjects of human nature by catching a complete story unlike quantitative research which only seeks outcomes omitting the effect of experience. The collected stories possessed the knowledge required for the research (Webster & Metrova, 2007). Given that this research investigated a more complicated subject, the motivation and problem-solving qualities of humans, the fitness entrepreneurs, this particular research method was very appropriate as it allowed to capture the necessary research information in the form of stories of the interviewed entrepreneurs, thus delivering very precise and a higher amount of details about the participating entrepreneurs. This would not have been possible with a quantitative research.

### **3.6. Semi-structured interviews**

The researcher asked the participants three main open questions, where they were to tell their story about the motivation to become a fitness entrepreneur, challenges experienced in their business and qualities they have as an entrepreneur. Depending on the details provided in their reply to these questions and if necessary, further prompts were asked to encourage the entrepreneur to provide more data about their ongoing motivation and how their entrepreneurial qualities helped in overcoming their business challenges.

While structured interviews are not very flexible for the interviewer as they require the respect of the order of the questions to be asked, semi-structured interviews provided the interviewer with more flexibility to ask questions for the collection of important data. Semi-structured interviews have various advantages. They are compatible with different methods of analysing the data and are quite easy to arrange but had to be carefully prepared in advance by planning

whom to interview, why to interview that person, what style to use for the interview and what to ask during the interview. The interviewer had questions in mind which he did not need to ask in a certain order. Access to people or organisations to be interviewed caused difficulties to the researcher (Grix, 2010, Willig, 2013) as the majority of the contacted entrepreneurs did not even respond or communicated their disinterest in participating in this study.

The data collected from the open-ended questions asked to the different entrepreneurs of the fitness industry, were narratives of their own experience, regarding their motivation as well as how they were able to overcome difficulties in their job. In this strategy, the researcher interpreted the data collected instead of fact finding as in other approaches (McQueen & Zimmerman, 2006). To collect the data necessary for this research, semi-structured interviews have been conducted with 6 entrepreneurs of the fitness industry. The semi-structured interview contained a small number of open-ended questions, and often started with public questions and then progressed to more personal questions, but they had to be meaningful to the interviewed entrepreneurs (Willig, 2013).

All interviewees received a consent form before the interview informing about the rights to only answer the question, he or she feels comfortable to answer as well as the possibility to end the interview. All interviewees also had the possibility to consent to audiotape (Galletta, 2013). The participants interviewed in person, signed the consent form before the interview while participants interviewed through the internet sent a signed consent form after the interview. Three of the participants were interviewed in person as they lived in the same country as the researcher, two participants expressed their preference to receive the questions and in a next step send the researcher their reply through voice recordings or video recordings. One participant was interviewed through an internet call.

### **3.7. Ethics**

During this research, primary data have been collected from individual entrepreneurs during the interviews and therefore required ethical approval. None of the entrepreneurs interviewed should suffer any harm due to their participation in this research. The research design contributes to high quality findings which can be used for the greater good (Denscombe, 2012).

At all times did this research comply with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David's Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice, with honesty in the whole research, rigor in respecting disciplinary norms and standards, transparency in declaring conflicts of interest and care and respect for the interviewees as core aspects of this research (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2017). Before the interview, the entrepreneurs have been informed about the research and its purpose and about their right to stop their participation in the interview at any time. Their participation remained voluntary and anonymous. All the information collected during the interviews have been handled by the researcher in complete confidence. A consent form in writing was handed to the entrepreneurs containing information about the research project, its nature and their participation. The collected data of the interviews have been kept secure by the researcher and not shared with any outside person (Denscombe, 2012).

### **3.8. Selection of participants**

In the literature review we have seen that the distinction between entrepreneurial behaviour and non-entrepreneurial behaviour is not always very clear (Hébert & Link, 2009). For the participants selection, the researchers looked for entrepreneurial characteristics as described by Wickham (2006) such as being an individual managing a venture with the aim to make a profit through opportunities in markets and creating value with the help of innovating skills while accepting risk. The selected entrepreneurs are creating value in the fitness industry, through gyms, personal training or equipment (Hemme et al., 2017). Entrepreneurs of this industry have been contacted by the researcher until at least 6 agreed to participate in the interview. Interviews have been conducted either in person or through the internet. Due to the risk of potential participant stopping the interview, refuse to answer important questions or may refuse participation, the researcher selected a higher number of entrepreneurs which could be interviewed to minimise the risk of not receiving the necessary data from at least 6 entrepreneurs.

### **3.9. Data analysis**

During qualitative research, very often large amounts of data are collected. For the data analysis, the researcher organised the collected qualitative data, in this case the narratives, in a

way to make this material comprehensive, which is not always an easy task (Creswell, 2003; White, 2004). To ensure this process in the best possible manner, the researcher followed the following six generic steps as recommended by Creswell (2003):

- 1) The interviews have been transcribed in order to make the data ready for analysis.
- 2) With the goal to obtain an overall comprehension of the data, the researcher read all the transcribed interviews.
- 3) The researcher then coded the data by classifying it into distinct parts which were then described with words of the interviewee's used vocabulary.
- 4) The researcher in a next step described the participants and their narratives and classified the main findings which then have been presented under different titles in the research findings section.
- 5) The findings about every fitness entrepreneur have been presented in a table.
- 6) To complete the analysis, the researcher made sense of the information.

During the process of interpretation, the researcher aimed to give the data a meaning so it can be understood correctly and aimed to provide the answers about the research questions. This process was an essential step in the qualitative research as it was the only way of giving the collected data a meaning, thus allowing to get a deeper insight into the participants experiences and their way of doing certain things as an entrepreneur, in this case about their motivation and their way of dealing with business challenges. The researcher applied the empathic interpretation where the main focus was on the obvious facts and not those that are hidden, to analyse its qualities and characteristics and create connections amid them and eventually detect patterns. In this process the researcher looked at the collected data from various angles and paid attention to distinct parts of the stories as well as their complete version. By doing so, the aim was to increase the understanding of the data collected from the interviews in order to get the whole picture of it. To achieve this in the best possible manner, the researcher tried to mentally enter the phenomenon at the centre of this research and comprehend it from within. The advantage of this particular process of interpretation is that it abstains from bringing in new ideas from outside and is grounded in the data (Willig, 2012).

### **3.10. Limitations**

The chosen type of data collection has a few limitations. The information collected through interviews, is an indirect information, filtered to the entrepreneur's personal views. The interviewees were different human beings without the exact same articulation skills nor perceptions. The interviewees may also have been biased through the interviewer's presence, nor was the data collected in a natural environment (Creswell, 2003). Webster and Metrova (2007) draw attention to the fact that in the case of narrative inquiry, big amounts of information are easily collected, which allow the risk of a more reducing view of the broad data which can leave out essential findings for the research and therefore recommend focussing on essential events in the collected information to avoid this trap.

It is equally worth to mention that the process of interpretation may have limitations too as humans often interpret so fast that it happens without them consciously being aware of it as it appears apparent to them thus not allowing to look for other possible meanings. On the other hand, it, it can become tricky when the meaning of something is ambiguous (Willig, 2012). To reduce this risk, the researcher sent the participants the data for verification as suggested by Creswell (2003).

In qualitative research, only a small number of participants are analysed as this research method requires much more time to collect and work with the data of one participant. This raises the limitation of the generalisation of the results obtained to a similar population. In this context comes up the question of the representativeness of the participants for the population to be analysed. Therefore, the participants should be representative for this population, namely fitness entrepreneurs in this research. Of course, there is no guarantee that other fitness entrepreneurs share the same motivations or problem-solving qualities than those of the participants of this research, but with this study, it is known that the findings are available in the population of fitness entrepreneurs (Willig, 2013). In this context the researcher has made efforts to select representative participants for this particular group of entrepreneurs as discussed in the section of the selection of participants.

### **3.11. Objective reflection and critique of the applied methodology**

It is known in qualitative research, that the process of research is influenced by the researcher, leading to the importance of reflexivity, where the researcher considers on how his own person is involved in this study with its findings. A distinction can be made between personal reflexivity and epistemological reflexivity. The first one deals with the influence of the researchers own interests, values or beliefs and the second one with how the research design and question may have built the data and results and if the research may have been conducted differently (Willig, 2013).

The researcher is of male gender, born in Luxembourg, speaks Luxembourgish, English, French and German and was 32 years old at the time of this study. He entered this research with a passion for fitness, more specifically calisthenics, which is a term used for a variety of bodyweight exercises. The researcher also admires entrepreneurs for their good qualities and positive contribution to society. The researcher could therefore have entered the research with a preference and admiration. All efforts have been done by the researcher to look at the collected data, the narratives of the different entrepreneurs, with as much objectivity as possible and leaving aside any preferences or admiration, by focussing on the objective of this research, to achieve as accurate results as possible. Accuracy is only possible by analysing the data in exactly the same manner with as much objectivity as possible. The researcher mentally set himself in the role of a scientific researcher, detaching himself from any preferences, admirations or gratefulness for their will to participate during this research. To ensure this in the best possible manner, the empathic interpretation as described by Willig (2012) was applied.

In this research, entrepreneurs were interviewed either in English or Luxembourgish. English was not the researcher's native language, neither was it for some entrepreneurs. When a non-native language is used as a way of communication, even more details might be lost as Kisser et al. (2012) found that in the context of tasks where language was mediated, people with English as their native language, achieved a better performance than people with another native language. All participants told the researcher their story about their motivation, challenges faced and personal qualities as an entrepreneur which helped them to overcome those problems. The story they told was the story as it was in their mind at the time of the interview. They may have

additional qualities or motivations that they were not aware of at the time of the interview. In this context it is important to consider the fact that some experiences of human beings lie hidden in the unconscious mind, not available to the conscious mind of the storyteller and can thus not be expressed in words (Leitch, 2006).

The researcher could have reduced the risk of entrepreneurs not being consciously aware of all their motivations or problem-solving qualities, by sending them a list of motivations and problem-solving qualities as identified in the literature review. If this study was to be repeated, the researcher would send the participants a list of those identified in this research after their interview, giving them a chance to add motivations or qualities which they may remember after going through the list.

The researcher also realised after conducting this research, that the applied method did not take into account the level of importance of their motivations and problem-solving qualities. The researcher could have included this criterion by asking the entrepreneurs to assess the strength of each of their motivations and problem-solving qualities. This could have been done in a second step after the interview, leaving the participants the choice to attach a number from 1 to 10, one being low and 10 being very strong.

## **4. DATA ANALYSIS**

In this section the data collected during the interviews with the six participants will be presented firstly in the form of short stories which summarise the main information collected during the interview, followed by a table summarising the relevant information regarding their motivation and problem-solving qualities. To support the interviewer's interpretation, this section includes original quotes from the interview transcripts that were in English for Fitness entrepreneurs 1, 2, 5 and 6. The quotes from the transcripts of Fitness entrepreneurs 3 and 4 have been translated from Luxembourgish into English as those interviews were conducted in Luxembourgish. In the end, two tables will regroup all the motivations and problem-solving qualities collected in this research with their frequency among the fitness entrepreneurs that participated.

### **4.1. Fitness entrepreneur 1 (hereafter FE1)**

For FE1, sport played an essential part in his life and, at an early age, saved him from going to junior prison. In 2009 he started to work out in outdoor parks with his friends. They then gave free training workout to street kids, showed their skills in schools, thus served the community and even won a talent TV show. He has the qualification of an engineer and his first entrepreneurial experience was that of creating a business in this field while being a student, which however went bankruptcy.

His first motivation in the field of fitness, was to help kids with street workout by awakening a passion in them for the sport and keep them away from bad things as he explained "With street workout I wanted to help similar kids I saw some potential in, just helping similar kids to have some passion in the sports and stay away a bit from the bad things". In the beginning he was working as an engineer, but he realised that for being able to follow his passion, street workout and calisthenics, he would need to dedicate his time for that and leave his old job. As he had to earn money to feed his family, he started this business in order to be able to fund all needs and continue working with his passion. FE1 said in the interview "I had to leave the job and I had to, you know, search for ways how I can, you know, feed my family, be paid and that's why we started this business because we were hoping to fund all our needs and continue work on our passion".

Before creating his current business, he founded a federation for street workout and calisthenics. With growing popularity, funds became necessary as no one was willing to provide the necessary money. In 2012, he met his current business partner who at that time had a pull-up bar business. Both joined their forces, FE 1 was bringing his skills, knowledge of workout and the crowd, to create their business of street workout outdoor parks and the business partner was bringing his knowledge.

The biggest challenge of this business was to sell the first street workout park in Europe. In the beginning both business partners invested a lot of time and money and the sales didn't happen. Another challenge was the presence of cheap Chinese products on the market and potential clients, governments and municipalities, were looking for cheap short-term solutions.

The solution to these problems were to firstly provide all necessary European certificates that prove that the product has the legally required quality standards of the European Union. They also had to convince their potential customers that it's better to create one high quality park than several low-quality parks. The first European country bought a park after two and a half years.

Qualities that helped FE1 in overcoming difficult situations were leadership skills and being active, not being afraid of taking decisions and taking a risk. FE1 made this clear by answering "I was just very active and had leadership skills in me from my parents, I guess so that just helped me to do, you know, not to be afraid of making decisions, taking a risk". If a certain quality is required in the business, he can just hire an expert in that field.

#### **4.2. Fitness entrepreneur 2 (hereafter FE2)**

FE 2 graduated as an army officer and he met his life partner, who was also a member of the army, at deployment in the gym. At deployment, apart from army duties, he trained, ate, slept and invested time in self-education. Fitness was a positive life changer for his partner. For him, sport, such as running, swimming, lifting weights was an activity he always liked. With the army, fitness became just a part of life and he always loved to look at things as a whole system and then find out how it works in the best possible manner.

When both came back from deployment, they decided to live together. After a rich experience from the army, he did not want to work under the orders of someone which he expressed by saying “I did not really want to be under someone, be really supervised by someone” adding, “for me that was such a strong drive to start something on my own”

This became his drive, his strong motivation to start something on his own with his partner and make a living independently. A further drive for him to continue working as a fitness entrepreneur is to make people realise that there exists a lot of false information about fitness, and they need to eat better and sleep better. He explained, “what keeps me running day after day” and “there is so much misunderstanding about fitness out there”, “I wish that you know, more and more people who realise that I just have to eat better, sleep better, take a better rest”. Another drive is to bring back some respect for coaches who he compares to doctors of movement, who support clients for a long time to a healthier lifestyle. His words in this respect were “my other drive next to this, to keep this going is to bring back some respect for the coaches”. He wanted to work independently, and his life partner always wanted a gym. They therefore decided to open their own fitness.

It was difficult to invest in a high-quality fitness and sell a high-quality service which was uncommon in the country, leaving many people in the first place sceptical. They started with the brand CrossFit, which also turned out to be a handicap as people came with expectations of group classes while they offered individual customized services.

They had to get people started and it happened with experience, time and better communication. After solving the marketing issue of the brand name, more people searching the particular service they offered and were satisfied. Overcoming the challenges created more self-confidence in him, to not be afraid of changes. He now found his market and focuses on his service.

A quality that helped him in challenging business situations, was his experience from the army, to be able to effectively lead people and to manage different tasks. He recalled “I think what helped me in the first place that’s all the things I have learned in the academy and to be an officer and to lead people”. Another important quality was to be able to do what he does with

all his focus which he expressed in the following way, “I think a really important quality is to give all your focus to that one thing you do”. He set himself a goal, a vision and maintains his focus until he achieves it.

#### **4.3. Fitness entrepreneur 3 (Hereafter FE3)**

FE 3 started cycling sport when he was 13 years old. Over the years, cycling became a life philosophy for him. He attended his first Spinning® course at the age of 21 and he realized that he can earn his money in a healthier way than a professional cyclist. He explained that “when I was 13 years old, I started cycling and recognised it as a life philosophy” and “at 21, I participated in a Spinning® course where I realised that I can do cycling in a healthier way and earn my money instead of becoming a professional athlete, a professional cyclist”. He then started giving Spinning® courses and as more and more people attended these courses, he created a business plan and realised that he could make a living with it.

His motivation to start his business was to use his passion to make a living independently. His ongoing motivation to continue with his business is the profitability, as well as the flexibility offered by professional independence. Another motivation is to care for and support his athletes, to see them succeed and create a positive change for them which he expressed by replying, “my motivation is always to look after my athletes that I still have, and on the other hand, to maintain the flexibility to say, ok I am not here on that weekend” and happily continues, “this motivates, you share so much positivity, you change the life of people in a positive manner”.

He experienced his first business challenge when he became father. Over the years, clients started attaching to him as he gave them courses as a coach. When he became father, he started working part-time. This was at the same time as the financial crisis in 2009/2010 which brought a lot of negativity among the population who started to spend less money. Clients became unhappy due to the fact that he did not spend as many hours in the fitness as he used to do before. This caused him an important financial loss.

He started to work again much more and be more present in his gym, and he reduced his human resources which saved costs. In the morning he offers personal training courses which allows him to generate more money. He created himself a situation where he can quickly generate money if he needs more money. Facebook also became a way of communicating what he does on an international scale, which makes his clients proud about his international standing and achievements.

While doing further education, he realised that his knowledge is not yet complete and with new knowledge he can progress. One of his entrepreneurial qualities is that he is thirsty for new knowledge as he puts it, “I am addicted to knowledge”. He always tries to be up to date with newest training methods, nutrition and mental training, which is a driving force for him to progress. He also acquired over the years a feeling of realising which client may harm his business and which client does not. Other qualities which helped him in his venture are curiosity and the ability to distance himself from what clients say about him by explaining, “yes, this and curiosity, curiosity and I had to learn as an athlete to take distance from what clients say to you”. Another quality which helped him was the ability use opportunities to generate more money quickly, such as giving Spinning® courses, and to take action quickly. He said “I act immediately, I see immediately, this needs to be changed, this month I do not have enough, I therefore do 2 weeks of Spinning® marathon because I know that a Spinning® marathon generates immediately an additional 800 €”

#### **4.4. Fitness entrepreneur 4 (Hereafter FE4)**

FA4 has finished a degree in administration and management in 2010 in Portugal and came back to Luxembourg in 2012, where he was born. He knew the situation of the fitness industry in Luxembourg and realised that a lot could be developed in this industry. Upon returning to Luxembourg, he started working as a personal trainer in different fitness studios.

He always had a dream to own his own business, and given that he identifies himself strongly with CrossFit, he took the courage to leave behind the comfort of being employed and started his own business. His motivation for becoming a fitness entrepreneur was to use his passion to

earn a living independently. He explained, “with the dream to have something on my own, which I always had, and given that I identify myself a lot with CrossFit, I took the courage, and left aside the comfort of working for someone, and told myself, now it is time to start something on my own”. The feeling to be able to help people with his service, to create positive change in their life, or even help them avoid surgery, make them happy, is FE4’s biggest motivation as he puts it, “there is nothing more beautiful than to come home in the evening with the feeling that you could help a person today”

FE4 conducted a study whether a CrossFit box would be profitable and found that it is feasible. He then quit his job as a fitness coach and opened a CrossFit fitness studio in 2018.

FE4 always had a very positive opinion about local politics and thought that young entrepreneurs would have some support. Unfortunately, he experienced exactly the opposite, he had no support, two banks refused his project, he had to give up a lot, sell his car, live in a small flat, in order to be able to start his business. This nearly caused him to experience a burnout. After he opened his fitness, more and more clients came which was a pleasant experience. Then he faced a second challenge, the first cancellations from clients of their membership, without giving a reason.

Due to the high quality of his service, the number of his clients increased, thus helping him with the expenses related to the business such as the rent of the CrossFit box. In 2019 he experienced a good year and the gym nearly achieved the expected goal. Marketing also was an important aspect and FE4 believes that with an improved marketing, better results can be achieved in the future.

Qualities which helped him so far in his business are firstly his education, which he could put into practice for the first time when he opened his business. FE4 said “my degree helped me a lot” and “it is now that I could put it into practice”. He now personally takes decisions and deals with matters related to strategy, marketing and organization, and his experience from the university helps him a lot. Another quality which helps him, is his interest to always learn something new, to constantly improve himself and he tries to educate himself in the field of

fitness and marketing. He explained, “I always like to learn”. Consistency, also a fundamental principle of CrossFit, and perseverance are two important qualities for FE4 which helped him as well in overcoming challenging times by making clear that “Consistency, is a main pillar of CrossFit” and “during the CrossFit start, we do the basics where I often speak of consistency because it is not sufficient to come to the training once or twice per month, it is necessary to come regularly, and consistency and perseverance as you said is extremely important”

#### **4.5. Fitness entrepreneur 5 (Hereafter FE5)**

FE5 started training at the age of 16 and as he didn't achieve the expected results, he started to form a passion for learning more about fitness and health. He left school to pursue his passion and started working as a personal trainer firstly in a gym.

His first motivation to become an entrepreneur in the fitness industry, was to be able to train whenever he liked as well as the money he would earn by explaining, “I probably loved training and I thought it was the best thing ever to be able to work in the gym, basically train when you want, the whole idea of train when you want”, “the money you get”, that was basically my motivation when I started”. Over time he realised that his passion wasn't just the money and training, but to help females achieve their fitness goals without being bound to restrictive dieting, which turned out to be his main motivation to enter the fitness industry as he put it, “I then started to realise how my passion wasn't just the money and the training, it was actually helping females go from restrictive dieting and kind of not knowing what to do, and kind of helped them become educated on how to lose weight and feel good”.

He has seen a gap in the market and used his passion to open his own fitness and work in it as a personal trainer helping frustrated females to go from restrictive dieting to feel more confident and happier.

The biggest challenge for FE5 was lack of confidence and self-doubt after leaving his area of comfort and wondering whether he could run his facility himself, the fear of becoming quiet as personal trainer, not being busy and in the worst case get bust.

Important entrepreneurial qualities and skills which helped FE5 in his business, overcoming challenges, are innovation and creativity, to be able to create new ideas that separated him from

the market by replying that “something you need to be is innovative” and “you need to be innovative number one and creative number two”. Other skills which helped him are the willingness to take risks and being an extremely hard worker as he said, “You need to have the skill of being a risk taker and an extremely hard worker”. His quality of being a risk-taker allowed him to open his own facility which was a rewarding experience. Further qualities which helped him overcome challenges were confidence, confidence to achieve the best results, remaining determined, and being passionate about what he is doing. FE5 draw attention to the fact that “confidence has going to be something you gonna need” and “you just need to be kind of determined the whole time and show perseverance” adding that “passion is gonna be one thing that you really need to have”

Accepting failure and adaptability in his approach of learning were additional qualities which helped him explaining that “you will have weeks where 4 to 5 clients are gonna leave you and you’re gonna fail, you’re failing, you know you need to be accepting any failure” and “you need to be extremely adaptable in your kind of approach of learning and your approach to your career”

#### **4.6. Fitness entrepreneur 6 (Hereafter FE6)**

FE6 grew up playing sports and was always athletic. He received his inspiration from his idol, Bruce Lee, whom he considered a strong disciplined person, physically and mentally. His parents, who themselves were very disciplined individuals had a profound effect on him too. FE6 loved the fact that Bruce Lee trained in a special way without going to a gym and this is where his passion for bodyweight exercises, namely calisthenics, all began. He started doing bodyweight exercises mastering calisthenics and then pushed himself to do new things that would just come into his mind. Without the availability of online research at that time, nor anybody to teach him, he learned all on his own through trial and error. When platforms like YouTube became available, he started posting videos about him training online. He did not expect the positive response, nor that it would take off worldwide.

His motivation to put his videos online was to motivate other people and show them something different as he made clear, “I just wanted to put something to inspire and motivate other people

and show them something different because there were no videos like mine”. His motivation to create his own brand, start a business was the response he got from putting those videos online and to motivate and inspire others, after seeing the effect he had on others with those videos explaining, “when I had people’s attention, you know, that kind of motivated me more to put more forward out there because I saw how, and the effect that I had on other people’s inspiration and motivation to doing it”. Basically, he used and still uses his passion to help other people change their lifestyle and get inspired. He turned his whole motivation and inspiration into a business.

A challenge for FE6 was to find an investor when he started his business. Given the nature of his business, which was different and unique to people, it was hard to show potential investors what their return from a potential investment in the business would be. This made it more difficult for him to start.

As he had no investor, he had to work twice as hard and use his own money to fund everything in his business. He used his passion and believed in a great return before actually seeing it. What helped his business as well was luck as a store decided to sell his videos, which received a very positive response and even caught the attention of local and national media which lead to him being fortunate enough and be seen on TV in front of millions of people.

Qualities which helped him overcoming those challenging situations were willingness to learn and eagerness to succeed clarifying “yes, definitely, willingness to learn, eager to succeed”. He started with little knowledge about business related subjects such as marketing but was able to acquire a lot of knowledge over the time through this skill. Other qualities which helped him in challenging situations where his own four D system he created, drive, dedication, discipline and determination, which he applies in any aspect of his life. FE6 continues “just by living by my four D system, my own four D system, which I created, I call it four D’s, drive, dedication, discipline and determination, so I implied those into what I was doing” He was unable to accept failure and instinctively faces challenges and goes past them replying that “the fact that I couldn’t accept failing is kind of what drove me” and “the type of person that I am, the way that I’m disciplined is like if I come into face with a challenge, I’m not gonna run from it, I’m gonna keep pushing toward it and overcome it”.

#### **4.7. Summary of the findings**

| <b>MOTIVATION</b> |                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                   | <b>Themes<br/>(Business type)</b>        | <b>Evidence (quotes)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Interpretation</b>                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>FE 1</b>       | Producer of outdoor street workout parks | <p>- “With street workout I wanted to help similar kids I saw some potential in, just helping similar kids to have some passion in the sports and stay away a bit from the bad things”</p> <p>- “I had to leave the job and I had to, you know, search for ways how I can, you know, feed my family, be paid and that’s why we started this business because we were hoping to fund all our needs and continue work on our passion”</p>                                                                           | <p>- Help Kids with street workout to create passion in the sport and keep them away from doing bad things</p> <p>- Use his passion to generate an income for his needs</p> |
| <b>FE 2</b>       | Gym and personal training                | <p>- “I did not really want to be under someone, be really supervised by someone”</p> <p>- “for me that was such a strong drive to start something on my own”</p> <p>- “What keeps me running day after day”, “there is so much misunderstanding about fitness out there”, “I wish that you know, more and more people who realise that I just have to eat better, sleep better, take a better rest”</p> <p>- “My other drive next to this, to keep this going is to bring back some respect for the coaches”</p> | <p>- Independence</p> <p>- Make people realise there exists a lot of wrong information about fitness</p> <p>- Bring back respect to the coaches</p>                         |

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| <b>FE 3</b> | Gym and personal training          | <p>- “When I was 13 years old, I started cycling and recognised it as a life philosophy”, “at 21 I participated in a Spinning® course where I realised that I can do cycling in a healthier way and earn my money instead of becoming a professional athlete, a professional cyclist”</p> <p>- “My motivation is always to look after my athletes that I still have, and on the other hand, to maintain the flexibility to say, ok I am not here on that weekend”</p> <p>- “This motivates, you share so much positivity, you change the life of people in a positive manner”</p> | <p>-Use his passion to make a living independently</p> <p>-The flexibility offered by this profession</p> <p>-Create a positive change in his athletes</p> |
| <b>FE 4</b> | CrossFit Gym and personal training | <p>- “With the dream to have something on my own, which I always had, and given that I identify myself a lot with CrossFit, I took the courage, and left aside the comfort of working for someone, and told myself, now it is time to start something on my own”</p> <p>- “There is nothing more beautiful than to come home in the evening with the feeling that you could help a person today”</p>                                                                                                                                                                              | <p>- Use his passion to make a living independently</p> <p>- Create a positive change in people’s life and make them happy</p>                             |
| <b>FE 5</b> | Gym and personal training          | <p>- “I probably loved training and I thought it was the best thing ever to</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>-Being able to train whenever he wants, which is his passion, and earn money</p>                                                                        |

|                                  |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                  |                                                                                                            | <p>be able to work in the gym, basically train when you want, the whole idea of train when you want”, “the money you get”, that was basically my motivation when I started”</p> <p>-“I then started to realise how my passion wasn’t just the money and the training, it was actually helping females go from restrictive dieting and kind of not knowing what to do, and kind of helped them become educated on how to lose weight and feel good”</p> | <p>-Help females achieve their fitness goals without being bound to restrictive dieting</p>                   |
| <b>FE 6</b>                      | Calisthenics personal trainer selling training videos and calisthenics certifications                      | <p>-“I just wanted to put something to inspire and motivate other people and show them something different because there were no videos like mine”</p> <p>-“When I had people’s attention, you know, that kind of motivated me more to put more forward out there because I saw how, and the effect that I had on other people’s inspiration and motivation to doing it”</p>                                                                           | <p>-Motivate and inspire others</p> <p>-Positive response he got from putting his training videos online.</p> |
| <b>PROBLEM-SOLVING QUALITIES</b> |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                               |
|                                  | <b>Themes (challenges)</b>                                                                                 | <b>Evidence (quotes)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Interpretation</b>                                                                                         |
| <b>FE1</b>                       | <p>- Selling the first street workout park in Europe</p> <p>- Cheap low-quality products on the market</p> | <p>- “I was just very active and had leadership skills in me from my parents, I guess so that just helped me to do, you know, not to be afraid of making decisions, taking a risk”</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <p>- Leadership skills</p> <p>- No fear of taking risk</p> <p>- No fear of taking decisions</p>               |

|            |                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| <b>FE2</b> | <p>- Scepticism of customers in the beginning with the unusual product</p> <p>-Marketing issue with CrossFit</p>                     | <p>- “I think what helped me in the first place that’s all the things I have learned in the academy and to be an officer and to lead people”</p> <p>- “I think a really important quality is to give all your focus to that one thing you do”</p>                                                                                                                                                              | <p>- Leadership skills</p> <p>- Complete focus on what he does</p>                                                                                                    |
| <b>FE3</b> | <p>- Financial loss due to his reduced presence in his early years of fatherhood</p>                                                 | <p>- “I am addicted to knowledge”</p> <p>- “Yes, this and curiosity, curiosity and I had to learn as an athlete to take distance from what clients say to you”</p> <p>- “I act immediately, I see immediately, this needs to be changed, this month I do not have enough, I therefore do 2 weeks of Spinning® marathon because I know that a Spinning® marathon generates immediately an additional 800 €”</p> | <p>- Thirst for knowledge.</p> <p>- Curiosity</p> <p>- Emotional distance from client’s opinion about himself</p> <p>- Taking action</p> <p>- Using opportunities</p> |
| <b>FE4</b> | <p>- Lack of support to start the business as a young entrepreneur</p> <p>- First cancellations from clients of their membership</p> | <p>- “My degree helped me a lot”, “it is now that I could put it into practice”</p> <p>- “I always like to learn”</p> <p>- “Consistency, is a main pillar of CrossFit”,</p> <p>- “During the CrossFit start, we do the basics where I often speak of consistency because it is not sufficient to come to the training once or twice per month, it is necessary to come regularly, and consistency and</p>      | <p>-Education</p> <p>-The will to constantly learn and improve</p> <p>- Consistency</p> <p>- Perseverance</p>                                                         |

|            |                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            |                                                                     | perseverance as you said is extremely important”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>FE5</b> | -Lack of confidence<br><br>-Self-doubt<br><br>-Fear of getting bust | - “Something you need to be is innovative”<br><br>- “You need to be innovative number one and creative number two”<br><br>- “You need to have the skill of being a risk taker and an extremely hard worker”<br><br>- “Confidence has going to be something you gonna need”<br><br>- “You just need to be kind of determined the whole time and show perseverance”<br><br>- “Passion is gonna be one thing that you really need to have”<br><br>- “You will have weeks where 4 to 5 clients are gonna leave you and you’re gonna fail, you’re failing, you know you need to be accepting any failure”<br><br>- “You need to be extremely adaptable in your kind of approach of learning and your approach to your career” | -Innovation<br>-Creativity<br>-Risk-taking<br>-Hard work<br>-Confidence<br>-Determination<br>-Passion<br>-Adaptability<br>-Acceptance of failure<br>-Perseverance |
| <b>FE6</b> | -Find investors when he started his business                        | - “The type of person that I am, the way that I’m disciplined is like if I come into face with a challenge, I’m not gonna                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | -Willingness to learn<br>-Eagerness to succeed<br>-Drive<br>-Dedication<br>-Discipline                                                                            |

|  |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                         |
|--|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  | run from it, I'm gonna keep pushing toward it and overcome it"<br><br>- "Yes, definitely, willingness to learn, eager to succeed"<br><br>- "Just by living by my four D system, my own four D system, which I created, I call it four D's, drive, dedication, discipline and determination, so I implied those into what I was doing"<br><br>- "The fact that I couldn't accept failing is kind of what drove me" | -Determination<br>-Inability to accept failure<br>-Facing challenges and instinctively going past them. |
|--|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The following two lists do use sometimes synonyms which regroup the answers provided by the participants, as they sometimes had similar replies but used their own vocabulary.

**List of motivations with their frequency in this study among the 6 participants**

| Motivation                                                         | Frequency in this study |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| In some sort help people to create a positive change in their life | 6                       |
| Use their passion to earn money                                    | 4                       |
| Independence                                                       | 3                       |
| Bring back respect for coaches                                     | 1                       |
| Flexibility of the profession                                      | 1                       |
| Positive response towards the service offered                      | 1                       |

**List of problem-solving qualities with their frequency in this study among the 6 participants**

| <b>Problem-solving quality</b>             | <b>Frequency in this study</b> |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Willingness to learn                       | 3                              |
| Leadership                                 | 2                              |
| Risk-taking                                | 2                              |
| Determination                              | 2                              |
| Decision-taking                            | 2                              |
| Perseverance                               | 2                              |
| Acceptance of failure                      | 1                              |
| Adaptability                               | 1                              |
| Confidence                                 | 1                              |
| Consistency                                | 1                              |
| Creativity                                 | 1                              |
| Curiosity                                  | 1                              |
| Dedication                                 | 1                              |
| Discipline                                 | 1                              |
| Drive                                      | 1                              |
| Eagerness to succeed                       | 1                              |
| Education                                  | 1                              |
| Emotional distance from customer's opinion | 1                              |
| Focus                                      | 1                              |
| Going past challenges                      | 1                              |
| Hard work                                  | 1                              |
| Inability to accept failure                | 1                              |
| Innovation                                 | 1                              |
| Passion                                    | 1                              |
| Using opportunities                        | 1                              |

## **5. DISCUSSION**

The objectives of this research were to study the motivation of fitness entrepreneurs as well as their problem-solving qualities when confronted with business challenges and thus search for common motivations and problem-solving qualities. To keep the discussion clear for the reader, it has been split into two parts, part one for the motivation of the participants and part two for their problem-solving qualities.

### **5.1. Motivation**

The findings of this research indicate that all the interviewed fitness entrepreneurs had more than one motivation to be a fitness entrepreneur. While they used different words to express their motivations, all six entrepreneurs had one common motivation, namely to help people in some way, be it to create a positive change in their life, make them realise that there exists a lot of wrong information in the industry or to inspire them. This wish was really strong as FE3 put it “this motivates, you share so much positivity, you change the life of people in a positive manner”, and FE4 similarly said that “there is nothing more beautiful than to come home in the evening with the feeling that you could help a person today”. These findings are similar to those of Hemme et al. (2017) who found that fitness entrepreneurs had a strong wish to help people by improving their body. However, this research was more specific about their motivation to be a fitness entrepreneur and could thus add to the research of Hemme et al. (2017) by providing further motivations. The second most common motivation which resulted from this research, given by four out of six participants, was to use their passion to earn money, which was wonderfully explained by FE1 “I had to leave the job and I had to, you know, search for ways how I can, you know, feed my family, be paid and that’s why we started the business because we were hoping to fund all our needs and continue work on our passion”, which is similar to Ranfagni & Runfola (2018) findings that passion can serve as a force which makes people transform their passion into a commercial activity. The third most common motivation amongst them was independence, named by three entrepreneurs as motivation. FE2 expressed this motivation strongly by explaining that “I did not really want to be under someone, be really supervised by someone” continuing “for me that was such a strong drive to start something on my own, which is similar to the findings of Benzing et al. (2009), Estay et al. (2013), Cassar

(2007), Mutairi & Fayez (2015) and Block and Landgraf (2016) where independence was a motivator for people to become an entrepreneur. Money was only given by one entrepreneur as a direct motivation in the beginning to start a business, but it occurs indirectly in the motivation of other four entrepreneurs in the form of using their passion to create an income to live independently or to meet their personal needs. However, none of the participants had money as a sole motivation to start their business, they had other motivations too, a fact which also emerged from the study of Manish & Sutter (2016). Other motivations that were always named once were to bring back respect for coaches, the flexibility of the profession and positive response towards the service offered. The results indicate that the process of motivation for fitness entrepreneurs is complex as it is not one single motivation which lead them into their profession. Apart from the will to help people, differences could be observed in many other motivations. The nature of their motivation depended on the individual and their circumstances which would be in line with the findings of Jayawarna et al (2011) who discovered that the motivation of entrepreneurs is influenced by their social experience.

## **5.2. Problem-solving qualities**

While the participants work in the fitness industry, the nature of their business was mostly different. The challenges they faced were also very different. The only problem which was common amongst three entrepreneurs were problems to start selling their product. Two expressed similar problems such as lack of support to start the business and problems to find investors. Other business challenges such as lower quality cheaper products from competition, marketing issue, financial loss caused by reduced presence in the early years of fatherhood, first cancellations from customers, lack of confidence, self-doubt and fear of bankruptcy were only given once in this research. The problems they faced were thus often of a different nature.

In this study the researcher was able to collect a very high number of qualities which the participants said to possess that helped them in overcoming challenges. It was interesting to see that every entrepreneur named more than one quality which he possesses as an entrepreneur that helped in overcoming business challenges. The most common was willingness to learn which helped three entrepreneurs, FE3 explaining “I am addicted to knowledge”, FE4 saying “I always like to learn” and FE6 replying during the interview “yes, definitely, willingness to

learn, eager to succeed". While this quality is not necessarily found in literature in the context of problem-solving, it forms part of Wickham's (2006) list of the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs. Five different qualities helped at least two entrepreneurs in the problem-solving process. One of them was leadership which is consistent with Chaudry's (1999) findings who considered it as one of specific qualities of problem-solvers. The other four were risk-taking, determination, decision-taking and perseverance. FE5 was very straightforward explaining that "you need to have the skill of being a risk-taker and an extremely hard worker". Risk-taking was also found by Cui et al. (2016) as an important ability to survive in a constantly changing environment. Determination is considered by Wickham (2006) as one of many characteristics of successful entrepreneurs. Perseverance is another quality already found in previous literature such as Toren & Toren (2011) who found that perseverance in their vision and positive state of mind helped entrepreneurs to overcome challenges and be successful. Markman & Baron (2003) similarly found that entrepreneurs with perseverance are more likely to succeed.

In this study emerged 19 different qualities which always helped only one entrepreneur in the problem-solving process. Hard work, confidence and openness to change which is similar to adaptability found in this research form part of Wickham's (2006) list of the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs. Using opportunities by finding them or creating them in order to overcome business challenges was also named by McClelland (1961). Bolton and Thompson (2013) even claim that the skill to find necessary resources to solve problems or exploit new opportunities distinguishes entrepreneurs from small business-owners. This is exactly what FE3 did in his case. Creativity is another quality which is consistent with Chaudry's (1999) findings who considered it as one of specific qualities of problem-solvers. Innovation also helped one entrepreneur which is consistent with the findings of Buttner & Garnsey (2005) that entrepreneurs have a more innovative approach to problem-solving than managers. Passion helped FE5 to overcome business challenges, a quality considered by Cardon et al. (2017) as a driving force for entrepreneur's persistence, innovation and success. Education is a quality that helped FE4 in the face of adversity which is consistent with Jain & Ali (2013) who argued that education boosts entrepreneurial achievement. The quality of focus of FE 2 which helped in overcoming adversities are also consistent with Barringer & Ireland's (2016) characteristics of successful entrepreneurs. For FE6, eagerness to succeed and drive were helpful qualities in the face of challenges which is consistent with Chaudhuri et al. (2012) who explain that successful

entrepreneurs need a drive to succeed. FE 5 said that acceptance of failure was helpful in the problem-solving process, while FE6 said the opposite that inability to accept failure helped in his case. The exact words of FE5 were “you will have weeks where 4 to 5 clients are gonna leave you and you’re gonna fail, you’re failing, you know you need to be accepting any failure” while FE6 explained that “the fact that I couldn’t accept failing is kind of what drove me”. While these terms firstly seem to be a contradiction, the researcher believes that it could be possible that FE6 cannot accept failure as he focuses on the goal to succeed, while for FE5 accepting failure could mean to accept what went wrong and can no longer be changed in order to move forward towards the goal. Wickham (2006) claims that a successful entrepreneur tries not to do a mistake, but if it happens, it is taken with a positive mind to learn from it. Further entrepreneurial problem-solving qualities found in this research were curiosity, emotional distance from customer’s opinion, consistency, dedication, discipline, and going past challenges.

While the possibility exists that the participants also had other qualities that helped them, which they were not precisely aware of during the interview, the findings indicate that there exists a difference in personality among the entrepreneurs of the same industry, as well as their approaches. It is interesting to see that with just 6 entrepreneurs, the researcher was able to collect 25 different problem-solving qualities, which seems very high, but the researcher interprets this as a proof of a multifaceted nature of the problem-solving process in entrepreneurship. While some common motivations and problem-solving qualities could have been found in this research, the results indicate that while they are active in the same industry, the entrepreneurs were different individuals with differences in their motivation and even more differences in their problem-solving qualities. Wickham (2006) explains that an entrepreneur is an individual in the centre of an entrepreneurial mechanism, but individuals show differences in their behaviour and also the way they respond to situations they face.

It was not clear in this research if those qualities helped the participants to the same extent or if some qualities were major problem-solving qualities while others assisted the major quality in the process. In this study, the researcher aimed to get an insight into the motivation and problem-solving qualities of fitness entrepreneurs. The qualitative research, more specifically

narrative inquiry proved appropriate for this purpose as it allowed through interviews with entrepreneurs to collect rich data about every participant and also new data, as they could tell their story the way they perceived it with their own vocabulary. As Willig (2013) explained wonderfully, the qualitative research allows to analyse in detail a phenomenon, which the researcher did in this research, and not a specific feature among a high number of individuals as the quantitative research does.

The researcher hopes to add to existing literature with an extensive list of specific qualities that may be helpful to entrepreneurs who are facing challenges and have difficulties in overcoming them. With the list that emerged in this research, they can use it as a check list for their specific case which may help them detect certain qualities that if developed or used, they hopefully can better solve their business challenges.

All the participants in this research had their individual motivations and they shared common motivations for being a fitness entrepreneur. In the problem-solving process, there were fewer common points and more differences in their qualities to solve the challenges. As a result of this study, the researcher was able to summarise the different stories of the entrepreneur's motivations and problem-solving qualities, leading to a list with all the different motivations and problem-solving qualities. While all participants were able to successfully overcome their business challenges, it is worth to mention that in the case of entrepreneurs, new challenges can emerge at any time as they face risks and uncertainties which normal people would not be comfortable to live with (Burns, 2007). The researcher thus hopes to provide entrepreneurs with a rich list of problem-solving qualities together with the personal cases, that may allow them to look at problems from different angles allowing them to overcome those challenges faster or move forward in that process when they feel to have hit a wall. According to Wickham (2006), successful entrepreneurs prepare themselves before new situations can emerge, helping them to avoid mistakes and if they should occur, then the entrepreneur should objectively analyse the situation to find a way of avoiding it. The researcher hopes that entrepreneurs can better prepare themselves with this list and individual case studies for new challenging situations and thus overcome them more effectively and faster.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The results of this research show that the participants all had more than one motivation to be a fitness entrepreneur. One common motivation that was found in all participants was to help people in some way, which is in line with the findings of Hemme et al. (2017). In addition to the findings of Hemme et al. (2017), other motivations in fitness entrepreneurs emerged with the second most common one, using their passion to earn money, followed by independence, two motivations that were previously identified in entrepreneurs from other industries by Ranfagni & Runfola (2018), Benzing et al. (2009), Estay et al. (2013), Cassar (2007), Mutairi & Fayaz (2015) and Block & Landgraf (2016). Less common motivations that emerged were the flexibility of the profession, positive response towards the service offered and to bring back respect for coaches. While these findings show that there were several motivations that served as a force to either pull or push those individuals towards the profession of entrepreneur in the fitness industry, they tell us at the same time that the process of motivation is quite complex and depends on the individual with his personal circumstances.

For the problem-solving part, results show that in the case of every participant, more than one problem-solving quality helped each one to overcome a business challenge they faced during their career. Interestingly, a total of 25 problem-solving qualities among six participants emerged, which seems very high, but at the same time may indicate a multifaceted nature of the problem-solving process in real life events of entrepreneurs in the fitness industry. Some common qualities were willingness to learn, leadership, risk-taking, determination, decision-taking and perseverance, qualities that were found in literature either in the context of problem-solving or qualities of successful entrepreneurs by Wickham (2006), Chaudry (1999), Cui et al. (2016), Toren & Toren (2011) and Markman & Baron (2003). Most of the other qualities, less common in this study were also named in previous literature as qualities of successful entrepreneurs or problem-solving qualities. The results show that the problem-solving process is a complex process where the entrepreneurs that participated used more than one quality to overcome the business challenges and they all used different qualities. The researcher used the qualitative research with semi-structured interviews which allowed the entrepreneurs to speak

freely about their own experience. It is thus possible that they may possess other qualities that helped them too while they were not particularly aware of them.

The researcher hopes to be able to add to existing research with these findings and provide entrepreneurs with a rich list of motivations and problem-solving qualities that may help the aspiring entrepreneurs, the interviewed entrepreneurs as well as other entrepreneurs with an insight into motivations that can serve as a driving force for entrepreneurship and allow them to look at problems from different angles allowing them to overcome those challenges faster or move forward in the problem solving process and better prepare themselves for new challenging situations and thus overcome them more effectively and faster.

Barringer & Ireland (2016) explain that entrepreneurs have specific qualities which are developed. Wickham (2006) states that entrepreneurs have the ability to motivate themselves and others. Given that the entrepreneurial qualities are not necessarily innate but are developed and entrepreneurs can motivate themselves, both processes can be improved. Human beings can learn from experience which translates into an improvement of that person's skill to think about problems and improve its strategies and they have the ability to apply theoretical knowledge which can help (Long et al., 2011). The researcher thus believes that entrepreneurs can profit from the results of this research by learning from the participants experiences and if helpful, apply new motivations and develop new problem-solving qualities which can then be applied. The researcher recommends in this context to use the table which summarised the findings together with the lists of motivations and problem-solving qualities which emanated from this research as a check-list for areas that have potential to be improved, allowing entrepreneurs to better prepare themselves for problems that can be encountered in the future and see if they can find further motivations to use positively for their venture. The summary table can be of value to entrepreneurs who have difficulties in overcoming a business problem as Barringer & Ireland (2016) recommend looking how similar problems have been solved if an entrepreneur faces challenges in overcoming an adversity and then apply that solution.

In this research, the entrepreneurs shared their motivations and problem-solving qualities. As they all provided always more than one motivation and problem-solving quality, it was not very clear if those motivations acted as a drive to become fitness entrepreneur with equal strength or if some motivations were stronger. Similarly, in the process of problem-solving they provided several qualities where it is not clear if some qualities contributed more strongly to overcoming adversities than others. The researcher would thus recommend in further research to include this factor too by asking the entrepreneurs which motivations and which problem solving-qualities were dominant in their case and provide the declining importance of the other ones. Given the possibility that the participants also had other qualities that helped them, which they were not precisely aware of during the interview, a further research can build on this one and reduce this risk by sending the participants the lists of motivations and problem-solving qualities, as created in this research, when they review the data of their story, giving them the possibility to complete their data with eventual motivations and qualities they may remember after going through the list.

### **Recommendations**

If entrepreneurs believe that the findings of this research can be of help to improve their motivation or improve their problem-solving qualities, the researcher recommends to use the table which summarised the findings together with the lists of motivations and problem-solving qualities that emanated from this research, which can draw attention to key motivations and qualities that have potential to be perfected in the entrepreneur.

As each participant provided several motivations and problem-solving qualities, further research may include the declining importance of those motivations and entrepreneurial qualities to overcome adversities. Additionally, the possibility of motivations or qualities they were unaware of during the interview can be reduced in a future research, by sending the entrepreneurs the lists about the motivations and problem-solving qualities, serving as checklist serving as a reminder to reduce the risk of forgetting some.

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