



Rural quilt shop entrepreneurs in Iowa: Pull and push motivations

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A 2014 Quilting in America™ study states that there were 16 million active quilters in the United States which represents 4.9% of the US population, spending approximately \$3.76 billion a year on their fiber arts passion. Quilters spend money on fabric, thread, books, classes, as well as guilds (Stalp, 2007). The average quilter owns approximately \$13,000 worth of tools and supplies and has a fabric stash of approximately \$6,000 (SAQA, 2014). The fabric and supplies quilters use may be purchased in big box retailers, such as Walmart and specialty large retailers such as Joanne Fabrics or Hobby Lobby. However, many quilters also purchase their goods from small businesses. The Small Business Association (SBA) (2016), reported that there are 28 million small businesses which account for 54% of all US sales. Due to the economic importance that quilters provide to the economy, as well as an interest in the economic development of rural communities, the researchers explored motivations of quilt shop owners in rural communities in the state of Iowa.

A semi-structured interview process (Creswell, 2013) was used to explore the topic. The researchers used a purposive strategy in choosing the participants to be interviewed, selecting 15 entrepreneurs in towns smaller than 1,500 individuals. Through theme analysis, the authors found two major themes related to motivation; these include pull factors of opportunity, independence, challenge/achievement, and money. The major push factors included those family and job related. Most of the quilt shop owners were not just pulled or pushed into

entrepreneurship, but rather concurrently pulled by one or more of the factors, and pushed by one or more of the factors.

Quilt shop owners also described their businesses as happy places to visit. During the interviews, they discussed how much happier they were, then when they worked for someone else. There were three areas related to happiness including, customers, relationships and passion for the shops and the fabrics.

General systems theory can better explain how the quilt shop owner's happiness is generated. General systems theory is based on relationships of the parts to the whole. There are three elements involved in systems theory: input, throughput, and output (Lovingood & Firebaugh, 1978). The input in this study was the pull factors including opportunity, independence, challenge and achievement, and money, and the push factors include family and job related issues. The throughput would be the quilt shop itself, and the output is the happiness factors including customers, relationships and passion. The feedback loop goes from the happiness of the quilt shop owners back to the pull and push factors of entrepreneurship.

References

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