

**The life story: A social qualitative research method and its application
in tourism management studies**

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Abstract

This present paper approaches the relevance of the life story as a social qualitative research method and the benefit it brings when applicated in tourism management studies. A literature review was made to determinate which is the role of this particular research method when performing a study in the social sciences field, as well in tourism management. This method leads to a better understanding of a person's own perception of its story, based in lived experiences inside, and outside, the tourism business ambience. For this issue, speaking of social responsibility and ethics in the tourism management qualitative research discipline, allows to conceptualize a vision which permits an adequate performance of a study that involves direct interaction with persons. This study contributes in a significant manner to consider the life story as a reliable qualitative research method for the construction of a data analysis, leading to remarkable results that will produce a major impact in science, mainly in tourism management studies.

Keywords: Qualitative research. Life story. Tourism management.

1 INTRODUCCIÓN

“A life story could stablish a bridge, a double relation, between interest and disinterest, social conditioners and indeterminations” (Veras, 2010:143). This present paper aims to commence by considering research, in general terms, as a fundamental

component of human knowledge. And therefore, that knowledge being conceptualized as the process where the following two actors converge and interact:

1. A cognitive subject (the one who knows an object of knowledge), and
2. An object of knowledge (something that the cognitive subject knows).

As a result, from that convergence and interaction, a new mental product is obtained, which is denominated knowledge. In that manner, that new product, knowledge, constitutes the interacting process as well as the result from it. In other words, knowledge is defined as the subjective action that produces it, as well as the product obtained by it.

Human kind has been distinguished, in the extension of its historic outcome, by its ability to develop interrogations which permits to understand and clarify all subjects, objects, and happenings, existing in its involving environment. Which impulses it to discern everything related to its codes and relations, to direct towards future years and to discover possible reasons which originate all existing things all around, in relation to those planted interrogations' correspondent pursued answers.

According to the above mentioned, is pertinent to affirm that is inconceivable to think the fact where there is no symbiotic interaction between the subject and the object of knowledge. If there is a motion force that impulses what we acknowledge as science, then it would be that interaction between object and subject, a cooperation that plentiful characterizes those processes, because is the detonator that fires all topics and problems solved by science. Reason why this always new (independently from its chronological age) and renewed qualitative focus seeks to be interested, and interrogate itself, into human reality to conceptually construct it, through knowledge.

Research with a qualitative focus is the beholder of a clearly humanist essence. With the purpose to achieve an understanding of the social reality from an optic of the ideal state of things, it outstands as a conception that explains, or may help to explain, the evolution and assimilation of the social order. Qualitative research distinguishes social life as the phenomenon produced by that shared creativity by all individuals conforming it. Its data proceed from ordinary life, common sense, explanations, and reconstructions which an individual does to live and survive daily (Ruiz, 2012).

The fact where that shared creativity stabilishes an identified reality, when shared with the mentioned ideal state of things, is perceived as objective, alive, changing, adaptable, dynamic, and knowledgeable for all human beings within that social interaction. "Qualitative methods highlight all diverse forms in which we could situate to give an adequate answer to concrete situations, that will be demarcating the research process" (Charriez, 2012:50). Methods, refers to all those techniques used to capture and analyze data to create knowledge. Methodology is thus a strategy of enquiry that guides a set of procedures (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Creswell, 2009).

Qualitative research methods are mainly focused in carrying out processes in descriptive terms. They interpret actions, languages, signs, expressions, perceptions, attitudes, among others, which are resultant from functionally relevant actions for the tourism researcher. Sits him in a correspondence with an enhanced social context for its better understanding. And yet the continued conceptual development of tourism depends on the exploration of new paradigms and perspectives, due to the necessity to get apart from dominant and taken-for-granted thinking, in order to gain possibilities of putting its multiple worlds anew (Pritchard, Morgan & Ateljevic, 2011).

In that sense, this type of research works with natural contexts, or taken just as they are in nature, not submitted to a reconstruction or modification by the tourism researcher (Taylor, 1998). The de-centring of the intellectual universe has also been encouraged by the fracturing of formerly stable divisions between subjects in the social

sciences which has enabled its scientists to break links with powerful epistemological straightjackets (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). “Society’s system of social ruling is making way for communicative self-steering. Dialogues between equal partners replace the traditional top down approach” (Binkhorst & Den-Dekker, 2009:311). Ren, Pritchard, & Morgan (2010) affirm that, instead of having a single hegemonic center in tourism research, tourism is enacted in multiple versions through various practices and performances across and within different knowledge communities.

Qualitative research seeks to explore reality just as others experiment it, by interpreting their own significances, feelings, beliefs, and values. That is why qualitative research follows a direction toward flexible and holistic investigations about persons, organizations, or groups, being study objects researched as a whole, which richness and complexity constitute the essence of what is being investigated (Berrios, 2000). “To visualize Social Sciences through these practices reflects other ways to think the testimony obtention process, and consequently, to relate with interlocutors” (Cardin, 2013:102).

Qualitative research has the objective to comprehend and interpret all happenings within human and social life. It seeks a practical interest goal, with the purpose to situate and align all human actions with their merely subjective reality. Therefore, it pretends to comprehend the singular individuality that characterizes persons and communities, within their own reference framework and historic-cultural contextualization. “Just like human experience is enormously diverse, tourism experience also is” (Montes, 2015:133). In this sense, social studies about tourism could provide fresh points of view, new focuses, through non-traditional looks in order to nourish public policies, civil society, identity constructions and all matters referring destinations (Pastoriza & Pliglia, 2012).

Tourism is a relatively new field of study, emerged from the work market necessity of specialization in service related jobs (Romo & Cruz, 2013). “The concept of the tourism experience has become a focal point for current tourism research and management” (Tung & Ritchie, 2011:1367). As many other phenomena in modern society, social sciences have studied tourism; nevertheless, there is not a unique social theory that will satisfy each and every researcher, so it is to remark that there are several focuses that could provide important information in order to enhance tourism knowledge (Gonzalez, 2009). “Tourism is thus most productively viewed not as an entity in its own right, but instead as a social field in which many actors engage in complex interactions across time and space, both physical and virtual” (Leite & Graburn, 2009:37).

2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND THE LIFE STORY

Qualitative research’s goal is to interact with individuals within their social context, attempting to absorb and interpret the meanings of their actions. As well, with every knowledge they have of themselves and from the reality they interact with. In that attempt, its intention is to find general and scientific approaches in relation to all those social situations and human phenomena they produce, with the simple but firm purpose of exploring, describing, and comprehending them through an interpretation and theoretical construction process.

The life story is a qualitative research method which intends to understand a social context and the social processes developed within it, parting from an experiential cumulus of an individual. This method “...does not seek to comprehend the “whole” life of a person; indeed, none elaboration of this kind proposes that it could be possible nor, therefore, an ideal to achieve” (Blanco, 2011:151). This research method is meant to be a

personal and intimate encounter in which open, direct, verbal questions are used to elicit detailed narratives and stories. Traditionally, its structure dictates that the interviewer maintain control over the interaction with the participant's cooperation (Briggs, 1986). "Accordingly, the roles assigned by the interview structure pre-empt the roles the interviewer and interviewee have in their social worlds outside the interview event" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). As stated by Schilling (2012:15):

[...] qualitative analysis of life stories brings stories to scene, stories that are testimony of human experience, experienced developed in time and space, and that reveal in their construction, element, personal and social, cognitive and factual, built through language in a here-and-now present temporality, but elaborating about past times and contingent futures"

The life story could be defined as all and every narration that tells a person's life experience. It is a personal and auto-biographic opus, stimulated by a researcher in a way that narration's content will express the informant's point of view, in contrast with what is remembered from all different lived situations (Pourtois, 2005). "This approach makes possible to study a particular fragment of the socio-historic reality and work it as a social object" (Romo & Cruz, 2013:44). Thus, the singularity of an individual is what must be taken in account as the revealing source of a specific life experience within its social context.

To define, understand or appreciate a conceptualization of the life story, just as the definition above mentioned and the others that could be found in literature from the concept, "...is possible to refer that the life story is a form in which a person narrate, in a profound manner, his life experiences in function of his life interpretation and given significance, from a social interaction" (Charriez, 2012:53).

The life story is an information provider method which, in conjunction with others, constitutes the narrative's ample panorama. That, in this case, corresponds to the gender that reunites all concepts mentioned before. Therefore, Vera (2010:144) define the life story as:

[...] The ample term that overcoats a quantity of narrations in respect to non-registered acts by other type of documents, or which their documentation must be completed. Recollected by interviews in different ways, it registers the experience of an individual or several individuals form a same collectivity.

The notable research importance of the life story in these last two decades, "revalorize the social actor (individual or collective), being not reducible to a data or variable condition (or to a group's archetypical representation condition) but categorized as a complex configuration subject and as the main character from social sciences approaches of the social reality" (Pujadas, 2000:127). In that sense, "...the life story, as qualitative research, pursues to discover a dialectic relation, a daily negotiation between aspiration and possibility, between utopia and reality, between creation and acceptance" (Charriez, 2012:50).

According to the above mentioned, a life story is any, and every, life experience narration of a person, a group, or an organization. It turns, then, into an auto-biographic document, executed by a researcher whom stimulates the interviewed person's memories. Stories, then, are stored in and retrieved from one's episodic memory and specific indices of stories such as the location and individuals involved in the experience. (Woodside, 2010). The life story possesses a general character. Through this method is intended to

perform a reading from the social happenings of an individual's life. It pursues the collective memory within their daily acting.

It does not seek a simple conceptualization of the story, narrating great events which have been seen from a certain angle. Instead, it seeks for a particular conceptualization of the story narrated by persons, which enrich and significate the generated knowledge about social reality. In the life stories, the subject is required to narrate his personal life, in a way that reflects all those lived experiences that, to him, have marked his life in a significant way.

3 THE SOCIAL SCIENCE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PRACTICE THROUGH THE LIFE STORY

“While it is a minority methodology, its prestige is increasing. Its contribution to the social sciences has been supported both by widely known academic works (Cardenal, 2016:57). In relation with all its conforming characteristics, the life stories constitute a qualitative research method that provides relevant information related to events, uses and costumes, with the purpose to explain, through them, how a person is. This method allows to observe the actions of an individual as a participant human actor in social life, by reconstructing all its lived events through the transmission of his life experience baggage. Charriez (2012:53) states that the life story:

[...] includes all accumulated information about a subject's life: scholarship, health, family, among others. Is performed by the researcher, whom acts as narrator, transcriber, and relator. Him, through successive interviews, obtains a person's subjective testimony from events and valuations of his own existence. Something lived is narrated, from its origin and development, with progressions and regressions, with widely precise outline, with its figures and significance.

The compilation of biographic narrations through the life story do not perform the role of a mere qualitative data collection instrument, with just the purpose to fill all derived holes from documented information or ethnographic field work (Pujadas, 2000:129).

To speak about all narrations conforming the life story, it must be spoken, at the same time, about the remembrances stored in the memory. Is almost an ineludible topic to evoke the fact where oblivion is an inherent pre-condition of human beings, always present in a small or big proportion in memories product of experiences from past events. The voluntary memory in human beings could remember but also destroy remembrances involuntarily.

Directly, is due to the, conscious or unconscious, process to put aside everything that hurts, bothers, angers or saddens; or as well, with the simple purpose to organize or accommodate ideas, thoughts, and remembrances. Birules (1995:9) comments:

[...] it is absolutely impossible to live without forgetting... the historic and non-historic senses are equally necessary, but when we refer (...) to the historic sense memory of the past, it is necessary to state that it can hardly be forgotten what has been just received or transmitted.

Therefore, the personal or intellectual relation between both interlocutors hold a medullary place in the process of building life stories. There, interviewer's interpretation, cultural assumptions, and intellectual baggage will meet the ones from the interviewed

person. As in any other conversation, to perform an oral story and to learn to listen, implies a particular attention to silences. It requires, in a great manner, to renounce an excessive valorization of the personal opinion from one of the parties. “It does not mean to turn into a neutral observer, but precisely the opposite; to be a good listener always requires empathy” (Muratorio, 2005:131).

The life story, as a social science qualitative research method, pursues to capture the interpretation process, by seeing things from the persons’ perspective which constantly interpret and define themselves in different situations (Charriez, 2012). Interviews are used extensively in qualitative research as a method of data collection. Interviews may be structured, semi-structured or non-structured (Robson, 2011). A structured interview will be the same as a questionnaire type approach, searching for a superficial level of response. Semi-structured interviews involve a few pre-determined areas of interest based in guidelines that help conduct the conversation. Non-structured interviews (ideal for life story research) comprehend a vast area to explore and the qualitative researcher largely follows the direction taken by the informant (Petty, Thomson & Stew, 2014).

No interview can truly be considered non-structured; however, some are relatively non-structured and could be considered equivalent to guided conversations (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This type of individual in-depth interview allows the interviewer to delve deeply into social and personal matters, whereas the group interview allows interviewers to get a wider range of experience but, because of the public nature of the process, prevents delving as deeply into the individual (Chilban, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). According to Pujadas (2000:139), it is to highlight that there are three essential strategic elements when a non-structured interview with life story orientation is performed:

1. If they are open depth interviews (this is, non-structured), the researcher labor basically consists to stimulate the informant to follow a direction during his narration, trying not to interrupt and to keep attention in order just to orientate in moments of memory losses.
2. This orientation labor must be supported by the usage of some personal documents (letters, photographs, personal diaries) at hand during the interview; that is why is so important that the chosen place for the interview should be the person’s residence.
3. To support the informant’s narration and, at the same time, to guarantee the narration’s most possible thoroughness, the researcher must transcribe all interviews, past and present, and systematically store them in four suggested files: literal, thematic, chronologic, and personal.

Cornejo, Rojas & Mendoza (2008) propose an interesting work model to design life story research, composed by the following steps:

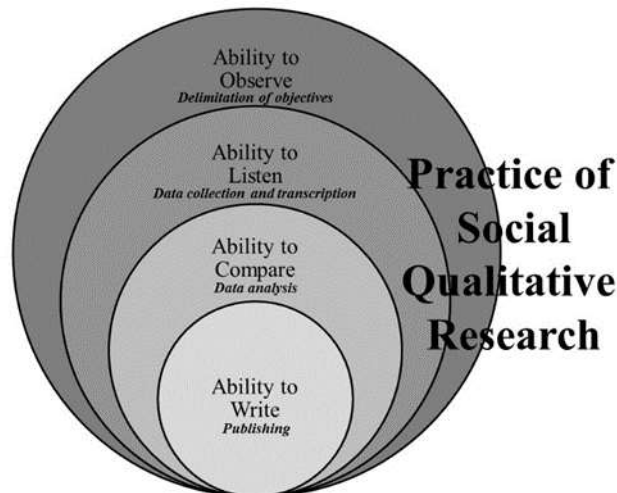
1. *Preliminary moment.* Before collecting data from the first narration, the researcher must make two ineludible choices: the topic and the approaching angle of it, responding to some derived questions: Why the topic was chosen? Why research it? What is the purpose of the research? Is the interest emerged from a personal experience? What is it? Likewise, he must critically revise all pertinent scientific literature from the topic with the purpose of a profound comprehension of the study object.
2. *Contacts, negotiations, and contracts.* In this phase, the ethical questioning turns fundamental, converging with the scientific one. All participant inclusion and exclusion criteria must be defined and applied, delimitating intervening parties

and providing them with information about the research objectives and contents, as well from the procedures about the participation. Likewise, the informed consent and the liberty to leave research when desired is promoted. The participants knowledge about the researchers will easy the transparency and closeness in this type of studies.

3. *Data collection through the interview.* All the life stories are always constructions, versions of the story a narrator or interviewed subject tells the researcher using the means of an interview. To the researcher, interview's number, duration, rhythm, and conduction, as well as its trustworthy and reliable transcription, are aspects to be considered due to all the richness they provide (language, lapses, idioms, among others). The usage of a field work notebook allows to perform a better process control and to prepare material for analysis.
4. *Narrations analysis.* The narration analysis methodology must be in function of logics. In one hand, of the study object, and in the other hand, of the type of findings wished to be obtained; in other words, the analysis methods must adapt to them and not otherwise.

“A life story is a practice of life, a life praxis in which the world's social relations of this praxis is performed are internalized and personalized, made ideography. This justifies the possibility to read or discover an entire society in a life story” (Martínez, 2011:115). Social research through the life story is essentially a phenomenological description that demands four procedural abilities from the researcher (See Figure 1): ability to observe, ability to listen, ability to compare, and ability to write, as proposed by Sanmartin (2003) for the practice of social qualitative research.

Figure 1 - Researcher procedural abilities for the life story



Source: Own elaboration, based in Sanmartin, 2003.

Ability to observe:

1. Initial stage: delimitation of objectives and project design.
Delimitation of the analysis universe.
Sample selection (representativeness/significance).
Work guide elaboration.

Ability to listen:

2. Localization and data recollection stage.
Auto-biography request.

Performance of biographic interviews.

Participating observation.

3. Transcription and registration: original or literal, chronological, personal, thematical...

Ability to compare:

4. Data analysis with the chosen analytical exploration method.

Ability to write:

5. Presentation and publication of the life story.

“To build a text accompanying a person’s personal trajectory development, valorizing and problematizing exposed situations and narratives, is a theoretical and methodologic election that pretends to reach the elaboration of an integral knowledge of reality” (Cardin, 2013:102).

4 THE PERSON AS THE BASIC SOURCE FOR SOCIAL QUALITATIVE RESEARCH THROUGH THE LIFE STORY: ITS IDENTITY, ITS MEMORIES, AND ITS SOCIAL INTERACTION

The life story suggests the researcher not to see culture as something apart from the individuals who create, experiment and, sometimes, defy it. This method helps to understand how cultural historic processes structure and influence individual lives. “More specifically, life stories also could reveal the challenge and transgression of supposed shared cultural rules” (Muratorio, 2005:134). The above mentioned makes sense because the qualitative research focus possesses a humanist perspective that implies an opening to individuals and to society. It profoundly valorizes the human person, seeks to meet with it and enriches from that encounter (Bonilla, 2005). Thus, “...people express their quest for ever more unique experiences reflecting their own personal stories” (Binkhorst & Den-Dekker, 2009:311).

The main source for the life stories is the person and its provided testimony, in its double face: 1) as unique individuality and, 2) as historic subject. In it, “psychological and contextual dimensions converge, which interaction generate a particular way to construct and narrate past experiences, always in clear relation with present situations and future projects” (Sanz, 2005:105). Pujadas (2000:141) mentions that the persons’ singularity and individuality must always be in account, not underestimating the following situations:

1. Is very difficult to find a good informant, this is, that will be a good narrator -someone with expressive capability, with mild and comprehensible speech, without memory lapses- and, likewise, not to be a mythomaniac who mixes fantasy with reality in his memory. The narration completeness, sincerity, genuineness, and criticality will depend from the quality of the informant.
2. There is a fundamental requisite, that the informant would and could dedicate all necessary time for the conformation of the entire life story, with a will to submit to all the numerous sessions from where the biographic narration will emerge and in which the final text be based on. In this second premise, the informant’s disposition and constancy will not only depend from him, but from all the cultural and social general circumstances that define the intersubjective relation during the interview. The researcher must have the conviction capability and must

gain the subject's trust and wish to collaborate, whom could distrust about the usage of his private material.

3. The election of the biographic informant requires an adequacy of the person's profile, as a case study, to the kind of testimony adapted to the research objectives. The pursued testimony must accomplish in some way the requisite of being "representative" of the entire studied social group, despite the irreducible specificity features of any case study.

The social dimension and the space and time from whom narrates the story are linked to the proper singularity of the individual. The profound study of an individual could evidence a personal structure or a conjunction of self and peculiar characteristics that, even though they are only belonging exclusively to the person, describe and could predict its conduct through a vast period of its life (Martínez, 2011).

Images from the past, as well as the remembered knowledge that has been transmitted, enforce powerful influence. "From our actual situation, we judge the past and support ourselves in collective representations and interpretations, strange to us at first, from our individual personalities; nevertheless, that configures the rationalization we make of our life and our context" (Sanz, 2005:106). A story's narrative, "...as a heteroclitite composition of images that are still contaminated by perceptions which direct life in the present, offers an access door to different paths to think the identity, the relation between a group and space" (Bortnowska & Alberton, 2015:740).

Besides attracting attention to the researcher's human characteristic that approaches the informant -the life story from someone corresponds to an intimate and subjective dimension that the researcher needs to respect under the prerogative not to "violate" the informant subject-, is to remark the researcher's active role, defined by his criteria, decision, and autonomy. They constitute the fundamental base for the good application of the method (Veras, 2010). In tourism activity, there is space for diverse research projects, even some with a non-merely business conception, where interesting life stories could be found (Montes, 2015).

5 METHOD

In order to develop a profound understanding of tourism management through the lens of the life story, it was necessary to conduct a deductive analysis, in which medullar categories and concepts from this qualitative research method and the social science theories were taken in account, applying their specific characteristics into the touristic phenomena. In this sense, along with the sources and authors of the mentioned research method, backgrounds and theoretical foundations were revised from tourism in social sciences and qualitative research.

Results from this analysis are now presented in order to be discussed and, if possible, to act as a baseline of academic scientific work in tourism management studies.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Potentialities of Qualitative Research in Tourism Management Studies through the Life Story

Current tourism research has not conquered public policy or Mexican enterprise, therefore is desirable in leisure industry, although "...as for many countries tourism is

the number one income generator and for many in the developed world an essential part of their quality of life” (Binkhorst & Den-Dekker, 2009:311). Tourism is “an integral part of local life, and the history, the culture, the economy and the society of a given area, and have been shaped through history by local lifestyles” (López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012:64).

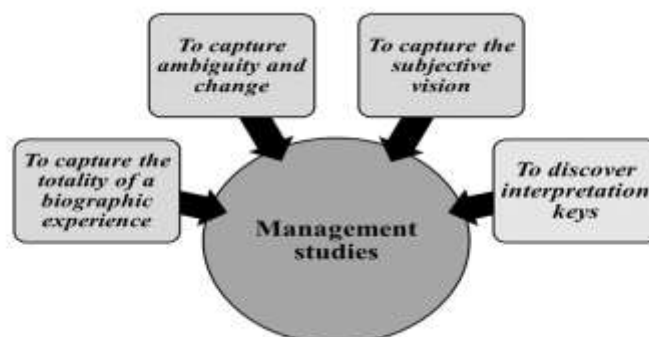
In the case of the life story interview, Uribe & Osorio (2017) manifest that before considering it in the touristic scene, the identified elements must be valued and interpreted within its own community’s system of cultural values, because from its acceptance and identification level given by the community, it will represent the impact of the obtained experiences in tourism research. In tourism studies, life stories have been used to analyze narratives and themes in an interpretative setting (Moscardo, 2010).

Therefore, the life story brings the possibilities of offering a profound interpretative framework to tourism management research, whereby the sense of the human experience is manifested in those personal narrations, in a way that prioritize the individual explication of taken management actions in the tourism arena, different from other used methods to filter and order answers in conceptual categories from predetermined management processes in general (Jones, 1983). Testimonies then will reveal all senses in which actors construct in their life travel within tourism world and the way they manage their businesses (Romo & Cruz, 2013). “[...] more research must be done to uncover the essence of what exactly makes certain experiences special, spectacular, and fittingly, memorable” (Tung & Ritchie, 2011:1367).

The life story provides the opportunity to capture emotions and identity as a part of the tourism imaginary (Fernández, 2014). According to González, 2009:110: “Tourism is an activity performed in society, therefore, it exists inside society and, as such, it is elaborated through all diverse actors that conforms it”.

According to Amaya, Ochoa & Schmidt (2015), tourism management studies confront one important generic problem: the study unit. Commonly, tourism studies focus in touristic destinations and countries, leaving behind individual entrepreneurs and enterprises. For that purpose, Ruiz (2003) establishes the most representative potentialities of the life story as a research method, that can be applied to disciplines such as tourism management, are the ones represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2 - Most representative potentialities of the life story in tourism management studies



Source: Own elaboration, based in Ruiz, 2003.

Those potentialities are the following:

1. To capture the totality of a biographic experience, totality in time and space, from infancy to present, from the intimate being of anybody who enters in a significant relation with a person's life. It includes several fixed points, such as: physiological needs, family network, personal and environmental society changes, critical moments and tranquility phases, individual's inclusion, and margination from its surrounding social world. "These fixed points are remarkable events from the past, which memory is maintained by cultural formation (texts, rites, and monuments) and institutional communication (narratives, observation, and practices)" (Bortnowska & Alberton, 2015:741). To the management researcher, to nourish from all those expressed experiences could help a comprehension of the origin or genesis of the entrepreneur process that motivated tourism businessmen to create and develop their enterprises.
2. To capture ambiguity and change. Far from a person's static and immobile vision, and from a vital, logic and rational process, the life story pretend to discover each and every experimented change throughout the person's life, its ambiguities, lack of logic, doubts, contradictions, and turn-arounds experimented through the years. "This interview is analyzed by a reconstructive process that differentiates between the 'lived life' and the 'told story', and subsequently connects both dimensions" (Cardenal, 2016:55). With it, the tourism management researcher could comprehend the context in which the businessman dive and filter ideas to elaborate tourism entrepreneurial and management proposals and planning.
3. To capture the subjective vision from themselves and from the world, how do they interpret their and others conduct, how do they attribute merits and impeach responsibilities to themselves and the others. Such vision reveals the negotiation that every life requires between the person's expressive tendencies and the rationality demands to accommodate to the exterior world. "It seeks to develop an analysis about the subject's experiences and practices, articulating it with historically constructed knowledge, to, through this dialogue, produce a more integral wit" (Cardin, 2013:102). In such way that the tourism management researcher has the capability to elaborate a comparison of the tourism businessmen entrepreneurial world with his own, with the purpose to obtain an objective valuation of a most vast and ample tourism management conceptualization.
4. To discover interpretation keys to tourism management social phenomena from general and historic ambiances, that can only have found an adequate explanation through the personal experience from concrete individuals. "Testimonies offer a look, provide a voice, remark the importance of culture and emotion in human life of everybody" (Fernández, 2014:42). Therefore, the tourism management researcher could elaborate objective conclusions about the entrepreneurial decision-making and, above all, its significance from an interpretative platform for tourism studies.

The points above mentioned, will allow the tourism management researcher to penetrate the universe reflected at narrations' transcripts when elaborating the life story. The auto-biography edition and the usage of personal documents, will conduct tourism management into a trans-disciplinary field in which humanist currents from different disciplines converge: social history, sociology, social psychology, and social anthropology (Pujadas, 2000)

In addition, is necessary to consider that all derived stories and texts acquire a social life of their own at present time. Continuously, they generate new significance during the reading process, and also, when younger generations of tourism managers read them when accessing to formal education. “It is an act which goes to the heart of questions about truth, beauty and virtue and challenges academics to reflect on tourism’s ontological foundations” (Pritchard, Morgan & Ateljevic, 2011:943). Reason why, tourism management researchers “...must assume the responsibility to seek for a voice that could cross cultural barriers and direct to academic audiences as well as non-academic” (Muratorio, 2005:134).

The tourism management researcher could find support in the established by Pujadas (2000:140-141), who mentions that the life story, elaborated from narrations, basically suppose:

1. To order information chronologically and thematically,
2. To cut digressions and reiterations,
3. To adjust the informant’s oral style as minimum as possible to be accepted,
4. To introduce notes throughout the text, that will contextualize and/or remit to other parts of the text,
5. To introduce, eventually, testimonies of those persons from the informant’s familiar or social universe that will help to calibrate and give perspective to the main narration,
6. To develop a methodological introduction where all the life story elaboration process circumstances be explicated, from first contact with the informant until text finalization, and
7. It is highly recommended, but low frequented, that the management researcher performs, at the end of the text, an interpretation of the edited life story in the context of the thematic objectives and the theoretic perspective that guided research.

This research method attempts a natural and interpretative approach, which implies that researchers will study tourism management at its natural ambiances, understanding or interpreting phenomena according through meanings conferred by persons (Bortnowska & Alberton, 2015). The life story, used as a technique or as an instrument, is the method of access to a social reality, the tourism reality (Martínez, 2011).

6.2 Methodological limitations of the life story in tourism management studies

Although “...interviews maintain their position as the research method of choice within the social sciences and, as a consequence, also within the field of tourism” (Jennings, 2005:99), there are some methodological limitations in this kind of research, due the proper nature of the orality and the material life documents, from the researcher-informant interaction and from the memory essence (Sanz, 2005). The most representative limitations from this method could be:

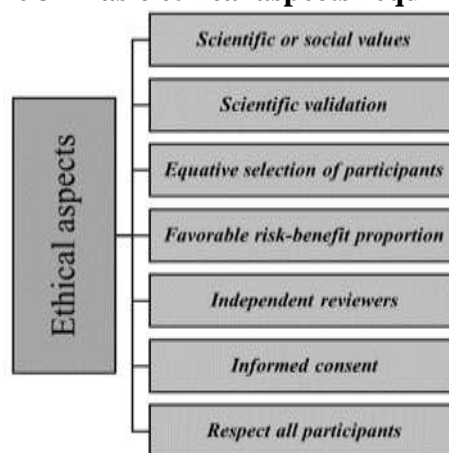
1. *Researcher lack of courage.* To take the life story as one of the capable methods to dive into unknown waters, deep or not, is an act of courage to be undertaken by the tourism management researcher (Veras, 2010:150).
2. *Informant’s selective memory.* It is the individual, with its inherent subjectivity, who select some experiences, and silence others. He definitively, organize the narration. Nevertheless, the autonomy of the individual narration is limited, because it comes conditioned to cultural

moldings, that organize narrative structures as well as contents and values that transit through narration (Pujadas, 2000:149).

3. *Researcher lack of ethics*. Undoubtedly, one of the most basic aspects when performing a qualitative research is to adopt two fundamental ethic dimensions: 1) procedural ethics, that implies the seek for an approval from the authorized expert committee (ethics committee) to develop its research, and 2) practical ethics, that refers to the daily challenges imposed by the same research (Charriez, 2012:59).

From the three limitations mentioned above, the lack of ethics requires a deeper treatment in tourism management research. In that matter, Exequiel Emanuel (cited in Botto, 2011), proposed seven basic requirements to evaluate ethical aspects when conducting researches (See Figure 3).

Figure 3 - Basic ethical aspects requirements



Source: Own elaboration, based in Botto, 2011.

Those elements are described as follows:

1. *Scientific or social value*: a tourism management research must have values to be ethical. In other words, its results should promote life condition improvement in tourism consumers. For example, through social entrepreneurship, or social sustainability, intervention.
2. *Scientific validation*: an ethical tourism management research must be planned in base of a meticulous methodology that conduct it to valid results. This is an especially important matter because it incorporates ethics into the intrinsic factors of any methodology.
3. *Equative selection of participants*: the selection of the study participants must consider the research objectives, highlighting all inclusion and exclusion criteria in a way that the selection will be commanded by a scientific judgment away from social vulnerabilities or stigmata.
4. *Favorable risk-benefit proportion*: research involving persons must always consider a careful analysis of all implied risks and benefits, especially in those studies that require an intervention. In this way, tourism management research can only be justified when potential risks for the individual subjects and society are maximized and the potential benefits are proportional, or exceed, the risks.

5. *Independent reviewers*: Due to possible conflict of interests in researchers, it is suggested to count with integrated evaluation instances, such as authorized independent persons from the study. They can decide over its development aiming to avoid design distortion and to protect social sustainability.
6. *Informed consent*: is one of the undisputable aspects of any tourism management research. Its purpose is to bring control of the subjects in respect of their incorporation or withdrawal from the study and to assure their participation, honoring their beliefs, values, and interests.
7. *Respect for all subscribed and potential participants*: the ethical preoccupation about all participants do not end when consent is signed. In any study is necessary to permanently consider a respect for all persons, their privacy and change of mind right, in respect to participating in the study, by receiving all necessary support and attention.

Resuming, the ethical dimension of tourism management qualitative research must not be considered just as an external element, such as to depend from an outside committee to the process, but it must be considered as a constitutive factor from management (Botto, 2011). Therefore, ethics is an essential part of the tourism management qualitative research methodology.

7 CONCLUSION

Mair and Reid's (2007:519) challenge tourism researchers to "provoke a broader debate about the nature of social research and the role that we, as researchers, can and should play in affecting social change". In order to understand tourism behavior, the narrations from life stories held by researchers with actors from the environment of a destination, are likely to provide a way to understand the influence of the activities they decided to undertake in it (Holden, 2006). Therefore, tourism study "[...] has the opportunity to create a more inclusive, more dynamic and more profound research base (Pritchard, Morgan & Ateljevic, 2011:946).

In this context, the life story is the result of certain tourism practice, from the dialectic movement of tourism individual experiences, accumulated within its opportunities and limitations, offered by entrepreneurial and economic structures; therefore, the analysis from the maintained narratives is developed through this focus (Cardin, 2013). This type of narrative is a reliable way to summarize a person's cultural features, and thus is a useful tool for tourism management studies (Carson, Hawkes, Gislason & Cantrell, 2016).

Tribe's (2010) latest analysis of knowledge generation in tourism affirms that the field's lack of theoretical development demonstrates its uncertain status. Tourism as an activity can only be understood from a multidisciplinary perspective, since in the context it requires accountants, administrators, ecologists, historians, sociologists, it cannot be conceived without the participation of all disciplines (Cuevas, Zizaldra & Loera, 2014:23). Nevertheless, "...nor is it common to invest in people research as a tool for innovative and sustainable tourism development as is already done in other business areas" (Binkhorst & Den-Dekker, 2009:324).

To comprehend the life story as a research method for tourism management studies requires to accept the premise where sociological imagination is the mediation capability between an individual, its biography, and its history. It also implies to admit the

active role of the individual in the enterprises history, "...what man do of its destiny in this crucial hours" (Veras, 2010: 150) through his entrepreneurial actions and decision making.

This research method combines personal and social documental elements that are real and imaginary at the same time, constructed in a significative form. It is characterized to be multi-disciplinary, which imperatively includes subjectivity and personal experiences (Blanco, 2011). With the actual increasing use and legitimacy of this method, researchers have been faced with the need to go beyond general presuppositions of a way of doing qualitative research and define more clearly not only its subjects of study, but also its epistemological and methodological foundations (Cardenal, 2016).

The informant's memory must be understood as an active production of meanings and interpretations, of strategic character, capable of influencing in present days through his management activities. Is all about a "...verbalized reflection of the personal truth and the social reality" (Sanz, 2005:114), which treatment must be thorough, critical, and enriching. The result will then depend from the management researcher's capability and knowledge about all limitations and potentialities that orality and life material bring to the biographic qualitative research. A touristic destination is an experienced space, so the actions that generate this experience only could be brought to the present time through an analysis of all narrative evidence from the actors; reason why this analysis construct paradigms that reveal realities from destinations and all the business movements within them (Schilling, 2012).

In short, the epistemological premise of this research method "...is the focus on experience, as an area at the intersection between the subjectivity that decides, reflects and acts, and its specific interaction with the system of social relationships in which it operates, as well as the contexts of opportunity that frame and constrain it" (Cardenal, 2016:58). The multiple voices from which each researcher speak, along with the multivocality of participants when applied to the holistic study of the tourism phenomena, add depth and fulsome understanding which is socially, culturally, temporally, geographically, and contextually situated (Jennings, 2005).

Life story interviews can provide rich and in-depth information about the experiences of individuals; however, there are many different forms of qualitative research interviews as well as other types of qualitative research methods that can be used by tourism management investigators (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

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La historia de vida: un método de investigación social cualitativa y su aplicación en estudios de gestión del turismo

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Abstract

El presente trabajo aborda la relevancia de la historia de vida como un método de investigación social cualitativa y el beneficio que aporta cuando se aplica en estudios de gestión del turismo. Se realizó una revisión de la literatura para determinar cuál es el papel de este método de investigación particular al realizar un estudio en el campo de las ciencias sociales, como en la gestión del turismo. Este método conduce a una mejor comprensión de la propia percepción de una persona de su historia, basada en experiencias vividas dentro y fuera del ambiente de negocios del turismo. Para este tema, hablar de responsabilidad social y ética en la disciplina de investigación cualitativa de la gestión del turismo, permite conceptualizar una visión que permita la realización adecuada de un estudio que implique una interacción directa con las personas. Este estudio contribuye de manera significativa a considerar la historia de la vida como un método de investigación cualitativa confiable para la construcción de un análisis de datos, que conduce a resultados notables que producirán un impacto importante en la ciencia, principalmente en estudios de gestión del turismo.

Keywords: Investigación cualitativa. Historia de vida. Gestión del turismo.

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