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CONTEMPORARY TOURISM CHALLENGES

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TECHNOLOGIES IN SMART TOURIST DESTINATIONS AND CUSTOMER SUCCESS ACTIONS: WAYS TO ENABLE A BETTER TOURIST EXPERIENCE?

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Abstract: *The use of technology has increased expressively and tourism is no exception, forcing the industry to change its approach to presenting products and services to a consumer who has also changed significantly, and he is now hyper-connected and much more demanding. As a result, cities follow this trend, and Smart Tourist Destinations emerge with the potential to improve the quality of the tourist experience across all dimensions and resources. However, how can we make tourists learn the best way to take advantage of these resources? This is where customer success (CS) strategies take action,that intend to educate the customer about the best way to use the available resources So, this article aims to analyse the publications in the Scopus database, about the customer success subject and identify possibilities of improvement in the tourist experience with the use of CS in Intelligent Tourism Destinations. Exploratory research was applied, using a qualitative approach and a survey of studies linked to the proposed themes, as well as a study of what has been published on the theme of customer success and its relationship with tourism in the Scopus database. After considerable refinement, a total of seventy-four articles only on CS were found in the database, and none of them related to tourism, indicating there is a significant gap that needs to be addressed by future study.*
Keywords: *Technology; Intelligent Tourism Destinations; Tourism Experience; Customer Success*

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism, which is regarded as an activity of great global impact, capable of delivering economic and socio-cultural benefits when well planned, it has experienced an intense growth since its first leverage after the Second World War. In spite of the moment the world has been going through, taken by a pandemic of unprecedented proportions, which has caused the sector to shrink in size and resignify products and services, tourism has the potential for great changes.

It is noticeable that from the late 1990s on, the greater access to technologies has been an ally in making its operations more integrated, connected to other sectors, and, consequently, more competitive to the market. Technology has not only become a vital component of tourism,

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but it has also revolutionised how trips are planned, business is conducted, as well as services and experiences are developed and consumed in tourism (Neuhofer, Buhalis & Ladkin, 2014).

In this context, the experience is an important factor that needs to be analysed, once that if it is not positive, there will be losses for the tourist and, as a consequence, for the place. As a result of this change in behavior, the tourist is now a hyperconnected consumer, in a hurry, who is more critical to the service failures, so it is necessary to redouble attention and care when receiving him/her.

According to Buhalis and Amaranggana (2013), Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been working in an integrated manner in cities as they have become increasingly competitive and complex. ICTs make cities more accessible and enjoyable for residents and visitors through interactive services, interconnecting all organizations. These are the so-called Smart Cities.

Smart Tourism Destinations (STI) emerge from cities that integrate an environment with technology incorporated in their operations and are in line with social components, improving the citizens' quality of life while also increasing service efficiency. (Vicini et al., 2012 apud Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2013).

However, even with greater access to technology, it is stated that most tourists are not prepared to enjoy what is available in these destinations because it is all very new to most of them. As a result, there is a need to inform, guide and educate this visitor so that he can take use of all these resources and potentialities.

In order to improve this experience, the idea of integrating a tool emerges, which, although it has appeared in software usability environments (SaaS - Software as a service) is now widely applied in companies for the use of products and services. These are Customer Success (CS) techniques that educate and guide customers for a better use of resources, resulting in a better experience.

The fact that having resources and services in a smart destination does not guarantee a good experience is the fundamental justification for this study, which believes it is necessary to create strategies to guide tourists and residents on the resources usability, ensuring a better experience.

Tourists have been strengthening themselves, evaluating their options and making more independent travel decisions, reducing their reliance on experts (Mendes-Filho et al., 2018) and generating more self-planned demand, requiring more information and guidance when arriving at their destinations.

As a result, we believe that implementing customer success strategies in intelligent destinations might be beneficial because they already have some technology integrated into their services and products, allowing them to deliver a more integrated and fuller experiencer. Therefore, this study aims to analyse what has been published in the Scopus database on Customer Success theme and identify the possibilities for improving the tourist experience with the use of CS in Intelligent Tourism Destinations.

2. METHODOLOGY

Exploratory research was conducted, with a qualitative approach, which is developed to provide an overview of a specific fact and it is carried out especially when the chosen theme is under explored (Gil, 2002). A survey of the studies was conducted, referring to the proposed themes, such as tourist's journey experience, the use of technology in Intelligent Tourist Destinations and the use of the customer success in this process. Thus, the first data were obtained and treated qualitatively, using the content analysis technique.

Some other paths were taken, with the collection of information about publications already held on this theme in the Scopus database. In order to meet the study objective of collecting what has been published on CS. The study took place on March 22nd of 2022, the type of documents chosen were articles that featured the expression "customer success" in the title, keywords, or abstract. (Chart 1).

Chart 1: Criteria for document selection – Step 01

Themes	Steps
Scientific publishing base	Scopus
Type of document	Articles
Keyword/ Expression	*Customer Success*
Language	Not specified
Time horizon	Not specified
Researched areas	Not specified
Total of studies found	**74**

Source: Survey data, 2022

We chose not to restrict the search in terms of time horizon, which was interesting to observe in the final result when the first publication on CS appeared in 1994. To represent the overall reality of publication, no restrictions on language or place were imposed. As a result, 74 publications on the topic were found.

3. USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE TOURIST EXPERIENCE IN INTELLIGENT DESTINATIONS AND CUSTOMER SUCCESS ACTIONS

When a person plans a trip and begins gathering information about all possible destinations, equipment and service providers, he is embarking on an adventure that will last

until he comes home. This process is known as the Tourist Journey and it is during this journey that the whole experience will occur, as well as the perception of services and products.

Acording to Pine and Gilmore (1999) the Experience Economy is a type of marketing in which a customer does not only buy a product or service, but also pays to spend time participating in memorable events. They go on to say that it is necessary to add elements that increase the use of the senses with certain products, producing sensations and emotions. To this, it is necessary to add the increased availability of technology, more accessible smartphones, social media platforms, the advent of the Internet of Things (IOT), augmented reality, Big Data and data on the supply and potential and actual demand of places, especially smart destinations, changing even more the travel scenario (Wang et al., 2020).

By providing a better experience, through more information about the usability of the destination, such as making available options of attractions and facilities in real time, which places are open, which establishments are crowded, augmented reality experiences, in which establishments there are queues, where there are vegetarian bars and restaurants, which is the best way to get to an attraction, all according to their preferences and mainly the value delivery that he was expecting, then, the objectivel of caring for the tourist would be achieved.

Emerging from the concept of Smart Cities that represent an environment in which technology is embedded and will synchronize components to improve the citizens' quality of life and, simultaneously, improve the efficiency of services in general (Vicini et al., 2012 apud Buhalis; Amaranggana, 2013) Smart Tourism Destinations (STD) should also have some criteria to be so considered. Thus, Miskalo-Cruz and Gândara (2016) list eleven dimensions that concern governance, urban territorial sustainability actions, tourism sustainability, accessibility, connectivity and sensitization, information systems and tourism intelligence, tourism information, online marketing sales, innovation and improvement of the tourist experience.

Tourists can simply use their cell phones, explore the destination and events of interest using in locco data collection. In doing so, these activities leave an enormous size of digital footprints, resulting in a multidimensional set of data that is known as Big Data (SOCAP International 2013, apud Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2013) and that can be very useful to this follow-up of the tourist experience.

Regarding the use of customer success actions for tourism because the assumption of a smart destination is to improve the quality of experience of those who visit it, the use of these actions is directly related, because it can generate a relationship of proactive involvement with customers, ensuring that the value of the products offered is noticed by them.

4. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

According to the analysis performed on the Scopus publications, it was possible to observe that the year of the first publications on customer success - 1994, and the year that had more publications - 2012, as well as the evolution of research in this area (Figure 1). It was also observed that the main authors on this subject and in this aspect, seven authors were tied, each one with 3 articles written on the subject (Figure 2)

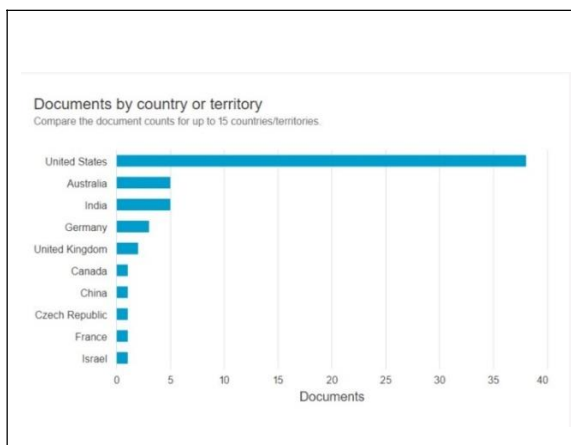Figure 1 – Documents published by year
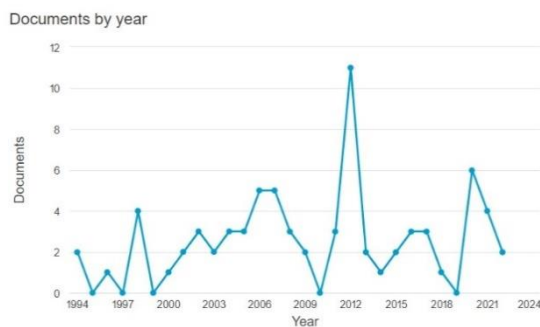
Source: Scopus, 2022

Figure 2 – Documents by author
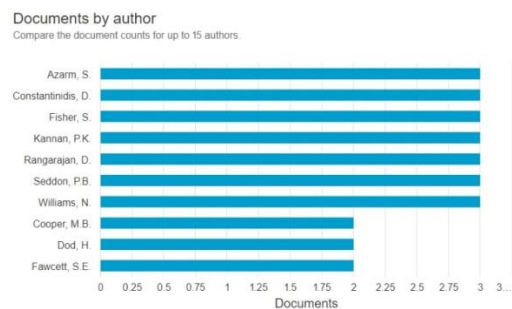
Source: Scopus, 2022

Another interesting study was undertaken on the origins of the documents found, with the United States coming out on top with 38 published articles, followed by Australia and India, with 5 pieces each (Figure 3). It is also worth analysing the area of study for which the research was conducted (Figure 4), because engineering surprisingly had the most publications, followed by business, indicating that customer success actions need to be more widespread, or at the very least, more researched in this management area.

Figure 3 – Documents published by year

Source: Scopus, 2022

Figure 4 – Documents published by subject area
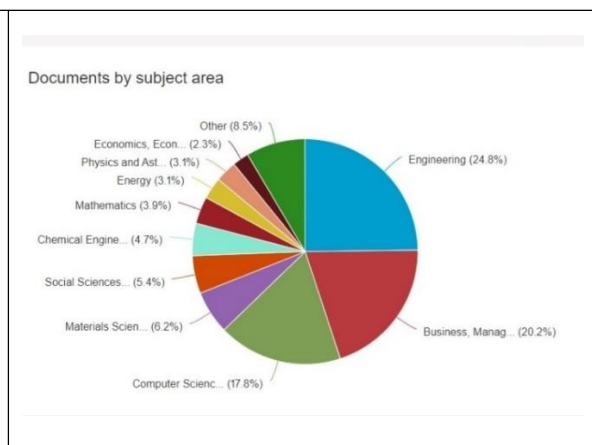
Source: Scopus, 2022

The analysis of the publications reveals this theme requires much more research in management áreas, particularly in tourism management, as no publication demonstrating a

direct relationship between "customer success," the Boolean operator AND and the word "tourism," appeared as a result of another filter in this database using the terms customer success. This demonstrates that whereas the CS theme has been addressed in other areas since 1994, no papers were found in the specific situation of tourism, at least in this database.

In order to change this reality and starting to use CS strategies to improve the tourist experience, some measures can be taken, such as using geographic information systems to observe the dispersion through the territory of the last visitors and thus answer questions such as where do consumers live or what characteristics define their socioeconomic status? By knowing this information, they can better adapt to future consumers (Supak et al. 2015 apud Myskalo-Cruz & Gândara, 2016).

Customer success strategies are proactive and strive to increase the relationship with the customer, that is, the tourist. Starting with advertising, which encourages potential visitors to learn about destinations and then create a positive impressiono of them. (Souza, Mendes-Filho & Buhalis, 2020) one can move on to the so-called lead conversion (possible buyer), which is already a part of the CS strategy, in which a potential tourist is motivated to check information and become a real visitor.

From this moment, many other relationship strategies can be used in the SC, such as onboarding (integration) and ongoing (in process) actions that would allow for a more supervised reception of visitors, and better instructing them about how to use existing services. Thus, welcoming and guiding them through the onboarding process with the use of applications with routes, maps, and general information, as well as taking care of details and information during their experience with tourist information totems scattered around the city, virtual tour guide applications, or the use of augmented reality, the place would improve their experience and generate a positive residual memory.

When it comes to the locality, everything that inhibits tourists from extracting value from products or services is a supply problem, not a demand problem. Furthermore, the potential to improve travel experiences will depend on the ability to find ways to communicate and promote the appropriate experience to the right tourist, in the right manner. (Tussyadiah, 2016 apud Souza, Mendes-Filho & Buhalis, 2020).

So, with the technology associated with customer success actions, destinations can extract valuable information, create new management tools, such as destination self-diagnosis, social media thermometer, online reputation indicators, and generate a digital transformation programme (INVAT.TUR, 2020) that would take them to a new dimension of customer experience, improving the way they interact with customers.

Customer success intends to enable the generation of greater revenue through actions such as active customer retention (Murphy, Mehta & Steinman, 2017) that in tourism terms would be a longer stay at the location, the reduction of Churn - cancellation rate or negative perception (negative comments on social media), use of up selling strategies (adding more profitable services) or cross selling (crossing services/products) to maximise customer value throughout his life cycle with the destination - LTV (Lifetime Value).

All of this is accomplished through proactive and dynamic monitoring of metrics and performance indicators - KPI's (Key Performance Indicators) in a proactive and dynamic planning. Even while, nowadays, inteligente tourism systems can determine user preferences, recognise and predict their needs, and have access to a wide repository of specialised knowledge at hand, to be able to rigorously evaluate their actions (Venturini, Ricci, 2006 apud Gretzel, 2011).

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

After analysing the Scopus database for customer success publications and doing a literature review, it was clear this theme still needs to be thoroughly investigated and disseminated to enhance awareness of its potential. There is na even wider discrepancy when it comes to the correlation of SC actions with tourist destinations considered as intelligent destinations.

As a result, we emphasize the importance of an intelligent destination for generating a positive change in the tourist experience through increased interaction and connectivity with him/her, because cities are a scenario where the traveller's experience is staged, and thus need to be planned and prepared to provide an impeccable journey for the tourist, within their expectations and what was sold to him. After all, destinations could invest more resources in technologies to personalize and contextualise their product (Buhalis & Foerste, 2015 apud Souza, Mendes-Filho & Buhalis, 2020) and this would allow the creation of a personalised experience for the travelers desired by the locality, with the goal of attracting more tourists (Shoval & Birenboim, 2018 apud Souza, Mendes-Filho & Buhalis, 2020).

It is thought to be a relevant theme because it demonstrates a large existing gap of research in the area of tourism, and it demonstrates a possibility of using the tourism offer in a more structured and oriented manner to the visitor's experience in smart destinations without, yet causing so many problems to the visited place since the tourist's journey would be better mapped and, as a result, better conducted

This study has not intended to exhaust all research possibilities for this subject, rather, it aimed to stimulate further research on this subject, by demonstrating how incipiente is research involving customer success and tourism activity.

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