Tourism SMEs in a Digital Environment: Literature Review

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Abstract

Purpose - The aim of the research is to present the main challenges faced by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism industry, to build and enhance their value proposition within the framework of a digital environment.

Design/methodology/approach - The authors carried out a review of the literature in databases using keywords. The selection of sources includes scientific articles and case studies based on different methods and contexts.

Findings - The findings suggest that in a context characterized by the integration of the economy and the interference of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), commercialization has become flexible and accessible. The above has had a tangible impact on the structure of the market and in the way in which the SMEs in the tourism industry are managed.

Research limitations/implications - The study offers an up-to-date and global vision for future researchers through the review of the literature on SMEs located in the tourism industry in the context of a digital environment.

Social implications - The study shows that to survive and grow, SMEs in the tourism sector must differentiate themselves from their competitors, evolve in their business model and rapidly integrate ICT in their organizational fabric.

Originality/value - The construction of a value proposition for SMEs in the tourism sector should be settled on an understanding of the position held, on the competence of the competitors and the needs of the market.

Keywords: Electronic Commerce, Value Proposal, Tourism Sector, Information and Communication Technologies, Competitive Advantage

Introduction:

The convergence of a set of innovations (Ayres and Williams, 2004) and the increase in the worldwide adoption of ICT (Weber and Kauffman, 2011) have contributed to a rapid transition towards a digital economy. They have set up new business scenarios, playing an important role in connecting SME's digital market (Martin and Matlay, 2001).

This has transformed the environment in which companies and regions compete (Chaves Avila et al., 2014), whose scope and implications are unclear, since each industrial sector develops in particular contexts and, therefore, it requires different intensities of the use of the information (Ananda, Hernandez and Lamberti, 2015; Chang, Magobe and Kim, 2015; Sanchez and Arroyo, 2017).

According to Ho, Kauffman and Liang (2011), ICTs have made marketing more flexible and accessible. They have also opened new possibilities and gave way to the era of electronic commerce (EC), which refers to the sale of the purchase of goods or services, through computer networks by specially designed methods, to receive or make orders (OCDE, 2002). The EC has contributed to the rapid replacement of old ways of doing business (Kang and Park, 2014; Rahayu and Day, 2015) it has also had a tangible impact on the way business is conducted and in the structure of the markets (Strzębicki, 2015). Also, it has encouraged the growth of SMEs in developed and developing countries (Kumia et al., 2015). However, in the developing countries, it has been limited by factors such as insufficient regulatory framework, and inadequate, limited or inaccessible infrastructure (Al-Somali, Gholami, and Clegg, 2015).

The EC involves time savings (Deltoro, Descals and Molina, 2012), cost reductions (Awiagah, Kang, and Lim, 2016), productivity gains (Savrul, Incekara, and Sener, 2014) and increased sales (Jones, Motta and Alderete, 2016). However, in some countries their adoption is incipient, and the differences between countries are considerable (OCDE, 2016). This has encouraged the generation of studies that have tried to determine the optimal conditions for EC adoption in particular sectors such as tourism (Esen and Uyar, 2012; Stănciulescu and Dumitrescu, 2014). Also, they have focused on analyzing the application of CE in some geographic regions (Gomez-Herrera, Martens, and Turlea, 2014; Bredzel-Skowera and Turek, 2015) in a framework where technology continually changes business models and services due to the changing needs and behavior of global travelers (Sigala, 2012).

The purpose of the research is to present the main challenges faced by small and medium-sized enterprises in the tourism industry to build and enhance their value proposition in the context of a digital environment.

The document is structured in five sections. In the first, the main theories of technology adoption are presented. In the second, the main elements that concern the EC are displayed. In the third, competitive advantage positions are detailed. In the fourth, the results of studies on the relationship between both concepts is shown. In the fifth, the method to carry out the research is described. Finally, in the sixth, conclusions are drafted.

Theories and models of acceptance and use of technology:

According to Sternad and Bobek (2013) studies on the determinants of acceptance and use of new information technologies, are based on several theoretical models, which are rooted in information systems, psychology, and sociology (Venkatesh et al., 2003). This points to a lack of consensus on the theoretical framework that best explains the adoption process (Jones, Motta and Alderete, 2016). However, about the adoption of the EC, in the perspective of Hajli, Sims, and Shanmugam (2014) conceptual frameworks are mainly influenced by two theories, the Technology Acceptance Model and the Theory of Planned Behavior. Yet, Rahayu and Day (2015) point out that five theories are the most used to investigate the determinants of adoption of EC by SMEs. This are classified into two categories: organizational and individual (Table 1).

Table 1 Theories and models of adoption and use of new technologies

Category	Theory or model	Author
Organizational	Theory of Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE).	Tornatzky and Fleischer (1990)
	Theory of the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI).	Rogers (2010)
Individual	Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA).	Fishbein and Ajzen (1975)
	Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).	Ajzen (1985)
	Technological Acceptance Model (TAM).	Davis (1989)

From the organizational point of view, the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) theory examines the adoption of various information systems and information technologies, both for products and services at the enterprise level (Gangwar, Date and Ramaswamy, 2015). The theory integrates variables of technology, organization, and environment (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990). Al-Somali, Gholami, and Clegg (2015) point out that the first variable -technology- relates to perceived benefits over compatibility, relative advantage, ease of use, cost and probability. The second variable -organization- has to do with managers' attitudes towards innovation, participation and support, organizational attributes, the quality of human resources, the complexity of management structures and the quantity of available internal resources. The third variable -environment- refers to external influences and is related to the industrial context. It includes competitive pressure and social trends, accessibility and availability of

resources provided by regulatory policies, economic and technological infrastructure. Furthermore, another of the theories widely used in the diffusion of information systems is the theory of the diffusion of innovations (DOI). From the perspective of Choudrie and Culkin (2013) in the context of innovation, a close association with diffusion. Therefore, it is necessary to understand both concepts. For Rogers (2010) innovation refers to an idea, practice or object that an individual perceives as new, suggesting that it needs not be an invention. In the other hand, the diffusion by Rogers refers to the process through which some innovation is communicated in a social system, using certain channels over time. Also, the DOI states that five factors influence the rate of adoption of organizational innovations, relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, probability, and observability (Rogers, 2010).

From the individual point of view, TRA states that behavioral intentions are a function of leading information or beliefs about the likelihood that the performance of a particular behavior will lead to a specific outcome (Madden, Ellen and Ajzen, 1992). That is, the theory referred to points to a causal chain of attitudes -individual and collective- towards a behavior, which are deemed the determinants of the intention to perform the behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975).

This, as noted by Casimir, Ngee Keith Ng, and Liou Paul Cheng (2012), has received the attention of scholars during the last decades, to examine the relations between attitudes, intentions and various types of behavior.

Along the same lines, the TPB adds the third construct to the TRA, the control of perceived behavior, which refers to the beliefs of consumers about access to resources and the opportunities to perform a behavior determined. Non-motivational factors include time, money, skills, and cooperation from others (Ajzen, 1985).

The previous perspective of Chen and Lu (2011) indicates that as long as an individual has opportunities, resources and intention to perform a behavior, they will successfully undertake said behavior, therefore, the control of perceived behavior influences directly or indirectly in behavior through behavioral intentions.

On the other hand, the TAM tries to explain and predict the determinants of the acceptance of information systems by end users (Ben Mansour, 2016) based on two variables, perceived utility, and ease of perceived use. The first variable -perceived utility- is defined as "the degree to which a person believes that the use of a particular system would improve his or her performance at work." While the second -perceived ease of use- as "the degree in which a person believes that using a particular system would not require a particular effort" (Rauniar et al., 2014). Some researchers have included other new concepts, either as antecedents of perceived ease of use

and perceived utility or as intermediaries between these two variables (Hernandez, Jimenez, and José Martín, 2009). Although these theories have been applied in several studies with strict scientific rigor to try to describe and explain the adoption of technology, one of the most used is the TAM, because it provides a basis for monitoring the impact of external factors on beliefs, attitude, behavioral intent, and behavior. However, according to Ben Mansour (2016), there is evidence to show that its first constructs account for less than 45% of intention and variance of use in a context related to EC. Moreover, El-Gohary (2012), mentions that the TAM ignores the effect of important factors that come both inside and outside of the organization, so it is frequent its extension. Recent research on the acceptance and use of new information technologies, as well as the EC (Table 2), highlights the importance of extending the TAM. Some dimensions that integrate are such as integrity, trust, credibility, enterprise mission, strategy, managers' perceptions and the external pressure of trading partners, with the aim of trying to explain the phenomena under study in a broader perspective.

Table 2 Application of the TAM in different contexts and topics

Authors	**The purpose of the study**
Hernandez et al., (2009).	Try to test the influence of the online shopping experience on electronic purchasing decisions.
Orzan *et al.,* (2012).	Propose and test an empirical model of adoption of online marketing techniques for Romanian SMEs.
Awa, Ojiabo, and Emecheta (2015).	Propose a framework that integrates the TAM, TPB, and TOE to enrich the literature and capture some peculiarities of SMEs.
Al-Bakri and Katsioloudes, (2015).	Explore the internal and external organizational factors affecting the CE or the adoption of EC systems by SMEs in Jordan.
Caniels, Lenaerts, and Gelderman (2015).	Explain why SMEs use the Internet in business processes and explore the relationship between market orientation and internet use.
Abou-Shouk, Lim, and Megicks (2016).	Investigate the factors that influence the adoption of EC in SMEs that are travel agencies in a developing country.
Ben Mansour, (2016).	Provide information on the determinants of the companies' acceptance of Internet banking.

Although the rest of theories and models on adoption and use of new technologies, were developed during the last century, there is evidence (Table 3) that show its application to studies in the XXI century, except for TRA. The previous one suggests that the others continue to provide elements to explain social phenomena from different contexts, the reason why its use is not ruled out.

Table 3 Applicability of theories and models on adoption and use of new technologies

Authors	Purpose of the study
Carmel, Dedrick, and Kraemer (2009).	Use innovation theory, especially the DOI to examine offshoring as a management innovation.
MacVaugh and Schiavone (2010).	Integrate existing theoretical explanations for the diffusion of innovation through the disciplines of marketing, innovation and sociological research.
Reza Jalilvand and Samiei (2012).	Study the impact of word of mouth advertising using electronic means, in a destination tourism choice, using the TPB.
Heuer and Kolvereid (2014).	To examine the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial behavior and to compare the effectiveness of entrepreneurship teaching approaches that are frequently used in the TPB.
LI, Zhao, and Yu (2015).	Explain the transformation of the service into the cloud in small and medium enterprises based on the TOE paradigm and understand the role of cloud service trust in the transformation process.
Brouwer and Mosack (2015).	Testing whether general and specific healthy eating behaviors and intentions can be best predicted by expanding TPB to include a healthy eating identity.
Aloulou (2016).	Contribute to the literature of business intentions by applying planned behavioral theory to the Saudi context and determining the factors that affect the intentions of the end-of-year Saudi college business students to become entrepreneurs.
Awa and Ojiabo (2016).	Try to provide a greater understanding of the adoption of information systems by investigating how 12 factors within the technology-organization-environment framework explain the adoption of enterprise resource planning software by small and medium-sized enterprises.
Jain, Khan, and Mishra (2017).	Examine the behavior of buying expensive fashion products using the framework of TPB.

Like TAM, the TPB, DOI, and TOE are theories and models that continue to be used to try to explain phenomena related to the adoption and use of new technologies, suggesting that they still have validity.

E-commerce:

For Ahmedova (2015), in the current context, competition is crucial for business development, as competitiveness is the most important condition for the overall prosperity of the firm. In modern businesses internet access and online presence is fundamental, since the line between shopping for the majority of users has been diluted (Constantinescu and Nistorescu, 2012). Thus, an area that encompasses processes related to the purchase and sale of products and services, as well as electronic information, called e-commerce has emerged (Yasin et al., 2014). Its evolution is related to the improvement of IT, the increased feasibility of adoption in various areas as well as the reduction of the cost of its use (Baršauskas, Šarapovas, and Cvilikas, 2008).

According to Tsai and Cheng (2012), EC is seen as a combination of innovative approaches, virtual applications, and Internet business operations in a unique, revolutionary and enterprise solution.There are three terms commonly used to refer to the EC such as e-commerce, e-business, and i-commerce (Turban et al., 2006). Despite the multifaceted nature of the EC designation, it is possible to identify convergence factors from the perspectives of different authors (Table 4), such as the Internet, computer network, purchase and or sale, products a services or both services as well as electronic transmission data.

Table 4 Key elements of electronic commerce

Authors	**Perspectives**
Rosen (2002).	Refers to a wide range of online business activities that include products and services; It is more than just ordering goods from an online catalog.
Darch and Lucas (2002).	It has to do with the process of doing business electronically where the internet and its related technologies are the facilitators of business processes.
Simpson and Docherty (2004).	It refers to the use of the Internet for buying/selling activities such as advertising, negotiations, and contracts.
Jelassi and Enders (2005).	Facilitate transactions, the sale of products/services through the Internet or another telecommunication network.
Huy and Filiatrault (2006).	It includes any economic or business activity that uses ICT applications to enable the buying and selling of products and services, facilitating transactions between businesses and between companies, individuals, governments and other organizations.
Manzoor (2010).	It refers to the use of electronic means and technologies to conduct trade, including within the company, business-to-business and business-consumer interactions.
Khurana *et al.,* (2011).	It includes the execution of transactions through the internet or other computer networks, whenever rights of ownership or use of goods, services or both are transferred.
Hajli, Sims, y Shanmugam (2014).	It involves doing business and conducting business through the Internet and opening new channels to communicate with consumers.

Based on the aforementioned elements, a company that incorporates the EC is one that carries out transactions involving the transfer of ownership of the use of assets, services or both, using all types a computer network. On the other hand, Marcelo, Veríssimo, and Yasin (2014) add that their revenues are derived in part from such transactions and include all types of business models. A first approximation to the CE classification is provided by Singh et al., (2016) who establish a categorization of two types, indirect and direct. The fundamental characteristic of the first is that the consumer makes the order online and traditionally it receives a product, however, the payment method is not electronic. On the other hand, the essence of the second is that the order and payment are made in an electronic medium, and a digitized

product is received. According to the market relationship, Moertini (2012) mentions that CE applications are divided into three categories: Business to Consumer (B2C), Business to Business (B2B) and Consumer to Consumer (C2C) which have grown exponentially with the spread of the Internet.

Feizollahi et al., (2014) identify four CE models, which describe the fundamental relationships between business and customer: C2C, B2C, C2B, and B2B. The EC is the result of the ICT revolution in the economic fields and is an adequate way to contribute to economic growth (Singh et al., 2016), and its big growth is also associated with the increase in penetration of the Internet around the world (Agudo, 2014).

The CE offers the ability to operate globally (Gallego, Bueno and Francisco Terreño, 2016). Its adoption entails several benefits such as increased sales (Jones, Motta, and Alderete, 2016), greater accessibility for end users (Afshar, Zhang, and Brem, 2013), time savings (Frasquet Deltoro et al., 2012), cost reduction (Wilson and Abel, 2002; Awiagah, Kang, and Lim, 2016), productivity gains (Savrul, Incekara, and Sener, 2014) and better customer service (Levy, Powell, and Worrall, 2005). So the role of ICTs should not be overlooked to improve operational efficiency and strategic efficiency (Czuchry and Yasin, 2003). Also, CE plays a unique role in contemporary SMEs (Afshar, Zhang, and Brem, 2013). It is a different way of doing business in certain markets and for selected clients (Hutt and Speh, 2001). Moreover, in the perspective of Yu et al., (2016), the CE is booming with the development of a new business models that will continuously puhs for several decades, in a global framework where economic functions are enabled by IT and the Internet (Marcelo, Veríssimo and M. Yasin, 2014).

Building a competitive advantage:

The theory of resources and capabilities starts from the premise that the competitive advantage does not depend on the structural characteristics of the market and the industry, but certain higher internal resources in the company. Also, the theory of resources and capabilities establishes that resources owned by a corporation must be differentiated from rivals, should be difficult to imitate and hard to substitute for others (Kumlu, 2014).

At the same time, the competitive advantage is the result of the evolutionary process that the company has followed throughout its history (Reynoso, 2005; Calix, Vigier and Briozzo, 2015). The concept is defined as "advantages company against others in the same sector or market, which allows it to excel and have a position superior to that of its competitors" (Porter, 1985:167). In this line, Aziz and Samad (2016) establishes that a company has a competitive advantage itself can offer quality products at lower prices, as well as better services, than its competitors.

In the case of Internet services, its adoption by SMEs implies a unique ability to encourage integration. The above favors the creation of the competitive advantage, due to greater transparency and communication, exchange of knowledge in time real and value added as well as flexibility and operational efficiency (Ongori, 2009; Ongori and Migiro, 2010).

Also, in Stockdale and Standing (2004), SMEs are more adaptable and sensitive to changes than large organizations and; generally, the speed and flexibility offered by the electronic environment benefits them. However, despite the advantages of the digital environment, Scupola (2009) mentions that internet platforms are still underutilized by SMEs.

According to Yasin et al., (2014) despite their organizational potential, operational and strategic benefits could remain outside the reach of most SMEs. Any company must understand its position in the market and that of its competitors, before starting the adventure towards the CE (Jeffcoate, Chappell, and Feindt, 2002). In modern organizations, knowledge is the basis of competition (Aghamirian, Dorri, and Aghamirian, 2015), and is the most valuable resource. Therefore, their efficient use contributes to sustainable competitive advantages (Fernie, Green, Weller, and Newcombe, 2003), which in a traditional economy would be complicated to achieve. Conclusively, the two factors which determine the survival or success of organizations are EC and customer knowledge (Aghamirian et al., 2015).

The impact of technology on the tourism industry:

The tourism industry, in perspective of Hrubcova, Loster, and Obergruber (2016) is one of the largest in the world. Many international organizations consider it as having a significant impact on the group of the least developed countries. On the other hand, authors such as Nicolae and Sabina (2012) point out that no other sector such as tourism provides jobs equally and guarantees wealth among emerging countries. Furthermore, Seghir et al., (2015) establishes that tourism is one of the most important economic drivers the last sixty years and is positioned as one of the fastest growing sectors in the world. Brida, London, and Rojas (2014) point out that the tourism industry has become the primary source of divisive income in the 48 least developed economies, except oil exports, generating 45% of services exports from developing countries and the main export in 80% of these cases. Meanwhile, Balli, Curry, and Balli (2015) establish that tourism has become the fourth export industry worldwide, only after fuels, chemicals, and food. As referred to in the studies of Ohlan (2017), Brida, Cortes, and Pulina (2016), Bassil, Hamadeh, and Samara (2015), Tang and Tan (Tang and Tan, 2015) and Brida et al., (2014), economic growth and other determining factors, cointegration. However, Gugushvili, Salukvadze, and Salukvadze (2017) argue that while the tourism sector triggers economic

growth, development remains fragmented and incomplete as in other branches of the economy. Therefore, the study of the impact of information and communication technologies is relevant, since in some cases they have revolutionized industries, such as tourism. According to Law, Buhalis, and Cobanoglu (2014) the EC in particular, offers unprecedented challenges and opportunities for tourism and hospitality businesses because they are increasingly dependent on ICT. It has also revolutionized operational and strategic management, expanding re-engineering of business processes across the industry, because, in the perspective of Szopiński and Staniewski (2016) the internet has changed the behavior of travelers. However, it is important to keep in mind that the tourism industry, especially rural tourism, is widely dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises, and is often considered less innovative than other sectors (Cosma et al., 2014).

This represents the consolidation of the link between ICT and tourism, to promote the competitiveness of tourism and to seek to meet the information needs of the current clients. The following is an investigation (Table 5), which demonstrates the link between technology adoption, competitive advantage building and use of the EC within the tourism industry, to achieve the development of a region or country.

Table 5 Impact of technology on the tourism industry

Authors	**Findings**
Araslı and Baradarani (2014).	The researchers found that the dimensions of accommodation and transportation had an insignificant effect on destination satisfaction. However, food and local cuisine, shopping and tourist attractions and the environment and safety had a significant impact on the satisfaction of the target.
Cosma *et al.*, (2014).	The main findings suggest that to survive in an increasingly competitive and global environment, tourism companies, especially smaller ones, need to differentiate themselves from their competitors with innovation tools. Likewise, it is established that innovation - products/services and marketing- in tourism should be considered as a permanent, global and dynamic process.
Najda-Janoszka and Kopera (2014).	The authors conclude that the obstacles related to the organization, the environment and the innovation process that oppose innovation in the tourism sector seem to be closely related. Also, most of the identified barriers emerge or tend to be aggravated at interfaces between stakeholders in local tourism.
Ionela, Constantin and Dogaru (2015).	The findings suggest that tourism, through its direct and indirect impacts, attracts significant foreign exchange, investment, and know-how, and stimulates the local economy, with a significant multiplier effect in many other areas of the economy. Likewise, the advantages and limitations are presented in the support to the tourist activity to foment cultural events, the architectural rehabilitation, the valorization of the natural landscape and the rural tourism.
Farid (2015).	The results indicate that there is a positive relationship between the presence of patrimonial sites and the number of tourists. On the other

	hand, in the first subject sector of study, it was found that the local population plays a vital role and benefits cultural tourism through the deployment of cultural capital. Meanwhile, in the second sector, the results point to the need to improve the competitiveness of the destination to increase the contribution of tourism to the local economy.
Alzua-Sorzabal, Zurutuza, Rebón, and Gerrikagoitia (2015).	The results indicate that the Internet has allowed tourists and the population to amplify their traditional channels of influence as opinion makers. What has been pointed out, has forced destinations to invest resources such as time, effort and money, however, very few quantify the efficiency of their communication channel. Finally, the authors present a ranking list that allows the analysis of variables that must influence the destination to improve that channel.
Barkauskas et al., (2015).	The authors found that there are five groups of macro-environmental factors that have an influence on rural tourism: economic, sociocultural, natural-ecological, political-legal and technological.
Omerzel (2015).	The authors make a theoretical and methodological contribution to the study of innovation in the field of tourism, by developing an integrative model that links the impact of entrepreneurial characteristics, networking, technological development and the environment to innovation as key success factors of SMEs.
Ardhala, Santoso and Sulistyarso (2016).	The authors state that four factors affect the development of the footwear industry as a tourist destination: basic requirements of the creative industry; tourist attraction; accessibility and mobility, and product development.
Pradinie *et al.*, (2016).	The results suggest that it is advisable to build a museum of energy as a tourist object that will be deployed even more in multi purpose tourism activities. It is necessary to consider the value added improvement for the community affected by the projects.
Simeon and Martone (2016).	The results indicate that in tourism, Web 2.0 and especially online reviews are tools that can be used to retrieve information, learn the behavior of consumers, make decisions and plan.
Demarco (2016).	The findings suggest that the competitive advantage of tourism destinations is essentially due to the ability to meet the need for unique experiences.
McCamley and Gilmore (2017).	It identifies the dissatisfaction of SMEs with the supply chain and the ongoing processes for the delivery of the tourism product. Therefore, the challenge is how to integrate the entrepreneurial and innovative activities of SMEs in the patrimonial tourism system.

Framework of work:

The research contributes to defining the main challenges faced by Small and Medium Enterprises in the tourism industry to build and enhance their value proposition in the context of a digital environment. For this purpose, the literature review focused on three databases, Web of Science, Emerald and Elsevier to retrieve scientific articles and case studies from different approaches and contexts using keywords (Table 6).

Table 6 Search strategies

Databases	Topics	Keywords
▪ Web of Science ▪ Emerald ▪ Elsevier	Adoption of technology	technology adoption models; technology adoption models AND sme; TOE AND sme; DOI AND sme; TRA AND sme; TPB AND sme; TAM AND sme; e-commerce AND adoption model; electronic commerce AND adoption model.
	E-commerce	e-commerce AND sme; electronic commerce AND sme; development AND e-commerce; ICT AND e-commerce; ICT AND development.
	Competitive advantage	competitive advantage AND sme; e-commerce AND competitive advantage; electronic commerce AND competitive advantage; sme AND strategy.
	Tourism	tourism AND economic growth; tourism AND development; tourism AND economic development; importance of tourism AND economic growth; tourism industry AND economic development; tourism AND ICT;

For the discrimination of the publications, the objectives and findings were analyzed. Subsequently, the selected works are thoroughly review. Finally, the construction of the article began, which included the following elements: models and theories on technology acceptance and use, electronic commerce, construction of a competitive advantage and impact of technology on the tourism industry.

Conclusion:

The purpose of the research is to present the main challenges faced by small and medium-sized enterprises in the tourism industry to build and enhance their value proposition in the context of a digital environment. The study shows that ICTs have defined new rules to compete at country, sector or regional level. In the case of SMEs focused on tourism, the changes have been profound, from operational and strategic management, due to the evolution of the behavior of travelers and the way they seek, process data, Evaluate and make decisions (Bizirgianni and Dionysopoulou, 2013).

The preceding demonstrates that to survive and grow, these economic units must differentiate themselves from their competitors, evolve in their business model and rapidly integrate ICT in their organizational fabric. The findings suggest that the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation significantly influences the intention to use the internet. ICTs provide tools that can help to retrieve information, learn the behavior of consumers, make decisions and plan so that the management of customer knowledge is fundamental (Aghamirian, Dorri, and Aghamirian, 2015).

The EC can also detonate the growth of SMEs located in developed and developing countries, provided that internal and external organizational

factors be overcome, especially the preparation, strategy, managers' perceptions and external pressure of the partners commercial.

On the other hand, the configuration of the value proposition to be effective must be based on the characteristic resources of the country, sector, region or locality and offer new, different or unique experiences. Should also consider that the motivations that lead a potential customer to make a purchase are not the same as those that influence an experienced customer. Likewise, the commitment to corporate social responsibility practices is another aspect that can contribute to consolidating the value proposition, especially in emerging markets (Nicolae and Sabina, 2012).

In a digital environment, the challenges of SMEs are aimed at generating internal conditions that contribute to overcoming the barriers of adoption and use of technology, and, build a value proposition that offers unconventional experiences for the target market. They should also base their business processes on ICTs to promote through electronic commerce what they can offer to tourists. Finally, the findings suggest that overcoming the above challenges in no way assures the growth of SMEs. However, they can make an important contribution to their permanence in the market.

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