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Articles and essays

Tourism for Older Adults under Transformative Consumer Research: proposing a research agenda

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Abstract

The demographic transition taking place in Brazil with the increased percentage of senior citizens in the population raises issues regarding aging, such as depression, feelings of loneliness and impairment. This essay presents information that contributes to the debates on how tourism can enhance seniors' overall well-being and provide these consumers with a better quality of life, therefore minimizing the negative impacts of the aging process. This study suggests that the Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) – a marketing approach that aims to support and disseminate studies focused on the quality of life and consumers' well-being – represents a valuable perspective for research focusing on senior travelers, a field with identifiable theoretical gaps. There is a lack of studies adopting the TCR perspective in the tourism context for this growing population segment. To finalize, this research project also proposes a research agenda with the intent of contributing to academic studies, market research for institutions and companies dealing with the sector of tourism services; also providing information that can support public policies concerned with the aging of the population.

Keywords: Tourism; Older People; Aging; Senior; Transformative Consumer Research.

Resumo

Turismo na terceira idade sob a ótica da *Transformative Consumer Research:* proposição de uma agenda de pesquisa

No curso da transição demográfica pela qual passa a população brasileira, o envelhecimento dá origem a problemas como depressão, solidão e sentimento de invalidez. Este ensaio apresenta informações que contribuem para discutir como a experiência do turismo pode dar origem ao bem-estar e melhor qualidade de vida aos grupos de consumidores da terceira idade de forma a minimizar impactos negativos do processo de envelhecimento. Defende-se aqui o uso da lente da *Transformative Consumer Research* (TCR) ou Teoria Transformativa do Consumidor. Essa abordagem do marketing propõe apoiar e divulgar estudos voltados à qualidade de vida e bem-estar dos consumidores e se apresenta como uma perspectiva importante para pesquisas que associem o turismo à terceira idade. Foi possível identificar lacunas teóricas e escassez de estudos que contemplem a perspectiva da TCR no contexto do turismo para esse crescente grupo da população. Uma agenda de pesquisa é proposta de forma a contribuir para estudos acadêmicos, para pesquisas de empresas e instituições que trabalham com o setor de serviços turísticos e também para fornecer informações

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que possam apoiar políticas públicas preocupadas com o progressivo envelhecimento da população.

Palavras-chave: Turismo; Terceira Idade; Envelhecimento; Idoso; Teoria Transformativa do Consumidor.

Resumen

Turismo en la tercera edad en la óptica de la transformative consumer research: proposición de una agenda de investigación

En el curso de la transición demográfica por la que pasa la población brasileña, el envejecimiento da lugar a problemas como depresión, soledad y sentimiento de invalidez. Este ensayo presenta informaciones que contribuyen a discutir cómo la experiencia del turismo puede provocar al bienestar y la mejor calidad de vida de los grupos de consumidores de tercera edad para minimizar los impactos negativos del proceso de envejecimiento. Se defiende aquí que la *Transformative Consumer Research* (TCR) – un enfoque del marketing que se propone a apoyar y divulgar estudios orientados a la calidad de vida y el bienestar de los consumidores – se presenta como una perspectiva importante para investigaciones que asocien el turismo a la tercera edad. Se identificó lagunas teóricas y escasez de estudios que contemplen la perspectiva de la TCR en el contexto del turismo de ocio para ese creciente grupo de población. Una agenda de investigación es propuesta al final para contribuir a los estudios académicos para investigaciones de las empresas e instituciones que trabajan con el sector de servicios turísticos y para proporcionar también informaciones que puedan apoyar políticas públicas preocupadas por el creciente envejecimiento de la población.

Palabras claves: Turismo; Mayor; Envejecimiento; Anciano; *Transformative Consumer Research.*

INTRODUCTION

Improvements in nutrition, basic sanitation, medicine, health care, education, knowledge, and economic welfare in general made it possible for people to have longer life expectancy. However, the aging process of a population bears some challenges. Those related to the financial viability of pension systems, adequate health care and the integration of older adults as active agents of social development are particularly noteworthy. Problems such as depression, loneliness and feelings of disability are commonly found in the older adult population (United Nations, 2007).

This scenario suggests thinking about public policies and other market actions to improve the quality of life of older adults. Understanding the behavior of this group fosters the possibility of improving its inclusion in the consumer society.

Tourism is one of the options for the integration of older adults due to its positive effects on the quality of life of the individuals who practice it, offering options of fun, knowledge, social interaction, making new friends and minimizing loneliness. This activity fills the time of the older adults, allowing them to use their skills, and contributing to their physical and mental health (Araújo, 2000). Thus, it can be said that tourism has transformative effect on the individuals who practice it.

The reflection about the transformative processes that the practice of tourism may provide to the older adults can be conducted from the perspective of Transformative Consumer Research (TCR). TCR is a branch of consumption studies focused and committed to the promotion of research for the direct and positive transformation of a consumer's life (Mick, Pettigrew, Pechmann, & Ozanne, 2012). This perspective is related to the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), which is a designation coined by Arnould & Thompson (2005; 2007) when they gathered consumption studies that develop research addressing socio-cultural, ideological and symbolic aspects of consumption to explain the relationship between consumers, market and cultural meanings.

Cohen, Prayag e Moital (2014) analyzed how consumer behavior had been studied in the period from 2000 to 2012 in three major tourism journals – *Annals of Tourism Research, Tourism Management* and *Journal of Travel Research.* The authors raised the major researched themes and reached nine key concepts: decision making, values, motivations, self-concept and personality, expectations, attitudes, perceptions, satisfaction, trust and loyalty. These concepts are within the cognitive perspective of consumer behavior, in which the contributions of psychology predominate. The authors point to gaps such as the study of hedonic, affective and cultural aspects in relation to consumption behavior in tourism. TCR is within the socio-cultural perspective of consumption and considers the shortcomings pointed out by Cohen et al. (2014).

Changes in the global and Brazilian population require the market to innovate and specialize in the supply of goods and services, such as those related to the tourism sector. Older consumers present great heterogeneity, bearing historical, social, economic and cultural complexities to research on this group; thus, classifications based on chronological age are limited, as observed by Mattar (2005). The author explains that the heterogeneity found in aspects such as income, profession and schooling prevents satisfactory analyses of the behavior of older consumers.

Therefore, the connection of consumer studies within the sociocultural approach of CCT coupled to the proposal of transformative studies of TCR is presented as adequate to the context of consumer behavior of tourism in older adults. This article proposes an agenda for research that relates the experience of tourism with older adults within the perspective of the TCR. The context of the aging of the Brazilian and world population will be analyzed below. Following, issues related to tourism and older adults, as well as their relationship with marketing and consumption will be addressed. Finally, TCR is presented in more detail to propose a research agenda.

AGING POPULATION

Demographic transition, the process in which populations are no longer predominantly young, is a global phenomenon. The aging of a population brings repercussions to society, such as a new conceptualization of old age (Herédia, 2002).

According to data from the United Nations (2015), the fastest growing segment of the population worldwide is the older adults one. In 2015, the population aged

60 years or more accounted for 901 million people, equivalent to 12% of the worldwide total. The population growth rate for this age group is 3.26% per year.

Still according to the United Nations report, life expectancy has grown in recent years. Globally, life expectancy at birth grew three years between the years 2000-2005 and 2010-2015, from 67 to 70 years. By 2030, the world's population is expected to be 1.4 billion older individuals, 2.1 billion in 2050, and may grow to 3.2 billion in 2100 (UN, 2015).

Brazil follows the international standards of population growth, having the older segment as the one growing the most in the Brazilian population, at a rate of 4% per year. Projections indicate that Brazil will be the sixth country in the world with the most older adults until 2025 (World Health Organization, 2005; IBGE, 2015).

A study on demographic change in Brazil points to an average increase of one million older adults per year in the country. The population aged 60 and older was 14.2 million in 2000, and grew to 19.6 million in 2010. And such population may grow to 41.5 million by 2030, and 73.5 million by 2050 (IBGE, 2015).

Currently, Brazil is in the group of countries undergoing an accelerated process of demographic transition. This is mainly due to the sharp reduction in birth rates combined with a decrease in mortality at all ages. This causes a significant change in the population's age structure (IBGE, 2015).

The growth of the older population in Brazil and in the world shows the change in the format of the broad-based age pyramid being replaced by a characteristic pyramid of an aging population, with its increasingly broad top (IBGE, 2015).

For the demographic analysis and for most of the studies and research on the older population, the age of 60 is commonly used as a dividing line between the younger and older segments of the population. However, chronological age is not the ideal criterion to establish the changes perceived by the aging process (WHO, 2005; UN, 2007).

From an anthropological perspective and from historical research, it must emphasized that representations about old age, its social position and the treatment given to them by young people have particular meanings in different historical, social and cultural contexts (Debert, 2007). Moreover, the transformation of old age into a social problem is not merely an increase in the number of older individuals as the term "demographic aging" suggests. In fact, the social problem is a social construction, not the result of the problems of a society. The transformation of aging into a social problem involves new definitions of old age and aging. A new image of aging is established by the emergence of vocabularies that oppose existing ones about what is old age, such as: old age x elderly; active retirement x passive retirement; residential center x asylum as suggested by Debert (2007).

The term "third age" was recently invented, being created by contemporary Western societies. The creation of this new stage of life, placed between adulthood and old age, brings with it a set of practices, institutions and specialized agents that define and meet the needs of this population, which is now characterized as a victim of marginalization and solitude in European and American societies from the 1970s onwards (Debert, 2007).

The standardization of all ages with retirement as a mark for the definition of third age requires the creation of new age brackets. Young older adults must be differentiated from old older adults. This leads to the surfacing of a new term

in French nomenclature for the classification of people older than 75 years: the fourth age. Thus, the third age is associated with the "continuity of active life through autonomy and practices of sociability" (Peixoto, 2007, p. 76), and the fourth age represents the very old, linked to the traditional image of old age, i.e., decay or physical disability.

In the late 1960s, European studies on the change of the understanding of old age arrived in Brazil. The adoption of the term third age stems from its connotation not being as pejorative, and for maintaining a certain association to leisure through the promotion of third age clubs (Araújo, 2000).

There is a growing interest in themes that break from the barrier of the stereotypes associated with the older adults in Brazil, and studies addressing non-traditional aspects such as empowerment (Goldenberg, 2008), beauty (Casotti & Campos, 2016), sexuality (Alves, 2014; Azize, 2014; Quillinan, 2016; Tomsic, 2016) and the relationship with the body (Sibilia, 2014; Maggie, 2014; Lobato, 2016; Limoeiro, 2016) have been growing in number.

The speech on the third age does not follow processes of objective changes, and must be understood as a constituent part of these changes. It helps accelerate and direct processes, as it operates new classifications and ways of managing aging. Themes and study possibilities that address the issues related to the aging process and to the older consumer are varied. Tourism surfaces as an important possibility for new experiences of aging.

TOURISM AND OLD AGE

When compared to sciences such as mathematics, physics, and philosophy, research on tourism is recent. Although tourism has been a relevant means of wealth distribution and generation for over a century, studies on this phenomenon have, in many cases, been limited to investigating these spots, not touching on crucial approaches such as the negative aspects of tourism. Therefore, we can observe a pulverized perspective of this field of study (Panosso Netto, 2011; Lohmann & Panosso Netto, 2012).

Epistemology thus becomes essential for tourism studies. The application of a revision of knowledge provides the criteria for acceptance of this field. Some authors have discussed and defended the importance of tourism studies in relation to its ontology, epistemology and methodologies (Jafari & Ritchie, 1981; Rejowski, 2000; Boullón, 2002; Barreto, 2004; Phillimore & Goodson, 2004; Ateljevic, 2009; Castillo Nechar & Panosso Netto, 2010; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010; Santos & Yan, 2010; Ascanio, 2010; Panosso Netto, 2011; Lohmann & Panosso Netto, 2012).

Some initiatives were important for the process of turning tourism into a science, such as the creation of the international journal *Annals of Tourism Research* in 1973, the establishment of the *International Academy for the Study of Tourism* and the publication of the *Encyclopedia of Tourism* in 2000 (Panosso Netto, 2011).

Among the various subjects that interact with tourism we can cite: anthropology, political science, psychology, geography, history, law, administration, economics and marketing (Jafari, 2005). Within the marketing approach, the study of consumer behavior is a subject of interest, having several publications in the main

international tourism journals (Gnoth, 1997; Goossens, 2000; Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003; Moschis, Curasi, & Bellenger, 2003; Mattila, 2004; Cohen et. al., 2014).

Tourism allows the development of research from different perspectives and approaches on the phenomenon since this field is multi and interdisciplinary, with great possibilities of theorization. Studies on older adults are relevant given the aging process of the Brazilian and global population

A survey conducted with the main Brazilian tourism journals to verify the themes related to tourism and older age found that studies on this theme are incipient. Studies on the following themes were identified: consumption behavior (Bacha & Vianna, 2008; Schein, Perin, Sampaio, & Ugalde, 2009), accessibility (Duarte & Borda, 2013), technology use (Moura, Gosling, Christino, & Macedo, 2017), segmentation (Sena & Guzman, 2008), quality in service (Motta & Lima, 2007), sports tourism (Senfft, 2004), cultural tourism (Lima & Simson, 2010); public policy (Carvalho & Silva, 2014), motivation (Nascimento & Santos, 2016), sociability (Carvalho & Salles, 2013) and quality of life (Babinski & Negrine, 2008; Esperança, Cerchiari, Martins, Alvarenga, & Canevari, 2012; Ashton, Cabral, Santos, & Kroetz, 2015).

The lack of studies addressing the issue of improving the quality of life of older individuals who experience tourism reinforces the importance of researching this context from a perspective of the positive transformation of the individual. The possibilities of well-being in the final stage of the life cycle are also important in the elaboration of effective public policies that contemplate tourism as an alternative of socialization for older adults.

Some programs of social tourism directed to older adults already exist in the world. Spain, for example, has policies to stimulate tourism for the older adults since 1985. Moreover, since 1999, Spain has a bilateral relationship for older adult tourism with Portugal (European Commission & DG Enterprise and Industry, 2010). Spain participates in the transnational program involving countries of the European Union: "Europe Senior Tourism", which began in 2009. The program is an initiative of the European Commission seeking to enable people who do not have financial conditions to travel to do so to vacation destinations in Europe, while helping local economies to overcome the off-season problems.

Companies seeking to participate in the Spanish programs undergo rigorous selection criteria, being monitored by the responsible bodies; they must offer services such as daily medical care in hotels, special menus, guides and certified professionals. The Spanish government offers approximately 30% in subsidy on the total value of the travels to stimulate this group to engage in this activity. There is a return of 1.50 euros for each euro invested.

These actions have proven financial viability, social and economic development, as well as contributing to the construction of citizenship, active employment policies, and the reduction of negative impacts of tourism seasonality; thus, showing that the combination between tourism and older individuals is crucial for marketing strategies of different goods and services.

Information about the Europe Senior Tourism program were extracted from http://www.europeseniortourism.eu

MARKETING AND CONSUMPTION BY OLDER ADULTS

Consumer behavior, as a field of study, is considered to be multidisciplinary (MacInnis & Folkes, 2009), and this is a characteristic that stimulates approaches from different perspectives. Tourism is a propitious field for studies in the area of marketing – more specifically, on consumer behavior – due to its various segments such as social and leisure tourism for older adults' groups. However, marketing as a discipline has largely ignored older consumers and focused on the younger population (Szmigin & Carrigan, 2001). Marketing studies on consumers older than 50 years are still incipient (Moschis, 2003).

Moschis (2003) presents the evolution of marketing for the older population in three phases: before 1980, during the 1980s and from the early 1990s. According to the author, the first phase encompassed the total neglect of marketing studies in relation to older consumers. Consumers over the age of 50 were not considered to be important to American companies, mainly because the country's market was youth oriented. Thus, the older consumer market was viewed as a disadvantaged segment of the population, with limited economic resources and relevance.

During the 1980s, what the author calls "trial and error marketing" begins, a moment when perceptions of the older consumer begin to change. However, since this segment had long been ignored, there was little reliable information for corporate decision-making. Many marketing actions were based on stereotypes and anecdotal evidence on older individuals, portraying this group as being homogeneously composed of moody, isolated and unhealthy people, resulting in boycotts of products and services from companies (Moschis, 2003).

The third phase – early 1990s – is characterized by greater commitment and caution in the marketing strategies. The number of companies that recognize the importance of the older market has increased, and these companies developed strategies to effectively reach such target audience to better meet their needs. Furthermore, the misunderstandings from previous periods led marketers to target their products and services to older consumers more cautiously, using surveys and other available information, seeking not to act based on intuition or guesses.

For Solomon (2011), the set of the main values to serve older consumers are: 1) autonomy: consumers in this group want to live active lives and be self-sufficient; 2) connection: consumers in this group value the bonds they have with their friends and family; 3) altruism: consumers in this group want to give something in return to the world.

In Brazil, Locatelli & Fontoura (2013) surveyed the publications that related research in administration and aging in the annals of the Brazilian National Meeting of Graduate Programs in Administration (Encontro Nacional dos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Administração – Enanpad) from 1997 to 2011 in all thematic sections. The survey found 26 eligible articles and the marketing area was the second with the most published articles – nine –, all within the consumer behavior thematic field, discussing themes such as satisfaction (Farias & Santos, 1998), attitudes (Anjos Neto, Souza Neto, & Gonçalves, 2002), purchase decision (Loureiro, Amorim Neto, Anjos Neto, Silva, & Santana, 2003; Ugalde & Slongo, 2006), tourism and leisure (Ladeira, Guedes, & Bruni, 2003; Bacha, Perez, & Vianna, 2006), consumption profile (Amaro

& Meira, 2006), moda (Slongo, Albrecht, Lavouras, Esteves, & Barcelos, 2009) and values (Kelly, Ribas, & Costa, 2010).

Brazilian studies within the social sciences field that studied aging can contribute to the marketing and consumer behavior area. The study by Peixoto (2007) proposed to elaborate how the concepts, concepts or notions associated with aging were conceptualized via the comparative understanding of French and Brazilian social representations related to these categories. Among her reflections, the author presents differences between the nomenclatures "elder" and "third age". The term "elder" portrays older individuals, those who are "respected", whereas the term "third age" symbolizes "younger old individuals". This term enables the surfacing of a new market encompassing services such as tourism, food and of beauty products, as well as new professional specialties for the third age.

Another study by the anthropologist Guita Debert (2003) analyzes Brazilian television commercials of the 1990s to understand the representations of older adults in advertising. The author identified three distinct ways of representing old age. The first was associated with negative stereotypes that were prevalent until the 1970s, such as arrogance, dependence, passivity, or loss of skills. In the second, old age was represented in an antagonistic way to the previous one, referencing situations in which the older adult is in a position of prestige, power, wealth and beauty, and such construction is strengthened during the 1980s. The research also identified representations related to the transgression of traditional social patterns by addressing issues such as sexuality, family life and the use of new technologies by older adults, which is associated with new meanings like hedonism, contestation and rebellion during the third age. The identification in Debert's (2003) study of three distinct sets of representations of old age in advertising in the same period suggests that there are difficulties in choosing communication strategies for older Brazilians or, in another interpretation, that we were already living among different profiles of older adults.

The several profiles of older adults can find various possibilities of leisure or how to use free time, having tourism as one of the options. Studies on the values and lifestyles of this group show that they are quite attractive to the service sector, especially vacations and leisure. Reaching the third age can mean biological, psychological and social losses, nevertheless it provides gains like freedom, more free time and life experience (Araújo, 2000). According to the World Tourism Organization (2016), the main motivating factors for older adults to travel are: recreation and entertainment, ballroom or folk dances, leisure or vacations, socializing and making friends during the trip, and most prefer to travel with friends. We can thus argue that the idea that older adults spend little and are inactive is no longer correct. Many individuals in this group are healthy and interested in new experiences and products, having income to consume them.

By identifying tourism as one of the leisure options for the older population and the positive impacts that this activity can provide to them, Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) can be a perspective for consumer studies with a focus on older adults since it can aid in the pursuit of well-being and positive transformation of the consumer's life (Mick et al., 2012).

TCR PERSPECTIVE - TRANSFORMATIVE CONSUMER RESEARCH

Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) was first used in 2005 to describe academic research on consumer behavior aimed at improving the lives of consumers, society and the environment by addressing issues and opportunities related to consumption (Mick, 2006).

Transformative Consumer Research thus differs from managerial research methods, which focus on consumption studies and the benefit of the organizations when approaching the planning, execution and publication (Petkus, 2010).

According to Mick et al. (2012), TCR is defined by six basic characteristics: 1) the objective of improving consumer well-being; 2) The development of several paradigmatic approaches; 3) The contextual examination of social problems; 4) The rigorous application of theory and methods; 5) Partnership with and for consumers; and 6) The creative disclosure of findings.

Furthermore, the authors also indicated four guidelines to direct studies based on a transformative approach: 1) practical knowledge; 2) theoretical contributions; 3) approach between the researchers and the agents of social change; and 4) adoption of alternative communication strategies (Mick et al., 2012).

The process of production and dissemination of traditional research is often limited to having it published in academic settings, restricting the access to this material to the author's peers (Mick et al., 2012). However, the transformative approach is committed to the dissemination of research to those of interest, such as: decision-makers from companies and public agencies and social leaders, which seems to be appropriate when the objective is the well-being of older adults through tourism experiences.

TCR was mainly influenced by the transformative paradigm of the social sciences (Mertens, 2007) in the studies on consumer behavior, which assigned an ontological character to it. Such character is expressed by its focus on the practice of social research capable of contributing to well-being, going in a different direction from some social sciences that lead to theories primarily developed for the academic environment (Almeida & Casotti, 2015).

Being influenced by participatory action research (Ozanne & Fischer, 2012) in its ontological conception, the TCR perspective advocates research that favors social change through studies that encompass the interests of marginalized or vulnerable social groups, such as older adults.

Moreover, TCR proposes to investigate issues ranging from excessive consumption of fossil fuels to problems associated with obesity, materialism, addiction and environmental degradation. However, it is not restricted to the analysis of problems related to excessive consumption, and involves issues associated with under-consumption such as malnutrition, poverty and homelessness (Mick et al., 2012).

Studies using TCR have already been developed worldwide, discussing some relevant topics such as childhood obesity (Grier & Moore, 2012), cigarette and alcohol consumption (Pechmann, Biglan, Grube, & Cody, 2012) and food allergy (Peniamina, Bremer, Conner, & Mirosa, 2014). In the Brazilian context some researchers have already proposed to study consumption from the TCR perspective, and themes such as consumption and environment (Gonçalves-Dias, 2008) and materialism (Coelho & Nascimento, 2015) were discussed.

A single Brazilian study was found linking TCR to tourism, more specifically, an ethnographic study on the experience of a group of Brazilian volunteer tourists in the context of a favela in Kenya (Almeida & Casotti, 2015).

In this sense, Pinto, Batinga, Ássimos & Almeida (2016) surveyed the annals of events and Brazilian journals for articles that used TCR to map the state of the art of the studies using this method. According to the authors, TCR is still treated in a timid and non-extensive way. Fifteen studies produced from 2008 to 2016 were identified, six of which were published in annals of academic events, two master's thesis, one doctoral dissertation, and six publications in Brazilian journals. From the publications in journals the identified themes were consumers with disabilities (Faria & Silva, 2011; Faria & Motta, 2012; Faria & Casotti, 2014), assistive technology (Faria, Casotti, & Carvalho, 2015), volunteer tourism (Almeida & Casotti, 2015) and a theoretical essay on TCR (Coelho, 2015). However, the authors stressed that studies approaching TCR in Brazil are embryonic and do not provide theoretical constructions nor ontological or methodological discussions.

Many activities that enrich personal and social development lie at the heart of TCR analysis, such as art, culture, physical activity and hobbies (Mick, 2012). Therefore, tourism as a form of leisure and recreation can be inserted in the transformative perspective to analyze how the consumption of travels can provide well-being feelings to those who consume them, i.e., how the consumption of tourism services can be transforming to groups older adult groups, whom are the focus of this reflection. These groups are commonly marginalized when considering public policies of social insertion, which is another characteristic that reinforces the use of the TCR perspective as advocated in this article.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RESEARCH AGENDA

Despite the increasing number of Brazilian and international journals for the reflection and research with tourism as the main theme, such field of study still seeks to be recognized as a science. Among the barriers to this recognition we can cite the recentness of the area of knowledge; the existing conceptual uncertainties; the fragmentation of knowledge produced; the prejudice of researchers from other fields of study; and the frailty of sustaining arguments (Panosso Netto, 2011). However, the possibilities of multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity of the area suggest a fertile ground for the development of theoretical proposals within the diversity of aspects offered by tourism in the third age. This article thus contributes to the field of tourism research by introducing the TCR method to discuss it in the context of older adult groups.

Older adults are associated with diverse issues within the themes of studies that aim to promote consumer well-being such as compulsive consumption, poverty, drug use, materialism, and consumer groups considered to be vulnerable, in which older adults are reminded along with other groups such as children and illiterate individuals (Lehmann & Hill, 2012).

There several fields of study to be found in the context of the older adult population when considering studies related to the transformative perspective. Regarding this group, tourism can be an alternative to alleviate such vulnerability that involves the physical and psychic isolation – which often affect individuals in

this phase of life –, opening opportunities for empirical studies that explore the transformative processes from the experiences.

Transformative Consumer Research proposes studies to be conducted with methodological rigor so these can provide a better understanding of the problems and well-being opportunities for consumers and their environments with the commitment of producing positive and inspiring changes. This article defends investigations capable of identifying and analyzing the transformative processes that the practice of tourism can provide for the older adult population.

We thus propose the following research agenda to support the theoretical construction of the phenomenon of tourism for the third age under the perspective of TCR:

- a) to understand how tourism practices can provide well-being for the third age;
- b)to understand situations in which the practice of tourism by older adults can attenuate characteristic problems of the aging process;
- c) to understand constructed meanings about the experience of tourism for older adult groups that had previous experiences from reports of life stories;
- d)to understand constructed meanings about the experience of tourism for older adult groups that have not had previous experiences from reports of life stories:
- e) to explore what older adults think about existing public policies on leisure and tourism;
- f) to explore the understanding of older adult groups about how public policies related to leisure and tourism can contribute to their well-being.

Tourism is crucial for the social integration of older adults since it assists in the maintenance of their social life, favoring self-esteem and the appreciation of this stage of the life cycle. Tourist experiences surface as one of the main activities for third age groups, given that some aspects of life become stable such as having more free time and income available to travel to new places.

The diversity of older adults is one of the challenges for studies linking tourism and this group, since they cannot be understood solely from demographic characteristics. Simone de Beauvoir (1990) states in her book "Old Age" that we consider someone who is ten years older to be old, and Pierre Bourdieu (1983) claims that "we will always be young or old to someone" (p. 113) in his article "Youth is a mere word". Both suggest the complexity of delimiting the boundaries of age and of generations that have been socially and culturally constructed.

Social scientists can contribute to the study of consumption and tourism to explore the sociocultural perspective in their investigations. The cognitive approach is predominant in studies on consumer behavior related to tourism practiced by older adults, being focused on analyzing themes like: motivations, satisfaction, expectations, decision making and perception. Furthermore, the

scarce studies and surveys focused on older consumers bring to light the reflection that marketing as a discipline and practice still fails to see the importance and potential of this group for the field. Thus, these studies do not approach socio-cultural aspects – as argued by the TCR perspective. Such aspects have influence on the tourism experience and may act as barriers or incentives for the transformative and well-being possibilities in the lives of older adults who travel.

The reflections on the transformative possibility of the practice of tourism by older adults are coupled to the proposed research agenda to stimulate both academic studies and surveys of companies and institutions working with the tourism services sector. The information collected here may also contribute to studies related to public policies concerned with the growing aging of the population.

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