

The Best Tourism Island Destination in the World and Meaningful Experiences: A Systematic Literature Review

O Melhor Destino Turístico Insular do Mundo e Experiências Significativas: Uma Revisão Sistemática da Literatura

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Abstract/ Resumo

Madeira Island is the World' Leading Island Destination for the last four years. As a winning destination it is vital to understand how the new "economy experience" is being acknowledged, since tourism is seeing a shift where meaningful experiences are crucial. The goal was to identify the variables being studied in Madeira tourism and if 'experience' is part of product offers. A systematic literature review was used with the terms: 'Madeira', 'Porto Santo' and 'Tourism'. Application of inclusion/exclusion criteria led to a final sample of 30 references. Three major themes being empathized in Madeira tourism were found: a) nature; b) culture/heritage and c) economy/marketing. Experience is being introduced on tourism product offers, however a lack of research focused on 'meaningful experiences'

A Ilha da Madeira foi eleita o Melhor Destino Insular do Mundo nos últimos quatro anos. Como tal, é vital compreender como a "economia da experiência" está a ser inserida, pois as "experiências significativas" são, atualmente, cruciais para o turismo. O objetivo deste estudo foi identificar quais as variáveis estudadas no Turismo da Madeira e se a 'experiência' faz parte da sua oferta. Foi utilizada uma revisão sistemática da literatura com os termos: 'Madeira', 'Porto Santo' e 'Tourism'. Critérios de inclusão/exclusão levaram a uma amostra final de 30 referências. Três grandes tópicos emergiram: a) natureza; b) património cultural e c) economia/marketing. A 'experiência' está a ser introduzida na oferta turística, porém existe reduzida investigação focalizada nas experiências signifi-

linked to personal growth and tourists' personal characteristics was discovered. Implications to theory and practice are discussed.

Keywords: Culture/Heritage; Madeira; Meaningful Experiences; Nature; Porto Santo; Tourism.

JEL Code: Z32, Z39, L83, P48

Madeira Islands have won in the last few years the title of “Europe’s Leading Island Destination” (World Travel Awards [WTA], 2013, 2014, 2016a, 2017a, 2018a, 2019) and of “World’s Leading Island Destination” (WTA, 2015, 2016b, 2017b, 2018b). However, to maintain its leading position it has to innovate and be attentive to the new trends of the markets. Tourism is one of the few worldwide industries that is crosswise through cultures and Madeira has in it its main economical income.

Overall, tourism is understood as a “social, cultural and economic phenomenon related to the movement of people to places outside their usual place of residence” (Department of Economic and Social Affairs – Statistical Division [DESA], 2010, p.1) (. Economically speaking, tourism is seen as the activities people undergo in the destinations they arrive. A visitor is a person who’s travelling for holiday, leisure and recreation, business, health, education or other purpose. Thus, tourism addresses all the activities taken by visitors in all of these different travel options extending beyond the traditional view of tourists as only seeking leisure/recreation (DESA, 2010). Tourism is too considered a business where experiences are sold. This idea combines everything that a tourist experiences in the destination encompassing their behaviors, perceptions, emotions and cognitions (Bosangit, Hibbert, & McCabe, 2015). For Kirillova, Lehto and Cai (2016) society is in a state of transition to an ‘experience economy’ where experiences with meaning and leading to personal growth are fundamental. These are built upon different elements including get to know the destination, the shared experience with people, the activities, the motivations and the prior experiences (Marujo, 2014). Tourists do not only want to experience the destinations, but want to experience themselves in the destinations (Bosangit *et al.*, 2015).

ficativas relacionadas com o desenvolvimento pessoal e características pessoais do turista. Implicações para a teoria/prática são discutidas.

Palavras-chave: Experiências Significativas; Madeira; Natureza; Património Cultural; Porto Santo; Turismo.

Código JEL: Z32, Z39, L83, P48

To efficiently provide services to tourists, it is important to know what psychological factors promote and affect a person decision to visit. Understanding their goals and what aspects motivate them to travel are important facets being studied by travel psychology. But beyond an economic perspective, it is important to comprehend tourists' behavior and personality to better understand and define travel behaviors (GHKAR, 2013). Simková (2014) highlights that it is curious that nowadays marketing is still one of the primarily preoccupations of tourism. Yet, marketing deprived of a full understanding of who is the tourist, his/her motivations and/or attitudes hardly promotes tourists wish to endorse in travelling. The truth is that if we do not know deeply who the person who visits is, it is difficult to successfully encourage tourism meaningful experiences. This idea of experience is a new market trend that Madeira needs to have in attention and “catch on”. Hence, the importance of this study which aims first to identify the variables being studied in Madeira tourism and secondly to explore if ‘experience’ is part of its product offers. To the best of the authors knowledge, no study has tried to do this so far. Thus, this research brings a new endeavor in the field and particularly in the study of Madeira tourism development. Therefore, in the next section we develop an overview of Madeira Island tourism, followed by a systematic literature review undertaken to identify the variables being study in this context and if the idea of ‘experience’ is being explored in Madeira. At the end, results are discussed and some conclusions drawn.

1. MADEIRA TOURISM OVERVIEW

In the 2018 annual report of the United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO]

(2018) international tourists' arrivals grew 7%, achieving a value higher than the expected 3.8% from 2010 to 2020 as estimated by the UN-WTO. This means that 1.326 million arrivals were recorded leading to more than 86 million tourists travelling to international destinations than in 2016.

The European Travel Commission [ETC] (2019a) in its first quarterly report from 2019, reported that following a solid performance of European Tourism in 2018, it is forecast a more moderate rate for 2019. ETC (2019a) stated that Portugal "broke arrival records in absolute terms early in the year" (p.4) with an increase of 6% in demand. However, in the beginning of 2017, Portugal had seen an increase of 24.9% on international arrivals compared with the same period of 2016 (ETC, 2017). In its second quarterly report from 2019 the ETC (2019b) revealed that the growth rate for European destinations is slower than the previous years. Portugal achieved in this second quarter of the year a demand of 3.4% of international arrivals.

In Madeira, in 2015, the demand for hotels had a record of 6.63 million of overnight stays (Secretaria Regional da Economia, Turismo e Cultura [SRETC], 2016). Local accommodations registered 313.000 overnight stays with a 206% increase from 2012 to 2015 and rural tourism had 79.000 overnight stays. (SRETC, 2016). In 2017 and from the last available report with statistics about Madeira tourism, overnight stays in Madeira surpassed 8.4 million, which is more 5.5% than in 2016. Local accommodations recorded 747.902 overnight stays, increasing 55.8% compared to 2016. Rural tourism in 2017 had 131.545 overnight stays, increasing 37.4% more than in 2016 (Direção Regional de Estatística da Madeira [DREM], 2018).

Tourism is responsible for 15% of Madeira regional employment and it is its principal economic industry (SRETC, 2016). The majority of Madeira airport passengers (84%) come from outside, particularly Portuguese's from the mainland, Germans, English and French. In cruise ships English and Germans are in the top visitors. November, December, March and April are the most visited months in Funchal port. May, June, July, August and September are the ones with least demand. In the last decade cruise ships in Madeira port had also a significant increase with its highest in 2012. There was a decrease from 2013 to 2014 but recovered in 2015 from 473.000 to 575.000 passengers, reaching a similar number to 2012 (581.000)

(SRETC, 2016). In 2016, Funchal port reported a total of 517.425 passengers in transit and in 2017 recorded a total of 536.142 passengers in transit. The majority came from Europe, particularly from Germany and the United Kingdom (DREM, 2018).

Madeira "is one of the oldest touristic destinations in the world" (Almeida, 2016: 146). It is considered one of the best islands and has on nature, its impressive landscapes, abundant biodiversity and general secure environment its main features (Almeida, 2016). Madeira and Porto Santo islands along with Desertas and Selvagens islands compose Madeira Archipelago, located in the Atlantic Ocean and part of Portugal. Only Madeira and Porto Santo are inhabited. Desertas and Selvagens are protected natural reserves.

Madeira Island already won several tourism awards including "Europe's Leading Island Destination" in 2013 (World Travel Awards [WTA], 2013), 2014 (WTA, 2014), 2016 (WTA, 2016a), 2017 (WTA, 2017a), 2018 (WTA, 2018a) and 2019 (WTA, 2019). It also won the "World's Leading Island Destination" in 2015 (WTA, 2015), 2016 (WTA, 2016b), 2017 (WTA, 2017b) and 2018 (WTA, 2018b).

Madeira tourism has its roots in two different periods. The first from the XV to XVIII century where it was a support for commercial navigation to the exploration of new continents. From these trips, descriptions about its geology, climate and beauty spread, leading many people from different areas to come, including medicine (Marujo, 2013). The therapeutic benefits of Madeira Island climate were divulged and it started to be recommended as a place for health treatments. Through the middle of the XIX century leisure started gaining a prominent position leading to the transition from a health island to a leisure/vacation island. During World War II Madeira tourism was affected, but with the construction of its airport in 1964 a new season of Madeira tourism started along with the construction of new infrastructures and political and social stabilization (Marujo, 2013).

Madeira offers a sub-tropical climate and a diversity of experiences. Currently, tourists have at their disposable accommodations with traditional lineups, but also modern ones. They can stay in the city or can go to a more rural area where they are in direct contact with nature. Hospitality in Madeira is renowned as are its services and products quality. Through the year it offers mild temperatures and diverse activities

not only in the mountains and its “Levadas Walks” but nautical activities such as sailing and surfing are gaining terrain. The summer brings mainly tourists from southern Europe and its New Year’s event is known for its fire-works, one of the largest in the world, attracting many at that time of the year (Machado & Almeida, 2014). Madeira set of annual animation events such as the Carnival Festival; the Flower Festival; the Atlantic Festival; the Madeira Wine Festival; the Columbus Festival; the Nature Festival and Christmas and End of the Year Festival (and many other in between) (SRETC, 2016) are likewise main features of its touristic products. Madeira annual events are a proof of the importance of aligning local history with tourism economic endeavors.

Madeira Island tourism offers are developed by diverse structures through a combination of policies, plans and actions that aim to promote the different tourism products offers. Public ones include governmental and regional entities and the private sector includes tourism animation companies, hotels and intermediates such as travel agencies (Fernandes, 2015). Performance indicators show that Madeira is, in the last decade, in a mature and consolidation period in its touristic activity which means that new creative strategies are in need to avoid the decrease of destination performance with impacts on the regional economy (SRETC, 2016).

Nature assumes a central destination product in Madeira. In all territory it is the common basis that allows to a unique experience (SRETC, 2016). Its laurel forest was even distinguished by UNESCO in 1999 as a natural world heritage site (Fernandes, 2010). Currently, nature tourism, including adventure, active and sports offers a new approach in Madeira tourism allying ‘classic tourism’ and ‘experience’ (Almeida *et al.*, 2013). There is a particular emphasis by local government in acknowledging the importance of residents as part of the touristic product. People are part of the destination offers and have an enormous impact on its differentiation (SRETC, 2016). In a study carry out by Alves, Costa and Salazar (2013) it was found that Madeira brand differentiating factors are: a) nature and natural beauty; b) good climate; c) hospitality and; d) services quality which are associated with a touristic culture of ‘well-receiving’. Its attraction goes beyond physical features embracing hospitality, sympathy and the art of the ‘well-receive’.

Regional authorities aim to affirm Madeira as a ‘must visit’ Europe destination considering: a) its nature and heritage; b) mild climate through the year; c) superior quality services; d) touristic tradition with genuine hospitality, history and culture; e) variety of sea and mountain activities; f) close and accessible to markets and; g) security (SRETC, 2016). For the period of 2017 to 2021 three major actions for Madeira tourism strategic development are already targeted: a) qualify and consolidate Madeira touristic offer; b) promote the sustainable development of tourism activity and; c) reinforce the destination position and notoriety (SRETC, 2016). Nevertheless, tourism promoters need to develop experiences that can contribute to tourists’ satisfaction and wellbeing, while those same experiences bring economic gains for the local entrepreneurs. The tourists’ travels to consume experiences. Everything they visit in a destination can be an experience being it behavioral, perceptual, cognitive, emotional, expressed or implicit. Each experience is different for each person and has a different meaning. But at the end what the tourist takes in his/her memory is the experience they lived (Marujo, 2014).

2. METHODOLOGY

The systematic literature review followed PRISMA (2009) guidelines and took place in August 2017. The Online Knowledge Library (B-On) and all databases available were used. Keywords ‘Tourism’ and ‘Madeira’ and ‘Tourism’ and ‘Porto Santo’ were applied and boolean operator ‘AND’ used for both keywords crossings. Truncation symbol ‘*’ was used with the term ‘Tourism’ to include words with the same origin. Quotation marks were used for ‘Porto Santo’ so both words were accounted in the research. Publications from 1997 to 2017, in English, Portuguese and Spanish/Castilian languages were included. These features allowed for the first search/step.

Next, the chosen inclusion criteria were: a) publications that had both keywords in the subject terms or related topics; b) publications from academic journals or dissertations/theses; c) publications that had the chosen keywords as main variables and; d) publications that used validated methodologies theoretical and/or empirical. The exclusion criteria used were: a) publications that lacked one of the keywords or

related topics; b) publications that were not from academic journals or dissertations/theses; c) publications where the main variables being study were not the chosen keywords or related to them and; d) publications with non-validated methodologies both theoretical and/or empirical.

The second step consisted of the application of inclusion criteria a) and b) through B-On. Thirdly, all references were imported to End-Note software and analyzed for duplicates. A

manual and individual review followed. Fourthly, the lasting inclusion/exclusion criteria were applied through a careful review of each title and abstract and the final sample achieved.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first search led to a total of 27.538 references and the second step resulted in a total of 47 publications (Table 1).

Table 1- Total of publications from the 1st and 2nd search terms crossings

	1 st step	2 nd step
	Tourism	Tourism
Madeira	26.714	46
Porto Santo	824	1

The references were imported to EndNote. Five duplicates were found and excluded. After a manual review five more duplicates were found/excluded that presented written errors, thus not previously acknowledged. Next, title and abstracts were analyzed leading to seven more exclusions: two publications did not

addressed Madeira as an island but as a construction material; one was a book article; one an internship report; one did not address Madeira tourism and two other consider it as a secondary variable. The final sample consisted of 30 references. Table 2 shows a timetable of publication.

Table 2-Publications from 1997 to August 2017

Date of publication	Nº of publications	References
1997-2006	0	-
2007	1	(Barros, 2007).
2008	1	(Oliveira, & Pereira, 2008).
2009	0	-
2010	4	(Almeida, 2010); (Almeida, & Correia, 2010); (Barros, & Machado, 2010); (Machado, 2010).
2011	1	(Silva, 2011).
2012	4	(Barros, 2012); (Machado, 2012); (Marujo, 2012); (Sampaio, 2012).
2013	3	(Jardim, 2013); (Machado, 2013); (Rodrigues, 2013).
2014	6	(Almeida, Correia, & Pimpão, 2014); (Barros, Gil-Alana, & Gonçalves, 2014); (Faria, 2014); (Machado, & Almeida, 2014) (Marujo, 2014); (Sousa, 2014).
2015	4	(Miguel, 2015); (Nelson, 2015); (Marujo, 2015); (Sousa, 2015).
2016	6	(Almeida, & Garrod, 2016); (Carvalho, 2016); (Rodrigues, 2016); (Fernandes, 2016); (Jesus, 2016); (Noite, 2016).
2017	0	-

A synthesis of the main results of each sample entry is presented on Table 3, followed by a reflection.

The current literature review focused on a 20-year period and it is interesting that from

1997 to 2006 not one reference was found. Since Madeira Island has a long history of tourism (Marujo, 2013) it comes as a surprise this lack of scientific research in the late 90' and 00' beginnings. The year 2014 and 2016 showed the

Table 3 - Sample overall main result(s)

Author(s), Date	Publication type	Main Result(s)
Almeida (2010)	Journal article	Factors with impact in the decision making process for Madeira rural tourists are: 1) learning opportunities; 2) family reasons; 3) classic factors (price, costs, good structures, no crow, availability); 4) stress management; 5) safety, welcome and gastronomy; 6) natural beauty and; 7) adventure.
Almeida and Correia (2010)	Journal article	Madeira tourism is entering the stagnation phase.
Almeida and Garrot (2016)	Journal article	The factors that affect choosing Madeira as a destination are generic and cross-cutting. Overall, tourists look for a combination of familiarity and novelty.
Almeida <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Journal article	Four segments centered on benefits sought by rural tourists in Madeira were found: 1) ruralist (rural activities, relaxation); 2) nature; 3) relaxation with family and friends; 4) the 'want it all' (any rural feature is important). The most attractive is the ruralist segment.
Barros (2007)	Journal article	There is a positive and significant relationship between sports and tourism in Madeira.
Barros (2012)	Journal article	There is a pattern of tourist characteristics accordingly to transportation travel type.
Barros and Machado (2010)	Journal article	The length of stay of tourists in Madeira is positively associated with age, gender, education, quality, buy wine, previous visit and German nationality. But negatively linked to British, Dutch and French nationalities and expenditure.
Barros <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Journal article	Annual Nordic tourists' arrivals in Madeira are highly persistent, but Sweden shows a slight degree of reverting behavior.
Carvalho (2016)	Dissertation	Local agencies are working to promote a cohesive and homogeneous Madeira brand to show potential visitors what the region has to offer to seniors but also for young, active people and those that enjoy aerial, land and nautical activities.
Faria (2014)	Dissertation	Estimated hotel Vidamar activity was over 14 million in December 2013.
Fernandes (2016)	Journal article	The damage caused in Madeira heritage tourism products due to heavy storms are a cause for concern as the climate change is expected to get worse. The region has much work to do to find a way to deal with the vulnerabilities of these tourism products and adjust to the outcomes of climate change.
Jardim (2013)	Dissertation	Online travel agency, MADtours, directed to young people, is an economic and financial viable business.
Jesus (2016)	Journal article	Madeira new tourism strategy is based on: mountain, sea and culture. Quality, environment, energy and sustainable development are main focuses as is a more active tourism in a link between tourism, health and sports.

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Machado (2010)	Journal article	A higher destination image of Madeira implies a higher length of stay. Older, more educated, male, British, German, Dutch and French tourists are expected to stay in Madeira for longer periods of time.
Machado (2012)	Journal article	Safety, security and risk have been underestimated by destination image research. "A strategic approach do destination management from proactive pre-crisis planning through to strategic implementation and finally evaluation and feedback" (p.50) is important.
Machado (2013)	Dissertation	Regarding competitiveness, Madeira can benefit from evidence-based methods to tourism policies development.
Machado and Almeida (2014)	Journal article	Nordic tourists are slightly attracted to Madeira as a second home destination.
Marujo (2012)	Journal article	Madeira towns value natural landscapes to attract visitors to their regions.
Marujo (2014)	Journal article	Tourists had a passive participation between 'entertainment' and 'aesthetic' experience dimensions, regarding Madeira Flower Festival.
Marujo (2015)	Journal article	The main motivation to tourists' participation in the End-of-Year event is linked to knowledge and experimentation of culture.
Miguel (2015)	Dissertation	Local business DIMA souvenirs are sought out by visitors. Quality and variety of these must be continually maintain. High satisfaction levels with the products are acknowledged by buyers.
Nelson (2015)	Journal article	Bloggers narratives from Madeira tourism experiences in "levadas" change from a tourist perspective to one of an adventurer. Tourism is potentially able to be an adventure and surpass challenges and lead to self-discovery.
Noite (2016)	Dissertation	Human resources management in Madeira hotels is increasingly being seen as important.
Oliveira and Pereira (2008)	Journal article	In choosing Madeira as a destination males value less its landscape, flora, gastronomy, cultural/heritage, fauna, Natural Park, tours, laurel forest, Funchal ecological Park, Garajau Nature Reserve, 'Rocha do Navio' Nature Reserve and birdwatching and value golf more than females. Older tourists value scenery more and less active/sports. Those with more education value "levadas" walks more than organized tours. British value climate and Portuguese extreme sports.
Rodrigues (2013)	Dissertation	It is financial viable the construction of a hostel in Madeira.
Rodrigues (2016)	Journal article	Motivations for rural tourists in Madeira are not centered only in its natural environment, but also on culture heritage.
Sampaio (2012)	Journal article	In Madeira Wine tourism the tourist global satisfaction is affected directly by their degree of wine involvement and indirectly by Madeira destination image.

Silva (2011)	Dissertation	A strategic plan for ‘Madeira Villas’ as an unique touristic and differentiated product in Madeira destination brand is lacking.
Sousa (2014)	Dissertation	The following nature tourism activities in Funchal stand out: experiencing and observing nature, “Levada Walks” and hiking, rural tourism, visiting green spaces such as gardens; wildlife observation and nature sports. The nature tourist is more educated, experienced, knowledgeable and creative and can be framed in two categories: soft and hard.
Sousa (2015)	Dissertation	Madeira town of Santana main motivation for visitors is its traditional architecture.

higher number of publications and in 2017, to date, not one was found. These results need careful interpretation since it may be due to the chosen inclusion/exclusion criteria and/or to limitations of the selected research online library. It can also be that scientific research regarding these islands is small, which leads to the need to foster it as tourism is Madeira main industry.

Comparing the number of publications between Madeira and Porto Santo, it is clear that Madeira is in the lead. Being the main island of the archipelago it is possibly the reason why the studies are more concentrated on it. Nevertheless, local authorities and government should also focus efforts in Porto Santo since it may bring new insights about its tourism which in turn can lead to a new market niche. Likewise Desertas and Selvagens as natural reserves can also have touristic potential. However, careful policies and actions need to be considered to continue its environmental preservation.

Overall, the analysis of the sample leads to some important discussions. First the importance of nature in Madeira tourism is undoubtedly. As local government stated (SRETC, 2016) nature is one of Madeira main attractions. Alves, Costa and Salazar (2013) in their study also found that nature and natural beauty is a key differentiator and Fernandes (2010) remembered that Madeira laurel forest was distinguished by UNESCO as a natural world heritage site, which puts nature in a prominent position as a fundamental part of Madeira tourism. Thus, nature is part of Madeira strategic products and one of the first key features used to promote tourism. It comes with no surprise that several studies have it as a prominent element. As examples Marujo (2012) acknowledged nature as primordial attraction, Sousa (2014) highlighted nature tourism; Nelson (2015) addressed adventure related to Madeira “Levada Walks” while, others focused in rural tourism

(Almeida *et al.*, 2014; Almeida, 2010; Rodrigues, 2016). Rural tourism is a particular highlight type of tourism which may entail an attempt to innovate as it is a segment hoped to stop or invert the tendency of destination stabilization or drop demand with the aim to maintain constant increase (Almeida, 2010). To maintain nature as an attractive feature, it is crucial to innovate. Public authorities are currently focused on a three-part strategy to Madeira tourism promotion where mountain, sea and culture are key elements (Jesus, 2016). A focus to promote an active tourism where health and sports are empathized is also being made (Jesus, 2016). As a curiosity in one of our findings tourism and sports were positively linked (Barros, 2007). If we look for the already available tourism offers, we see that sports takes as its background nature (in land and/or in sea) (SRETC, 2016). The leading status of nature leads to the necessity of its preservation. Results show the need to reflect in the consequences of vulnerabilities due to weather and climate changes that can affect Madeira tourism, as has happened before. Work is needed to preserve not only nature but also cultural heritage (Fernandes, 2016). This means that backup plans for (pre)crisis management are important (Machado, 2012).

Culture and particularly cultural heritage and tourism events are important subjects empathized by the results. Findings lead to conclude that heritage and events are a significant feature of Madeira tourism where many look to experience local cultural events as the End of the Year Festival (Marujo 2015), the Flower Festival (Marujo, 2014), or specific product offers such as Madeira wine (Sampaio, 2012) or traditional architectural heritage such as “Casas de Santana” (Sousa, 2015). Culture and heritage are also one of the key features acknowledged by government as a must see of Madeira

(SRETC, 2016) and part of its tourism strategy (Jesus, 2016).

Another finding highlights the importance of economy and marketing policies. The search for what factors differentiates Madeira when people decide to visit or what are people motivations to do it are the focus of different studies (Almeida & Garrot, 2016; Almeida *et al.*, 2014; Almeida, 2010; Marujo, 2015; Oliveira & Pereira, 2008; Rodrigues, 2016). Social-economic characteristics of the tourists such as age, education, gender and nationality (Barros & Machado, 2010; Machado, 2010) and those related to their travel choice (Barros, 2012) are too topics of discussion as is the study of specific markets such as the Nordic countries (Barros *et al.*, 2014; Machado & Almeida, 2014). A highlight is the existence of several case-studies as the main method in dissertations/theses and its majority in economy or marketing and related fields (Faria, 2014; Jardim, 2013; Machado, 2013; Miguel, 2015; Rodrigues, 2013; Silva, 2011). Services quality and hospitality are also key promoters of the island tourism (Machado & Almeida, 2014). Still the review only led to one publication that concluded that human resources management in tourism businesses (hotels) is increasingly being considered important (Noite, 2016). Accordingly, Alves, Costa and Salazar (2013) found out that hospitality and services of quality are brand differentiators of Madeira tourism. Almeida and Correia (2010) concluded that Madeira tourism is entering the stagnation phase but it may stay in the maturity stage indefinitely. Nonetheless it needs to reinvent and innovate to avoid declination. These concerns are also expressed by governmental authorities that consider crucial the need to be current but also to attract “old” and new visitors (Carvalho, 2016; Jesus, 2016).

Experience is however lacking as a research topic in Madeira tourism. It is possible to identify attempts, particularly in cultural product offers as is in the case of the many different festivals that occur throughout the year. Also, it looks like new policies are being built and a focus in brand differentiators is being made. Nature comes as an important aspect of Madeira tourism and the bet of entities in activities focused on mountain, sea and culture (Jesus, 2016) can be seen as an important step to give memorable experiences to those who visit Madeira. As Kirillova, Lehto and Cai (2016) acknowledged the idea of ‘experience economy’ means that experiences are crucial for

self-improvement. Experiences are, therefore, built by an array of elements in a destination (Marujo, 2014), meaning that a careful policy is needed to ensure that people live a meaningful and fulfilling experience. But for that it is important to make efforts to understand the tourists and how Madeira can be a place to develop this so-called ‘meaningful experiences’.

4. CONCLUSION

The idea of ‘experience’ in tourism is changing the way offers should be made and destinations promoted. In this review, the studies are still lacking to address ‘experience’ as a main variable and in a more individualistic perspective. Thus, more research is needed.

However, if experience is understood as everything that surrounds the tourist (Marujo, 2014) we have in this review a set of results that suggest that Madeira tourism is adapting to the arrival of this ‘experience economy’, particularly through its policies. The array and diversity of offers; the authorities concern with being current and the introduction of new policies/strategies can be an expression of this adaptation. Also, the importance of cultural heritage, mainly acknowledged through local festivities, can be seen as a door to “experience” Madeira. Nonetheless, the tourist is being understood mostly through social-economic and demographic factors. Little to no attention is given to the personal and psychological characteristics that led them to Madeira and/or led them to choose specific product offers. Understanding desires, what the tourists’ value and what they need to increase their wellbeing are important factors to consider to better and to customize services, to increase service excellence and to promote meaningful experiences.

If this new ‘experience economy’ is showing that personal development is important for people, studies must also be directed toward this process as offers should also acknowledge the importance of promoting personal development in their experiences that will lead to more satisfaction, more wellbeing and ultimately it may contribute to destination revisitation and positive economic outcomes. This reflection is in accordance with Simková (2014) conclusions that marketing is still the main concern. But if the tourist characteristics are not understood, attracting people to the destinations will be challenging.

Overall, this literature review found three major themes in Madeira tourism: a) nature; b)

culture/heritage and; c) economy/marketing. Beyond these the importance of ‘experience’ seems to be emerging in Madeira tourism product offers. Nevertheless, the studies with this idea as their main focus are still lacking as it is the understanding of who is the tourist following a more individualistic and personal approach.

The review had some limitations but in those suggestions for future improvement. The chosen inclusion/exclusion criteria may have been too restrictive and with that relevant publications may have been left out. Also, other keywords could have been used and despite our efforts to develop an objective analysis this type

of research leaves space for subjectivity. Future research may be improved by using inter-observer agreement reliability. Moreover, the lack of studies about Porto Santo Island tourism led results to be mostly centered in Madeira Island. In the future we suggested to develop studies that have Porto Santo as a primordial focus and also studies that consider a personal and psychological approach to the tourist. It is our belief that Madeira and Porto Santo tourism experiences must be memorable. For that products reinvention and innovation are of extreme importance as it is to consider in its design the visitors’ personalities to optimize their meaningful experiences.

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