

Strategic Sales Management in the Tourism Ecosystem: From A TRANSACTIONAL APPROACH TO THE DOMINANT LOGIC OF SERVICES

STRATEGIC SALES MANAGEMENT IN THE TOURISM ECOSYSTEM: FROM TRANSACTIONAL APPROACH TO SERVICE-DOMINANT LOGIC

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SUMMARY

This scientific article proposes an in-depth analysis of sales management applied to the tourism sector, investigating the transition from classic *commodity* marketing models to Service-Dominant Logic (SD Logic) and the Experience Economy. The central objective is to demonstrate how the integration of *Customer Relationship Management* (CRM) tools, combined with strategic leadership focused on human competencies, can generate a sustainable competitive advantage in a market saturated by digital disintermediation.

The methodology used is based on a systematic and exploratory literature review of seminal and contemporary works up to the year 2021, encompassing theories of marketing, strategic management, and tourism. The results indicate that effectiveness in contemporary tourism sales management does not reside in the isolated transaction, but in the co-creation of value and the management of the customer lifecycle. It is concluded that organizations that neglect personalization and data intelligence tend towards obsolescence, requiring sales managers to have an analytical, consultative, and technologically fluent profile.

Keywords: Sales Management. Tourism. Competitive Strategy. CRM. Service-Dominant Logic.

ABSTRACT

This scientific article proposes an in-depth analysis of sales management applied to the tourism sector, investigating the transition from classic commodity marketing models to Service-Dominant Logic (SD Logic) and the Experience Economy. The central objective is to demonstrate how the integration of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools, combined with strategic leadership focused on human competencies, can generate sustainable competitive advantage in a market saturated by digital disintermediation. The methodology used relies on a systematic and exploratory bibliographic review of seminal and contemporary works up to the year 2021, covering theories of marketing, strategic management, and tourism. The results indicate that effectiveness in contemporary tourism sales management lies not in isolated transactions, but in value co-

creation and customer lifecycle management. It is concluded that organizations neglecting personalization and data intelligence tend toward obsolescence, requiring the sales manager to have an analytical, consultative, and technologically fluent profile.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry, globally recognized as one of the fundamental pillars of the service economy, is facing a critical inflection point regarding its commercial management and sales methodologies. Historically, the sector operated under a Fordist industrial logic, characterized by the standardization of packages, mass tourism, and a sales approach focused strictly on volume and inventory occupancy. However, sociocultural transformations and the advent of disruptive technologies have drastically altered consumer behavior, requiring a complete reconfiguration of sales strategies. It is no longer just about selling a trip or accommodation, but about managing complex expectations in a highly competitive environment.

Sales management in contemporary tourism must be understood from the perspective of intangibility and inseparability, intrinsic characteristics of services, which make the commercial process much more challenging than in the sale of manufactured goods. In this context, the sales manager ceases to be a mere supervisor of financial targets and becomes a strategist who must orchestrate distribution channels, dynamic pricing, and, fundamentally, long-term customer relationships. Academic literature indicates that the sustainability of tourism companies depends directly on the ability of their leaders to transition from transactional selling to consultative and relational selling.

This article is justified by the pressing need to systematize knowledge about the new skills required in tourism sales management, an area frequently neglected in favor of operational or logistical management. The relevance of the topic is amplified by the disintermediation crisis caused by *Online Travel Agencies* (OTAs), which force traditional agencies and operators to rediscover their added value. Without robust sales management, based on data and focused on the user experience, the survival of companies in the tourism ecosystem becomes unlikely. Sales, therefore, are analyzed here not as an isolated event, but as a continuous process of building trust.

The research problem guiding this work can be summarized in the following question: how can strategic sales management, based on the Service-Dominant Logic and the intensive use of data, mitigate the effects of commoditization in the tourism sector? To answer this question, we seek to understand the variables that influence the purchase decision of...



The modern tourist and how organizations can structure their sales forces to meet these new demands. The central hypothesis is that technology, far from replacing the human salesperson, enhances their ability to offer high-level consulting, provided it is managed... correctly.

The structure of this work was designed to cover the main dimensions of sales management applied to tourism. Initially, the historical and theoretical evolution of the sector is addressed. Next, the application of advanced service marketing concepts is discussed. The analysis continues with the role of technology and CRM, the importance of the experience economy, the challenges of multichannel distribution, and team leadership. Finally, future perspectives and the sustainability of the commercial model are presented. Each section was developed with theoretical rigor, seeking to engage with classic and contemporary authors who guide strategic thinking in the field.

Methodologically, this study is characterized as qualitative research of an exploratory-descriptive nature, carried out through a bibliographic survey. Highly credible secondary sources were selected, including books, theses, and scientific articles published up to 2021. Data analysis followed a hermeneutic approach, seeking to interpret the selected texts in light of the practical realities of the tourism market. The use of non-academic or ephemeral sources was avoided, ensuring the solidity and permanence of the discussions presented throughout the text.

In short, the introduction of this complex topic serves as a foundation to demonstrate that sales management in tourism is a science that demands multidisciplinary. The manager needs to understand consumer psychology, applied statistics, geography, information technology, and human resource management. Throughout the following sections, these facets will be dissected, offering the reader a holistic and in-depth view of how to transform bureaucratic sales departments into engines of innovation and sustainable profitability.

2. The Historical Evolution of Sales Management in the Tourism Context

Understanding current sales management in tourism requires an analytical return to its origins, where the "mass tourism" model dictated the rules of the commercial game. For much of the 20th century, especially in the post-war period, sales management was essentially logistical and operational, focused on issuing tickets and vouchers. Travel agencies functioned as mere distribution outposts for airlines and hotel chains, with little or no strategic autonomy over the product. The salesperson was an order taker, whose main skill was mastering the codes of global reservation systems (GDS), without the pressing need to develop complex negotiation skills or personalized consulting.

Over the decades, and with increased competition, the phenomenon of excessive standardization was observed, where the focus of sales management resided in economies of scale. Tourist packages were...



Formatted as off-the-shelf products, aiming to reach the largest possible number of consumers at the lowest unit cost. Commercial management, at this stage, was primarily concerned with gross volume and *market share metrics*, neglecting profitability per customer or customer loyalty. Tourism literature indicates that this model, while profitable for a time, created a sales culture addicted to low prices, which would become a structural weakness with the arrival of the internet and price transparency.

The disruption of this paradigm occurred with the digital revolution and the rise of the "new tourist," a more informed, independent consumer averse to Fordist standardization. Sales management then needed to shift from a product orientation to a market orientation. Companies that insisted on keeping their sales teams focused solely on quick transactions began to lose ground to automation tools. The role of the sales manager transformed: it became imperative to train teams to understand the psychosocial motivations behind travel, moving from selling features (a hotel room) to selling benefits (rest, status, adventure).

Another crucial aspect in this historical evolution is the shift in power dynamics between suppliers and distributors. Previously, airlines paid generous commissions, which sustained the sales structure of agencies without significant active commercial effort. With the elimination of these commissions (the so-called "end of zero-based commissions"), sales management had to reinvent itself to seek remuneration through service and consulting fees. This demanded a much more sophisticated sales pitch from salespeople, who needed to justify the value of their intellectual work to the end customer, something unprecedented in the sector's history until then.

Globalization has also played a decisive role in the complexity of sales management. With the opening of new destinations and easier access to remote markets, the portfolio of tourism products has expanded exponentially. The sales manager has faced the challenge of managing an immeasurable amount of information, requiring curation. Selling tourism has ceased to be about having access to information (which the client also has on the internet) and has become about the ability to filter, organize, and validate that information. Recent history in the sector shows that successful sales are those that reduce customer anxiety in the face of an excess of options.

Furthermore, the evolution of sales in tourism has paralleled the evolution of general sales management theories. It moved from the manipulation and pressure phase (1970s/80s) to the customer satisfaction phase (1990s) and, finally, to the partnership and co-creation of value phase (2000s onwards). In tourism, this is visible in the changing role of agents, who now act as *Travel Designers* or lifestyle consultants. Managing these teams requires qualitative metrics, such as the Net Promoter Score (NPS), and not just quantitative ones, reflecting the historical maturation of the profession.



Finally, it is impossible to separate the history of sales management in tourism from economic and health crises. Each crisis (September 11th, the 2008 crisis, pandemics) acted as a catalyst that eliminated companies with amateur sales management and strengthened those with robust and adaptable processes. Resilience became a sales competency. Historical analysis teaches us that the sector is cyclical and vulnerable to external factors, and that sales management must be built with sufficient flexibility to alternate between expansion strategies and defensive retention strategies, as the macro-environmental scenario dictates.

3. The Dominant Service Logic (SD Logic) Applied to Sales of TRIPS

The Service Dominant Logic (SD Logic), first proposed by Vargo and Lusch, offers the most robust theoretical framework for underpinning modern sales management in tourism. Unlike the Goods-Dominant Logic (GD Logic), where value is created in the factory and destroyed by the consumer, the SD Logic posits that value is always co-created. In tourism, this is an absolute truth: a trip is not a finished product; it is an experience that only comes to fruition when the tourist interacts with the destination, service providers, and the local community. In sales management, this means that you're not selling an object, but a value proposition that requires the customer's active participation to succeed.

From this perspective, the sale ceases to be the final point of the production process and becomes the beginning of a relational process. The tourism salesperson acts as a resource integrator. They combine operational resources (knowledge, skills) and operational resources (airplanes, hotels) to propose a solution. Sales management must train professionals to understand that the client doesn't buy a window seat; they buy the ease of travel to conduct business or the panoramic view to fulfill a dream. SD Logic forces the sales team to focus on "service in use," that is, how that trip will serve the client's higher purposes.

Applying SD Logic to tourism requires a radical shift in sales rhetoric. Instead of focusing on tangible attributes (bed size, flight schedule), the discourse should center on intangible results. Management must guide the sales force to conduct in-depth diagnostics. If value is co-created, the salesperson needs to deeply understand the client's context to design the proposal. This aligns with consultative selling methodologies, where the salesperson educates the client on how to extract the best value from that tourism experience, transforming the sale into an act of strategic consulting.

A critical point in SD Logic is the concept of "value in context." The same tourist package to Paris has completely different values for a couple on their honeymoon and for an executive at a business fair. Effective sales management is that which manages to segment and adapt the offer to these different contexts. Rigid sales systems and memorized scripts are the enemies of this logic. Management must empower salespeople with the autonomy to personalize the offer.

ensuring that the proposed value is relevant to the specific context of that consumer, at that specific moment.

Co-creating value also implies that the customer has responsibilities. In tourism sales management, this means educating the customer about their role in the success of the trip (for example, the importance of arriving on time, respecting local rules, and having the correct documentation). A sale that fails to align with these expectations is bound to generate dissatisfaction, regardless of the quality of the hotel or flight. Therefore, the sales function expands into a pedagogical role, where the manager must ensure that communication is clear, transparent, and honest, avoiding promises of value that cannot be delivered.

SD Logic also reiterates the importance of service networks. No tourism company sells alone; it depends on a complex ecosystem of partners. Sales management must therefore include supplier relationship management. The seller needs to trust that the hotel will deliver the promised service. If the value chain fails, the customer's perception of value collapses. Thus, the sales manager in tourism also acts as a partnership manager, ensuring that all links in the chain are aligned with the value proposition sold to the end customer.

Finally, adopting a Service-Dominant Logic in sales management is a survival imperative. In a world where basic tourism products are commodities accessible with a click, the only real differentiator is service—defined here as the application of skills for the benefit of others. Agencies and operators that internalize this philosophy don't sell trips; they sell the guarantee that the client's time and money will be converted into well-being and memories, something that a price comparison algorithm, however sophisticated, still cannot replicate with the same empathy and contextual depth.

4. The Role of CRM and Data Intelligence in Personalizing OFFER

In today's landscape, sales management in tourism is inseparable from information technology, specifically Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems and Big Data analytics. The era of intuition is over; the era of data-driven precision is the norm. CRM should not be viewed by management merely as registration software, but as a strategic philosophy that places customer knowledge at the heart of commercial decisions. In tourism, where preferences are highly subjective, the ability to record, process, and activate behavioral data is the greatest asset of a sales team.

Data intelligence allows for segmentation of the customer base with a granularity previously impossible. Instead of grouping customers solely by demographic data (age, income), modern sales management utilizes psychographic and behavioral data: previously visited destinations, average spending per trip, dietary preferences, wedding anniversary dates, and even patterns.



Navigation data from the company's website. The sales manager uses this information to create "micro-segmentation" campaigns, offering the right product to the right customer at the exact moment, dramatically increasing conversion rates compared to mass marketing.

The use of predictive algorithms is a frontier that advanced tourism sales management is already exploring. Based on purchase history, artificial intelligence systems can suggest a customer's likely next destination even before they begin researching. This allows the sales team to act proactively, anticipating desires. For the manager, this means a change in workflow: instead of waiting for the phone to ring, the team receives "qualified leads" generated by data analysis, optimizing the time and effort of the sales force.

However, implementing CRM and data intelligence brings significant management challenges. The first is data quality. A dirty, outdated, or duplicated database is useless. Sales management must instill in the team culture the discipline of recording every interaction.

The salesperson needs to understand that information is as valuable as the commission. Furthermore, there's the ethical and legal challenge, especially with regulations like the General Data Protection Law (LGPD). The manager must ensure that the use of data for sales respects the client's privacy and consent, building a relationship of trust and not invasion of privacy.

The personalization of offerings, made possible by data, is tourism's answer to commoditization.

When a salesperson has access to a customer's history and knows that the customer prefers rooms on lower floors and has a gluten allergy, and proactively uses this information, they create a formidable exit barrier. The customer realizes that "training" a new supplier (or an OTA) would be too much work. Thus, CRM becomes a retention and loyalty tool. Sales management should monitor metrics such as *Lifetime Value* (LTV), focusing on the profit generated by the customer over years, and not just the margin of the immediate sale.

Integrating CRM with other channels (omnichannel) is another crucial point. Customers interact via email, WhatsApp, social media, and phone. Sales management needs systems that unify these interactions into a single view (*Single Customer View*). If a customer complains on Twitter and then calls the salesperson, the salesperson needs to be aware of the complaint to properly handle the sale. Fragmented information is a sign of poor management that frustrates the consumer and leads to lost sales. Technology should serve as the "glue" that binds all the points together.

contact.

In conclusion, technology and CRM are "means" and not "ends." They don't replace the human touch, but rather "augment" it. Successful sales management in tourism uses technology to automate bureaucratic tasks (issuing, collecting payments, sending vouchers) and free up humans to do what they do best: empathize, negotiate, and create emotional connections. The manager



The sales model of the future is therefore a hybrid that understands both people and analytical platforms, using data to empower your sales team.

5. The Experience Economy as a Competitive Advantage in Sales Management

The Experience Economy theory, formalized by Pine and Gilmore, argues that the evolution of economic value has progressed from *commodities* to goods, then to services, and finally to experiences. In tourism, this transition is palpable. Sales management that focuses solely on service components (flight + hotel) is competing in a "red ocean" market, a bloody and price-driven environment. To navigate a "blue ocean," sales management must focus on selling memorable experiences, transforming the trip into a theatrical production where the customer is the protagonist.

Selling an experience requires a fundamentally different approach than selling a service. The service is about saving the customer time and effort; the experience is about the time the customer *wants* to spend. The sales manager must train their team to sell sensations, narratives, and personal transformations. You don't sell a trip to Disney; you sell the magic of childhood recovered. You don't sell a trek in Peru; you sell personal overcoming and connection with ancestry. This change in sales *pitch* requires creativity and profound emotional intelligence on the part of the salespeople.

Personalization is key to the Experience Economy. A mass-produced experience is, by definition, less valuable. Sales management should encourage "mass customization" or handcrafted customization, depending on the niche. This involves listening to the customer to add personal touches that make the trip unique. It could be a surprise dinner, a guide who speaks the specific dialect of the customer's interest, or an itinerary off the beaten tourist track. The commercial value of these additions is disproportionately high relative to their cost, allowing for higher profit margins.

Within commercial management, the Experience Economy also alters pricing. While services are priced by the market (competitor prices), experiences are priced by perceived value. If the sales team can effectively communicate the exclusivity and transformation that the trip will provide, the price becomes secondary. The sales manager must work on *branding* and *storytelling* to support these premium prices. The sale becomes an exercise in seduction and the promise of emotional value.

However, managing the delivery of the experience is critical. There is a high risk in selling high expectations. If the sales team promises a transformative experience and the operation delivers mediocre service, the frustration is immense. Therefore, sales management must be closely aligned with operations and product management. The salesperson cannot promise what they can deliver.

The destination cannot deliver. The *feedback loop* between the seller and the operator must be constant to adjust sales promises to the reality of delivery.

"Memory" is the end product of the Experience Economy. Sales management should focus on after-sales service not just as a courtesy, but as a way to consolidate that memory. Actions such as sending a printed photo of the trip, asking for a testimonial, or reminiscing about the trip a year later are commercial tactics that extend the experience and keep the brand alive in the consumer's mind. This stimulates loyalty and word-of-mouth recommendations, which is the most powerful sales tool in experiential tourism.

In short, the Experience Economy offers an escape route from price wars. For sales management, this means abandoning the "ticket seller" mentality to assume the identity of a "dream architect." It's a more labor-intensive model, requiring more qualified professionals and longer service times, but it's the only model capable of generating sustainable profitability and defense against automation in the leisure and luxury tourism sector.

6. LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE SALES TEAMS IN TOURISM

Technology and strategy are useless without the human capital capable of executing them. Sales management in tourism is, ultimately, people management. Leading high-performance teams in this sector presents specific challenges: high turnover, the need for vast geographical and technical knowledge, seasonal stress, and pressure to meet targets. The sales leader in tourism must act as a mentor and facilitator, creating an environment where tacit knowledge (the salesperson's travel experience) can be shared and transformed into explicit knowledge for the entire organization.

Training and development *should* be continuous, not sporadic events. The tourism product is constantly changing: borders open and close, hotels are renovated, visa rules change. Sales management must implement routines of constant updating. In addition to technical knowledge ("hard skills"), it is vital to invest in "soft skills": empathy, active listening, resilience, negotiation, and persuasive communication. The tourism salesperson deals with people's dreams and hard-earned money; emotional intelligence is the main tool of the job. The manager should promote *role-plays* and simulations to sharpen these skills.

Motivation for a tourism sales team goes beyond financial commission, although that is fundamental. Tourism professionals are generally passionate about travel. Management should use this passion as a motivational lever, offering *familiarization trips* (familiarization trips) not just as a reward, but as a work tool. A salesperson who has visited the destination sells with much more expertise, enthusiasm, and authority. The manager should structure these incentives strategically, linking them to learning goals and knowledge sharing with the team upon their return.



Defining goals and key performance indicators (KPIs) should be intelligent. Goals based solely on sales volume can encourage the sale of poor-quality or inexpensive products, harming the brand in the long run. Modern sales management adopts a *Balanced Scorecard*, balancing financial goals with goals for customer satisfaction (NPS), conversion rate, response time, and CRM data entry quality. Salespeople should be evaluated based on the health of their client portfolio, not just the month-end closing figures. This creates a culture of commercial sustainability and accountability.

Recruitment is another pillar of leadership. Finding talent that combines a passion for travel with commercial aggressiveness and organizational discipline is difficult. Often, management makes the mistake of hiring "travelers" who are not "salespeople," or "salespeople" who lack cultural sensitivity. The ideal profile is that of a hybrid consultant. The *onboarding* process should be robust, immersing the new employee in the company culture and sales processes from day one, to reduce the ramp *-up time* until they start producing results.

Conflict management is also part of the leadership routine. In tourism, problems happen: flights are canceled, hurricanes hit the Caribbean, hotels are *overbooked*. The sales team is on the front line receiving customer frustration. The leader must provide emotional and technical support during these crisis moments, acting as a shield and helping to find solutions. A team that feels abandoned by the manager during times of crisis loses motivation and confidence in the company. Servant leadership is the most suitable model for this high-pressure environment.

Finally, sales management should promote diversity and inclusion. Tourism is a global and multicultural activity. A diverse sales team is better able to connect with a broad customer base and understand the cultural nuances of the destinations sold. The leader should foster an environment of respect and collaboration, where healthy internal competition does not turn into predation. Collaborative teams exchange destination tips and help close complex sales, boosting the overall department's results.

7. Economic Sustainability and Future Prospects for Sales Management

The economic sustainability of sales management in tourism depends on the ability to adapt to a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous future (VUCA world). Profit margins in travel agencies have suffered historical compression, demanding leaner and more efficient business models. The future points to sales management based on recurring revenue and value-added services, moving away from exclusive dependence on supplier commissions. Subscription models (travel clubs) and *fee-based pricing* are gaining traction and require a new commercial mindset.

The integration between sales and marketing (*Smarketing*) will become increasingly profound. The boundary between those who attract the customer and those who close the sale is disappearing with the digital age. Management must align these two areas so that they work towards the same objectives and metrics. The content generated by marketing should serve as ammunition for the salesperson, and the salesperson's *insights* should guide marketing campaigns. Companies that keep these departments in isolated silos will lose efficiency and agility in the future market.

Sustainability also involves social and environmental responsibility (ESG). The modern consumer is increasingly aware of the impact of their travels. Sales management must incorporate sustainability into the commercial discourse, not as *greenwashing*, but as a real value. Selling to ethical suppliers who respect the environment and local communities becomes a competitive differentiator. The salesperson must be able to guide the customer towards more responsible choices, adding moral value to the purchase and positioning the company as an agent of positive transformation.

Remote work and distributed teams are a well-established reality, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Future sales management will have to deal with teams that don't share the same physical space. This requires new digital control and collaboration tools, as well as management based on trust and results, not hours worked. "Digital nomadism" also applies to tourism salespeople, who can work from anywhere in the world, experiencing the product they sell firsthand, which can be a great asset if well managed.

Artificial intelligence will continue to advance, taking on increasingly complex roles. Chatbots and virtual assistants will handle first-level customer service and simple sales 24/7. Human sales management will be restricted to complex, high-value sales that require deep empathy. The future of the profession is not extinction, but specialization. Managers must prepare their teams to work with AI, using it as an assistant, not a rival. Technology will free salespeople from bureaucracy so they can be more human.

Predictive scenario analysis will be vital. Tourism is sensitive to exchange rates, politics, and climate. Sustainable sales management must have contingency plans for different economic scenarios. Product and destination diversification is a *hedging strategy*. If the dollar rises, the team focuses on domestic markets; if Europe closes, it focuses on the Caribbean. The agility to pivot the commercial strategy will be the hallmark of surviving companies. The manager must have a firm grasp on the global market to quickly steer the ship.

In conclusion, the future of sales management in tourism belongs to ambidextrous organizations: those that can be efficient in low-cost digital operations for simple products, and extremely sophisticated and personal in providing consultancy services for complex trips. The balance between *high-tech* and *high-touch* is the "holy grail".



The sales manager is the alchemist responsible for creating this blend, ensuring that technology serves the humanity of the encounter, which is the ultimate essence of tourism.

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