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TANATOLOGY: REFLECTIONS ON THE FUNERAL MARKET IN PARANÁ COAST (BRAZIL), BETWEEN THE PROFITABILITY AND THE RESPECT

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ABSTRACT

The death is a complex funeral ritual, and the phases of funeral and burial have become a farewell ceremony with the presence of the dead body, so important for those who were not at the time of the person's death. The perception about the death has shown great changes over the last few decades, and some debates that were taken as complex have gained some space in the thanatology, including studies on the funeral market, also known as the death market. In Brazil, this market generates 19 thousand jobs, and moves approximately 2 billion dollars a year, and has presented a growth rate of 8% per year. Despite the sector relevance, few studies have been done on this issue so far. In this context and in order to promote a thanatological diagnosis related to the funeral market Paraná Coast, an exploratory and descriptive study was carried out between June and December of 2018, directed at nine managers of funeral companies. The study found that the majority of respondents (n = 66%) rated the competition as non-aggressive, and that the results were satisfactory and it is only necessary to maintain the prices in the regional range as the main business strategy. The majority of the respondents (n = 77%) reported that a service offering approach was not carried out and that they expected customers to look for the company, and only from that moment on the service process began, which revealed that the strategies are respectful, ethical and non-invasive. Regarding to the analysis of the threats in the perception of the interviewees that could be limiting the development of the sector in Paraná Coast, the most cited were the business unpredictability (n = 20.01), the need for companies to seek greater professional organization in the service provision (n = 19.69) and lack of skilled labor to deal with death situations (n = 11.62). The most part of the managers interviewed (n = 86%) were classified by the Miles and Snow taxonomy with the defensive strategic positioning, and this positioning may be the result of the perceived scenario, where the high demand and low competition result in simple and less innovative strategies and especially with low-cost advertising. It was concluded that even if it is a satisfactory market, the diagnosed threats can result in unfavorable conditions for the sector development, so the improvement of management, employees training, and the correct use of strategy and marketing tools could generate greater efficiency in service, as well as the innovation could be a relevant alternative to avoid that better structured competitors from other regions could settle in the region.

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INTRODUCTION

The death is a complex funeral ritual that opens space for reflection on possible relations among death, time, space, memory, missing and the absence of the people involved in the death of a loved one. Thus, it may be considered in the context of the complex funeral ritual, the stages of what are called

funeral passage rites, besides the oblation rites, it is necessary to consider the care with the body; the funeral and burial; and the mourning, which involves the celebration rituals for the dead souls (REESINK, 2012). The rituals according to Kovács (2014) are essential to give sense and meaning to crisis situations and the death fits perfectly in this context. The funeral ritual had its origin in the need to confirm the death, when in ancient times, by the scientific condition of the period, it was difficult to recognize death and it could happen that people wake up already buried, factor that for decades was confirmed one of the greatest fears of humanity, which is to be

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buried alive. Although at the current time, the death certificate confirms the death situation, the funeral rite became in addition a body farewell ritual, very important for those who were not at the time of the person's death. The perception about the death has shown great changes over the last decades, and some debates considered as complex have gained space in the thanatology, between those according to Neves and Damo (2016), has gained significant relevance the economy studies of the sector. Kovács (2014), also reaffirms that among the debates regarding to the thanatology that has had advances in the ways of perceiving death, it is the market related to death. Funerary agents, known as death workers, have modernized the way how they provide these services and under the economic focus, the sector has had great relevance.

The debate on the funeral market may seem like morbidity (OSPINA *et al.*, 2018), but this market in Brazil according to Sicep, (2019) generates 19 thousand jobs, and for Lopes (2015) there are in Brazil, 5, 5 thousand companies related to the funeral market that moves approximately 2 billion dollars a year in almost one million of deaths, according to Lopes (2015), this market has a growth rate above to the Brazilian average of 8% per year. The people involved in the loss of a loved one, do not always have the emotional conditions to conduct the funeral ritual processes, including the burial, which makes it essential to provide funeral services efficiently and ethically (Ospina *et al.*, 2018), and often according to Neves and Damo (2016), there is almost total ignorance of the buyer about what to expect when the person gets in at the funerary, for example, doubts about what to look for, what to avoid, how much it would cost, this doubts are inherent in such delicate moments, and thus it may be that, driven only by emotion, people end up making decisions about the forms and types of services to be contracted for the funeral and burial ritual which subsequently generates financial hardship for those who lost a loved one. The cost of death is classified as high according to Neves and Damo (2016), in other countries it is the third highest expense, after a house and a car, in the life of an ordinary family. The cost varies according to the family composition in terms of income. The death in the words of Kovács (2014), reveals the differences in social classes, which are also manifested in rituals, as funerals, in the inputs, as types of dead casket with several props, in crowns as well as the burial places that vary in terms of refinement and consequently in price. It also includes the funeral homes specialized in the body care, with the ceremonial to receive the relatives and friends. Thus, according to Kovács (2014), the commercialization of death occurs with the offer of the most varied types of service and some of the professionals who provide these services earn great profits.

Nowadays there are constant changes regarding to the strategies in the funeral market, although there is still a lot of resistance and fear about this issue, the financial values generated by the sector end up defining a strong need for professionalization in this sector. Amato Neto (2000) describes that the adoption of appropriate means and methods for effective management is indispensable for the business maintenance and that these companies are being managed on the basis of the relationships among them, marked by the globalization and the restructuring that they are involved, in other words, in spite of the increasing changes that globalization demands, the companies face obstacles to remain in the market and all this process of stability requires market analysis and strategies adapted to each reality (Souza and

Qualharini, 2007). Although little approached in academic studies, the funeral market has common features like any other segment and the companies that operate in it, as according to Andrade (2012) says for success and development, managers must establish solid structures based on business strategies prepared to meet the needs of the customers with the possibility of prospecting in order to act with the competition. Kovács (2014) reports that there are few references in the literature and in the specialized scientific literature in thanatology that involves the work of funeral service professionals in relation to death, in this way, the present study aims to promote a thanatological diagnosis related to the funeral market in Paraná Coast (Brazil), seeking to answer specifically to the following issues.

- Promote a survey on the socioeconomic profile of managers associated to the sector.
- Promote a diagnosis about what are the business strategies adopted in the sector that in the perception of the interviewees are able to generate profitability and that can be classified as non-invasive.
- Promote an analysis of the factors (threats) in the perception of the interviewees that may be limiting to the development of the sector in Paraná Coast.
- Promote a classification using the Miles and Snow taxonomy, on the types of organizational strategies adopted by funeral managers and if this may have influence in the funeral market in the region.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

I was used the exploratory and descriptive research method, which sought to understand how business strategies happen in the funeral market. It was considered descriptive because the study was carried out using data collection between June and December 2018 in six cities from Paraná Coast. The kind of approach was quantitative one based on data collection techniques, where the results were presented with the perceptions and analyzes, describing the complexity of the problem and the variables interaction, which according to Neves (1996), consists in a method that seek to enumerate or measure events.

It was identified 10 (ten) managers of companies associated to the funeral market in Paraná Coast, but only 9 (nine) agreed to participate in the research, and the interview according to that proposed by Lakatos (1991) was carried out with a semi-structured questionnaire. The first stage of the study was aimed at identifying the socioeconomic data of the interviewees and later, it was carried out a survey on the threats in this sector using the perception of the managers. The threats according to Anacleto *et al.* (2017) are the factors that can compromise the success of the company or business. The threats are not always perceived by those involved, requiring analysis on the current risks that the sector may suffer. Yet according to Anacleto *et al.* (2017) the implications can be characterized as a challenge arising from a trend or an unfavorable development to the company, which can directly contribute to the loss of customers and the profits reduction. The cross-impact matrix was organized following the Anacleto *et al.* (2017) propositions, which describes the matrix as the crossing of threats among them. The matrix uses percentage values from 0 to 100 for each opinion that the interviewees shared collectively in relation to the other opinions expressed,

Table 1. Strategic categories by Miles and Snow taxonomy (1978)

Strategic Category	Description
Defensive Strategy	A company that follows this strategy seeks to have and maintain a relatively stable product/service line. Its focus is on a more limited range of products/services than its competitors and tries to protect its domain by offering better quality products, superior services, and/or lower prices. It does not seek to be among the leaders of the sector, restricting to what the company knows how to do well or better than anyone.
Prospective Strategy	A company that adopts this strategy is continually expanding its line of products/ services. It emphasizes the importance of offering new products/services in a relatively broader market area. This kind of company values being one of the first to offer new products, even if all efforts are not highly profitable.
Analytical Strategy	A company that follows this strategy tries to keep a limited line of products/ services and be relatively stable and at the same time tries to add one or more new products/ services that have been successful in other companies in the same sector. In many ways it is an intermediate position between defensive and prospective strategies.
Reactive Strategy	The company that adopts a reactive strategy shows a more inconsistent behavior than the other types. It's a kind of non-strategy. It does not risk in new products/ services unless threatened by competitors. The typical approach is "waiting and see" and respond only when forced by competitive pressures in order to avoid losing important customers and/or maintaining profitability.

Source: Miles and Snow (1978)

comparing each item analyzed in the relation of influence practiced and the influence received in the funeral market activity, in other words, the greater the index, the greater the relevance and the attention to be given to the solution to the problem suffered by the businessmen. The impact matrix generates an index of relevance (importance for the development) that can be obtained by the equation:

$$IR = \frac{FA \times FB \times 100}{\sum SF}$$

IR= Relevance Index of the evaluated situation;

FA = Index of received influence;

FB = Index of practiced influence;

$\sum SF$ = Indexes Sum (FA x FB) of all questions analyzed by the participants.

After this stage, the taxonomy classification of Miles and Snow (1978) was performed, on what was the typology in which the manager classified himself, and later based on this profile, to identify if the commercial strategies and services adopted could be classified as invasive. The managers classification by the strategic taxonomy of Miles and Snow was obtained following a pre-defined script containing 11 (eleven) questions guided according to that proposed by Conant, Mokwa and Varadarajan (1990), using face-to-face interview.

The questionnaire allowed in each question, four alternative answers that directed to the classification according to the typology proposed by Miles and Snow, namely: defensive, analytical, prospective or reactive, and the respondent could only choose an alternative, so if the funeral manager answered to the most of questions similar alternatives, the strategic classification was then defined in that class in which the interviewee was classified. According to Miles and Snow (1978), companies develop relatively stable strategic behavior patterns in the search for a good alignment of management with the environmental conditions observed by administration, and they show 4 behaviors (Table 1). After completing the data collection, strictly following what was proposed by Anacleto (2016), the interpretative analysis was adopted, using the triangulation technique of data aggregating the information obtained in the interviews, the information verified in the documents analyzed, and also in the observation of the participants during the interviews and time of stay in the funerary.

This way the data triangulation allowed the classification according to the typology proposed by Miles and Snow (1978), in relation to the diagnosis of the observed scenario.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study revealed little difference among the respondents related to the gender being 55% male, being the same percentage of managers with university education levels. The most part of the interviewees (n = 67%) revealed that they carried out previous situational analysis before the installation of their companies in the region, as well as they also stated that they are still promoting analysis in order to define their action strategies, in this same context part of the interviewees (34 %) reported that they do not carry out a situational analysis, since they consider that the competition is not aggressive, and in this context the results are satisfactory, and it is only necessary to keep the prices in the regional range. When they were questioned about which strategies were most used to keep the company on the rise in this kind of business, there was a wide variety of answers, with the most cited being the search for the business organization (n = 66%), advertisements in the region (n = 55 %), offer a variety of services (n = 50%) and especially affordable prices (n = 55%). The advertising to attract customers were similar for all surveyed establishments, with the most recurrent answers being television (n = 44%), radio (n = 33%) and social networks (n = 66%), and just one of them said that they find customers using tele-sales. The most part of the interviewees (n = 89%) reported that they had a post-service evaluation system to assess whether the service offered met the required prerequisites. The contact with clients and their families is very delicate in this segment and the majority of the respondents (n = 77%) reported that they expect that the customers look for the company, and only from this moment on begins the service process, and just one of the interviewees reported that the company seeks to make contact with customers regardless of the moment experienced. Most of the interviewees (n = 77%) reported that at the moment of offering services they promote an analysis related to the socioeconomic situation of their clients. The funeral market is described by Neves and Damo (2016), as having two distinct logics, the first one is represented by the immediate service, which is composed by funeral home, cemeteries and crematories directed to people with greater purchasing power, and the second one includes the social security system with a focus on lower income classes, so the consumption in the funeral market has a set of restrictions and constraints, a tendency supposedly contrary to what is considered the consumption itself.

Table 2. Implications (threats) in the interviewees' perception that may be limited factors to the development of the funeral market in Paraná Coast

	Threats to the sector	IR
1	Business unpredictability	20,01
2	Companies need more professional organization in order to provide the service	19,69
3	Lack of skilled labor that know how to deal with death situations	11,62
4	Lack of long-term business planning	11,18
5	Lack of humanization in competition related to customers, although competition is not explicit	9,10
6	Little variation in the service offered by the companies	8,23
7	Companies from other regions working around especially in relation to cremation	7,39
8	Inexpensive business strategies in use	6,88
9	Companies with low market differentiation	3,88
10	Use of products that damage the environment such as artificial flowers, fabrics, nylon	2,02

Table 3. Classification of strategies used by managers/owners of the funeral market in Paraná Coast according to the strategic taxonomy of Miles and Snow (1978)

Strategic typology of Miles and Snow	Frequency (%)
Reactive	11
Defensive	89

Thus, Gonzalez (2016) describes that in addition to providing services, there is a need for agility and innovation in this sector, which is consistent with the concern of not promoting a more aggressive approach in the commercial aspect, but to wait for the client, in this context, it is important to humanize and bring more affectivity to the service, using the technology and the psychology in order to create affective bonds, which can provide the formation of a good relationship with the client. The approaches to clients in Paraná Coast can be classified as non-invasive, since the most aggressive approach does not occur and the waiting for the client constitutes an ethical concept, and price is classified as the main business approach, so in this presented context, the relationship marketing, although not perceived or reported by the interviewed managers, constitutes the main approach adopted. With the marketing evolution some differentiated forms of relationship between organizations and clients have emerged, aiming to create partnerships in order to have profitability, but the objectives of all parties involved in the process must be achieved. In a very broad way McKenna (1989) says that the main focus of the relationship marketing is to integrate over time the parties involved in the relations of trade or service by providing a relationship oriented economically to the results called "win- win" where both partners have benefits, however, the customer feels satisfied with the quality of service received. Quality is defined by Gonzalez (2016), as the performance of the service with respect to the details, and with which it was assured to the clients in order to satisfy their needs.

It is a key parameter, for any sector that aims to be successful in the face to the competitiveness, and in the funeral market many times the quality is linked to raising the costs of a funeral and burial. The funeral agents according to Neves and Damo (2016), are aware that the emotional susceptibility of family members at the time of mourning favors them in the financial negotiation, but similarly to what was observed in Paraná Coast, this commercial facility is used with a balance between the economic interest of the entrepreneurs and the emotional susceptibility of those who need the services, which confirms the adoption of the relationship marketing at the moment of service. Most of the threats to the development of the sector that were reported by the interviewees are susceptible to solutions in each establishment (Table 2), and a significant portion of the implications is associated to the lack or need of investment in staff training.

The management of a company must have the knowledge about its business and how it should focus its efforts to explore a certain opportunity, in this context then arises the need for a more appropriate strategic positioning in order to mitigate the unpredictability of this segment. When analyzing the structure of a company and its strategies, it is necessary to understand that even within a specific market or environment where the organization is already established, the rules for business survival tend to fit over time and that all strategies must always respect the customer while also aiming to generate profitability for the company. Chiavenato (1999) understands that the organizational structure is the design of the organization, the assumed form to integrate its resources and strategy, it is the global plan responsible for using these resources and serving the clients. When the issue is the funeral market, strategic planning or long-term planning as well as the notion of business definition are very importance because this process is the initial step in the elaboration of all the strategies that will base the competitive advantage of the company, and for Andrade (2012), the definition of the business is directly related to the decisions made by the company in relation to the market in which it operates, always seeking for new opportunities in order to improve the company performance, but especially in the search for the professionalization of the companies. Although it is a relevant topic, the companies from Paraná Coast, according to the interviewees (n = 89%), showed little capacity related to the professional management of their enterprises, although most managers have higher education level.

Despite the majority of respondents (n = 67%) revealed that they had carried out previous situational analysis for the installation of their companies in the region, the need for professionalization when analyzed the threats of the sector is evidenced as the second item of greater relevance. Kotler (2000) said that two factors must be taken into account in mitigating the unpredictability of the sector, the first one is the deep knowledge on market and the competition using in-depth analysis systems, and the second factor is people qualification and training. Marketing analysis, management and company strategies should be common issues for managers, however, the funeral market may be a differentiated thematic area even for more experienced managers, due to the type of involvement that such area has with its clients in moments when they are traditionally taken by deep and painful feelings.

The probable explanation for the occurrence of this situation may lie in the fact that, according to the interviewees, this sector is a type of service inevitably necessary, and although competition among the companies occurs, the demand is high and the companies have limited service capacity, so all companies end up having orders for funeral and burial services. However, the high demand in relation to the small number of service establishments apparently justifies the absence of long-term business planning. Therefore, companies pay little attention to the need for advertising as instruments of business practices, traditionally adopted in more specialized areas in order to attract the attention and loyalty of their clients. The commercial structure and the strategy used by the funeral companies are currently similar to those described by Silva (2015) who said that the companies of this segment in the mid-1990s did not have professionalized markets models nor they were helped by market research for the need of the clients, since they only used the best location of their companies in order to attract customers, so they looked for the best commercial points near the hospitals, and then they would be more easily remembered. However, according to Silva (2015), in spite of the proximity, these managers acted in an ostensive manner and only had this service demand when the deaths occurred and the families looked for them to contract the services and then the terms of the contract were negotiated. Similar to what was described by Silva (2015), the companies of funeral market in Paraná Coast have similar strategies when they approach the clients, most of them uses social networks and only a smaller portion uses (n = 11%) radio and television. Although the advertisement aims the service for all socioeconomic classes found in commercial strategies, they are trivial, uncreative and they just remember the client where the company is located.

Modern society demands other ways of thinking the market, even in a delicate way as the case of the funeral market which should be considered, Gonzalez (2016), argue about the operation of these organizations in relation to the treatment with the customers and the sales, he emphasizes the need that advertising campaign should be carried out in advance in order to prepare the families in relation to their choices, increasing the information to the consumer and gaining their trust, helping them, within the precepts of the company respect and ethics. The second factor described by Kotler (2000), is about training, the funeral market in Brazil, as in the world has increased significantly, according to Gonzalez (2016), increasingly the businessmen are aware of new approaches and offer of new services to customers, and when a sector does not have skilled labor force, the company should seek better graduated professionals who can perform the function satisfactorily, but this action traditionally raises the costs of the company, even though it may be classified as decisive in the quality of service offered, it seems that the investment in the training of the agent who provides the service directly to the families has not yet been adopted. The moments that permeate the funeral and burial according to Kovács (2014), bring to people the materialization of pain and the fact of death. Some families express their feelings of pain, sadness and anger directly to funeral professionals, who often for not understanding the situation and they are not prepared to this torrent of feelings, they can hit back, thus they create embarrassing conditions, so the training and qualification are essential aspects to be considered in the formation of funeral professionals.

According to Neves and Damo (2016) there is for those closest relatives of the deceased, those who are responsible for the choice and acquisition of funeral goods and services, and the success or failure of this service tends to be appreciated by other family and friends. The limited availability of skilled labor is an important factor to be analyzed to the development of the sector, the organization will have good results if in the occurrence of errors, it has a professional trained to act in the face of the difficulty, correcting errors and not reprimanding the people involved in the failed processes, as also described by Furlong (1994), so for the organization to serve its external customer, it must first serve the internal customer. The mismatch among the employees causes problems that can result in losses in relation to the spontaneous advertising of the quality of the services provided by the company. The great majority of employees do not see the external customer, only their daily activities, and the great challenge of the company is to align the internal customers with a focus on the desires of the external customer.

The organization, according to Gonzalez (2016), should offer training to the employees to stimulate and develop the motivation in order to build a satisfactory relationship with the clients, because the search for the clients' trust is indispensable in the funeral sector, and such trust can be nurtured by maintaining a sense of respect, transparency and dedication, as well as offering a service of excellence, avoiding this way, setbacks and unexpected expenses when in the occurrence of the death. The client's approach in this segment refers to the strategic defensive typology of the company according to Miles and Snow (1978) taxonomy, which most of the managers of the surveyed companies carried out a self-assessment (n = 89%) as the profile of the defensive strategy. It was also observed that the companies that have managers with less education level, use the reactive strategy, and this position do not configure as a strategy, because it is characterized a non-strategy, where the organization only adopts corrective measures when the market or its financial situation obliges it.

Table 3. Classification of strategies used by managers/owners of the funeral market in Paraná Coast according to the strategic taxonomy of Miles and Snow (1978)

Strategic typology of Miles and Snow	Frequency (%)
Reactive	11
Defensive	89

For Miles and Snow (1978), the organizations that use this typology seek to have and maintain a stable service or product line, focusing on a more limited range of products/services than their competitors and protecting their business by offering products with better quality, more specialized services and more affordable prices, not trying to be a market leadership and being restricted to their specialties. According to Miles and Snow (1978), the companies with the defensive strategy believe in the stability of their business, having their efforts focusing on conquering and establishing their Market share, which demonstrates to be a strategy contrary of companies with prospective characteristics, so they can be characterized by being vanguard companies or even in relation to analytical companies they are characterized especially by using market research and constant analysis. The paradigm of strategic choice according to Gimenez *et al.* (1999), is associated to the organizational adaptation efficiency and it depends on the

managers' perceptions about the environmental conditions, and also on what decisions the organization will take related to these conditions. Thus, in this context, the model of analysis based on the strategic typology of Miles and Snow (1978), identifies that companies develop strategic behavior patterns which are relatively stable in the search for a good alignment with the environmental conditions observed by the administration. In this context, the adaptive efficiency of the organization depends on the perceptions of the managers, and the companies then end up assimilating in their culture the strategic typology of the manager. Thus, each strategic typology has its peculiarities and it has the power to significantly change the direction of how the problems of the adaptive cycle of the companies are approached, which can culminate in different answer times and also different types of results according to the type of strategy implemented. The decision-making processes may or may not influence how the company develops itself with its customers, which can have consequences in companies culminating in the development and success or not of its goals and objectives.

The strategic defensive typology is classified as an efficient model of adoption in the conduct of business, and it can be adapted to the current conditions in Paraná Coast, especially due to the scenario that favors this typology, where several types of suppliers such as flower shops and others are located in the same region. According to Miles and Snow (1978), in scenarios similar to this one, the defensive strategies help in maintaining its position in a market with little competition, where companies do not see the need to expand the business using great advertising campaigns, thus meeting the needs of its customers without using methods to achieve its profitability. Despite the favorable scenario, the strategic defensive typology, according to Cobra (1991), the success of an organization and its abilities to keep advantage from the others, comes from the organization business system, including costs, structure, quality of service and sales, the sum of these factors act as a necessary situation in order to obtain advantages, in which take in account the services specification. Therefore, such premises must also be considered by funeral companies, since such sector must have specific operation costs and specialized service to approach the clients and sell the products. The current scenario where processes and achievements are more complex, require that companies plan more and better, but the trends that make up the market carry unpredictability and continuous changes, which promote uncertainties in results, requiring the manager to be attentive and in the middle of the turbulence be able to understand the desires and needs of customers.

The external environment is a scenario seen with rivalry and competitiveness among companies, through this scenario it is observed strategies that formulate the costs of the segment, Anacleto (2016), describes that a new competitor that promotes a dispute in the market, can may lead to higher costs, so this can further aggravate the scarce differentiation of the products and services. An external threat often influences the income of the companies established in a region, and the dispute to conquer customers and reliability, may result that the companies that adopt this strategic typology to be subordinate to the organization power and capacity to meet new competitors, thus making this strategy to lose its efficiency. The challenge for companies of this sector, according to Lopes (2015), is to go against the daily turbulence and offer personalized services to all audiences, showing that

loss is a unique moment that deserves attention with innovative services offered by companies from other places and countries, and that could be adopted on a larger scale in the regional market. It would be interesting offer a quiet environment to receive people, a place with plants and flowers to give the feeling of calm, artificial water fountain, air-conditioned spaces, live music, slides with memorable photos of the deceased and souvenirs for the guests, and the QR Codes on the tombstones (2D code) then people could access the history of the person buried there using apps installed on smartphones. In other words, it is evident the relevance of the professionalization in this sector, and the correct and efficient use of the profession, seeking a suitable way to synthesize all the information acquired in relation to the market, enabling the strengthening of the business strategy that will help the company to create lasting sustainability based on the competitive advantage related to its competitors and to finally adequately meet the needs and desires of the customers at a such delicate time.

Final Considerations

The study revealed small difference among the respondents related to the gender, being 55% male, being the same percentage of managers with university education levels, and nonetheless significant part of the interviewees (34%) reported that they did not carry out situational analysis before the implementation of their establishments. The majority of the respondents (n = 66%) classified the competition as non-aggressive and the results of the companies were satisfactory, being only necessary to keep prices in the regional range as the main business strategy. The majority of the respondents (n = 89%) reported that they had an evaluation system after the provision of the services to assess whether the service offered met the required prerequisites.

Most of respondents (n = 77%) said that a service offering approach was not carried out and that they expected customers to look for the company, and only from that moment on the service process began, which revealed that the strategies were respectful and non-invasive. Related to the analysis of the factors (threats) in the perception of the interviewees that could be limiting to the development of the sector in Paraná Coast, the most cited as relevant were the business unpredictability (n = 20.01), the companies need more professional organization in order to better serve the client (n = 19.69) and lack of skilled labor to deal with death situations (n = 11,62). Most of the managers interviewed (n = 86%) were classified by the taxonomy of Miles and Snow with the strategic defensive positioning, since they are responsible for the service specialization and in provide an appropriate price within the regional reality. The defensive strategic positioning observed may be the result of the perceived scenario, where the high demand and low competition result in simple, little innovative and especially low-cost strategies, including in advertisement campaigns. The study reveals that even being a satisfactory market, the diagnosed threats can result in unfavorable conditions for the development of the sector, so improving management, training of employees, and the correct use of strategies and marketing tools could generate greater efficiency in order to attract the clients and retain them, as the innovation could be a relevant alternative to avoid the entrance of better structured competitors from other regions.

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