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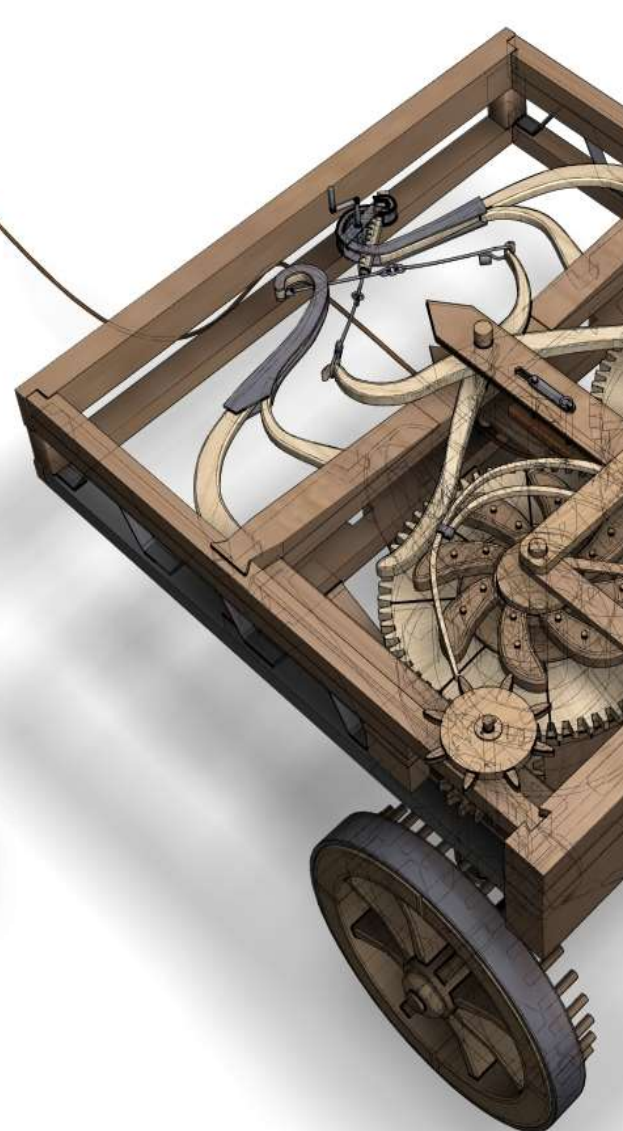
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Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism is an interdisciplinary research journal, aimed to publish articles and original research papers that should contribute to the development of both experimental and theoretical nature in the field of Environmental Management and Tourism Sciences.

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Community-Based Tourism and Stakeholder's Collaboration: Lessons between Mexico and Spain

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Abstract:

Community-based tourism is widely advocated by academics and professionals as a potential contributor to the conservation and development of a tourism destination. However, other practitioners have questioned whether sustainability goals can be achieved through this form of tourism. Of the various factors reported in the literature that hinder the success of sustainable tourism, the lack of effective collaboration among stakeholders is prominent. This study focuses on stakeholder theories and investigates the contributions of stakeholder collaborations to community-based tourism. For this research, an exploratory design was adopted, in-depth interviews with stakeholders were conducted and the websites of community-based tourism companies in both destinations, Mexico and Spain, were analysed. The results revealed the beginning towards a more local, responsible and sustainable tourism among the stakeholders of community-based tourism. However, community-based tourism in Mexico and Spain has accelerated the replication of this type of tourism, in both tour operators and larger companies, which affects the development of fair trade and the use of natural resources, neglecting communities and benefiting others interests in the tourism industry. Therefore, in remote and resource-poor destinations, the lack of community empowerment and participation jeopardizes the long-term survival of the ecosystems and the local communities themselves.

Keywords: community-based tourism, stakeholders, travel agencies, sustainability, local development, livelihood.

JEL Classification: Z32; Z30.

Introduction

Since the concept of community-based tourism (CBT) was born, governments, NGOs and tourism companies have placed considerable emphasis on this development model (Zapata 2011). The development of community-based tourism has been considered as essential for sustainable practices because of its capacity to benefit the local population while reducing tourism's negative impacts. However, in many cases, communities are not as cohesive or homogenous as one may assume, which complicates institutional and international participation in CBT projects (Farrelly 2011).

In order to re-think the development of CBT, this research proposes a new approach by focusing on the relationship between the intermediaries and the rural and isolated communities located in Mexico and Spain. The aim of this research is to determine the role intermediaries can play in the development of CBT.

Through the case study material, this research proposes a new context for the reconceptualization of community-based tourism to move towards a more sustainable approach with tourism stakeholders. In this regard, this research includes the government, residents and local development authorities as relevant CBT stakeholders for sustainable development.

Several definitions and descriptions of CBT can be found in the literature, and despite the differences between them, they all have various aspects in common, like the emphasis on conservation, education and local development. On one hand, this type of tourism has been recurrently promoted as an alternative to mass tourism, contributing to sustainable development, community empowerment and environmental conservation (Ambe, Tsi, Chi, Siri, & Tita 2010). But on the other hand, the literature claims that it lacks effective stakeholder collaborations and partnerships, and that it is characterized by inadequate stakeholder competencies (strategic, planning and operational) as well as poor governance (Diamantis 2018; Towner 2018).

Furthermore, this research highlights the important role of media influence, including both websites and social media networks, which might benefit the intermediation process for travel agencies across various markets focused on community and responsible tourism. Given that, this study suggests a broader approach to understand community-based tourism, more specifically the role intermediaries play in the development and promotion of this tourism service.

This paper presents conceptual and theoretical foundations associated with literature review on community-based tourism. The relationship between local resource management, local community and sustainable practices with the tourism stakeholders are then presented. The paper also describes the methods used to collect and analyse the data. Guided by the theoretical framework, the findings section of this study is described by elements associated with community-based tourism and the role of travel agencies in promoting sustainable practices in both countries, Mexico and Spain. The paper then discusses the findings and concludes.

1. Literature Review: Understanding the Community-Based Tourism Participation and Stakeholders Collaboration

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) asserts that sustainable tourism can be a useful tool to create opportunities for local economic diversification of poor and marginal areas without other development opportunities; to offer better labour-intensive and small-scale opportunities than any sector but agriculture; and to promote gender equality by employing a relatively high proportion of women (World Tourism Organization 2003).

Community-based tourism refers to local efforts aimed at planning, developing and managing tourism-related opportunities (Murphy 1983; Prentice 1993; Simmons 1994). Local people should be able to organize themselves and the resources in such a way that it will benefit everyone (Taylor 2017). Traditional economic activities, sociocultural characteristics and physical resources are essential elements of the local identity of the residents. For example, in 1990, Botswana approved a tourism policy that encourages the conservation of natural resources and focuses on providing local communities, mainly from rural areas, with direct and indirect benefits from tourism by promoting employment, development and tourism services (Stone 2011). Moreover, it gives communities the responsibility to manage their own resources and an opportunity to economically benefit from wildlife resources in their localities (Mbaiwa 2008). Sierra Juárez de Oaxaca is an example of the appropriation of their forests, water and tourist resources and reflects a form of empowerment and contribution to community economic and social development (Ruiz 2002). Where are located references for understanding and performance of community institutions and forms of governance of natural and cultural assets in this segment.

Indeed, the UNWTO supports tourism for economic development and poverty reduction in developing countries, emphasizing the role of micro, small and medium tourism companies, but also community-based tourism understood as a self-managed business organization by the communities (family groups, rural communities of a region, cooperatives or indigenous villages), by integrating this type of activity in a complementary to the traditional activities carried out in rural areas (Ploeg 2008). In this regard, CBT refers to an activity based on entrepreneurship where the ownership and the management of the patrimonial resources are managed by the community, with an arrangement of collective practices and solidarity participation work (Maldonado 2005).

However, CBT has been strongly criticized concerning the low economic impact in terms of jobs and income, the result of small-scale interventions, the low life expectancy after external funding ends, the monopolization of benefits by local elites, and/or the lack of business skills to make it operational (Zapata 2011).

In Latin America, Cañada and Gascón (2007) reported that CBT is treated as a marginal economic activity that generates insubstantial benefits considering the national macro-economy. In a study of a CBT project in a rural Mayan village in Yucatan (Mexico), Taylor (2017), indicates certain inconsistencies in the project assessment between the project planners and the affected community due to their different perception of success indicators.

Community-based tourism planning should not only introduce new management tools, but it should also introduce a 'language of management' and new ways of thinking (Wearing and McDonald 2002). Besides, CBT faces several challenges and constraints that hinder the participation of community-based enterprises (Stone 2011). A successful collaboration improves inter-organizational relationships, ensures wider actor participation, brings viable solutions to problems and facilitates the implementation of conjoint decisions (Wondirad *et al.* 2020). Ideally, community involvement implicates designing a tourism project so that the intended beneficiaries are at the forefront and participate in its development (Stone and Stone 2011). Tourism sustainable in economic, environmental and socio-cultural aspects also requires partnership and collaboration amongst various stakeholders (Yodsuwan and Butcher 2012). For local planning efforts to be effective and sustainable, they need to reflect the wishes, the traditions and the knowledge of the local population (William 2007).

Therefore, the participation of rural communities in tourism businesses is the main focus in the developing world for over 30 years (Stone and Stone 2011). In fact, the local population and their communities have become "the objects of development, but not the subjects" (Mitchell and Reid 2001, 114). The participatory development strategies try to create a reverse development environment working from identified and defined initiatives within the community (Taylor 2017). The collaboration is a process in which actors convene together to discuss issues of shared interest with the intention to arrive at a common ground (Bramwell and Lane 2000; Gray 1989; Jamal and Stronza 2009). Factors such as power issues, trust, interdependence, reciprocity, transparency, commitment and genuine participation often determine the outcome of stakeholder collaboration (Zapata and Hall 2012).

Specifically, tour operators are considered essential stakeholders for community -based tourism development because of their market expertise and experience (Snyman 2014). Hence, it is contended that community-based tourism enterprises (CBTEs) possess the potential to create jobs for locals, diversify the sources of livelihoods, offer additional income and facilitate the communities' empowerment, as well as contribute to conservation efforts (Sakata and Prideaux 2013).

Consequently, the stakeholder theory strongly underlines the significance of collaboration and partnership between actors for the accomplishment of common goals (Bricker and Donohoe 2015). The adoption of stakeholder theory in the current study enables the identification of the relevant CBT stakeholders, in regard with their characteristics, nature, expectations and roles in the CBT. The review of factors that determine effective stakeholder collaboration extracted from existing literature (Wondirad *et al.* 2020) features the reciprocal relationship between actors to mutually exist and thrive in the long run (Bricker and Donohoe 2015; Marzuki and Hay 2016). As a joint decision-making process among diverse stakeholders, collaboration is determined by a wide variety of factors. These factors influence the development, the progress and the results of a collaboration, which can be explained in various forms (Wondirad *et al.* 2020). Some of them are: Devising comprehensive solutions (Graci 2013); Promoting discussions, communications and negotiations among tourism stakeholders (Araujo and Bramwell 2002); and boosting trust and mutual understanding between stakeholders (Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Graci 2013).

Furthermore, recognizing the existence of collaboration limitations is crucial for stakeholders to be psychologically and mentally ready for the inevitable stalemates as the road to consensus building might be more daunting than expected (Wondirad *et al.* 2020)

Integrating these theories enables the current study to better understand the mechanisms of stakeholder analysis and consensus-building strategies taking into account the concept of sustainability. CBT communication among all represented stakeholders should be transparent and it should also represent the interests of the community as well as reflect true ownership (Mearns 2003).

In the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (article 9, section 5), the UNWTO mentions that "travel agencies will not abuse the dominant position they may occupy. They will avoid becoming transmitters of cultural and social models that are artificially imposed on the receiving communities. A will have to commit to local development, preventing an excessive repatriation of its benefits".

Given all that, this study focuses on the relationship between the travel agencies specialized in community-based tourism and the rural and isolated communities located in Mexico and Spain. Specifically, the relationship between the travel agencies and remote communities is a process which involves many actions and embraces different fields of knowledge (Wearing and McDonald 2002) for example Strengthening of community

management, consolidation of the tourist offer, positioning in the market and strengthening of governance in the communities (MINCETUR 2020).

2. Methodology

1. Case Study

According to Yin (2009), research on community-based tourism is optimal when seeking to answer the "why" and "how" certain decisions are made. Because of this, case studies have been increasingly used in tourism research (Ryan and Stewart 2009) and for this reason, in this document focuses on two countries, Mexico and Spain. Consequently, the selected travel agencies come from two countries that, although they are very different, share some elements in common, such as the importance of the tourism industry, decentralizing the high demand for sun and beach tourism, companies certified by different organizations National and international such as Rainforest and Travel Life, also have the similarity of focusing on nature, responsible and sustainable tourism in rural, isolated and indoor areas of the country. In Mexico, tourism represents 8.5% of GDP and contributes to creating jobs for millions of Mexicans, an estimation of 2.3 million direct jobs (OECD 2019). In Spain, tourism is one of the main pillars of the economy, with a contribution to the GDP of 11.7% and around 12% of all employees working in this sector (INE 202). In 2019, Spain had the second position in the UNWTO ranking of international tourist arrivals and also in the ranking of foreign exchange income for tourism. Mexico has also become a well-known tourism destination, occupying the spot number 7 in the ranking of international tourists' arrivals (Turespaña 2019; DATATUR 2020). Both countries are especially popular for the sea and sun tourism on the coastal areas. Spain is the world's leading destination for sun and sea vacations. Maspalomas-Costa Canaria and Costa Brava are currently two mature destinations in the orbit of international tourism that have contributed decisively to the consolidation of this vacation model (Perez 2015). Similarly, Mexico and the Mexican Caribbean enjoy mass sun and sea tourism, which has generated several planned tourist cities such as Cancun. Today it is one of the most popular and successful destinations (Torres and Momsen 2005). Another example of sun and sea tourism is Acapulco, involving the Mexican government for the planning of this destination (Aldape 2010).

However, the potential of tourism to be inclusive and to grow sustainably, as well as to improve local and regional development in Mexico, has a wide margin to be exploited. Yet, the sector also faces various challenges in terms of competitiveness and sustainability. The main political challenges include the need to adapt the development model of tourism to be more inclusive, to increase the economic support for small businesses and to interconnect new markets and destinations (OECD 2016). In Spain, the main challenges tourism is facing are related to improve the use of technology, encourage national demand, to increase the profitability and competitiveness of tourism companies and to adapt the product of the experiences to the new profile of travellers (Mateos and Rojas 2019; Fernández Alcantud, López Morales and Perles Ribes 2016; García Cabrera, García Soto and Gutiérrez Pérez 2019).

In both countries, the need to face the actual situation of climate change and the need to look for more sustainable forms of tourism, involving rural areas and local communities, is a reality. For example, community-based tourism is an option for economic and social development in rural Mexico, where remote areas are inhabited by indigenous people (Palomino *et al.* 2016). As a result of government action or self-managed community initiatives, there are currently 998 companies with indigenous participation dedicated to offer tourism services and activities, located in 729 towns in 27 states. They involve 414 municipalities that represent 16.82% of the 2,461 municipalities in the country (INAI 2016). Since 2011, 1,350 community companies offering alternative tourism activities in Mexico have been created, including ecotourism, rural tourism and adventure tourism. They acquired the reference of government institutions as a new means to become a productive industry while considering community-based tourism as a value of their heritage assets and to appropriate the basic natural resources (López 2013). In Spain, even though there are no indigenous communities, there are large inland areas where the economy is mainly based on agriculture, areas which usually experience population and services loss due to the lack of a diversified economy. Therefore, these areas look for economic development and community-based tourism might be a good opportunity (Gil and Bellido 2018). Proximity tourism in Spain tends to be a good alternative for close destinations as well as slow tourism, regarding a slowdown in the current pace of life and a greater enjoyment of the rich environment (Soria and Coit 2013). These case studies reflect a diversity of community-based tourism companies as well as CBTE marketing approaches in Mexico and Spain.

2. Data Collection

An exploratory qualitative approach was adopted in this research in order to achieve the aforementioned goals, as information about community-based tourism related to travel agencies is scarce (Creswell 2013; Wondirad 2020). The main goal of this research is to better understand the relationship between community-

based tourism and relevant stakeholders. Given that, several travel agencies from two different countries were interviewed. Mexico and Spain were chosen as case studies, where rural areas try to develop alternative tourism initiatives apart from the sun and sea mass tourism (Vera, Paladines and Velasco 2017).

Data collection for this study was carried out through a detailed website analysis of different travel agencies that have community-based tourism in common, both Mexican and Spanish. The key words used were: "Responsible Tourism", "Sustainable Tourism", "Ecotourism" and "Nature tourism". The results of the search are shown below, Table 1.

Table 1. Web Research of Sustainable Travel Agencies (Spain and Mexico)

Travel Agency	SP/MX	Certification	Name of Certification	Indigenous and/or vulnerable communities	Receiver / Issuer	NGO	Keywords used in the web:
AgroTravel Turismo Responsable	SP	Yes	Rainforest Alliance	Yes	Receiver / Issuer	Yes	Responsible
Nadiu Turismo responsable	SP	No	N/A	Yes	Issuer	No	Responsible
Taranna Responsable	SP	Yes	Socially Responsible Company	Yes	Issuer	Yes	Responsible, sustainable and community.
Feel by doing	SP	Yes	Biosphere Committed Entity	Yes	Receiver	Yes	Responsible community and sustainable.
Sao Viajes	SP	No	N/A	No	Receiver	No	Natural and Sustainable.
Eco Mind Travel	SP	No	N/A	Yes	Receiver / Issuer	No	Responsible and sustainable.
Creative Rural	SP	No	N/A	No	Receiver	No	Rural, Sustainable, natural.
Andara Viajes	SP	No	N/A	No	Receiver	No	Gastronomy, cultural, and rural.
Viajar Eslou	SP	No	N/A	Yes	Receiver / Issuer	Yes	Responsible and community.
Ven a Descubrir	SP	Yes	Spanish Network against sexual and child exploitation.	Yes	Issuer	Yes	Responsible and sustainable.
Alma Mochilera	SP	No	N/A	Yes	Issuer	No	Responsible, sustainable and solidarity.
Viajes Buceo	SP	No	N/A	No	Receiver / Issuer	No	Solidarity
Ponle la Cara al Turismo	SP	No	N/A	Yes	Receiver	Yes	Community, creative, solidarity.
Viajes tumaini	SP	No	N/A	Yes	Issuer	Yes	Responsible, sustainable and solidarity.
Viajes responsables	SP	Yes	Rainforest Alliance	Yes	Issuer	Yes	Responsible
Turismo Vivencial	SP	No	N/A	Yes	Receiver / Issuer	Yes	Sustainable, local and responsible tourism
Be Local Tours	SP	No	N/A	Yes	Receiver	Yes	Ecotourism and responsible.

Travel Agency	SP/MX	Certification	Name of Certification	Indigenous and/or vulnerable communities	Receiver / Issuer	NGO	Keywords used in the web:
Bwell Trip	SP	No	N/A	Yes	Receiver / Issuer	Yes	Responsible, nature and ecotourism.
Slow4	SP	No	N/A	No	Receiver	No	Sustainable, local and responsible tourism
Aethnic	SP	Yes	SWITCHMED	Si	Issuer	Yes	Community and solidarity.
Mint 57	SP	Yes	Responsible Tourism Certificate Spain	Si	Issuer	Yes	Responsible, sustainable and solidarity.
EXO TRAVEL	SP	Yes	Travel Life Certified	Si	Issuer	Yes	Responsible, sustainable and adventure.
Itinerantur	SP	Yes	ANETA Sea Natural Parks	Si	Receiver	Yes	Sustainable and solidarity.
Viajes Home World	SP	No	N/A	Si	Issuer	Yes	Fair and solidary tourism.
Genuine Spain	SP	Yes	Travel Life Certified	No	Receiver	No	Sustainable, local and responsible tourism
Kamino Tours	MX	Yes	Travel Life Certified	Si	Receiver / Issuer	No	Sustainable and local.
Sonoa Tours	MX	Yes	Travel Life Certified	No	Receiver	No	Sustainable, community and responsible tourism
Totonal	MX	Yes	Rainforest, Travel Life & ESR	Yes	Receiver	Yes	Community and sustainable.
Rutopía	MX	Yes	Cielo Mex	Yes	Receiver	Yes	Community and biocultural.
EcoTours	MX	No	N/A	Yes	Receiver / Issuer	Yes	Ecotourism, sustainable, community.
Explora Travel	MX	Yes	Rainforest Alliance	Yes	Receiver	No	Sustainable and natural.
Oaxaca Tours	MX	No	N/A	Yes	Receiver	No	Familiar, receiver and local.
Nichim Tours	MX	Yes	Badges "M"	Yes	Receiver	No	Responsible, sustainable and rural.
Paraíso Huatulco	MX	Yes	AMTAVE	No	Receiver	No	Adventure, natural and ecotourism.
El Andador	MX	No	N/A	Yes	Receiver	No	Local, community and receiver.
Tonilna Tours	MX	Yes	Badges "M"	Yes	Receiver	No	Local, community and adventure.
Tierras Mayas	MX	Yes	Trip Advisor	Yes	Receiver	Yes	Sustainable, local and responsible tourism
Pertours México	MX	Yes	Badges "M"	No	Receiver	No	Local and cultural tourism
Univers Maya	MX	No	N/A	Yes	Receiver	Yes	Responsible Tourism

Travel Agency	SP/MX	Certification	Name of Certification	Indigenous and/or vulnerable communities	Receiver / Issuer	NGO	Keywords used in the web:
Ecotura	MX	No	N/A	Yes	Receiver	Yes	Ecotourism, adventure tourism
Espíritu Aventurero	MX	No	N/A	Yes	Receiver	No	Ecotourism, gastronomic and local tourism.
Sierra Norte	MX	No	N/A	Yes	Receiver	Yes	Community based tourism, ecotourism.
México Travesías	MX	Yes	Badges "M"	Yes	Receiver	Yes	Sustainable and adventure tourism
Experturismo	MX	Yes	Sustainable Tourism	Yes	Receiver	Yes	Sustainable and adventure tourism
Nayarit Adventures	MX	No	N/A	Yes	Receiver	Yes	Ecotourism, adventure and local tourism
Aventura Mundo	MX	No	N/A	No	Receiver	Yes	Adventure and ecotourism
Viajes Chimiali	MX	Yes	Badges "M"	No	Receiver / Issuer	Yes	Sustainable and adventure tourism
Viaje por chiapas	MX	No	N/A	Yes	Receiver	No	Natural y Sustainable Tourism
Cabaña Aventuras	MX	No	N/A	Yes	Receiver	No	Natural, local and ecotourism.

Source: of the author based on sustainable travel agencies.

All travel agencies shown in table 1 work with local communities, they are all certified by a national or international organization, and they all collaborate with NGOs and use the word "community tourism" in their webs. According to official databases, in Mexico there are 6.800 travel agencies (Asociación Mexicana de Agencias de Viajes Nacional - AMAV Nacional), and in Spain there are 9.000 travel agencies (National Institute of Statistics of Spain). After a thorough review, Yet, only 12 travel agencies from Mexico and 10 from Spain meet the aforementioned criteria, which compared to the total number of registered travel agencies is a low percentage.

Four travel agencies were selected from Table 1 for further analysis, two of them based in Mexico and the other two in Spain. The decision-making for the selection of these agencies was the tourism design they handle within their packages, the national and international certifications they have, the support within different NGOs and groups within rural and isolated communities, and the similarity in the philosophy of promoting community-based tourism, which unlike the other agencies, they did mention the term "Community-based tourism" and not only "sustainable tourism", "Ecotourism" or "Responsible tourism". A comprehensive analysis of the websites and products of the selected travel agencies was conducted, as well as in-deep semi-structured interviews with their managers by using face-to-face video call zoom. The main aim of the interviews was to understand the perceptions of the participants related to the inclusion of stakeholders and the role that travel agencies might have as facilitators to community-based tourism, as well as how to create sustainable tourism experiences. The interviews were conducted between March and May 2020, where the managers were asked about the development of new community-based business, about the potential economic development of the involved communities, the relationship between the stakeholders and the local destination and about the importance of tourism sustainable certification.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section was related to the knowledge or perception travel agencies have on community-based tourism. The question "what is community-based tourism for you?" was aimed at explaining motivational stories about why to promote this type of tourism, which connection they have with both local communities and businesses, and the role the tour guide should have. Listening to each founder's previous experiences allowed them to know limitations and how to manage the economy for the benefit of the community. The second section of the questionnaire was related to operational issues, such as the travellers' profile, how packages and products are created, the role the government should play or the importance of sustainable certificates. Finally, the last section was related to the role travel agencies

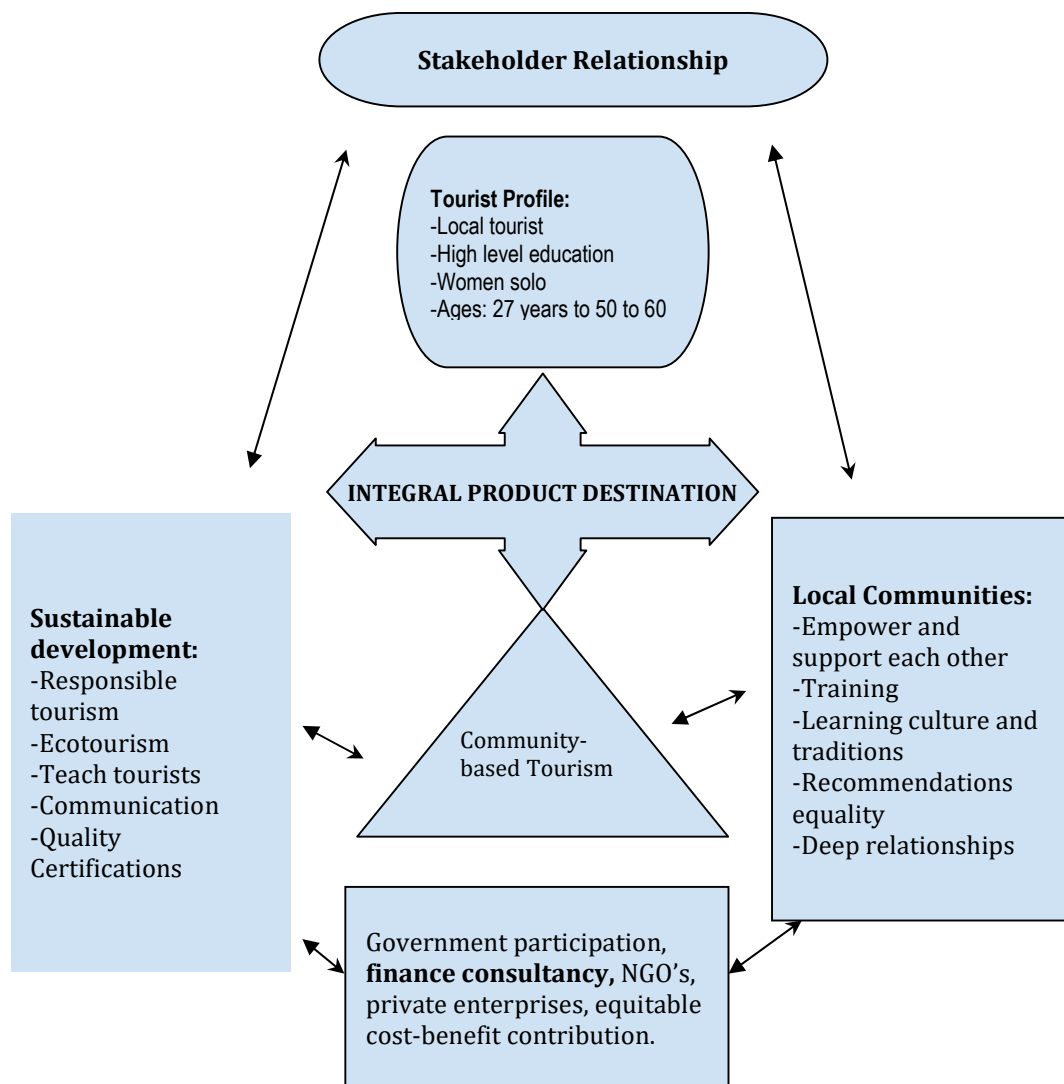
have in the protection of natural and cultural heritage of the selected destinations, including both tangible and intangible. The aim was to explore whether stakeholders became more aware of the importance of controlling the impacts of tourism activities on destinations.

The four travel agencies committed to community-based tourism are: (1) “Taranná”, which is the oldest company based in Barcelona (Spain) and which encourages responsible tourism all around the world, by promoting sustainable tourism in Spain and Costa Rica, and in different destinations in various African countries; (2) “Feel by doing”, also based in Barcelona (Spain), promotes local tourism in Catalonia ; and both (3) Rutopía and (4) Totonal are Mexican travel agencies based in Mexico City and Playa del Carmen respectively. Both agencies promote the development of indigenous communities and small producers around central and southern Mexico.

Findings and Discussion

Figure 1 summarises the main findings of this research. In general terms, results show similar perceptions of the stakeholders from both countries regarding community-based tourism. The empowerment of local communities is one of the main motivations for travel agencies to work on the development of community-based tourism. The limitations and difficulties to develop and promote the real scenario of this activity for tourism are one of the harder issues to succeed in promoting this type of tourism experience.

Figure 1. Perceptions of the stakeholders in Mexico and Spain about CBT.



Source: Authors.

The present study reveals lessons learnt from Mexico and Spain on community-based tourism. Results reveal that, despite the vast potential for the development of community-based tourism, this type of tourism in both countries is currently not the main attraction. It grows slowly and the profile of tourists is very specific, like

the tourist who prefers weekend plans, responsible, knowledgeable and demanding in the money they will invest. Most of the results show that it is important to develop a destination with a comprehensive tour package by integrating different experiences from the same destination. For example, visit Barcelona and add a day trip to taste wine in a local community or visit a farm and learn how to make cheese.

Interviewees agree that it is necessary to make a comprehensive destination product based on the participation of locals. Tourists demand to interact with locals, which add value to the visitor experience. Sonia Teruel, from Totonal in Mexico, designs the experience according to the tourists' interests. In most cases, the travel agency suggests mixed packages, combining activities with indigenous communities and the sun and beach activities as well. It is a way to open the eyes of the tourist, trying to engage different profiles of visitors and making them discover other ways of tourism.

Although this answer has consensus among all the travel agency respondents, it is also true that there is the local tourist, who does weekend excursions and only wants to visit the destination without requesting a complete package, as mentioned by Judit from Feel by Doing in Spain.

To understand community-based tourism based on the perceptions of the stakeholders from Mexico and Spain is one of the main goals of this research. Given that, the selected travel agencies consider CBT as a work philosophy, which takes care of the well-being of local communities and supports a bilateral exchange of experiences, between both residents and visitors. They also explain that CBT is much more than bringing visitors to the destination. It is a very powerful socio-economic activity for rural communities. Travel agencies offer tools to local communities to foster empowerment, such as helping them to solve and face their problems and thus, avoiding migration to other areas, cities or countries.

Most of the respondents agree on the importance of the media and social networks, and the way they can be used to promote tourism destinations, where the real benefit of community-based tourism as an experience can be shown, and not just as an adventure or volunteer activity in an isolated place.

Felisa from Taranna in Spain raised the reflection on whether tourists are aware or not of their behaviour and impacts on tourism destinations. She questions to what extent is the obligation of the travel agency to educate tourists; she said that "apart from our task, the human being has to change". Good communication and solidarity activities are a way to educate tourists and to explain where they are going. "People have the right to travel to the Mediterranean, and to go on a cruise. But what right do people have to harm the planet that belongs to everyone, communities, environmental spaces, or the sea?" (Felissa 2020). People have the right to travel but people have no right to destroy and invade. Consciousness has to change and as mentioned in the ethical code of tourism (UN, 2001), it affirms the right to tourism and freedom of tourist movement, without damaging the area visited.

The activities developed in rural communities, the difficulties to access isolated communities, the way of working with locals, the creation of tourism products and the economic distribution among the interested parties are questioned in this research. The local communities normally set the price for the activities developed in their areas and then, the travel agencies add their profit percentage. Sometimes travel agencies also make suggestions or assess the communities on how to tailor the price or on how to create experiences for tourists and what to include in the deal. For example, Sonia from Totonal said that her agreement with the local communities is based on a 10% commission, but it is not fixed. It depends on each community and experience. Some collaborators even provide their services at a cheaper price, and other community members said that "it doesn't matter, I do it for free" Diego from Rutopia mentioned.

As shown in this study, local communities ask for advice to travel agencies or associations to create tourism products in order to have access to the tourism market. "Our job is to adapt to them and they to us" - Diego from Rutopía in México. It is about empowering communities without erasing their essence, which is the most valuable.

Travel agencies usually conduct a diagnostic, listen to the community and assess their potential. Sonia from Totonal always shows her vocation for the culture and everything that is typical of the area. Judit from Feel asserted the importance of their social task as a travel agency and highlighted their strengths in developing workshops and visits for the local community.

Diego, from Rutopía in Mexico, highlights the importance of proper time management, the structure of the activity, the access to the market, the services' description on the website and the storytelling, as well as the importance of a fair price for the town.

All the interviewees agree that they are not asking for exclusivity. The goal is to empower the community and make it self-sufficient. As shown in table 1, most of the travel agencies working with responsible or community-based tourism collaborate with NGOs. In this regard, Diego from Rutopía highlights the importance of

collaborating with these associations considering the experience they have working with the host communities. Working with NGOs helps them to accelerate the process of product design and helps travel agencies to get in touch with local communities. In particular, Felisa from Taranna mentioned that in many cases NGOs assist the partnership between the travel agency and the community. At the same time, NGOs play vital roles in addressing some of the constraints of community participation by promoting the establishment of effective stakeholder collaboration (Zhuang, Lassoie and Wolf 2011, Wondirad 2020).

With reference to quality certifications and as shown in table 1, 16 out of 33 travel agencies have a sustainable certification. As it was mentioned in the literature review, sustainability certification schemes might quell criticisms of greenwashing, build corporate legitimacy and enhance corporate reputations, which give key stakeholders more confidence that firms are operating in a sustainable manner (Esparon *et al.* 2014). In general, the most common opinion is that quality certifications are necessary to structure a travel agency, to apply for awards and distinctions and to connect with the international business. In particular, the certifications mentioned in the interviews were: Travel Life for European Connections to improve environmental and social management, which include training, management, planning, reporting, and updated tools for the tourism sector; and Rainforest for the US aims at pioneering work in sustainable tourism that verifies environmental and social standards. The interviewers also mention local recognitions and distinctions in Mexico and Spain in order to promote and grant the protocols and norms to preserve the environment and destinations themselves, such as "Distintivo S" in Mexico and "Certificate of Responsible Tourism" in Spain.

Felisa, from Tarana, remarks that it is necessary to create a new sustainable certification, which should be more flexible, and which should be accepted across different countries where travel agencies operate. In general, certifications are very rigid and inflexible, and some criteria are almost impossible to achieve being a local travel agency. Yet, Sonia from Totonal and Judit from Feel by doing so agreed that the certification itself provides small economic benefits and that is not the way to attract more customers, but rather new collaborators.

Regarding the government's participation with travel agencies, Rutopia emphasised the support from different local governments to develop their project and promote the local community, like the tourism campaign of the State of Hidalgo in Mexico. On the other hand, Judith from Feel mentions the lack of support from the government for the development of tourism initiatives outside of Barcelona. She also mentions there are support groups and entrepreneurship courses, but not enough monetary support. In general, the rest of the interviewers agree that the government is not truly involved in the development of sustainable tourism, but they acknowledge that several supports are being reformed thanks to COVID 19.

Given all that, the motivations of all interviewees who create and promote community-based tourism in their country are similar. One of the questions asked was "Why promote community-based tourism? Why does an agency specialize in this activity?" All interviewees answered that question with the same motivation: to show the tourism destination through the eyes of their local people. In all cases, the travel agency started their business after travelling and meeting different communities all around the world. In the case of Taranna, the inspiration came from Costa Rica and Latin America. In the case of Judit, from Feel by doing, was after having an extraordinary experience in Senegal and similarly, Totonal and Rutopia fell in love with the indigenous villages of Mexico and the magnificence of its nature.

Conclusion

The current study has examined the perceptions and relationships between the stakeholders and the local communities. As seen in the literature review, community-based tourism is a developing-tourism activity, not challenging to define but to study as it can be approached from different perspectives. This research has also explored community-based tourism stakeholder's interactions and relationships as well as the factors affecting stakeholder collaborations to develop sustainable tourism in countries like Mexico and Spain.

The results obtained show that there are common factors that motivate the development of companies related to community-based tourism, and that there are certain difficulties to promote this activity and that there are real limitations to get sustainable certifications and distinctions.

The findings of this study also reveal that, despite the vast potential for community-based tourism, countries usually measure success in terms of economic returns and visitor arrivals instead of the net effects of tourism on the environment, local economy and community (Bien 2010; Ruhanen 2013). In developing countries, economic returns of tourism draw more attention at the cost of destinations' environmental and socio-cultural heritages (Ruhanen 2013). On one hand, the Spanish travel agencies are focused on developing local activities, workshops of traditional knowledge and on gastronomy tourism in rural destinations. On the other hand, Mexican

travel agencies focus on showing nature, the indigenous villages and the isolated communities where it is not too easy to get.

The current study offers the following theoretical contributions. By conducting an extensive literature review, this investigation has first contributed to the ongoing discussion about the travel agencies as stakeholders from two case studies, Mexico and Spain. The research findings assert that community-based tourism consistently contributes to environmental conservation, cultural revitalization and local community livelihoods improvement, in both developing and non-developing countries. Therefore, this study takes into account the views of two different worlds with two different socio-political spheres.

Community-based tourism in Mexico and Spain are experiencing a growth in this type of tourism, which in turn involves more and more tour operators and larger companies, affecting the development of fair trade and the use of natural resources. Yet, travel agencies and NGOs try to protect communities and benefit themselves as well.

In remote and resource-poor destinations, the lack of community empowerment and participation jeopardizes the long-term survival of ecosystems, which affects the preservation and promotion of local communities.

The study has employed a qualitative approach due to the lack of previous research in this field and due to the nature of the study's goals. The use of a single approach might constrain data variability, and thus compromise the reliability of the research findings.

Finally, the current study considered four stakeholder groups as a unit of observation in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder collaborations in community-based tourism, which at the same time provides the supply side perspective. With the identified factors affecting stakeholder collaborations, future researchers are advised to undertake empirical verification of these factors by using either quantitative or mixed methods. Furthermore, future research should also consider one or two types of relevant stakeholders related to tourism and achieve a more in-depth understanding of the connections between tourism stakeholder collaborations and community-based tourism.

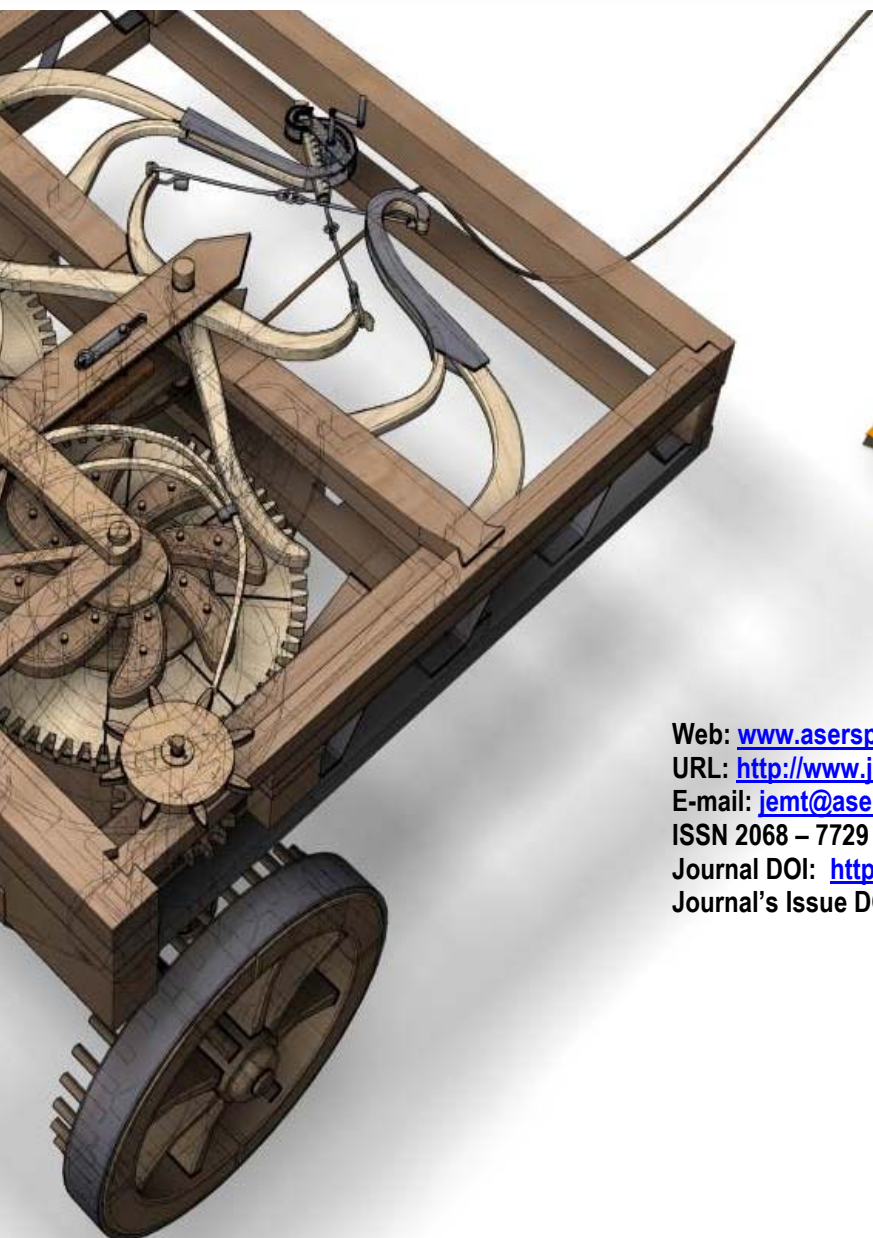
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