Research Article

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Impact factors for the development of a competitive and sustainable tourist destination. Case: Southern Sonora Region

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Abstract: Sustainability is now seen as a strategy used to encourage tourism. The objective of this research is to analyse the success factors of sustainable tourism in the southern region of the State of Sonora, Mexico. The research was carried out in 2018. The methodology used was qualitative, explanatory and non-experimental, that is, a multiple case study (Guaymas, Isla Huivulai and Alamos). It was concluded that the natural and cultural beauty, security and accessibility, as well as the environmental protection of the area were rated as important by 20% of respondents. Moreover, the business profile of the residents of a particular location with tourism potential and the accessibility of the place were rated as important by 10%. The implications of this are that as sustainable tourism projects are implemented, a variety of aspects will have to be considered in the tourism programme, also ensuring good management in order to achieve suitable conditions. In addition, governments should be encouraged to offer facilities and regulations to contribute to the improvement of these projects.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism; CSR; tourism destination; destination competitiveness; México; Sonora State.

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1 Introduction

In recent years, the search for sustainability has been a basic premise at all levels of society. Companies have been aware of the need to work towards sustainable development, a concept arising from the Brundtland report which defines it as: "The development that satisfies the needs of present generations without compromising the possibilities of future generations to satisfy their needs" (UN, 1987, p. 43). In this context, governments need to encourage sustainable projects; work towards achieving sustainability should also be supported at the academic level (Henderson, 2007). Sustainability will be achieved by the exercise of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), based on a *Triple Bottom Line* framework posited by Elkington (1997, 1998), which has three dimensions: economic, social and environmental.

This must be viewed in the context of the Commission of the European Communities (EC, 2001), in the famous *Green Paper: Promoting a European Framework for Corporate Social Responsibility*, which sees CSR as a voluntary integration by companies of social and environmental concerns into their business operations and relationships with their stakeholders. The European Commission revised this definition, declaring that companies must own their impacts on society, making explicit reference to the need for collaboration with stakeholders in order to integrate social, environmental and ethical concerns, respect for human rights and consumer concerns in their business operations and central strategy (EC, 2011).

Sustainability is linked to tourism, a source of economic, social and cultural benefit for many countries (Haven-Tang, Jones & Webb, 2007; Bernini, 2009; Carvalho, Márquez & Díaz, 2016). The contribution of tourism to sustainable development can be positive, given its interaction with both the environment and community (Saarinen, 2006).

It is important to mention that the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2019) conceptualises sustainable

tourism as tourism that fully takes into account current and future economic, social and environmental repercussions to meet the needs of visitors, industry, the environment and host communities. However, in order to have sustainable destinations and to make tourism competitive, strategies and administrations must be strengthened using the dimensions of CSR. They must consolidate and improve their skills in order to offer quality services while maintaining profitability (De la Puente, 2018).

The influence of tourism worldwide is increasing due to its impact on developing economies (Kheiri, Lajevardi, Mohsenipour Golmaghni, Fakharmesh & Sahar Mousavi, 2016). The links with the social and environmental dimensions of CSR are clear and positive (Gallardo, Sánchez & Ferraz, 2014).

In recent years, tourism has gained significance in rural areas (Sánchez-Hernández, Gallardo-Vázquez & Galán-Ladero, 2016), providing benefits including income generation and job creation, education and the promotion of local development. Rural tourism can facilitate sustainable local development, as long as natural resources and cultural heritage are protected and a proactive environmental awareness is promoted (Henderson, 2007; Gallardo *et al.*, 2014).

To the best of our knowledge, there are no studies that empirically analyse the factors for developing a competitive and sustainable tourist destination. This paper addresses that gap in the literature by analysing the economic impact in the southern region of Sonora.

The objective of this paper is to analyse the success factors of sustainable tourism in the southern region of the State of Sonora, Mexico, based on multiple case studies of tourist sites in Guaymas, Isla Huivulai and Alamos. The research has been developed during 2018 and it is both documentary and theoretical providing a framework for the development of an empirical database. Non-experimental explanatory case studies will be developed. The study concludes by demonstrating that the natural and cultural beauties, the security and accessibility of the sites, the potential market, the business profile of the residents and the ability to facilitate implementation of environmental protection programmes will be determining factors for the success of the implementation of sustainable tourism in this region. The most relevant factors will be addressed in the conclusion in order to develop a sustainable tourism project.

The paper is structured as follows: After the present introduction, the theoretical framework is presented. Next, the tourist sites which are the object of the study are described. Fourth, the methodology and the case study are presented. Next, the results of the study are analysed.

Finally, the conclusions, limitations and future research lines are presented.

2 Literature review

Currently, world tourism is experiencing significant changes influenced by the global economy, technological advances and a variety of new trends in tourist demand. Varisco and Cruz (2009) report that the tourism sector foresees not only new risks, but also opportunities, where the management of tourist destinations will have to be focused on competitiveness and sustainable development.

Within the tourism sector, the competitiveness of a destination is determined by numerous factors, among which are the geographical area or location, cost and security, as well as the effectiveness of management (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). The site interactions between tourist destinations (Carvalho *et al.*, 2016) are of interest in this context. Tourism regions can show patterns of spatial dependence and demonstrate the influence of neighbours in the performance of a tourist destination on tourism demand (Deng & Athanasopoulos, 2011; Zhang, Xu & Zhuang, 2011; Marrocu & Paci, 2011, 2013; De la Mata & Llano, 2013; Paci & Marrocu, 2014).

The tourist destinations of a region, country or continent compete with one another for a share of the tourist market, which implies that the key factors in achieving a stable relationship between the dimensions of CSR must be analysed and must be the criterion used to assess the competitiveness of a tourist destination (Knežević Cvelbar, Dwyer, Koman & Mihalič, 2016).

The concept of tourism competitiveness is so broad that there is no single and generally accepted definition. This is also due to the fact that in the tourism sector, what is marketed is a combination of tangible and intangible products and in the end, the way in which it is operated will affect the experiences of the tourists. Mazaraki, Boyko, Bosovska, Vedmid and Okhrimenko (2018) mention that the competitiveness of tourist destinations is related more to the sum of nature-based products which can generate a global experience for the visited area. Crouch and Ritchie (1999) propose that the essential issue for tourism competitiveness is the economic prosperity of its inhabitants. Given that destinations compete mainly for economic reasons in an attempt to attract the highest possible tourist expenditure, the analysis of tourism competitiveness should focus on long-term economic prosperity. This is the criterion that should be used to assess the

competitiveness of a tourist destination. Another theoretical approach to be highlighted is that of Dwyer (2008), which places emphasis on tourist prices together with the changes in exchange rates, productivity levels and tourist attractiveness. Tourist attraction has been identified as one of the variables and is part of the natural and cultural beauty of a place, and is a reason to develop tourist and recreational activities around it, which become a factor of success in a sustainable project. Thus, the first proposition is established:

Proposition 1: Effective management of tourism activity will generate competitiveness and sustainable development.

Development in the tourism sector is largely based on cultural and natural resources, tourism planning and development, as well as airport proximity, low production cost and low turnover rate (Buhalis, 1999). Han, Hsu and Lee (2009) pointed out that the implementation of CSR practices, particularly environmentally sustainable practices, can reduce the cost of operations for hotels.

However, the fact that a tourist destination has important comparative advantages does not necessarily imply that it is competitive; therefore, in order to have a competitive advantage, Alvarado and Oddone (2017) argue that the strategies implemented must be managed efficiently with the use of natural and cultural resources in a sustainable manner. Tourism service companies must implement CSR policies in order for the tourist attraction to survive in the long term.

The comparative advantages are primarily the resources that the territory has which have been configured as a tourist destination. Among them are the natural resources (beaches, mountains, climate, etc.), the socio-economic conditions (attitude of the local population towards the activity, availability of labour, etc.) and the regulations and policies used to promote tourism activity (taxation, incentives, subsidies, etc.). These are the elements that condition the starting situation and that have constituted the nucleus of the sustainable tourism development paradigm (Alvarado & Oddone, 2017). Thus, the second proposition is established:

Proposition 2: The resources of the territory and the implementation of CSR practices can generate a sustainable tourism paradigm.

In addition to generating employment and economic capacity, tourism companies carry out an activity involv-

ing historical assets, natural landscapes, monuments and places identified as world heritage (Vargas, 2007).

Interest groups play an important role in exercising pressure on tourism companies involved in the implementation of sustainable practices (Alvarado-Herrera, Bigne, Aldás-Manzano & Curras-Pérez, 2017). These *stakeholders* include tour operators, clients, employees, suppliers, government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and so on (Cheyne & Barnett, 2001). Undoubtedly, the most influential are consumers, which exert pressure, demanding companies implement sustainable measures (Ayuso, 2006; Fatma, Rahman & Khan, 2016).

These sustainable measures require efficient management of environmental aspects and can become a strength for those tourist destinations that have not yet achieved a consolidation of the economic and social aspects (Pérez, Casas, González, Pérez & Fernández, 2014). The raw material of the tourism sector is the natural and cultural heritage that a region has, which requires strengthening the adequate management aligned with sustainability and achieving the CSR of all providers of tourism services. It is assumed that the territory of a tourist destination is a space in which diverse agents interact, including business, social, environmental and public institutions (Gutiérrez & Narváez, 2017).

The development of a sustainable tourism industry must take into account the opinions of local residents and their attitudes towards the tourist destination, as this is a measure of community support for achieving adequate progress in the sector (Besculides, Lee & McCormick, 2002; Gursoy, Jurovski & Uysal, 2002; Brida, Disegna & Osti, 2014; Del Chiappa & Abbate, 2016; Hernández & Mercader, 2015). Some factors to highlight are the gender differences (Lockyer, 2012), religion (Coulter, Hermans & Parker, 2013), community attachment (Lee, Kang & Reisinger, 2010), nocturnal activity (Cardona & Sánchez-Fernández, 2017) and support for a game structure (Lockyer, 2012). Thus, the third proposition is established:

Proposition 3: A variety of interest groups contributes to the development of sustainable tourism in a community.

What determines a tourist's choice is their understanding of the destination, which will be affected by adequate advertisements and experiences of other tourists, knowledge and awareness of the site (Tasci, Gartner & Cavusgil, 2007). Konecnik and Gartner (2007) studied the destination image to measure the value of the Slovenian brand between German and Croatian tourists. Its objective was to offer a target brand value and test whether the components of the brand are a valid measure (components

such as awareness, destination image, quality destination and destination loyalty). In this way, tourists, knowing a brand, create their own images of that destination. These images are composed of four dimensions: knowledge of the destination brand, image of the destination, destination experience and destination loyalty (Chen & Chen, 2010; Kheiri *et al.*, 2016).

Another issue of interest to consider would be the threats derived from issues such as terrorism, organised crime, pandemic diseases, economic crises and other events that could be happening and consequently threatening tourism in a particular destination, constituting a risk to the tourist (Chen, Chen & Lee, 2009; Fuchs & Reichel, 2011; Kozak, Crotts & Law, 2007; Hajibaba, Gretzel, Leisch & Dolnicar, 2015; Osland, Mackoy & McCormick, 2017). Fischhoff, De Bruin, Perrin and Downs (2004) found that the inclinations of tourists to travel to a destination are strongly conditioned by whether the site location and safety risk estimate is above or below one's risk tolerance threshold. When considering personal risks, Hajibaba *et al.* (2015), found that they can be physical, financial, health related and social. Thus, the fourth proposition is established:

Proposition 4: The characteristics of the destination will condition any sustainable tourism project.

3 Guaymas, Huivulai Island and Alamos

Guaymas, Alamos, and Isla Huivulai were selected because of their tourist potential. Unfortunately, these regions do not have public policies that promote competitive and sustainable tourism. There is a lack of field knowledge that would encourage conditions which could boost tourism. Therefore, this study analyses these cases, in order to highlight the importance of the context and identify relevant factors in hopes of motivating a greater concern on the part of relevant governments for the promotion of tourism in these areas.

3.1 Guaymas

Guaymas is an important port in the Sea of Cortéz, located in Sonora. Initially, it was developed as a fishing port. Today, it is used for the import and export of a variety of products and minerals. Maquiladoras generate a very important economic stimulus for the region. Its natural

and cultural characteristics have encouraged the development of tourist activity, which has become one of the most important economic activities of the town.

Guaymas is located 135 km south of Hermosillo, the capital of the State of Sonora, and is the sixth most populous city in the state. The municipality of Guaymas has a town called San Carlos, where most of the important tourist development is concentrated. One of the most important attractions is the desert shore affording visitors a variety of recreational activities, such as beach activities, enjoyment of the landscape and sunsets, sport fishing, scuba diving, ecotourism, adventure tourism and destination weddings. The port's history provides cultural attractions, which have been developed to generate an influx of tourists and subsequent economic benefits, for example, the carnival.

Guaymas' supporting infrastructure includes well-established two- to four-star hotels, rental condominiums, restaurants, evening entertainment centres, a dolphinarium, and adventure tourism and ecotourism services. There is also an international airport currently serving only private planes.

3.2 Isla Huivulai

Isla Huivulai is located in the Sea of Cortéz and is part of the flora and fauna protection area called Islands of the Gulf of California, and is located 45 km from Ciudad Obregón, Sonora, part of the municipality of Benito Juárez, where remnants of the indigenous Mayan culture can still be found. There is, however, no tourist infrastructure, as it is an island of desert dunes.

One of the fundamental attractions which are of great ecological importance is an upwelling of fresh water 97 m deep, which has fed a desert oasis where date palms and wildlife take refuge. This oasis has become a tourist destination; but due to its environmental fragility, a project of sustainable tourism and integral management is crucial in order to protect the island.

3.3 Alamos

The town of Álamos was founded in the 17th century when silver was discovered and mining was developed. This town is also known as the "City of the Portals" and has been decreed by the Mexican government's tourism authorities as a "Pueblo Magico" or "Magic Town", a distinction given to towns that meet the criteria that promote tourism and the conservation of cultural values. In the

17th century, Álamos was socially and politically one of the most important regions in the northwest of the country, witnessing various armed conflicts such as the Battle of Alamos in 1865 and the Civil War of 1866. This history has encouraged visitors from southern Sonora to visit Álamos, since it is also the birthplace of Maria Felix, one of the most important actresses in the golden age of Mexican films.

Currently, the town of Álamos can provide lodging, restaurants with typical regional food and tour guides. Every year, Álamos celebrates a cultural festival in honour of Alfonso Ortiz Tirado, the lyrical ambassador of Mexican song.

The village is located in the centre of the Sierra of Alamos Chuhuajqui River, Protected Natural Area of Flora and Fauna. This has allowed the development of sustainable tourism projects that include both the protection of the environment and the social development of the region.

4 Methodology

The literature review has provided some theoretical models (Table 1), which have been used as a reference for determining the success factors in the sites selected for this study. In the determination of success factors of a sustainable tourism project, the Systemic Competitiveness Model of Esser, Hillebrand, Messner and Meyer-Stamer (1996) was taken as a final reference. The model's definition is the product of the complex and dynamic interaction between four economic and social levels of a national system: the micro level of companies, which simultaneously seeks efficiency, quality, flexibility and speed of reaction, many of them articulated in networks of mutual collaboration; the meso level corresponding to the state and the social actors that develop specific support policies, encourage the formation of structures and articulate learning processes at the level of society; the macro level that exerts pressure on companies through performance demands; and, finally, the meta level that is structured with solid basic patterns of legal, political and economic organisation, sufficient social capacity for organisation and integration and capacity of the actors for strategic integration.

The research methodology used is based on multiple case studies. Meredith (1998) and Voss, Tskiriktsis and Frohlich (2002) argued that this approach is useful in the construction and development of new theories and ideas and allows rigorous and holistic research, particularly as a method to examine issues of "how" and "why" (Yin,

2003). The objective is to collect data through a variety of techniques, depending on the resources available to the researcher; techniques such as interviews, workshops and observations are used with the purpose of developing detailed information about a single case or a small number of related cases (Yin, 2003).

The design of our research was non-experimental, since no variables were manipulated and there was no level of measurement, which allowed explanation from a theoretical and exploratory context of place, the factor that influences the success of a sustainable tourism project. Therefore, in the case study, no situations were built, but the phenomenon was studied and its existing actions were reviewed. This was accomplished in several phases that are explained below:

- In the first phase, occurrences of the determining factors for each case were verified in relation to the success of a sustainable tourism project. In order to determine the success factors of a sustainable tourism project, the success concept was related to its competitiveness. For that, a matrix of perceptions was built, in order to analyse the occurrence of each factor in the three cases under investigation.
- In the second phase, a thorough review of the sustainable tourism literature, CSR and the relationship of success and competitiveness of a tourism project was carried out.
- In the third phase, the places were selected for observation using subjective perception to describe and categorise the impact factors involved in the success of the sustainable tourism project. The methodology consists of a place review based on the variables. This review will take place over a period of 15 days, evaluating the places through a checklist over three holiday periods, giving a total of 45 days of evaluation. These cases were selected based on the following characteristics: tourist influx, natural and cultural characteristics, touristic offerings and marketing of tourist products. The first place to be evaluated in a 45-day period was Guaymas, where the factors were evaluated during Holy Week (spring), summer and winter for a total of 45 days; the second was Alamos, where the factors were evaluated during Holy Week and winter for a total of 30 days primarily on weekends; Isla Huivulai was the third place to be evaluated, which was carried out during a period of 30 days during Holy Week and summer.
- In the fourth phase, a *matrix of perception* was used to determine and assess each of the success factors of a sustainable tourism project. This matrix was formed by six impact factors suggested in the literature asking

subjects to give each a binary value of 1 or 0 in order to code the so-called perception matrix.

- The fifth phase consisted of the development of a *panel of experts* made up of 12 members, representing the sectors directly or indirectly involved in the development and execution of tourism projects as follows: 2 representatives of the private initiative of the tourism sector, 4 represented by administrators and tourism offices of the Federal and State governments, 2 academics with expertise in tourism or a related area, 2 administrators of Natural Protected Areas (NPA) and 2 researchers in tourism.

5 Results

Starting from the theoretical models (Table 1), in the first survey conducted in the tourist places, the success factors of each tourism project were determined and based on the review of the literature were categorised as follows: *natural beauties and cultural, security in place, accessibility to the site, accessibility to the potential market, business profile and protection of the environment*.

From the theory, Porter (1991) supports Proposition 1, based on its competitive advantage model. In the same way, Crouch and Ritchie (1999) and Hassan (2000) contemplate the competitiveness derived from tourist activities. More currently, Dwyer and Kim (2001) raised a new proposal of a competitive model of tourist destinations as well as Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto (2005). With the

Table 1: Theoretical models

Year	Authors	Input
1991	Porter	“Competitive Advantage” Model, it is emphasised that the conditions of the economic sector determine the competitive advantage
1999	Crouch and Ritchie	Competitiveness model of tourist destinations. In this model, the security and accessibility to the place are determining factors in a tourist destination for its competitiveness
2000	Hassan	Conservation of the environment in the competitiveness of tourist markets
2001	Dwyer and Kim	Restructuring the model of Crouch and Ritchie (1999). It is mentioned that natural and cultural resources are the primary sources for the development of a tourist destination
2003	Dwyer and Kim	New proposal of a competitive model of tourist destinations. In this model, the accessibility to a potential market can be rescued as a factor of success in the management of tourist destinations
2003	Huybers and Bennett	Sustainability as a factor of tourism competitiveness measured by profitability
2005	Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto	They created a competitiveness model of tourist destinations at the University of Nottingham and created the World Travel Council
2005	Fyall and Garrod	Tourism trend towards an efficiency approach
2007	Zhang and Jensen	Competitive advantage factors: conglomerates, tourist attractions , quality of services, status of infrastructure and tourism resources , conservation of the environment , perceived value and prices
2007	Claver, Molina and Pereira	The hotel trade is the one that should boost the competitiveness of the tourist destination. Here you can determine that the business profile is decisive in the successful management of a sustainable tourism project.
2010	Ritchie and Crouch	Tourism Destination Management Model: Leadership, management, policies and strategies are implemented. The business profile is highlighted as a determining factor in all tourism management
2013	Chen and Phou	Differentiation of the destination as a source of competitiveness and market loyalty

Source: The authors (2018).

support of all these authors, we can affirm that, from the point of view of academic literature, the management of tourism activity will generate competitiveness and sustainable development, as we proposed.

5.1 Perception matrix

After having categorised each of the factors that impact on the success of a sustainable tourism project, and based on the characteristics of each evaluated place, it is determined which factor gives greater importance to each of the reviewed places, building the following matrix of perceptions (Table 2).

The perception matrix exposes the set of factors of the territory that have determined the success of a project. At the same time, a series of measures related to the implementation of CSR in the destinations are observed. All of them reach average (2) and high (3) values in all cases. In order to reach the maximum values in all cases, it would be necessary to work on improving the security in the place and the environmental protection in the case of Alamos. In turn, the accessibility to the place, in the case of Guaymas, should be improved.

From a global point of view, each of the cases analysed reaches high compliance values (4, 5 and 6). With this, we can affirm that the territory resources and the implementation of CSR practices could generate a sustainable tourism paradigm, which means supporting Proposition 2. At the same time, we can affirm that the characteristics of the destination condition any sustainable tourism project, supporting Proposition 4. The fact of obtaining global scores of 4, 5 and 6 for each of the three cases indicates that the behaviour of the destinations is very similar. We cannot forget that it is the same geographical area,

with similar natural and cultural contexts, which will determine a very similar perception by users.

5.2 Panel with experts

Subsequently, having a result of the success factors in a sustainable tourism project through the literary review and case, a panel with tourism experts is made, whose results are presented in the following tables. First, we can observe the results obtained from the survey carried out to visitors at each place, in percentage of importance according to the perception of the visitor in each site.

The value perception in Guaymas indicates high scores (25%) for the importance of natural and cultural beauties and the security in the place. Then, 20% is attrib-

Table 3: Perception value of Guaymas

Factor	Value in percentage
Natural and cultural beauties	25
Security in the place	25
Environmental protection	20
Accessibility to the potential market	10
Accessibility to the place	15
Company profile	5
Total 100	

Note: Twenty percent corresponds to the fundamental factors for the success of a sustainable tourism project; 10% corresponds to the factors that can be worked for compliance through the same sustainable tourism project.

Table 2: Perception matrix

Case	Natural and cultural beauties	Security in the place	Accessibility to the place	Accessibility to the potential market	Company profile	Environmental protection	Total perception
Guaymas	1	1	0	1	1	1	5
Huivulai Island	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Alamos	1	0	1	1	1	0	4
Total	3	2	2	3	3	2	
1 = Value							
0 = Non-value							

Source: The authors (2018).

uted to environmental protection. Moreover, a 15% score is for accessibility to the place, followed by accessibility to the potential market (10%) and, finally, a low score of 5% for the company profile (Table 3).

In Alamos, the value perception indicates the highest scores (25%) for the importance of natural and cultural beauties, environmental protection and accessibility to the place. Then, 15% is attributed to security in the place. And, finally, a low score of 5% is assigned to accessibility to the place and the company profile (Table 4).

In Huivulai Island, the value perception indicates the highest scores (25%) for environmental protection and accessibility to the place. Then, 20% is attributed to the importance of natural and cultural beauties. Moreover, a score of 10% is considered for security in the place, acces-

sibility to the potential market and the company profile (Table 5).

In an aggregate way, the overall results of the expert panel perceptions are presented in Table 6.

The panel of experts offers very similar assessments to the different factors. Globally, all of them score the importance of natural and cultural beauties, security in the place, environmental protection and accessibility to the potential market with 20%. However, the score drops to 10% for accessibility to the place and the company profile. We believe that the experts' opinions are very valuable as they are based on personal and other contributions from the interest groups with which they have been related. In this sense, the active participation of each of the actors involved in the tourism sector is essential, since in the operation of tourism services, it is the empirical knowledge that predominates and from this approach, decisions are taken daily in order to seek competitiveness and sustainability of the sector. Moreover, these authors are the end users of tourism and their perception of the factors is decisive for their justification. This way, we can affirm that the role of interest groups contributes to the development of sustainable tourism in the community, so that proposed Proposition 4 is supported.

6 Discussion

Our intention has been to analyse the success factors of sustainable tourism in the southern region of the State of Sonora (Mexico). Given the high values of the perceptions analysed, we can deduce that the influence of sustaina-

Table 4: Perception value of Alamos

Factor	Value in percentage
Natural and cultural beauties	25
Security in the place	15
Environmental protection	25
Accessibility to the potential market	5
Accessibility to the place	25
Company profile	5
Total 100	

Note: Twenty percent corresponds to the fundamental factors for the success of a sustainable tourism project; 10% corresponds to the factors that can be worked for compliance through the same sustainable tourism project.

Table 5: Perception value of Huivulai Island

Factor	Value in percentage
Natural and cultural beauties	20
Security in the place	10
Environmental protection	25
Accessibility to the potential market	10
Accessibility to the place	25
Company profile	10
Total 100	

Note: Twenty percent corresponds to the fundamental factors for the success of a sustainable tourism project; 10% corresponds to the factors that can be worked for compliance through the same sustainable tourism project.

Table 6: Global perception value of the panel of experts

Factor	Value in percentage
Natural and cultural beauties	20
Security in the place	20
Environmental protection	20
Accessibility to the potential market	20
Accessibility to the place	10
Company profile	10
Total 100	

Note: Twenty percent corresponds to the fundamental factors for the success of a sustainable tourism project; 10% corresponds to the factors that can be worked for compliance through the same sustainable tourism project.
Source: The authors (2018).

ble tourism in these analysed areas will cause improvement in the development of the economy (Kheiri et al., 2016). At the same time, we have linked the perceptions derived from the expert panel with the influence that interest groups have for them, focusing on the social and environmental dimension of CSR (Gallardo, Sánchez & Ferraz, 2014). This study shows numerous opportunities for sustainable tourism, given the high values derived from the qualitative study in the Sonora area, highlighting the competitiveness of the area (Varisco & Cruz, 2009). More exactly, according to the results obtained from an exploratory approach, it is determined that for the success of the development of sustainable tourism in the regions of Guaymas, Alamos and Isla Huivulai, the following are necessary: first, having natural and cultural beauties; second, environmental protection; third, safety; fourth, accessibility to the place; fifth, accessibility to the potential market and sixth, company profile.

The importance of geographical and safety factors in the management of destinations has been highlighted (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Osland, Mackoy & McCormick, 2017), observing the natural factors of the area (Buhalis, 1999; Vargas, 2007; Alvarado & Oddone, 2017; Mazaraki, Boyko, Bosovska, Vedmid & Okhrimenko, 2018). At the same time, the environmental impact of the actions in the destinations is evident in the three case studies (Han, Hsu & Lee, 2009).

7 Conclusions, limitations and future research

Nowadays, the search for sustainability presides over business activity at all levels. In this case, the tourism activity is also oriented towards realisation of sustainable tourism, taking into account the many advantages that this can provide. In this study, we wanted to analyse the success factors of sustainable tourism in the southern region of the State of Sonora, for which we have addressed a multiple case study oriented in three specific areas.

In view of the results obtained and according to the information collected in each of the tourist places, the most relevant factors considered for a sustainable tourism project to be successful are: natural and cultural beauties, accessibility to the market and the business profile. On the other hand, the factors of secondary importance for the success of a sustainable tourism project are: safety, accessibility to the place and protection of the environment.

The qualitative results of the panel of businessmen reflect that the dimension of the economy of CSR is the

one that reflects the greatest interest. This is due to the fact that the actors who participate actively in the tourism sector and in the development of projects of sustainable tourism are entrepreneurs, therefore, their initial interest is the recovery of investment, marketing tourism products and consolidating a tourism offer that meets the needs of an increasing tourist demand. However, and based on the literature, it can be determined that the environmental and social dimensions of CSR are also within the development strategies of a sustainable project.

This means that as sustainable tourism projects are implemented, certain aspects will have to be considered in the tourism programme, such as the valuation of tourism resources, that is, the natural and cultural beauties of the destinations, as well as good management to achieve accessibility to the place, in addition to considering the needs of the potential market, strengthening the business profile of service providers and the rational use of the natural environment.

We can point to many diverse implications of this research. From the academic point of view, we consider that the paper contributes to the literature on the topic, since it focuses, in a very clear and specific manner, the suitable factors in order to carry out a sustainable project in the tourism area. From the business environment, entrepreneurs have the ability to focus on other factors, depending on their possibilities and interests, in order to address the most successful project, which will result in positive results for the company. From the point of view of the managers, the research establishes the need to focus on the care and improvement of each of the factors, favouring a good accessibility, good security and protection measures, all oriented towards the best attainment of a sustainable project. Finally, the government, linked to the managers, must study appropriate and favourable measures for these projects, regulating the mechanisms and norms to reach the project purpose.

Despite the study's interest, we consider that it is not exempt from certain limitations. In this sense, we consider that the conclusions obtained are not generalisable to other areas, given that the tourist areas have very different characteristics depending on the context; so, it would not be possible to extend these results to other areas and other countries. On the other hand, it is a qualitative study based on case studies and supported by a panel of experts, so that complementing it with other techniques could provide more value. Based on the foregoing limitations, the following are proposed as future lines of research: a) replicate the study in other tourist contexts, either from the same country or from other countries, in order to carry out comparative studies and b) complement the qualita-

tive study with another of a quantitative nature through the elaboration of a questionnaire that could be presented in tourist areas and completed by visitors to these places.

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