Chapter 2 Dynamics of sustainable tourism. Case of Tehuacán, Puebla

Capítulo 2 Dinámica del Turismo Sostenible. Caso Tehuacán, Puebla

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Abstract

The present work tries to analyze the development of post-COVID-19 tourism at Tehuacán city and the possibility to become in a sustainable activity considering that the conditions exist to become in the city and historically the region of Tehuacán has been a spot of tourism in the city. state of Puebla and that tourism as one of the first activities that has recovered its dynamics after the pandemic and that in many sectors of the country it has been the one that has allowed economic recovery. A descriptive analysis was carried out based on a data collection carried out in the months of April and May 2022 to a sample of tourists in the city of Tehuacán. The descriptive analysis allows us to understand the current situation of tourism, its strengths and areas of opportunity so that it can be consolidated as an economic activity.

Tourism, Tehuacán, Sustenible tourism

Resumen

El presente trabajo trata de analizar el desarrollo del turismo post COVID-19 en la ciudad de Tehuacán y su capacidad de éste para convertirse en una actividad sostenible considerando que en la ciudad existen la condiciones para ello y que históricamente la región de Tehuacán ha sido un foco de turismo en el estado de Puebla y que el turismo como una de las primeras actividades que ha recobrado su dinámica después de la pandemia y que en muchos sectores del país ha sido quien ha permitido la recuperación económica. Se realizó un análisis descriptivo a partir de una recolección de datos realizada en los meses de abril y mayo del 2022 a una muestra de turistas en la ciudad de Tehuacán. El análisis descriptivo nos permite entender la situación actual del turismo, sus fortalezas y áreas de oportunidad para que se pueda consolidar como actividad económica.

Turismo, Tehuacán, Turismo sostenible

2.1 Introduction

Tehuacán stands out in the State of Puebla for its diverse tourist attractions that are known at national and international level and that represents a very important factor for the economy of the State of Puebla, some of its diverse attractions that it possesses are representative architectonic places like its colorful Palace, the Temple of the Calvary, the church of San Francisco, the distinctive cathedral of the city, the evolution museum, the Cultural Complex and the Church of "El Carmen", among others, the church of San Francisco, the distinctive cathedral of the city, the museum of the evolution, the Cultural Complex and the Church of "El Carmen", among others, its popular and renowned spas, its natural springs that at the time were attributed healing properties, as well as the well-known biosphere reserve Tehuacán-Cuicatlán.

Some important aspects and part of the cultural identity is the gastronomy as an activity of great importance for tourism and as an economic factor that benefits mainly hotels and restaurants, the traditional food as an identity of the city that stands out for its history and cultural heritage with the elaboration of a representative dish and of great relevance is the festival of mole de caderas with a great value in the municipality, the chile en nogada fair with a variation in its elaboration with miahuateco chile instead of poblano chile, the elaboration of the typical sweet known as muégano, the Tehuacán donkey bread, the diverse sweets and drinks that result in a great tourist attraction for the region of Tehuacán.

Tourism was affected during the pandemic by the confinement that did not give any possibility for the tourist activity to develop continuously, since the promotional activities and fairs were paused, which by not promoting themselves considerably reduced mobility, which caused great economic losses, this led to several businesses having to close their activities, a clear example of this situation was the emblematic hotel "Mexico" that since 1950 was one of the most representative of the city, and that in September 2020 will cease its activities definitively.

With the lifting of the restrictions and the return to the activities in the whole state of Puebla, the tourism has begun to flow gradually, and it is there where the dynamism in the region must overcome and have a clear way to be able to structure in an effective way the planning on the part of the municipality to promote the tourist attractions of the city, with events that show and promote the cultural wealth, with work plans for the development that benefits the different local businesses, businessmen, municipality and the population in general.

2.2 Theoretical review

Tourism is considered as one of the main generators of economy at international level especially in developing countries and helps them to have a boost (Orgaz & Moral, 2016), and it is a key factor for the development of rural communities where it is a key factor for rural communities where it is very well defined an impact on their area as a support for their growth. It also helps the conservation of rural areas as "general and rural tourism is the way to preserve the natural and cultural environment; it revives old traditions; it actively contributes to intercultural communication and the expectations of world peace", (Jafari, 2005).

Therefore, an overall analysis should be emphasised, where basic contextual aspects of the city's situation should also be addressed, considering and proposing a scheme that addresses all kinds of social, cultural, environmental, economic and political variables, within a national and international context; as well as the terms of their overall interdependencies and interrelationships in the very important relationship: Visitors - Suppliers - Tourism Destination (González & Mendoza, 2014).

For Buhalis (2003), Malaver (2011), cited in (Castillo-Palacio M, 2015), tourism as an industry undergoes constant transformation on a continuous basis. Tourism evolves presenting different changes constantly which should be considered because nowadays it is not only seen as a business model, but also as a means of care and preservation of the environment, since it is indispensable and also a reference point.

Currently there are regions and cities that have managed to orientate the use and image of their environments and as part of their cultural and natural attractions as part of a cultural heritage which attracts the attention of a large number of tourists and visitors. It should be taken into account that tourism in the region comes from the representative and unique gastronomic attraction that determines specific characteristics, features and differences as indicated by the World Tourism Organisation (2020).

According to Mascarenhas-Tramontin & JM (2010) cited in Mascarenhas (2005) tourism is that which can produce positive effects on the dynamics of a place for example: (a) complement of tourist offer and (b) increase of a flow in accommodation, able to attract to localities and cities investments in order to generate jobs, as mentioned by Schlüter, (2003) and Mascarenhas-Tramontin & JM, (2010) that integrating all the individual elements can be crucial to favour marketing, promotion and economic-social benefit, greater income in tax collection, expose and make known the local culture, generate in a positive way an image that can rescue the values and local traditions helping to preserve the culture which in turn will be fundamental to generate recognition and social empathy, all this is possible thanks to a tourist flow.

It is also important to consider that according to Solari and Pérez (2005) tourism through local bases can sustain a sustainable change in economic development, however, when it is left aside, sectoral plans that allow tourism development and therefore local economic development are not carried out. Peral and Gil (2012) mention that tourism from a sustainable approach can be a trigger for economic development, only that they should be given more dissemination and support for tourism research from a more scientific approach, which can help to have more accurate information on sectoral plans that allow a relevant diagnosis to implement improvements that contribute to effective growth.

Ribeiro-Cruz (2019) considers that tourism goes very much hand in hand with the culture of what each locality, region or city represents, it is a matter of consolidating implementing and generating actions that promote unique and sustainable tourism by transforming the environment without losing the region's own values. Therefore, the cultural environment will always be dynamic, therefore, it undergoes transformations and effective and constant exchanges, and is reconfigured in the coexistence with other cultures. Cultural tourism is part of a sustainable community development and according to Dzul, Damián and Macias (2020), tourism depends on many external factors, where there are multiple stakeholders in the growth and dissemination, activities that must be planned to have a good performance.

For Muñoz (2003), to do tourism is to arrive at a dream place where one experiences a facet of the cultural dimension, where people are integrated as part of a strengthened society.

With all of this, we must consider, both for Tehuacán from a tourism approach and for any other locality, that sustainable tourism motivations go hand in hand with dynamism and identity, and that, according to Muradas, Taño and Arma (2001), this implies a variation and increase in demand, influencing the behaviour of tourists, having an impact on the economic sectors, where cultural heritage is the decisive factor for the motivation of the interested tourist, i.e. all those places that promote identity, encouraging but above all taking care of the natural environment, promoting the sustainability of the region.

In ecological terms, it is essential to preserve and protect the natural resources and the environment in which tourism takes place. This implies the conservation of ecosystems, the promotion of sustainable practices, proper waste management and the protection of natural areas and endangered species. Furthermore, environmentally friendly tourism activities, such as rural community-based tourism, nature tourism and ecotourism, should be promoted.

2.3 Methodology

For this research, a quantitative study was carried out, comprising an instrument with 36 items distributed in four dimensions: Tourism Promotion, Sustainable Tourism Dynamism, Service and Product Quality and Identity. In this first approach to the dynamism of tourism in the region of Tehuacán post COVID, the variables analysed were: The rating of aspects related to accommodation according to the level of satisfaction received, with respect to Good location and Value for money, as well as the rating of aspects related to the services of restaurants and food areas according to the level of satisfaction received, The survey was carried out using a five-point Likert scale to measure these variables, where 1= Poor, 2=Poor, 3=Regular, 4=Good, 5=Excellent, and finally the condition of public spaces such as the zócalo or market.

This study was carried out with a sample of 345 tourists with a confidence level of 93% and a margin of error of 5% and a variability of 50%. Data collection was carried out during the months of April and May 2022 with the support of 100 students from the Business Development educational programme at the Technological University of Tehuacán.

The data were analysed with SPSS software, firstly making a descriptive analysis of the sample such as: gender, age, where they come from and degree of studies, then an analysis of the variables of the perception that the tourist has with respect to the location and the price-quality relationship of the accommodation service and the restaurant services, the responses were analysed in relation to why they decide to visit the city of Tehuacán, the perception of the state of public spaces and the costs of the services consumed were also analysed.

2.4 Results

The first measure obtained about the relationship of the scale variables was a Cronbach's alpha statistic for 30 items that gave a value of 0.963, which shows that the data has consistency.

The respondents who visit Tehuacán are national and international, to describe the characteristics of the sample the place of residence and gender of the interviewees were related, as can be seen in Table 2.1, 118 women are tourists who come from the same state of Puebla, 11 come from the United States and 46 from the Mexican Republic; while 111 male tourists come from the state of Puebla, 13 come from the United States and 46 from different states of the national territory.

Table 2.1 Composition of tourists by place of residence

		Place of residence			
		State	International	National	Total
Gender	Female	118	11	46	175
	Male	111	13	46	170
Total		229	24	92	345
Note: Data correspond to survey responses (2022).					

The highest percentage of respondents have high school studies, as can be seen in the schooling variable, as can be seen in table 2.2, of all female tourists: 8 have primary school, 34 secondary school, 67 high school, 60 undergraduate, 3 postgraduate and 3 other studies. Men: 7 have primary school, 24 secondary school, 78 high school, 52 undergraduate, 9 postgraduate and 6 other studies.

Table 2.3 Composition of tourists by level of education

		Level of education completed by the visitor/tourist						
		Primary	Secundary	High School	Bachelor's degree	Postgraduate	Otro	
Sex	Female	8	34	67	60	3	3	175
	Male	7	24	78	52	6	3	170
Total		15	58	145	112	9	6	345
Note: Data was obtained from the survey (2022).								

Respondents are young visitors between 20 and 24 years old, as shown in table 2.3, 27.2% (94 tourists) are in the age range of 20 to 24 years old, 17.7% (61 tourists) are between 25 and 29 years old, 15.9% (55 tourists) are between 18 and 19 years old and 11.3% (39 tourists) are in the range of 30 to 34 years old, so it can be inferred that tourism in the city of Tehuacan is of a very young age.

Table 2.3 Age range of the majority of tourists

		Age			
		Frequency	Porcentage	Percentage valid	Cumulative percentage
Valid	18-19	55	15.9	15.9	15.9
	20-24	94	27.2	27.2	43.2
	25-29	61	17.7	17.7	60.9
	30-34	39	11.3	11.3	72.2
	35-39	29	8.4	8.4	80.6
	40-44	27	7.8	7.8	88.4
	45-49	10	2.9	2.9	91.3
	50-54	18	5.2	5.2	96.5
	55-59	7	2.0	2.0	98.6
	60-64	3	.9	.9	99.4
	65-69	1	.3	.3	99.7
	70-74	1	.3	.3	100.0
	Total	345	100.0	100.0	
Note: The data were obtained from the survey (2022).					

What most influences the decision to visit Tehuacán are the tourist accommodation services. To measure the dynamics of tourism in Tehuacán, a descriptive analysis was made of which factor most influences the decision to visit, as can be seen in Table 2.4, where 32.46% (57 women and 55 men) consider tourist accommodation services to be a priority; 19.71% (32 women and 36 men) consider food services in second place, and 18.84% (31 women and 34 men) find tourist infrastructure interesting.

Table 2.4 Factors influencing the decision to visit this tourist area

		Factor influencing the decision to visit this tourist site					
		Tourist activity	Tourist attractions	Tourism infrastructure	Food services	Tourist accommodation services	Total
Sex	Female	33	22	31	32	57	175
	Male	24	21	34	36	55	170
Total		57	43	65	68	112	345
Percentage		16.5	12.5	18.8	19.7	32.5	100
Note: Data were obtained from the survey (2022).							

Tourists visiting Tehuacán say that the accommodation is good, to measure the level of tourist satisfaction in tourist accommodation services in relation to their location, it is observed in Table 2.5 that a Likert scale of five was used, where 1=lousy, 2=bad, 3=Regular, 4=Good, 5=Excellent; 30. 7% (106 tourists) consider the location to be good, 25.5% (88 tourists) perceive it as excellent, 22.6% (78 tourists) rate it as fair and 11.9% (41 tourists) and 9.3% (32 tourists) perceive it as bad and terrible respectively.

Table 2.5 Tourists' perceptions of the location of accommodation services

Good location					
		Frequency	Percentage	Percentage valid	Cumulative percentage
Valid	1	32	9.3	9.3	9.3
	2	41	11.9	11.9	21.2
	3	78	22.6	22.6	43.8
	4	106	30.7	30.7	74.5
	5	88	25.5	25.5	100.0
	Total	345	100.0	100.0	
Note: The data were obtained from the survey (2022).					

Tourists consider that the accommodation with respect to the price-quality ratio is good, we can see in table 2.6 that for this ratio a Likert scale of five was also used, where 1=poor, 2=bad, 3=Regular, 4=Good, 5=Excellent; 36. 5% (126 tourists) consider that the price-quality ratio is good, 31.3% (108 tourists) perceive it as excellent, 20.9% (72 tourists) rate it as fair and only 5.5% (19 tourists) and 5.8% (20 tourists) perceive it as bad and lousy respectively.

Table 2.6 Tourists' perception of the Price - Quality ratio of the accommodation service

Value for money					
		Frequency	Percentage	Percentage valid	Cumulative percentage
Valid	1	20	5.8	5.8	5.8
	2	19	5.5	5.5	11.3
	3	72	20.9	20.9	32.2
	4	126	36.5	36.5	68.7
	5	108	31.3	31.3	100.0
	Total	345	100.0	100.0	
Note: Data are from the survey (2022).					

Visitors perceive the location and access to restaurants and food courts to be good. A Likert scale of five was used to measure this variable, where 1=poor, 2=bad, 3=Regular, 4=Good, 5=Excellent; we can see in Table 2.7 that 35.9% (124 tourists) consider the location and access to be good, 23.8% (82 tourists) perceive it as excellent, 20.6% (72 tourists) rate it as regular and 14.5% (50 tourists) and 5.2% (18 tourists) perceive it as bad and lousy respectively.

Table 2.7 Tourists' perceptions of the location and easy accessibility of restaurants and food service areas

Good location and easy access					
		Frequency	Percentage	Percentage valid	Cumulative percentage
Válid	1	18	5.2	5.2	5.2
	2	50	14.5	14.5	19.7
	3	71	20.6	20.6	40.3
	4	124	35.9	35.9	76.2
	5	82	23.8	23.8	100.0
	Total	345	100.0	100.0	
Note: Data were obtained from the survey (2022).					

The results in table 8 show that visitors perceive the price-quality ratio of restaurant and food court services as good and a Likert scale of five was also used to measure it, where 1=poor, 2=bad, 3=Regular, 4=Good, 5=Excellent; 35. 1% (121 tourists) consider the price-quality ratio as good, 32.5% (112 tourists) perceive it as excellent, 19.1% (66 tourists) rate it as fair and only 7.8% (27 tourists) and 5.8% (19 tourists) perceive it as bad and lousy respectively.

Table 2.8 Tourists' perceptions of the Price-Quality ratio of restaurant and food court services

Value for money					
		Frequency	Percentage	Percentage valid	Cumulative percentage
Valid	1	19	5.5	5.5	5.5
	2	27	7.8	7.8	13.3
	3	66	19.1	19.1	32.5
	4	121	35.1	35.1	67.5
	5	112	32.5	32.5	100.0
	Total	345	100.0	100.0	
Note: Data was obtained from the survey (2022).					

Tourists consider public spaces such as the zócalo and main market to be in good condition. To measure this variable, Table 2.9 shows that a Likert scale of five was also used, where 1=poor, 2=bad, 3=Regular, 4=Good, 5=Excellent; 41.1% (143 tourists) consider that these are in good condition, 22.3% (77 tourists) rate it as regular, 21.2% (73 tourists) perceive it as excellent, and only 10.7% (37 tourists) and 4.3% (15 tourists) perceive it as in bad and very bad condition respectively.

Table 2.9 Tourists' perception of the conditions of public spaces (zócalo, market, etc.) in the city center

Public spaces (zócalo, market place) in good condition					
		Frequency	Percentage	Percentage valid	Cumulative percentage
Válid	1	15	4.3	4.3	4.3
	2	37	10.7	10.7	15.1
	3	77	22.3	22.3	37.4
	4	143	41.4	41.4	78.8
	5	73	21.2	21.2	100.0
	Total	345	100.0	100.0	
Note: Data was obtained from the survey (2022).					

Tourists visit Tehuacán for holidays, recreation and leisure, to identify what the dynamics are regarding tourism post COVID, as shown in Table 2.10, 72.5% visit this place for holidays, recreation and leisure, 16.3% visit this place for studies, 7.8% for sports and 1.7% for document management.

Table 2.10 Reasons for visiting

		Reason for the visit					
		sports	Education and training	Document management	Business and personal reasons	Holidays, recreation and leisure	Total
Sex	Female	1	13	2	22	137	175
	Male	5	14	4	34	113	170
Total		6	27	6	56	250	345
Porcentage		1.7	7.8	1.7	16.3	72.5	100
Note: Data were obtained from the survey (2022).							

Normality tests were made to the questions that had to do with the level of satisfaction received with respect to the location and the price-quality ratio of both the accommodation and restaurant services, as well as to the question that had to do with the perception of the conditions of public places (see table 2.11), according to the sample that is greater than 50, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used, showing that there is no statistical significance in the answers, since the p-value is $< Alpha (0.05)$.

Table 2.11 Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test

Normality tests						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistician	gl	Sig.	Statistician	gl	Sig.
Level of satisfaction received with respect to the good location of the accommodation service	.214	345	.000	.882	345	.000
Level of satisfaction received from the accommodation service in relation to value for money.	.242	345	.000	.845	345	.000
Level of satisfaction received from restaurants and food services with respect to their good location and easy access.	.238	345	.000	.884	345	.000
Level of satisfaction received from restaurants and food courts with regard to price-quality ratio	.241	345	.000	.849	345	.000
Condition of public spaces (zócalo, market)	.257	345	.000	.876	345	.000
a. Lilliefors significance correction						

Visitors to Tehuacán consider it important to consume traditional dishes as shown in Table 2.12, where the results indicate that 48.7% consider it important to consume traditional dishes, 25.8% think it is very important.

Table 2.12 Importance of traditional dishes

Traditional dishes					
		Frequency	Percentage	Percentage valid	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Important	168	48.7	48.7	48.7
	Indifferent	48	13.9	13.9	62.6
	Very important	89	25.8	25.8	88.4
	Not important	7	2.0	2.0	90.4
	Unimportant	33	9.6	9.6	100.0
	Total	345	100.0	100.0	
Note: The data was obtained from the survey (2022).					

Tourists also consider the price they pay for a traditional dish to be fair. See table 13, where 76.8% rate it as fair, 13.6% consider it to be expensive, 5.8% consider it to be cheap, and 2.0% rate it as very cheap.

Table 2.13 Price paid by tourists for a traditional dish

Price perception of a traditional dish					
		Frequency	Percentage	Percentage valid	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Cheap	20	5.8	5.8	5.8
	Expensive	47	13.6	13.6	19.4
	Fair	265	76.8	76.8	96.2
	Very cheap	7	2.0	2.0	98.3
	Very expensive	6	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	345	100.0	100.0	
Note: The data were obtained from the survey. (2022).					

2.5 Discussion

According to the authors Del Barrio, López and Frías (2011), Tehuacán has the conditions to attract tourism according to what is observed in the responses of the respondents, who in this case are young tourists and consider that both the accommodation services, restaurants and public spaces, among others, are in good condition, as well as the perception that visitors have according to these services with respect to the price-quality and care of public spaces are good.

The results obtained also indicate that Tehuacán can generate local development since, as mentioned by Solari (2003), the synergy of all the aforementioned activities when complementing each other allows for the creation of new synergies in society, creating new conditions and eventually allowing for the generation of public policies in favour of these changes. In this sense, supporting tourism in Tehuacán helps to counteract the labour problems that have increased in recent years.

2.6 Conclusions

It is concluded that the dynamics of tourism in the city of Tehuacán, Post COVID has managed to remain active and that much of this is due to the fact that it continues to be a city with a diversity of attractions in its infrastructure, cultural, accommodation services, nationally recognised gastronomy such as mole de caderas, as well as being recognised as the cradle of corn, as well as being the obligatory step to visit nearby regions that also have cultural, gastronomic and historical attractions such as: San Diego Chalma, Zapotitlán Salinas, San Juan Raya, San Antonio Texcala, where you can visit the pyramids, the salt mines, the paleontological treasure, onyx and marble quarries just to mention a few. According to the results, those who visit Tehuacán and its region the most are international tourists, which turns out to be a key factor for the development and growth of this area, as mentioned by Orgaz and Moral (2016).

According to the data obtained, it can be inferred that the dynamics of tourism in the city of Tehuacán post Covid has begun to strengthen again and that this activity has enough solid activities with respect to: accommodation services, food services, gastronomy, infrastructure, emblematic landscapes, among others, to be able to generate the promotion of the place (Del Barrio, López, & Frías, 2011).

According to the information gathered in this research, it can be observed that 60.9% of the tourism dynamism is carried out by a young market in the age range of 18 to 29 years and 19.7% is in the young adult range of 30 to 39 years (see table 3), who like to visit the city of Tehuacán primarily for its tourist accommodation services, secondly for its food services and thirdly for its tourist infrastructure.

It is worth mentioning that Tehuacán continues to be a very attractive place not only for state and national tourists, but also for international tourists, and for this reason it must keep up with the demands of the market in order to provide a better experience and continue with this dynamic, which is undoubtedly a reference in the economy and development of this city.

Tehuacán has always had a great variety of tourist attractions and they have generated a very active economy, since, according to the results observed in terms of the motivation for visiting this city, 72.5% do so for reasons of holidays, recreation and leisure and 16. This leads us to reinforce that the dynamics of tourism in Tehuacán continues to be active and has its greatest influence on a young potential market, as shown in the results of table 3, where it is observed that 72.2% corresponds to a young adult population.

It is important to generate synergies between the different tourism actors: government, entrepreneurs and chambers of Tehuacán, because although it is true that the results obtained show encouraging data, most of these actors operate in isolation, leaving an excellent opportunity that the value chain could provide. These synergies should be aimed at offering valuable experiences to tourists.

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