Chapter 4 Sustainable tourism: opportunity for the MSMEs of Chilapa de Álvarez, Guerrero

Capítulo 4 Turismo sostenible: oportunidad para las MiPymes de Chilapa de Álvarez Guerrero

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Abstract

The objective of this investigation was to measure the dynamism of sustainable tourism in the Municipality of Chilapa de Álvarez Guerrero, for which a research model was established, considering the variables of sustainable tourism and marketing, correlated with the issue of customer service. A theoretical investigation was carried out to identify the main themes and have a better understanding of the subject. On the other hand, for this study an evaluation instrument was used aimed at managers or owners of companies that are directly related to tourism and was applied in the month of July 2022, out of a total of 133 respondents. The research method that was carried out is quantitative and the results obtained indicated that the variables established in the model are significantly correlated, so that the sustainability opportunities have an expectation of significant growth in the perception of the businessmen surveyed. And a point in favor is that most of the respondents are young leaders of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) with a high school and bachelor's degree education. Finally, it is concluded that, for the MSMEs of the Municipality of Chilapa de Álvarez Guerrero, who are a specific sector that lives on tourism, they must apply this vision of sustainable tourism, improve customer service and apply tourism marketing strategies in the region and thus Likewise, identify other business tourism opportunity niches such as: ecological tourism - rural or magical town, for this the support of the Municipal, State and Federal authorities is required to promote growth and development in infrastructure and security, appropriate for this business sector of this Municipality.

Sustainable tourism, MSMEs, Tourist marketing, Competitiveness.

Resumen

La presente investigación tuvo como objetivo medir el dinamismo del turismo sostenible en el Municipio de Chilapa de Álvarez Guerrero, por lo que se estableció un modelo de investigación, considerando las variables de turismo sostenible y mercadotecnia, correlacionada con el tema de atención al cliente. Se realizó una investigación teórica para identificar los temas principales y tener una mejor comprensión del tema. Por otra parte, para este estudio se utilizó un instrumento de evaluación dirigido a los gerentes o dueños de empresas que tienen relación directa con el turismo y fue aplicado en el mes de julio de 2022, de un total de 133 encuestados. El método de investigación que se realizó es de tipo cuantitativo y los resultados obtenidos indicaron que las variables establecidas en el modelo están correlacionadas de manera significativa, por lo que las oportunidades de sostenibilidad tienen una expectativa de crecimiento significativo a la percepción de los empresarios encuestados, y punto a favor es que la mayor parte de los encuestados son jóvenes líderes de empresas Micro Pequeña y Mediana Empresa (MiPyme) con una educación de nivel bachillerato y licenciatura. Finalmente se concluye que, para las MiPyme del Municipio de Chilapa de Álvarez Guerrero, quienes son un sector específico que vive del turismo, deben aplicar esta visión de turismo sostenible, mejorar la atención al cliente y aplicar estrategias de mercadotecnia turística en la región y así mismo identificar otros nichos de oportunidad turísticas empresariales tales como: el turismo ecológico – rural o pueblo mágico, para ello se requiere del apoyo de las autoridades Municipales, Estatales y Federales para fomentar el crecimiento y desarrollo en infraestructura y seguridad, apropiado para este sector empresarial de este Municipio.

Turismo Sostenible, Mipyme, Mercadotecnia turística, Competitividad

4 Introduction

In Mexico, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2017), tourism is one of the most important economic activities in the country. It generates more than 4 million jobs and contributes almost 4% of the Gross Domestic Product, according to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, 2020), the country has been visited by more than 24 million tourists as of August 2020, which places Mexico in the number 3 position worldwide (Ministry of Tourism, 2022). However, the travel and tourism sector has faced, in recent years, economic complications, public health warnings and insecurity in various regions of the country (OECD, 2017). In this regard, Mexico faces a number of structural challenges, as it has based its tourism strategy on the development of large-scale resorts in just eight cities, which concentrates the benefit and development of certain geographic areas (OECD, 2017).

When it comes to tourism, Guerrero is one of the main tourist destinations in Mexico, due to two main characteristics: variety of attractions and the cultural heritage of its people (Portal político, 2019). The State has seven regions divided into 81 municipalities (INEGI, 2020), where each one has important historical and cultural attributes, the tourist activity is mainly concentrated in three destinations called "Triangulo del Sol" which includes the municipalities of Taxco, Ixtapa Zihuatanejo and Acapulco (Mexico, n. d.), the municipality of Ixtapa Zihuatanejo and Acapulco (Mexico, n. d.), the municipality of Ixtapa Zihuatanejo and the municipality of Acapulco (Mexico, n. d.). f.), the Municipality of Chilapa de Álvarez, belonging to the central region of the State, rich in culture, gastronomy and handicraft *tianguis*, is also a place considered by tourists to visit.

In this sense, there is a growing interest in sustainable tourism whose fundamental objective is to obtain maximum profitability, protecting the natural resources that sustain it and respecting and involving the population (UNWTO, 2019). According to the Sustainable Development Report (UN, 2019), tourism faces significant challenges such as deficiencies in water supply, sanitation and treatment, connectivity, urban mobility and social differences. In accordance with this, the general objective of this article is to measure the dynamism of sustainable tourism in the Municipality of Chilapa de Álvarez Guerrero, and its purpose is to identify the niches of opportunity for MSMEs, to develop marketing and sustainability strategies.

Therefore, based on the definition of the objective, three phases were outlined for the development of the research: a) a literature review was carried out, which allowed to define the themes of sustainable tourism, marketing and customer service, b) determination of the methodology to carry out the research, taking as reference the instrument developed by the steering committee RedaYN (2022) and c) elaboration of results, which helped to understand the situation in the Municipality of Chilapa de Álvarez Gro, and thus seeking to understand the particular characteristics faced by MSMEs in the research area.

4.2 Theoretical review

4.2.1 Tourism marketing

The information presented is intended to give support and orientation to the research, the broad field of marketing can be approached from different perspectives that involve variables such as market, customer, customer satisfaction and competitiveness, which affect the development of marketing strategies. Reviewing the literature there are several authors who refer to how to apply their strategies, however, given the circumstances, they have also proposed a new vision for the application of these tools.

Marketing, more than any other function of the company, is concerned with customers, it seeks primarily to create value and customer satisfaction; Peter Drucker, for his part, explains that the goal of marketing is to know and understand customers so well that the product fits them and sells itself (quoted in Kotler, 2011). Historically, marketing has been the instrument through which business organisations have communicated their strategies and products to potential consumers (Giraldo-Patiño et al., 2020). However, given the current circumstances, marketing has developed another type of application such as destination marketing, which is considered as a discipline that allows linking the destination with the market (Bigné, Font et al., 2000).

Therefore, it is necessary to know the characteristics of the market and the environment surrounding tourism companies and organisations, such as design, creation, distribution and how to reach the customer in order to offer their product or services in such a way that they can satisfy the customer's needs and be better than their competition (Saavedra and Cortés, 2022). Marketing is a fundamental piece of the tourism industry to generate business and opportunities, for awareness, motivation and convincing, generating knowledge of potential potential customers, visitors or travellers each of the values of accommodation or a destination on the map (DIMEO, 2018, cited in Olguín et al., 2020).

4.2.2 Sustainability and tourism competitiveness in MSMEs

To address this tourism marketing vision, it is important to consider other issues such as is tourism sustainability, several studies have highlighted that tourism destination competitiveness can be increased through management based on environmental quality and sustainable tourism development (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999; Dwyer and Kim, 2003; Hassan, 2000; Hu and Wall, 2005; Huybers and Bennett, 2003; Mihalič, 2000; Ritchie and Crouch, 2000, 2003; among others cited by Dieguez et al, 2011), this requires community, business and government involvement.

Competitiveness is defined as "the ability of a firm to produce and market products at better conditions of price, quality and timeliness than its rivals" (Porter, 1985, cited by Labarca, 2008, p. 160). According to Ferraz, Kupfer and Haguenauer (1996), cited by Madeiros et al. (2019) competitiveness can be defined as the ability of a firm to create and implement competitive strategies and maintain or increase its product share in the market in a sustainable way. These capabilities are related to a variety of factors, controlled or not by firms, ranging from the technical training of personnel and administrative management processes to public policies, infrastructure supply and demand and supply peculiarities.

Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) are a fundamental part of the country's economy, but many of them do not achieve the desired competitiveness, mainly due to weaknesses in internal and external factors, which almost always lead to their closure. They must try to improve their administrative processes supported by techniques and processes in decision making and organisational functioning (Ortiz, 2009) and at the same time contemplate the formality of the organisations in fiscal and financial matters for their growth and development.

4.2.3 Customer service

Finally, understanding the needs of the market will allow us to be competitive and provide better customer service. In the first instance, in order to understand the concept of customer service, it is important to identify what service is, taking up Stanton (2016) who defines it as "identifiable and intangible activities that are the main object of a transaction designed to provide customers with satisfaction of wants or needs" (pp. 333-334), in contrast Kotler (2004), defines it as "a performance or act that is essentially intangible and does not necessarily result in the ownership of something", finally the central theme is the customer (p. 29).

On the other hand, the customer is the potential or actual buyer of the products or services (American Marketing Association [AMA], 2009), once having these two concepts, to talk about customer satisfaction is to know the desires and expectations of consumers. According to Ninco and Duque (2017), they point out that customer satisfaction when acquiring goods or services, will turn them into potential customers of MSMEs, which leads them to return to consume the products or services, in addition to promoting them to their friends, friends and acquaintances, which will mean an increase in sales of MSMEs. According to Blanco (2001, quoted in Peréz, 2007), customer service "represents a strategic tool that allows to offer added value to customers with respect to the offer made by competitors and to achieve the perception of differences in the overall offer of the company".

4.3 Methodology

The research was approached as a quantitative study with a descriptive scope and correlational scope (Hernández and Mendoza, 2018). For the selection of the study variables, the sustainable development questionnaire was used, developed by the RedAyN steering committee (2022), which considers 3 dimensions: marketing, sustainability and customer service (Figure 4.1). To obtain the information, a sample calculation was developed with a 5% error and a confidence level of 95% (Alcalá, 2022), the information was compiled during the month of July 2022 and a total of 133 questionnaires were applied to selected MSMEs in the tourism sector in the Municipality of Chilapa de Álvarez Guerrero. On the other hand, the study of the data was carried out by statistical method after the questionnaires were applied, using the reliability analysis - Cronbach's Alpha, descriptive analysis, correlation and regression analysis, from which the results were obtained and interpreted to respond to the purpose of this research.

4.4 Results

Figure 4.1 Theoretical model of the research work
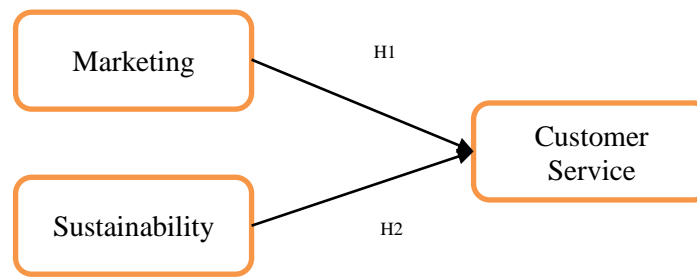
Source: Own elaboration

Reliability analysis - Cronbach's alpha

In this section, the results of the reliability of the instrument are shown. As a theoretical reference, it is important to consider that the value of Cronbach's alpha requires compliance with some conditions of acceptance, so that according to what is proposed by Frías (2014), if the result is from the value of 0.7 then the construct or instrument is considered acceptable and therefore reliable for validation. However, for research in the experimental phase or first phases of analysis for the purposes of designing new instruments as well as research projects, it is permitted to continue with the study regardless of the references made by George and Mallery (2003) and Nunnally (1967) regarding having values of 0.6 (questionable analysis) and 0.5 (poor values), which means that the research process can continue with values of 0.5, considering that for a following phase, the intentions and effects of each variable that integrates a factor or block must be reviewed. The reliability results for the constructs integrated in the theoretical model of the `present research work are shown below:

-    Marketing Block: 7 items - 0.751.

-    Sustainability Block: 11 items - 0.700.

-    Customer Service Block: 5 items - 0.781.

The results obtained from the constructs of the theoretical model of the present study indicate that the instrument is reliable and that the respondents perceive the intention of each indicator or question without problem as well as its correct elaboration.

Descriptive analyses

With respect to the indicators that were integrated into the measurement instrument in this study and obtained from the empirical work, the following results are shown with respect to what the representatives of these types of organizations express: With respect to age, approximately 33% of the managers or owners of these companies are between 25 and 34 years old, and 13% are between 20 and 24 years old, thus showing that for this sample, the great majority of those responsible for the operations of these types of companies are young people. Likewise, 52% of the managers surveyed were men and 48% were women, a result that reflects a trend towards gender equality. With regard to the level of education, 32% reported having a high school education and the same percentage had a bachelor's degree. Approximately 65% of the companies surveyed are micro enterprises and 27% are nano enterprises, which are organizations with a small number of employees.

Regarding the level of sales with this new post-COVID normality, 36% of the managers of these companies agree that their sales have not been maintained despite the pandemic phenomenon, but have grown significantly, while 27% prefer to disagree with this indicator, as their sales have decreased. Regarding the level of monthly income, 31% of the entrepreneurs consider that their income is less than $5,000, while 20% say that their income is between $5,000 and $10,000. On the other hand, 64% of these companies say that their income is complementary to their main activity and 55% say that this complementary income comes from an informal activity.

Correlation analysis

In this section we analyse the results of the Pearson correlation coefficient, where it is important to highlight that this statistical technique measures the degree of relationship or association that generally exists between two random variables. It should be remembered that the coefficient fluctuates for its measurement between $-1 \leq \rho \leq 1$ (Joe, 1997; Pita, 1996). A correlation aims to measure the strength or degree of association between two quantitative random variables. In this sense, when the ρ value is positive (+) the relationship is direct between the variables. If the value of ρ is negative (-), the relationship is inverse and if the value of ρ is equal to zero (0) the value of the variables will be independent and unrelated to each other (Restrepo and González, 2007). Regarding the theoretical model proposed in this study, the correlation results between the constructs show that the dimensions of Sustainability and Marketing in terms of customer service are significantly and positively correlated, considering then that, for tourism marketing, sustainability opportunities have an expectation of significant growth in the perception of the entrepreneurs of these surveyed companies and this is reflected in the customer service that is normally provided.

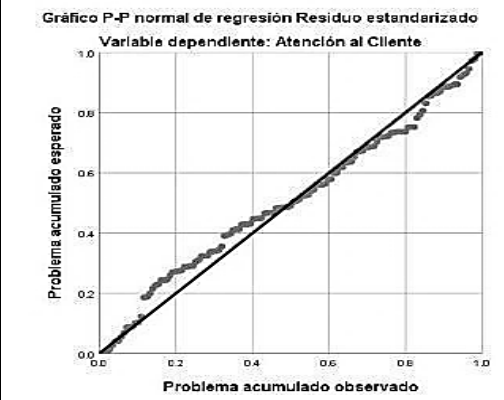**Table 4.1** Pearson correlation of the theoretical model

Educational Conditions Block Factors		Customer service
Marketing	Pearson correlation	.448**
	Sig. (bilateral)	.000
Sustainability	Pearson correlation	.488**
	Sig. (bilateral)	.000
Note** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).		

Regression analysis

It is important to consider for this regression analysis to have as a reference the existence of a model with which it will make sense to describe the effect that an independent variable will have on a dependent variable (Rodríguez, 2012). In this sense, by applying this statistical technique, it is intended to test the hypotheses raised in this study through the explanation of the influence that an independent variable has on a dependent variable as can be seen graphically in image 1, which proposes a theoretical model for this research study, considering of course the causes that are generated by nature in this type of analysis, taking into account the basic regression model shown below: $Yi = \beta 0 + \beta 1X1i + ... + \beta kXki + \varepsilon$

According to Mood and Graybill (1978), this statistical method allows the independent variable to explain the prediction and behaviour of the dependent variable. Table 4.2 below shows the results of the linear regression performed on the theoretical model of the present study considering the contributions of the managers or owners of the surveyed companies:

Table 4.2 Summary of the block model of the factors customer service, marketing and sustainability

R^2 adjusted	0.233	Durbin-Watson	1.600	
Value F	40.993	Value (t)	6.403	
Sig.	0.000	FIV	1.100	

Gráfico P-P normal de regresión Residuo estandarizado
Variable dependiente: Atención al Cliente

Source: Own elaboration

According to the results obtained, the equation generated is as follows:

Customer Service = 0.562 + 0.624 Sustainability + 0.408 Marketing + 0.098 error.

Regarding the data observed in table 2 with respect to the perception of the respondents, the theoretical model by its result of R2j, explains 23.3% which allows us to deduce that there really are other important factors that indicate good customer service and not exactly those included in the theoretical model of this study, however, the model is viable to the research work by the results obtained in acceptable values of F, T and reliability. On the other hand, according to the perception of this type of entrepreneurs in their diverse business backgrounds, they refer that it is sustainability that they consider a strength and has a positive impact on customer service and on the other hand marketing activity is perceived as an important area with positive impact and that since a significant number of managers in these companies are young staff, they take good advantage of marketing strategies to provide adequate and meaningful customer service. This means that although the managers of these surveyed companies perceive various factors that impact on customer service, at least the aspect of Sustainability and Marketing are seen by them as important and key elements to have a good and competitive customer relationship that is key to the performance and growth of the businesses they represent.

4.5 Discussion

Our results show that the dimensions of Sustainability and Marketing in terms of customer service are significantly correlated, sustainability opportunities are expected to grow in the perception of the surveyed entrepreneurs. So, it is agreed with Valenzuela (2019), when he mentions that nowadays talking about customer satisfaction is talking about the desires and expectations of consumers.

On the other hand, Chilapa de Álvarez Guerrero is a municipality at the gateway to the mountains with its own culture and customs that has not been considered for sustainable tourism activities, according to a study prepared by the magazine Mexico (s.f.), mentions that the concentration of this activity is focused on the tourist corridor of the triangle of the sun or in the magical town of Taxco. In order for the municipality to be competitive in the field of sustainable tourism, it is necessary to guarantee the labour stability of the workers, since most of them lack economic benefits and social security, as mentioned by Morán et al. (2021) in their article "Results of the Magic Towns Programme Tlatlauquitepec, Puebla: a vision of the social actors". Considering that the results of this research indicate that 65% of the MSMEs surveyed are trained, which indicates that training in this sector needs to be improved.

In addition to this situation, having a young sector leader of the companies in the research area and with a high school and undergraduate education is something positive because they can improve customer service and apply tourism marketing strategies in the region, we must also take into account that companies must enter into tax and financial formality for greater growth and security for our visitors, according to the current tax laws.

4.6 Conclusions

From the results obtained we can determine that tourism is not considered as a main activity but as a second option by the people interviewed, however it is considered as an opportunity for the MSMEs of the Municipality of Chilapa de Álvarez Guerrero who are a specific sector that live from tourism, To this end, the support of municipal, state and federal authorities is required to promote the growth and development of this sector, through the provision of security, infrastructure, training and appropriate environments for the business sector to provide and welcome tourism in the region in the right way; This denotes new lines of research such as delimiting a specific sector, to identify support needs and to identify other niches of tourism business opportunities such as ecological tourism - rural or magic town.

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