

Chapter 5 The economic, cultural and gastronomic activity that drives Yucatán as a sustainable tourism destination

Capítulo 5 La actividad económica, cultural y gastronómica que impulsa Yucatán como destino turístico sostenible

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Abstract

Tourism is a key economic activity for any destination since it allows it to promote its tourist attractions and generate income for the population through the exchange of goods and services. The present study seeks to know to what extent the economic, cultural and gastronomic activities that are carried out in the State of Yucatan contribute to Sustainable Tourism, which must be ecologically friendly, economically possible and equitable for the communities. This study is part of a national study led by RedAyN, the entity responsible for the information collection instrument, which in this case was a questionnaire addressed to a sample of 351 visitors to the State of Yucatan and it was found that the respondents confirmed that Both culture and gastronomy contribute to Sustainable Tourism in the entity. As well as the fact that tourism sustainability will only be possible when taking full advantage of the economic, social, cultural and natural resources of a locality, the visitor is left satisfied, and the inhabitants of the place are affected as little as possible. Yucatán is achieving this due to the partnership between society and government, where the former have become guardians of the State's natural resources and the legislation and conservation of public and natural spaces.

Tourism, Sustainable, Culture, Gastronomy, Economy

Resumen

El turismo es una actividad económica clave para cualquier destino, ya que le permite promover sus atractivos turísticos y generar ingresos a la población a través del intercambio de bienes y servicios. El presente estudio busca conocer en qué medida las actividades económicas, culturales y gastronómicas que se llevan a cabo en el Estado de Yucatán coadyuvan al Turismo Sostenible, que debe ser amigable ecológicamente, posible económicamente y equitativo para las comunidades. El presente estudio forma parte de un estudio nacional liderado por la RedAyN, ente responsable del diseño y validación del instrumento de recolección de información que en este caso fue un cuestionario que se dirigió a una muestra de 351 visitantes al Estado de Yucatán y se encontró que los encuestados confirman que tanto la cultura como la gastronomía contribuyen al Turismo Sostenible en la entidad. Así como el hecho que la sostenibilidad turística sólo será posible cuando aprovechando al máximo los recursos económicos, sociales, culturales y naturales de una localidad, se deje satisfecho al visitante, y los habitantes del lugar resulten lo menos afectados posibles. Yucatán lo está logrando debido a la mancuerna entre sociedad y gobierno, donde los primeros se han convertido en guardianes de los recursos naturales del Estado y los segundos trabajan por la legislación y conservación de los espacios públicos y naturales.

Turismo, Sostenible, Cultura, Gastronomía, Economía

5.1 Introduction

Yucatan, Mexico, is a State of the Mexican Republic carved with traditions, color and unique aromas, where the exuberant nature of its land converges with the modernity of its services and the warmth of its people. Yucatan has a diversity of tourist attractions among which cenotes, beaches, trails, among others, that provide invaluable experiences to visitors. Yucatan has internationally recognized archaeological sites, which attract thousands of tourists every year, who are amazed by the originality of its ancestral constructions surrounded by the unique nature of the region.

Merida, its capital city, does not go unnoticed, its transformation in recent years has made it a point of reference in the Yucatan Peninsula, for its economic, social and sustainable development. Merida is a city of novelties, in which today one can see everything from electric transport, bicycle lanes to horse-drawn carriages, as a mechanism to protect animals. Merida offers visitors a number of entertainment options for all budgets, walking in its historic center, touring its neighborhoods, enjoying the rhythm of a jacana, the color of the culture, knowing its historic buildings, tasting a variety of typical dishes and desserts, make tourists, touring the city from end to end, with the tranquility and security of its streets and public spaces. The city offers a diversity of food, transport and entertainment services, so that tourists can travel to natural spaces in the interior of the state to experience alternative tourism, such as bathing in the cenotes, cycling or practicing extreme sports like rappelling. The white city of Merida, Yucatan has a diverse hotel infrastructure to suit any budget. The best thing is undoubtedly the hospitality and friendliness of its people, always ready and cordial to help tourists, regardless of their origin.

Tourism is a key economic activity for any country, as it generates an important income for its inhabitants, when they offer products and services to visitors and obtain income for it. Therefore, the aim of this research study is to find out to what extent the economic, cultural and gastronomic activities carried out in the State of Yucatan contribute to sustainable tourism. Therefore, the present research aims to identify to what extent the economic, cultural and gastronomic activities implemented in the State of Yucatan in the field of tourism contribute to Sustainable Tourism.

The research design contemplated the application of a survey addressed to a sample of 351 visitors to the city of Merida, who, as national and international tourists, expressed their perception of the economic, cultural and gastronomic activities that they identify as contributing to sustainable tourism in the State of Yucatan.

The topic is relevant because it assesses the relevance of tourism efforts implemented in the state of Yucatan through a diversity of cultural and gastronomic activities that promote sustainable tourism that not only seeks the preservation of current natural resources, but goes beyond that, to achieve the economic development of the region and raise the quality of life of its inhabitants.

5.2 Theoretical review

5.2.1 Tourism

Tourism is the temporary movement of people on their travels to places other than where they regularly live. According to Macias, Corral and Izurieta (2020) "tourism is one of the few productive activities in which it is possible to obtain income, benefit communities and at the same time conserve the environment". (p. 300)

Tourism is a complex phenomenon that encompasses multiple sectors and agents, and should be studied as a system whose interactions cannot be separated from the tourist destination where the activity takes place (Moreno, Korstanje and Picaso, 2020, p. 1).

According to Murcia, Ramírez, Valderrama and Morales (2017, p. 22) tourism has stood out in the last ten years as part of the tertiary sector, strengthened to a large extent by the connectivity brought about by technological development, allowing the world to show the different cultural windows and exotic places that dazzle their visitors, and with sites of interest for the development of business, research, sport, leisure, allowing the mobility of a significant number of people, to make this dynamic a profitable business, which with innovation in the dimensions: economic, environmental protection and social equity, allow the development of social and individual competitive ventures, projecting the sector in any region.

Tourism activity, depending on how it is planned, can help to lift people out of poverty and improve their lives, because tourism has the potential to promote economic growth and investment in localities through employment opportunities, income distribution and the promotion of other activities such as agriculture, fishing and handicrafts (Morillo, 2011, p. 136).

For Loo, Plaza and Medina (2021, p. 266), due to the dynamic nature of tourism, it becomes a significant source of income and employment, in which given its nature, it establishes links with other productive activities, giving rise to the creation of productive chains, due to the fact that it requires a large amount of goods and services.

According to Espeso (2019, p. 1105) the new publics, with the use of technology, are transforming tourism, due to the processes of disintermediation and co-production of spaces and experiences created in a collaborative manner, in which different agents are involved.

Tourism trends are being impacted by new technologies, particularly the internet, and the services offered through it, generating important changes in the application of these services (Navarro, Almaguer, Moreno and Hernández, p. 87).

5.2.2 Sustainability

The deterioration of the surrounding ecosystem in general puts the natural heritage at serious risk of loss. The concern and resistance of local actors who see their traditional way of life affected by entering into an unprecedented task that, although it brings pecuniary benefits, is provoking the outbreak of disputes and resistance within the community (Espinal, Betancourt, Scarpetta and Cruz, 2020, p. 25).

Economic development around the world has brought with it the indiscriminate use of resources, which has given rise to a greater awareness of the need for development to be sustainable, where not only the economic, but also the social and environmental impacts are taken into account. (Manzano-Durán, Peñaranda-Peñaranda y Luna-Quintero, 2021, p. 16).

According to López, López and Ancona (2005) sustainable development incorporates the word sustain from three approaches: social, economic and ecological, considering that for it to be sustainable, it means that from all points of view it must continue indefinitely and therefore proposes mechanisms to raise the quality of life of the population, in addition to conserving and restoring natural resources, maintaining ecological processes, biological diversity, gender equity, race, creed, responsible distribution of resources, etc. (p. 5), which implies a change of attitudes, ethical and educational aspects, awareness, responsibility and a commitment of all social groups that inhabit the planet. (p. 5).

The concept of sustainable development explains the integral and inevitable link between the natural system and development. It refers to a process of transformation in which the exploitation of natural resources, investment and scientific and technological progress seek to satisfy present and future needs (Cardoso, 2006, p. 7). Taking care not to put present resources at risk for future generations.

The growth of tourism in natural environments gives rise to the need to promote socially sustainable actions, mainly those that reduce the negative impacts on the natural and social environment that can be created (Moral-Moral, Fernández-Alles, Sánchez-Franco, 2018, p. 3).

What is ultimately unsustainable is an economic system focused on the pursuit of short-term private profit, which is committed to indefinite economic growth on a planet with limited resources, without taking into account the environmental and social consequences (Vilches, Gil-Pérez, 2016, p. 2).

5.2.3 Sustainable tourism

Tourism development should be based on the criteria of sustainability, i.e. it should be ecologically bearable, economically convenient and equitable from an ethical and social perspective for local communities (Amador, 2021, p. 33).

According to Cánoves, Villarino and Herrera (2006), sustainable tourism should be based on the following principles:

- 1) Making optimal use of environmental resources, a key element for tourism development, helping to conserve natural resources and biological diversity.
- 2) Respecting the socio-cultural authenticity of the host communities, preserving their potentialities as well as their values, in favour of achieving understanding and tolerance between cultures.
- 3) Ensuring long-term economic viability, benefiting all stakeholders, creating stable employment opportunities, earning income for the local communities. (p. 209)

According to Bertoni (2008, p. 158) the economic sustainability of tourism is associated in the medium term with the possibility of maintaining the quality of the resources, simply because the purpose is to increase the well-being of the visitor and to ensure that the tourist business is repeated.

According to the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Navigation of Malaga (2010, p.19) sustainable tourism can be defined as "the balance between the maximum use that can be made of the economic, social, cultural and natural resources of the destination area versus the satisfaction of visitors and the negative impacts on the host society or the environment that can be caused".

Sustainable tourism must stop being just a strategy with multiple interpretations and become a reality that can be achieved and adjusted to the specific situation of each place (Torres, 2013, p. 165).

From which arises the term ecotourism, which promotes ethical tourism, which seeks on the one hand the welfare of communities and on the other hand the operation of an entrepreneurial, group or cooperative business (Martínez, 2017, p. 3).

Tourism sustainability should be seen as a key tool for economic growth (Serrano-Amado, Montoya-Restrepo, Cazares, 2018, p. 107).

5.3 Methodology

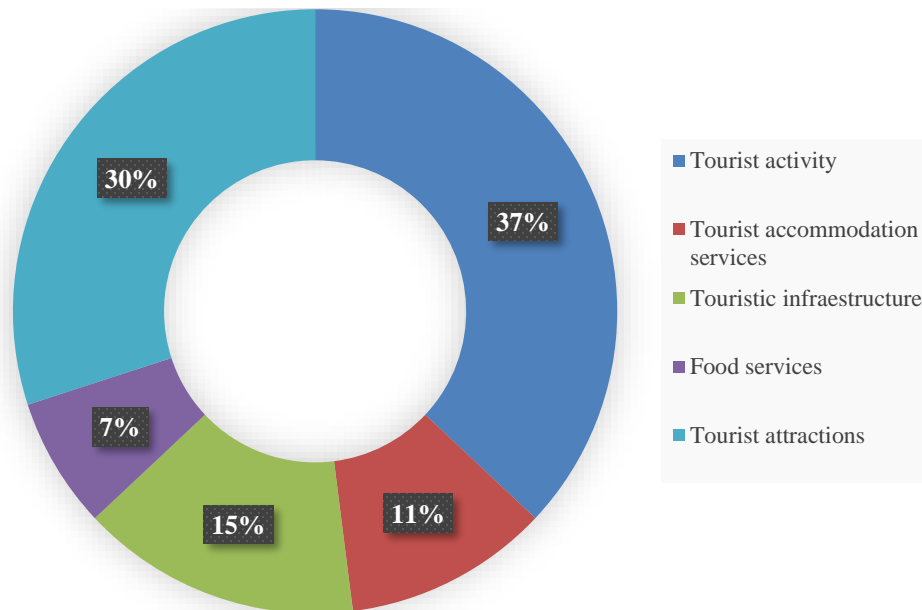
The research study was conducted in four stages, in the first stage the problem that would be addressed in the research study was defined, in this case identifying to what extent the economic, cultural and gastronomic activities carried out in the state contribute to sustainable tourism in the entity.

In the second stage, a review of the literature was carried out to clarify what sustainable tourism is and its impact on the life of a community, for which the survey was chosen as the data collection technique, and using the tourist questionnaire designed by the RedAyN, a sample size of 351 visitors of both national and international origin was calculated. With regard to the calculation of the sample size, it was found that because the number of visitors that made up the universe to be approached was infinite, the sample size was calculated with a confidence level of 95%, a probability of success of 65%, a probability of failure of 35% and an estimation error of 5%, giving a total sample size of 351 people to be surveyed.

In the third stage, data was collected by surveying visitors to the city of Mérida by means of a personal interview; the information collected was then entered into a database designed by the RedAyN. The last stage was the analysis of the results, in which a review of the answers obtained in the survey was carried out, and a discussion of the findings was drafted, presenting the main ideas in the conclusions section.

5.4 Results

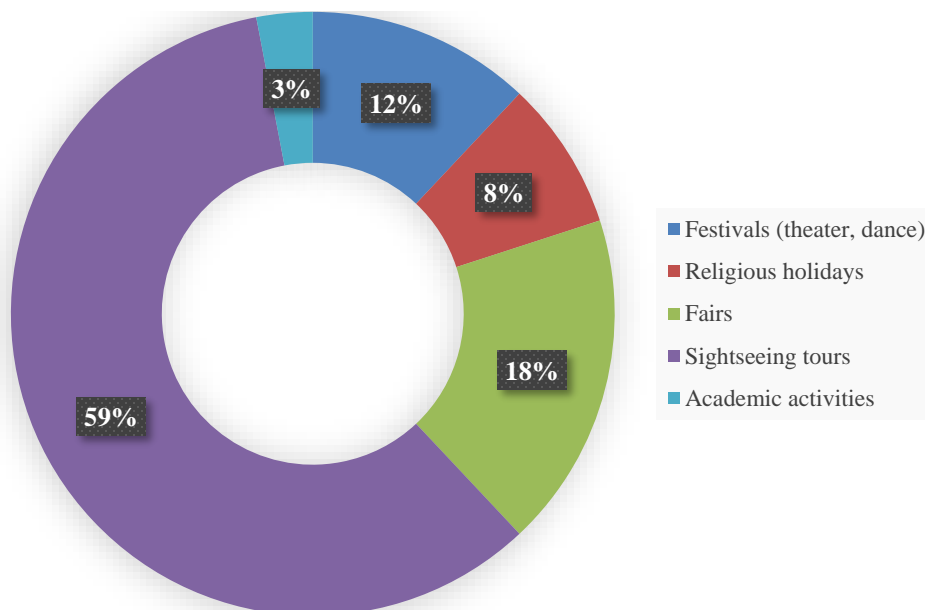
48% of the sample was made up of women and 52% of men, where just over 40% of the total sample reported an age between 20 and 34 years old, finding that the two main reasons that have the greatest influence among the visitors of the sample surveyed in their decision to visit a tourist area are the tourist activity and attractions, as shown in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 Influence on the decision to visit a tourist site

Source: Own elaboration, (2022)

Yucatan has a permanent tourist activity, since it offers lodging services, transport and access to a great variety of tourist attractions, which is precisely the second reason why visitors decide to visit a tourist area. This first finding confirms that tourism is a lively economic activity that generates employment in the state and therefore income for thousands of Yucatecans who offer tourist services to visitors.

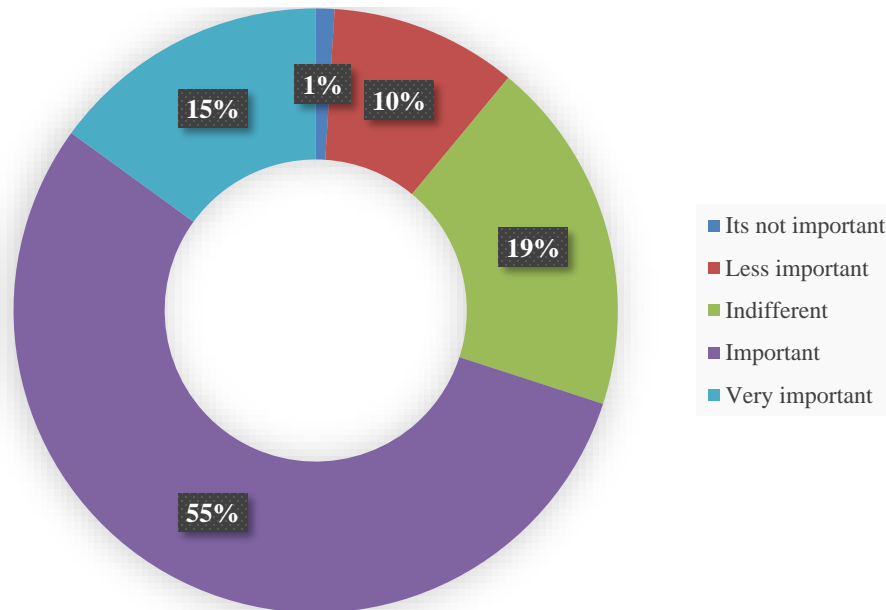
According to the sample of visitors surveyed, the main activity that influences the decision to visit a place is sightseeing tours, in which visitors can get to know emblematic places of the tourist destination visited. However, it was found that the third activity that respondents consider influences their decision to visit a place are festivals (theatre, dance, among others), which shows that culture contributes to tourism in Yucatan, since dance stands out for its colour, dance and original music, and regional theatre is recognised for its creativity and humour. The above can be seen in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2 Activities influencing the decision to visit a place

Source: Own elaboration, (2022)

Regarding gastronomy, Yucatan has unique traditional dishes in the region, among which cochinita pibil, relleno negro, papadzules, poc chuc and Tzic de venado stand out. When questioning the selected sample of visitors to the State of Yucatan, as to whether food is a decisive factor in the choice of a tourist destination to visit, it was found that more than half of the respondents answered that it is important, to which adding the percentage of respondents who considered it very important, we would be having that out of every 10 visitors to the State of Yucatan, 7 tourists consider that food is a decisive factor in the choice of a tourist destination to visit. This confirms the significant role that gastronomy plays in tourism in Yucatan. The above can be seen in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3 Food as a decisive factor in the choice of a tourist destination to visit

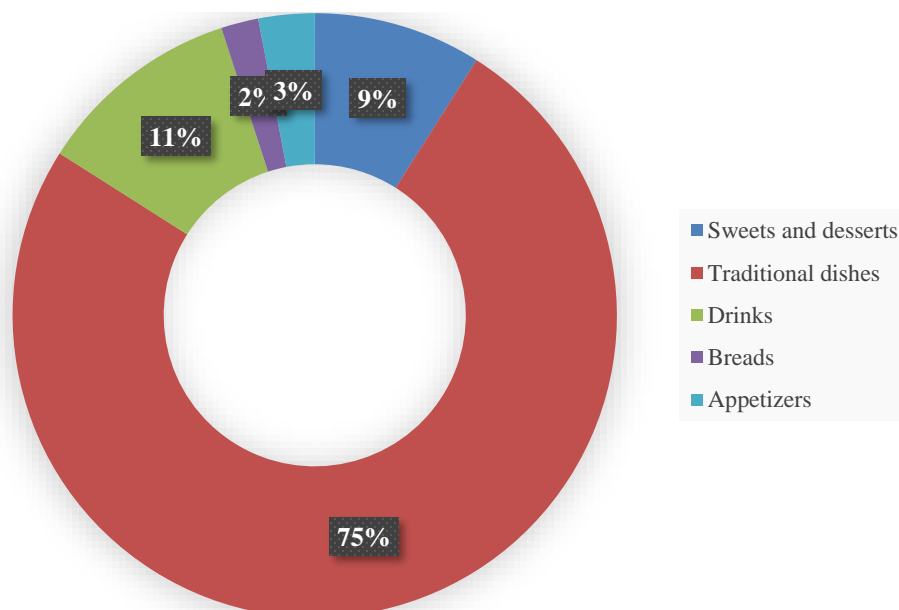


Source: Own elaboration (2022)

Among the traditional gastronomic products that visitors indicated as decisive when choosing a tourist destination to visit are the traditional dishes of the place they visit, as can be seen in Figure 5.4. According to the responses of the visitors surveyed, the food should be accompanied by the traditional drinks of the place, such as lime water or horchata, in the case of Yucatan.

According to the responses obtained, the visitors addressed in the survey, if they consider the gastronomy of the tourist destination visited, mainly its traditional dishes and beverages.

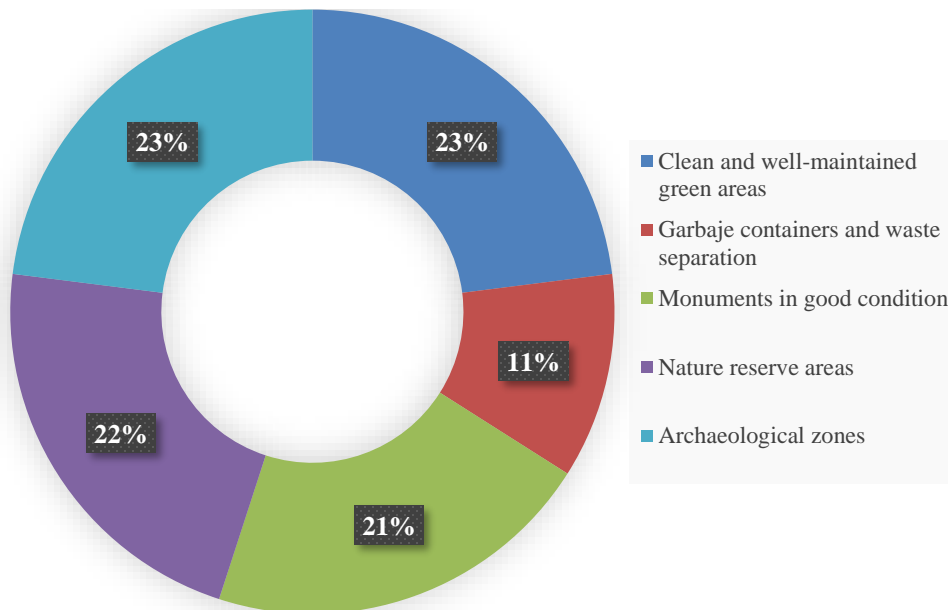
Figure 5.4 Gastronomic products as a factor in deciding on a tourist destination



Source: Own elaboration (2022)

With respect to the conservation of the environment and cultural attractions, the sample surveyed stated that the best-kept spaces in the State of Yucatan are green areas and archaeological zones, followed by nature reserves, as can be seen in Figure 5.5. Yucatan has nature reserves in the interior of the State, which surround communities where inhabitants have organised themselves into cooperatives to offer tourist services to visitors. Among the most common services are access to cenotes, where tourists can bathe and practice aquatic activities. There are also tours along the trails, where tourists learn about the attractions of the visited community.

Figure 5.5 Conservation of the environment and cultural attractions



Source: Own elaboration (2022).

5.5 Discussion

Based on the literature consulted in this research study, in which sustainable tourism is defined as the balance between the maximum use of the resources of an entity, the satisfaction of visitors and the negative effects it can have on the host society, it was found that this balance is achieved in Yucatan, because society and government have integrated to offer tourism products to visitors, The negative effects on rural communities are minimised because the inhabitants of the localities themselves, organised through cooperatives, offer tourist attractions to visitors and become the guardians and protectors of the natural resources under their protection. The tourist strength of the State is supported by its attractions, culture and gastronomy, which according to the survey carried out, is appreciated by tourists, who not only value them, but also become a decisive factor for visiting the State.

5.6 Conclusions

Based on the results obtained from the survey applied to visitors to the State of Yucatan, the relevant role that tourism plays for the State and its municipalities is confirmed, due to the fact that it has countless tourist attractions, which have become sources of employment for the inhabitants of the communities in which they are located, highlighting the archaeological sites and nature reserves, where tourists pay to have access to these unique spaces, among which cenotes stand out.

It was found that culture also contributes positively to tourism, since visitors are interested in learning more about the State, its customs, traditions, dance, music and theatre, in which there is a special type of regional theatre.

Gastronomy has a stellar role in tourism in Yucatan, because, according to the survey, visitors stated that traditional dishes can be a deciding factor for visiting a tourist destination, since Yucatan has, in addition to its traditional dishes, unique drinks and desserts such as dulce de yucca, nace and ciricote.

This research study confirms what is stated in the literature that culture and gastronomy contribute to the tourism development of a destination. Furthermore, sustainable tourism is only possible to the extent that there is a commitment by society to make a rational and responsible use of natural resources, ensuring that visitors are also jointly responsible for this care.

To the extent that there is collaboration between society and government, opportunities will be created that allow not only the responsible use of environmental resources, but also their preservation, to be enjoyed and used by future generations.

Therefore, to the extent that society and government make a rational use of economic, social, cultural and natural resources, keep visitors satisfied, and ensure the quality of life of the citizens of the host place, it will be possible to achieve an integral development in the communities.

It is a reality that environmental protection institutions have also played a key role, since they are in charge of enforcing the law when there is damage to the environment. Without losing sight of the fact that sustainability not only entails the optimal use of natural resources, but also of economic, social and cultural resources.

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