

Community Tourism In Ecuador: A Special Case In The Rio Indillama Community, Yasuní National Park

Carlos Mestanza Ramon ^{*1}, Maritza Sanchez Capa ¹, Angel Cunalata Garcia ¹,
Mirian Jimenez Gutierrez ¹, Marco Toledo Villacís ¹, Aurora Ariza Velasco ¹

¹ Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo, Extensión Norte Amazónica, Facultad de Recursos Naturales, Puerto Francisco de Orellana, Orellana 51002, Ecuador;

Abstract— Community tourism is a recent tourism initiative that is being developed in Latin America as an alternative to traditional tourism. This tourism typology aims to contribute to the conservation of the environment and the participation of the local community in the tourist management of the territory.

Community tourism, defined as any solidary tourist activity that allows the active participation of the community from an intercultural perspective and the proper management of cultural heritage, based on a principle of equity in the distribution of local benefits, has been converted since approximately three decades in a strategic activity for many rural and indigenous communities of Ecuador. However, it seems that this process, which began more than thirty years ago, is now showing a marked deceleration and the recovery it has achieved is very little. The objective of the present investigation is to analyze the current state of community tourism, a particular case in the Indillama River Community, Yasuní National Park, and to be able to answer the limiting factors that hinder the takeoff of this activity, born in the same of the indigenous communities.

Keywords— Community tourism; Río Indillama Community; Yasuní National Park; limiting factors.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism as a factor of development is one of the premises of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Some time ago, the secretary general of the UNWTO insisted on political leaders more interest in tourism, since it is part of "a new-new economy" that "is generating more income and more jobs than other traditional sectors"; at the same time, he insisted that tourism "is capable of reducing poverty and supports development" [1,2].

In recent decades, the tourism sector has been immersed in an intense process of strengthening the participation of local communities in developing countries that materialize in Community Tourism initiatives. This paper highlights the important impact of tourism on the regional economy of the region, stating that it has a series of ideal characteristics for the implementation of Community Tourism initiatives; low level of agrarian and industrial development, high rates of poverty and unemployment [1,3].

The community tourism concept appears for the first time in 1985, where aspects related to tourism and rural areas of the least developed countries are analyzed, tourism is considered a

tool to reduce poverty. Community tourism is appropriate in Latin American countries, as it is a fundamental tool to reduce the poverty level of the most depressed areas and contribute to their economic growth. There are several community tourism projects in Latin America [3,4].

Community tourism is appearing strongly in the Andean region, which is based on the local community and the management of the territory. It is a tourist modality in which the local community participates actively in this type of activity and allows generating wealth in rural areas of Latin American countries, through the participation of the local community in tourism management, so that the benefits obtained have an impact on the community itself [4].

In recent years, community tourism has been able to promote the integral development of communities trying to reduce poverty by generating employment and obtaining additional income, avoiding migratory movements. This type of tourism offers the opportunity to create small labor-intensive businesses and employs a relatively higher percentage of women than other sectors, without forgetting that the local community is the essential part of the tourism product [5,6].

Territorial management is very important because it is necessary that tourism be respectful with the environment and responsible with the social environment. Inadequate tourism can degrade habitat and deplete natural resources, while sustainable and responsible tourism can help preserve the rural environment and local culture. In addition, resources can be better managed collectively than individually, since through local management a greater social control over use can be made, which is why it is necessary to stimulate responsible tourism that not only improves the quality of life of rural areas but the natural and cultural resources of the places of destination [3,7,8].

It must also be ecologically sustainable in the long term, economically viable and equitable from an ethical and social perspective for local communities. A good tourism management should conserve natural spaces since nature and culture are the support of tourist activity. The objective of this tourist modality is to preserve the ethnic identity, the valuation and the transmission of the cultural heritage in all its forms, since the native cultures are carriers of values, history and identity [8,9].

Community Tourism provides important benefits in the rural areas of these countries, since, in the first place, it has a direct impact on the families of the local population, on the socioeconomic development of the region and on the lifestyle; Secondly, it stimulates responsible tourism that improves the quality of life of rural areas as well as the natural and cultural resources of the places of destination and, finally, it is a way to eradicate poverty; Let's not forget that tourism is the main exporter of services for developing countries and has a great potential to offer them competitive advantages. In addition, it is the main source of income and foreign currency and in some countries, they represent 40% of its GDP [10,11].

The implantation of community tourism, in the economic area, stimulates the local economy; in the environmental aspect, the promotion of tourism promotes the sustainability and conservation of the environment and optimizes the management of natural resources. Socially it allows the appearance of the concept of associationism, since important natural resources, such as water and land extensions, are for community use; culturally and educationally, the contribution to the recovery of culture, its gastronomy, folklore, customs and allows tourists to learn about pluriculturalism, multilingualism, and biodiversity; and finally, the opportunity to attract tourists who practice responsible behavior with the environment [12,13].

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A. Materials – Study Area.

Yasuní National Park is one of the last pieces of jungle in Ecuador, the most biodiverse place on the planet. Here extraordinary forests that are the heritage of all Ecuadorians and reserve of life on Earth are erected. It is also home to peoples who have developed in close dialogue with the jungle and who know it in depth.



Fig.1. Map of Ecuador showing the location of the Yasuní National Park, the Huaorani Ethnic Reserve and the two Huaorani communities cited in the text. The more heavily shaded areas indicate land over 500 m. [9].

In the last decades, this magnificent region has had to face a complex combination of factors: oil and wood extraction, the income of settlers and missionaries, and the accelerated growth of tourism. To face them, the Yasuní seeks to combine human activity with the conservation of its natural and cultural treasures. Thus, a biosphere reserve was established in the territories between the Napo and Pindoyacu rivers.

The park is located in the eastern-center of the Amazon region and is the largest protected area in continental Ecuador. It was created on July 26, 1979 and has an area of 1'022,736 hectares that houses an extraordinary natural and cultural heritage.

The Waorani, Kichwa, Shuar indigenous peoples and the Tagaeri and Taromenane ethnic groups live in their territory and area of influence, living in voluntary isolation, as well as settlers who have immigrated from different parts of the country. The PNY, together with the Intangible Zone Tagaeri - Taromenane (ZITT) and the Waorani territory, was declared by UNESCO in 1989 as a Biosphere Reserve [14,15].

B. Methodology

The methodology of the present investigation seeks to analyze who they are and what role the main actors of Community Tourism play in the Rio Indillama Community, Yasuní National Park, Ecuador, the current legal framework, and be able to give an answer on the limiting factors that do not let the growth of this activity.

The study used a mixed methodology (qualitative quantitative), not experimental and cross-sectional, and a bibliographical and field review (interviews and surveys) was carried out from 2010 to 2018. The field work was carried out between January and June of 2019 (figure 2).

The methodology has been designed to respond to the need for innovation. The result is a multi-method natural experiment. The start of tourism in the Yasuní National Park is a natural change that allows analysis between periods of recent years. The configuration also allows us to separate the control processes that did not experience the change in the conditions of those that did. The ideal data would be longitudinal, but due to a series of problems and characteristics with respect to the populations, such methods were almost impossible to implement. Therefore, cross sections from different periods were used to compare the effects of the natural experiment. This method still provides a clean comparison of the data from the baseline survey in a tourism period 2010 - 2018 and also a comparison.

This natural experiment was part of a study of multiple methods in which it includes qualitative and participatory elements, such as direct observation in the areas where tourism is developed, interviews and focus groups of the interested parties. Qualitative elements were used to understand stakeholder concerns, design interviews, provide context and nuance to quantitative data, and assist in the interpretation of data. This project was based on the application of semi-structured associated interviews that were designed to measure the main limiting factors of community tourism in the Río

Indillama Community, categorized as economic, social and environmental.

The techniques used in the present study were: (a) observation, (b) on-site interviews with representatives of the main actors of Community Tourism; and (c) the survey that consisted of only 4 questions: perception of tourism, community tourism objectives, current regulations and main problems.



Fig. 2. Investigative team

The results are described qualitatively by economic, social and environmental sections. The final conclusions propose a macro analysis of the problems of the community in the mentioned factors. It is intended to be a starting point for a future SWOT analysis.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Economic

The community tourism little or nothing contributed to the economy and to the improvement of the quality of life, in the community Rio Indillama the indigenous feel disappointed with the administrators of the tourist undertakings. The few incomes and a bad distribution of the royalties left by tourism has caused social conflicts.

Currently, the problem of low or zero economic royalties has been a very strong factor for the members of the community to show a lack of interest in bonding and teamwork.

The implementation of infrastructure has been possible thanks to contributions and gifts from local governments and NGOs, at present the infrastructure presents deteriorations which cannot be repaired due to the lack of proper management of the few resources that enter [16,17].

There is no clarity about the management of economic resources, the lack or non-existence of tariffs for the scarce services they offer contribute even more to the deep crisis in the management and management of community tourism.

In the community there is a crisis in the management model. They do not have a strategic plan that allows the proper functioning of the independent enterprise of the shift managers.

Poor marketing management and the lack of a flagship product is one of the main problems evidenced in the low demand for tourism. The community requires a change in the immediate management model, which should show weaknesses and threats through a SWOT, which should be supplemented and accompanied by the implementation of a star tourism product. When found in a protected area, this product should be oriented towards conservation tourism [18,19].

B. Social

The community tourism model is characterized because the rural communities (indigenous or mestizo) are in charge of at least part of the control of this activity and also receive part of their economic benefits. It is one of the most applied conservation strategies in Ecuador and other tropical countries, considering it an economic alternative that could stop deforestation and other forms of over-exploitation of resources in communities, also contributing to the rescue of local cultures. However, there are several problems that affect the development of this activity.

In other words, community tourism from an indigenous perspective has been seen as a panacea for development and has the support of states, NGOs, cooperation agencies, and international organizations. However, this model of tourist operation has some problems; Their impact is minimal or no impact on local practices of resource use, they improve only modestly the family income and they depend too much on external aid not only in the short term also but in the long term (and in some cases, indefinitely).

At least part of these limitations is based on a misconception of what life is like in a community; Many of the organizations that support community development programs idealize the relationships that exist among the local people in the group, without considering that in any human group people have different and often conflicting interests and are hardly compatible, especially if the community does not exist, capable and honest leaders who are in charge of minimizing the disagreements and achieving the cooperation of the people in this type of initiatives. There is a lack of knowledge about the valuable tourist resource they possess and a weak appreciation of their ancestral traditions. A significant deficiency observed is the lack of teamwork that facilitates the various activities that arise from tourism processes.

C. Environmental

World tourism has consolidated as one of the most polluting industries: it represents 8% of global emissions of greenhouse gases, of which 12% correspond to air travel. The impact of tourism will grow to 40 percent by 2025 if policies and habits are not changed.

The main results obtained in this research generate an acceptance by the local population towards the sustainable development of the destination through community tourism, with high environmental and sociocultural costs and benefits for low tourism. Therefore, the local population does not perceive negative impact through community tourism and few economic benefits.

The vegetation and fauna of a landscape are one of the elements that we like the most, but through actions that seem "harmless" we affect it, even slightly, anthropogenic pressure can greatly disturb the various biotic elements. In the Río Indillama Community it is evident that tourists carry out actions to collect plants, flowers and seeds, species suffer various changes, and even loss in quality. The best thing will be to invade them as little as possible. The logging that has been destined to constructions of tourist establishments and the constant use of firewood for diverse uses, can affect especially the younger species, and also the species that are destined to tourist parks and gardens are altered. A great affectation is evidenced by the generation of waste and its poor management. The evidence is impossible to hide on arrival is very easy to observe waste presence everywhere. The ignorance of the impact for the tourism in a bad management has caused to a large extent to the declivity of the tourist growth.

IV. CONCLUSION

To begin with, I believe it is time to put our feet on the ground and accept that many of the proposed community tourism programs do not have the necessary attributes and strength to take off, maintain and grow. This acceptance must mean allocating the funds and efforts assigned to them for other purposes. It is also time to use our imagination and originality to propose other production alternatives and sustainable development in the communities. That is everyone's task, but those who have the ultimate responsibility for

Evaluating and implementing them must be the members of the communities without the influence of external organizations that, in some cases, have benefited from maintaining the status quo or have demonstrated that they do not have the capacity to change it.

The communities have a great challenge ahead and can only face it successfully if they worry as soon as possible to improve their education systems. This is a complex and long-term process that is not based on doing the usual lightning workshops; his final goal should be to teach us what they are not born knowing: respect, responsibility, commitment and a deep love for what they do.

By incorporating community tourism into the life plans of the communities, the leaders have found a relatively easy way to include, at least on paper, a good part of the community. In other words, these projects are a tool commonly used by leaders to demonstrate their management. But in practice, the level of commitment, responsibility and participation of community members in community tourism programs is very variable and does not always correspond to the pattern of distribution of income from the program. This inequity is the result of the interplay of competing interests that exists in all human communities and that only strong, wise and honest leadership can control.

The profusion of projects to train, design and evaluate community tourism programs by foundations and related organizations is surprising if contrasted with the scarcity of projects and activities that effectively bring tourists to the programs. The Ministry of Tourism does not escape this trend, three of the four components of its Community Tourism

program, are technical assistance, training and implementation of quality standards, only the last component is promotion. It would not occur to anyone to deny the need for training, evaluation and development of adequate standards for the success of a tourism program. However, many of the foundations and cooperation agencies stay there because it is a much easier way to demonstrate management by presenting a report with the results of a few days' evaluation or a typical training workshop of dubious results, considering the modular antipedagogic methodologies they use.

As an implication for management, the results of this research may be useful, first of all, for the local community that benefits from the activity generated by community tourism. The managers of the community tourism must continue betting on the sustainable development of the same, since it could generate numerous benefits for the local community, as well as improving the conservation of natural resources. On the other hand, government entities should consider the results obtained in this study, because they could improve tourism development in areas with potential for community tourism, in order to promote the sustainable development of local communities.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ashley, C., Roel, D., & Goodwin, H. (n.d.). Estrategias de Turismo contra la Pobreza: hacer el trabajo de Turismo para los pobres. Un examen de la experiencia. Reporte de Turismo orientado a los Pobres. Retrieved from http://www.propoortourism.org.uk/ppt_report.pdf
- [2] Batista, M. V. (2013). La interpretación del patrimonio en el medio rural. ¿Y ahora qué? Revista ph84. Panorama, 10-11.
- [3] Bengt-Ake, L. (2004). Why the New Economy is a Learning Economy. (D. o. Copenhagen Business School, Ed.) DRUID Working Papers,, 4(1).
- [4] Mooser, A. ; Anfuso, G. ; Mestanza, C. ; Williams, A. Implicaciones de gestión para los sitios escénicos más atractivos a lo largo de la costa de Andalucía (suroeste de España). *Sostenibilidad* 2018, 10 , 1328.
- [5] CEPAL - FAO - IICA. (2013). Perspectivas de la agricultura y del desarrollo rural de las
- [6] Américas. Santiago de Chile: Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe
- [7] (CEPAL) - Organización de las naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura (FAO) - Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación para la Agricultura (IICA).
- [8] LÓPEZ GÚZMAN T. Y SÁNCHEZ CAÑIZARES, S. M. (2009): "Turismo Comunitario y Generación de Riqueza en países en vías de desarrollo. Un estudio de Caso en el Salvador", REVESCO, nº 99, pág. 85-103. ISSN: 1885-8031
- [9] GUERREIRO MARCÓN, E. M. (2007): "O Turismo comunitario como agente de desenvolvimento social e a comunidade Guarani nas Ruínas Jesuíticas de São Miguel das Missões" Revista de Turismo y Patrimônio Cultural, vol. 5, págs. 343-352, ISSN: 1695-7121.
- [10] Mestanza, C.; Saavedra, H.; Gaibor, I.; Zaquinaula, M.; Váscones, R.; Pacheco, O. Conflict and Impacts Generated by the Filming of Discovery Channel's Reality Series "Naked and Afraid" in the Amazon: A Special Case in the Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve, Ecuador. *Sustainability* 2018, 11, 50.
- [11] MACÍA, M. Multiplicidad en los usos de la palma por los huaorani del Ecuador amazónico. Revista botánica de la Linnean Society 2004, 144 , 149-159.
- [12] Blackstock, K. 2005. A critical look at community based tourism. *Community Development Journal* 40: 39-49
- [13] FEPTCE.2010. www.feptce.org/images/stories/contenido/pdfs/estadistic-o-feptce.pdf (consultado Sept. 10 2010).
- [14] Kiss, A. 2004. Is community-based ecotourism a good use of biodiversity conservation funds? *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* 18: 222-237

- [15] Ministerio del Ambiente, Ecociencia, UICN. 2001. La Biodiversidad del Ecuador, Informe 2000. C. Josse (ed).
- [16] Ministerio del Ambiente, Ecociencia, UICN. Quito Ministerio de Turismo. 2010. www.turismo.gob.ec (consultado Sept. 10 2010: noticias.../index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2275:ministro-ehlers-coordina-acciones-de-politica-publica-con-la-feptceycatid=19:noticias-al-dyItemid=151)
- [17] Mestanza, C.; Piccardi, M.; Pranzini, E. Coastal Erosion Management at Callao (Peru) in the 17th and 18th Centuries: The First Groin Field in South America?. *Water* 2018, *10*, 891.
- [18] Organización Mundial de Turismo. 2010. UNWTO World Tourism Barometer January 2010. unwto.org/facts/eng/pdf/barometer/UNWTO_Barom10_1_en_excerpt.pdf. Vol 8, 1 (consultado Sept. 10 2010)
- [19] Redturs.2010. www.redturs.org/nuevas/articulo1.php?ca_codigo=7yhome=1(consultado Sept. 12 2010) Ruiz, E., Hernández, M., Coca, A., Cantero, P., del Campo, A. 2008. Turismo comunitario en el Ecuador, comprendiendo el community-based tourism desde la comunidad. *Revista Pasos* 6: 399-