Research Article

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Sustainable tourism planning in Bahía Solano, Colombia

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Abstract: The municipality of Bahía Solano possesses important tourist attractions. The majority of them consist of natural wonders such as whale, dolphin and bird watching. Its marine area offers diving courses, all types of fishing, surfing, other water sports etc. The enormous amount of natural wealth stands in contrast to the lack of local development and the high rate of poverty among its inhabitants. Bahía Solano has enviable tourist professions but a low level of competition. This research proposes a methodology of social innovation, elaborated by researchers, that involves nature, communities and tour operators, where a connection of surveys with the expectations and perceptions of the different entities (inhabitants, tourists, and tour operators) has been obtained.

Keywords: Tourism plan; Territory planning; Sustainable tourism; Indigenous people; Bahía Solano; Pacific Ocean

1 Introduction

The municipality of Bahía Solano is located in the Colombian department of Chocó, a region of 46,530 km^2 with many contrasts. Here, an abundance of natural richness (jungle, soil resources, and the Pacific Ocean shoreline) conceals the low quality of life of its inhabitants, especially when compared to the other regions of Colombia. According to encolombia (2013), the unsatisfied basic needs (UBN) of this department present indexes higher than the national average, 79.19%, the highest in the whole country. However, there is a great difference between the municipalities within El Chocó, and for the case study carried out (Bahía Solano), the UBN is 30.19%.

The Municipal Development Plan 2016–2019 (Bahía Solano, 2016) was terminated early, inhibiting its effectiveness, due to several difficulties such as civil war conflict or post-conflict, promotion and costs. Based on these needs, the research community [Social Innovation Scientific Park (PCIS), Social Innovation, GEPADES], academia (e.g., UNIMINUTO, University College of Business VSO, Prague – Czech Republic), government (the mayor's office of Bahía Solano) and an institution (Ministry of Tourism) have joined forces to understand the inhabitants better. The primary goal consisted of promoting development that combines exogenous and endogenous variables. Based on that, the mayor of Bahía Solano invited UNIMINUTO to use its Social Innovation National Park unit to generate a process of mutual collaboration on the different issues related to the municipality's current problems.

The Tourist Plan adopted by the municipality was published in 2003, 15 years ago. Consequently, it has lost validity in many different aspects. It requires a new evaluation and the development of a new tourism plan in the face of the new realities of the modern sectoral regulations issued by the national government and in agreement with the Tourism Plan of the Department of Chocó. One of the most evident problems consists in the need to strengthen tourism in the municipality. The Secretary of Culture and Tourism of Bahía Solano raised the need to generate a new Tourism Development Plan to determine the programs and projects to prioritise and those that are in agreement with the different players. Based on that need, the current study presents the methodology of the social innovation route proposed by the researchers that takes into account the natural landscapes, local communities, and managers of tourism. The primary goal consists in developing a survey to observe the link between the expectations and perceptions of the different entities (inhabitants, tourists and tour operators), detecting the different needs and

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problems in the exploitation of community tourism in the regional development of this municipality.

The Municipality of Bahía Solano was created by Ordinance No. 8 of November 19, 1962, of the Departmental Assembly of Chocó. It previously belonged to the municipality of Nuquí. The Municipality of Bahía Solano is geographically delineated in the west by the Pacific Ocean, in the north by Jury and Carmen del Darién, in the south by Nuquí and Alto Baudó and in the east by Bojayá. Bahía Solano has a total rural area of 1667 km², and its urban area consists of 95 km². The average temperature is 27 °C.

The main productive and economic activities of the municipality are public employment, artisanal fishing, trade, tourism, agriculture and forestry extraction. Other economic sectors with smaller participation consist of joinery, carpentry, construction, the sale of meals, domestic work, informal trade, loading and unloading of ships, and transport of passengers by land, sea, or river (República de Colombia Ministerio de Trabajo, 2013).

The Municipality of Bahía Solano comprises the municipal seat (Ciudad Mutis), six subdivisions, the Corregimientos (Nabugá, Huina, Huaca, Cúpica, El Valle and Mecana), two recognised or formalised indigenous reserves and two in the process of formalisation (Boroboro, Poza Mansa, El Brazo and Villa Nueva Juna), an extensive collective territory of Black communities (overlapping with the Corregimientos), the Utría National Natural Park and six Natural Reserves of civil society that also comprise areas of special management. A total of 87% of the population living in Bahía Solano recognises itself as Black, mixed race, African Colombian or African descendent; 9% as indigenous, and 4% Mestizo and others. According to the data in Table 1 (Population City, 2018), the 2016 population projection for Bahía Solano was 9,351 inhabitants (1.9% of the total population of the department).

The mayor's office of Bahía Solano, under the leadership of Harley Liliana Ortiz, has joined UNIMINUTO and especially the Social Science Research Park to help with different problems of the municipality. One of these problems evidenced on the first visit was the need to strengthen local tourism. The municipality elaborated a Tourism Development Plan in 2003, which is already outdated. The Secretary of Culture and Tourism of Bahía Solano raised the need to generate a new Tourism Development Plan for the department to determine the programs and projects to prioritise with the participation of different local players. The municipality of Bahía Solano presents a vocation for ecological tourism with a rich culture and ecosystem already exploited for tourism. The Bahía Solano Tourist Plan should contribute to fostering this sector and to tracing the route for tourist exploitation.

The PCIS of UNIMINUTO consists of an open platform that integrates local players and resources from diverse institutions. The idea is to articulate the agencies of the Science, Technology, and Innovation System with the local communities of the most vulnerable territories to develop projects based on social innovation for the support of the people, the construction of communities and the transformation of territories with a focus on integral development. We have proceeded to evaluate the existing tourism development plan and update it as a new tourism plan following the new sectoral regulations of the national government and in agreement with the Tourism Plan of the Chocó Department. The preliminary results of Gómez & Antošová (2019) have contributed to the next stage of the project on spatial approach for framing tourism development in Bahía Solano. Prior to the analysis stage, appropriate methodologies and techniques were chosen in depth to study regional development of this territory because this area was considered economically undeveloped. However, the region has achieved success in local tourism (Antošová & Salamanca, 2019), and an opportunity arose in the perception of providing security (Šilhánková, Goméz, Antošová, & Pondělíček, 2018) in local Colombian tourism. Based on that previous research, we seek similar approaches that help answer these main questions: How to preserve and economically develop the poorest areas of the Bahía Solano? What is keeping local tourism back? And, what interpreted products should this place promote? What experiences obtained from the studies in the peripheral region of the Czech Republic can be extended to the municipality of Bahía Solano? If there

Table 1: Rural population: population according to gender and population by age range (2016).

Population from the Bahía Solano Municipality 2016	Urban	Rural	Population according to gender 2016	
			Men	Women
9351	4906	4445	4557	4794

Source: Population City, 2018

are results and a similar context for the territorial planning in Bahía Solano with positive and negative impacts, we could put the idea of local tourism in this area into practice to maintain non-economically developed zones through the implementation of new tourist products such as an ecotourism trail (see Annex Figure 7).

2 Theoretical framework

According to (Brunori & Rossi, 2007; George, Mair, & Reid, 2009; Lara, 1999), the term "rural area" is often confused with other terms such as rural destination (Barbosa, 2007; Dickinson, Robbins, & Fletcher, 2009), but it consists of a point of arrival or a reception area for tourists. The essential components of local tourism include (i) focal attraction, (ii) cultural heritage, (iii) health services, (iv) complements to local attractions, (v) supplementary activities, (vi) access systems, (vii) the community and (viii) integration characteristics. "One of the great challenges facing tourism is to understand clearly the factors that motivate people to choose a particular destination over other possibilities" (Ritchie and Crouch, 2010). Rickly & McCabe (2017) looked for these possibilities in the central resources and attractions of the area, and what motivates the tourist to visit a particular area is the expectation of a memorable experience. These resources and attractions include the physiography of the destination, its culture, history and cultural heritage; a range and mix of available activities; an adequate superstructure, entertainment and links with the market. Moreover, the same authors have emphasised that while entertainment is often a complementary activity, it may become the primary attraction of the destination (Iorio & Corsale, 2010; Mejía González, 2014; Ritchie & Crouch, 2010). Other authors point out (Gonzáles Mantilla & Neri, 2015; Morales González, 2008) both the positive and negative impacts of local tourism and its successes and failures, particularly how they are integrated and guided by the participation of its key players (without leaving the community aside) (Brunori & Rossi, 2007; Conradson & Pawson, 2009), as well as how indigenous people are involved in the planning process of the touristic destination (Sánchez-Zárate, 2016; Tosun, 2005) and in the process of territorial development (Le Blanc, 2010; Lorenzini, Calzati, & Giudici, 2011; Rescia, Pons, Lomba, Esteban, & Dover, 2008; Terluin, 2003).

Similarly, some authors have established the concept of alternative tourism as a lighter approach to the traditional and dominant approaches. The majority of existing research based on cultural tourism often refers to the cultural heritage environment (Gomezelj & Mihalič, 2008; Hausmann, 2007; Petrović-Ranđelović & Miletić, 2012; Reisinger, 2009; Waitt, 2000).

The cultural heritage environment has usually been framed on the dimensions of the past such as traditional buildings, museums, local cultural traditions and unique customs, local festivals and folklore, historical architecture and restorations, traditional and cultural panoramas, including the rural areas of the capitals, etc. It seems, however, that there is little research available that focuses specifically on other forms of cultural tourism, such as those related to creative cultural industries (arts and music), as valuable assets for rural cultural development. For this reason, according to George, Mair and Reid (2009), a series of essential aspects of rural tourism development are under consideration:

- First aspect: The role of tourism in the local culture is complex and not always well understood.
- Second aspect: Local tourism changes the rural landscape.
- Third aspect: The local community is a central component of rural cultural tourism.
- Fourth aspect: Sustainable local tourism and the sustainable rural community should be visualised with symmetry.
- Fifth aspect: Local tourism is not an addition to rural cultural development policies but should be an integral part of them.
- Sixth aspect: Planning is essential for the success of rural tourism development.

3 Methodology

The proposed method is based on three key activities: the evaluation of secondary data, a compilation of data by primary source and the post-design improvement or elimination of current activities. The main objective as a design of the tourism plan has been projected into the national and departmental development plans through the articulation of four specific objectives that link tourism products (interpreted and not interpreted) in the region Chocó, specifically in the municipality of Bahía Solano. To develop these activities, the project has been guided by the Scientific Park in Bogotá (PCIS).

WHALE SIGHTINGS + ALREADY INTERPRETED ⟶
EVALUATE (surveys with tourists, inhabitants, tour operators and key actors)

ECOTOURISTIC PATHS – NOT INTERPRETED ⟶ INTERPRETING, DESIGNING THE IMPROVEMENT AND DESIGN PROCESS TO SYSTEMATISE A TOURIST PRODUCT (qualitative surveys with indigenous people, focus groups with tourism managers, brainstorming)

ARTISANAL FISH + ALREADY INTERPRETED ⟶ EVALUATE (surveys with tourists, inhabitants, tour operators and key actors)

BEACH AND SUN + ALREADY INTERPRETED ⟶ EVALUATE (surveys with tourists, inhabitants, tour operators and key actors)

Specifically, an action protocol has been proposed (see Figure 1) to carry out the work in the field (collection of information from primary sources):

1. Apply the surveys designed for the three groups of interest (inhabitants, organisations and tourists).
2. Carry out focus groups with the mayor's office and tourism managers in this area.
3. Evaluate the results and analyze them through specialised software in qualitative and/or quantitative data processing.

The data collection was carried out in the municipality as follows.

As part of the agenda, focus groups were held with tourism sector organisations in two stages of 4 hours. In each stage, there were five to seven groups with a maximum of 22 participants and three instructors who monitored and recorded the interviews. In principle, the groups answered five questions (presentation of the team and research proposal, the context of the current state, level of representation and participation of the sectors).

The second stage was carried out through a round-table where the proposals for Bahía Solano's strategies of tourism development were established. Among the groups, associations were presented by national and international entities.

Note: Scientific Park of Social Innovation, University Corporation Minuto de Dios (UNIMINUTO), Wildlife Pacific Institution of Ecotourism and Research, Infrastructure and Planning Advisor of the Mayor of Bahía Solano, Journal Director/Reporter, University College of Business in Prague (Czech Republic), Association of Women for Fish Marketing (MASMEPEZ), Botanical Garden of the Pacific, Coordinator of Culture and Tourism (Bahía Solano Municipality), Program Manos a la Paz, Mayorship, Posada del Mar Bahía Solano, Ambassador of Chocó, Departmental Counselor of Chocó Heritage, National Police, Dance and Aerobics Instructor, Chiviguí Natural Reserve, Community Association of the Municipality, Music Professor of Bahía Solano, Community Inter-Institutional Group of Fisheries of the Chocoano Pacific, Hotel Balboa Inn SAS, Legal Representative Corporation MareoArigua and coordinator of Culture and General Tourism of the Dolphins, Posada Rocas de Cabo, Las Maria Community Action, Cabaña – el biengerminaya, Caguama Association, Utría National Park, Chocó Tourism Police, Pozamanza Governor, Legal Representative of the North Pacific General Community Council, Students of the municipality, Association of Pikemen, Guard of Alto río Valle Boro-BoroBorzaPozamanza and El Brazo, President of the Chocó Valley Rice Growers Association, President of the Junta Miraflorez Community Action, Police Inspector, Sharlyts Transport and Representatives of the Frontepaz Project.

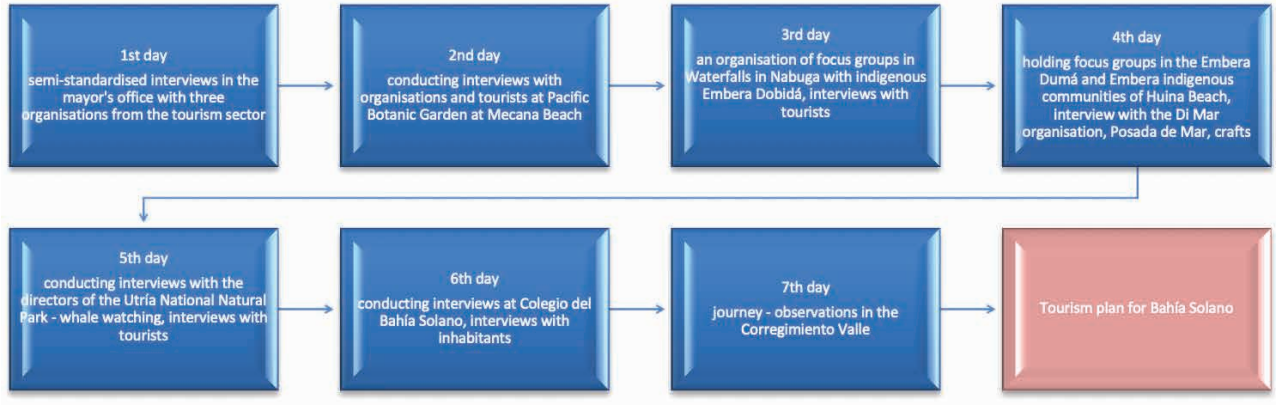


Figure 1: Action protocol,
Source: Researchers' elaboration

During the fieldwork in Bahía Solano, it was possible to inquire about the positive and negative impacts of tourist activities carried out according to the responses of tourists (66) and agents directly involved in the tourist activity of the municipality. This allowed the present investigation to gain a holistic perspective and produce a more integrated interpretation.

The article presented an analysis of the interviews of tourists conducted during the visit to Bahía Solano in July 2017. The tourists responded to four researchers who specialised in tourism development. The respondents could express their reasons for their trip, their perceptions of security or insecurity and the reasons for these perceptions, their expectations and the indulgences of the tourist destination.

The data from the standardised interviews were processed with SPSS software. The method of optimal scaling was used in four stages to improve data interpretations, where the behaviours of the variables as well as their categories were observed. The objective of the optimal scaling was to recognise a special profile of tourists and their preferences in Bahía Solano. The Cronbach coefficient (Table 2) informed the reliability that each dimension representsthe distribution of the frequencies of the categories. In each analysis, Cronbach's alpha justified the extraction of a dimension with its values above 0.6.

4 Results

We presented the second part of the research as the main conclusion for the next step of updating the proposed Tourism Plan for Bahía Solano. In the first part, we performed the optimal scaling for other variables of the same research (Antošová, Arias Gómez and Arias Gómez, 2019). We focused on the profile of tourists and their behaviour in Bahía Solano, which is crucial for the proposed improvement strategies for developing the tourism of the municipality.

4.1 Tourist Profile

This type of processed information has led to the definition of a set of profiles (Table 3) that adequately describe the responses of tourists in such a way that certain types of visitors prefer to carry out certain activities and this reveals particular characteristics.

However, according to the frequency of countries, most of the respondents turned out to be other nationalities, which represents the potential scope for tourist attractions in the region once an adequate marketing strategy has been adopted. For obvious reasons, a large number of individual groups corresponded to local tourists who presumably had first-hand knowledge and reference of the natural scenarios of the department of Chocó and the maritime wealth of the country. Among the foreign visi-

Table 3: Country of origin of the respondents

Origin		Frequency
Valid	Germany	10
	Colombia	32
	Italy	4
	France	5
	Spain	7
	United States	4
	Great Britain	3
	Czech Republic	1
	Total	66

Source: Researchers' calculation

Table 2: Estimation of the variables' reliability

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Inertia	Variance %
1. Tourist activity, age, country of origin, overnight stay and origin of destination knowledge, gender (profile)	0.729	0.425	42.481
2. Tourist activity, advertising, reasons for visiting	0.824	0.739	73.917
3. Tourist activity, pleasant or unpleasant perception of the destination or Chocó department	0.740	0.490	49.001
4. Tourist activity, perception of security or insecurity at the destination and the reasons for this perception	0.660	0.595	59.507

Source: Researchers' calculation

tors, German and Spanish nationals stood out, followed by French, Americans and Italians.

The results of the correspondence analysis have led to interesting findings. National tourists tend to visit the region in order to see the habitat of the whales since the biodiversity of the marine fauna of the Pacific coast is widely known in Colombia. However, the foreign tourist is segmented by countries. North Americans, Spaniards and Italians preferred whale watching rather than other activities; French tourists visited the area because of the sun, beach and river-crossing activities. French tourists also focus on observing the fauna and flora in the region. Activities tailored towards ethnic tourism may occur more rapidly since visitors stated that they could be developed in short periods of time (less than one night). Moreover, according to the age range, we noticed different inclinations in practicing the many available activities in their geographical environment. For example, the structural component of whale watching focused on tourists over 51 years old, whereas younger tourists do not feel attracted to this type of activity (Figure 2).

In general terms, whale watching is a predominant activity in tourist preferences, mainly of Colombians. This circumstance triggered a particular interest in knowing the behaviour and environment of this species, and the inhabitants of the region also organised their tourism strategies around this tourist attraction. We therefore considered the need to harmonise the transformation of the tourist products of marine environments with the sustainable conservation of whale environments, in such a way that economic exploitation does not result in any environmental deterioration due to human intervention in animal and maritime contexts.

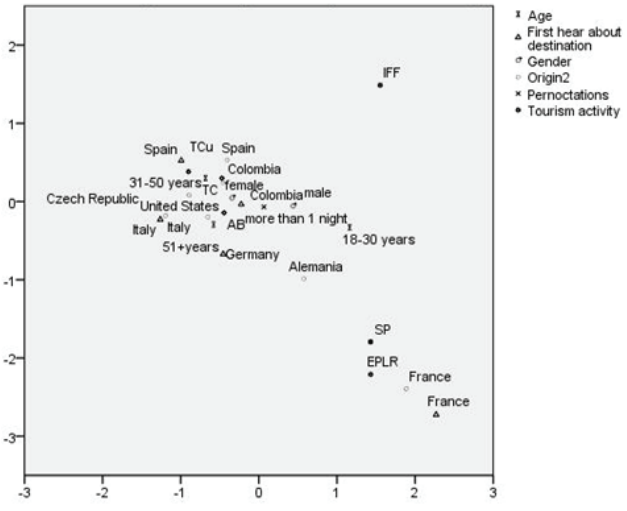


Figure 2: Map of correspondence between variables of tourist activity and profile of tourists

Source: Researchers' calculation.

Note for Figure 2: Categories of variable tourist activity: TCu – Cultural tourism, IFF – Interpretation of flora and fauna, TC – Scientific tourism, AB – Whale watching.

4.2 Touristic activity, public relations and reasons

The model proposed in its analysis stage intersects the relevant variables we took for the investigation: tourist activity, advertising and reasons. We observed for visitors that the activities of scientific tourism and those related to sun and beach are associated with occasional reasons. The activity of whale watching (Figure 3) corresponded to an explicit activity of local tourist interest. We therefore consider whale watching an endogenous activity, which is consistent with the conclusions we obtained from the analysis of the tourist profiles and typologies.

4.3 Tourist activity, pleasant or unpleasant experience

The trends we observed were likely the result of etiology regarding the tourist's interests. Similarly, based on the instruments used, we noticed a preference for the development of the previously mentioned activities and how the tourists felt positive or negative impacts during their stay. Whale watching is an activity associated with a pleasant experience since it links sensations that evoke a strong aesthetic component and demonstrate the biodiverse potential of the municipality's geography. Additionally, experiences that are distinct from the activities of fauna and flora observations (Figure 4) add positive aspects to the richness of the natural environment presented by the municipality. However, it is important to mention the limitations and deficiencies of accommodation.

4.4 Tourist activity, perception of safety and insecurity

The tourist's perception of safety forms a crucial aspect of our analysis. Choosing the time for developing activities such as whale watching might influence the tourist's perception of safety (Figure 5). However, we also observed the disappointment of tourists regarding the security of transportation and the presence of illegal activities of various

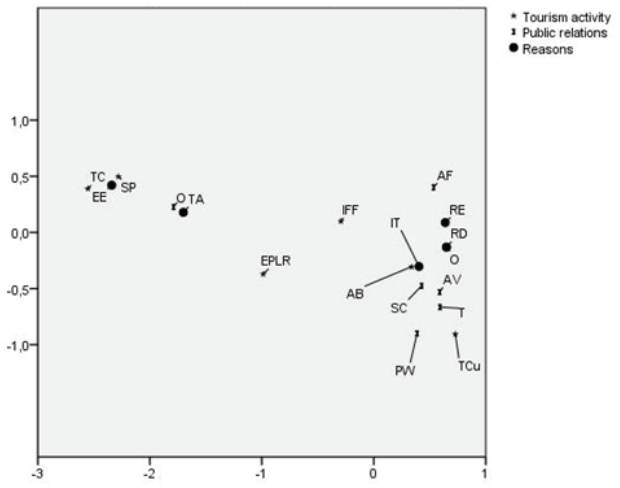


Figure 3: The correspondence map between the variables of tourist activity, public relations and reasons

Source: Researchers' calculation.

Note for Figure 3: Categories of variable tourist activity: TCu – Cultural tourism, IFF – Interpretation of flora and fauna, TC – Scientific tourism, AB –Whale watching, SP – Sun and beach, EPLR – Enter the rivers (Mecana, Guaca can be lowered by pneumatics), ET – Ethnotourism.

Categories of variable public relations: AF – Friends/family, AV – Travel Agency, T – Television, O – Other, e.g., the bible of the great traveler, Lonely Planet, PVV – Websites.

Categories of variable reasons: EE – Specific events, TA – Work here/work mission, IT – Tourist interest, RE – Educational reasons, RD – Relaxation/rest.

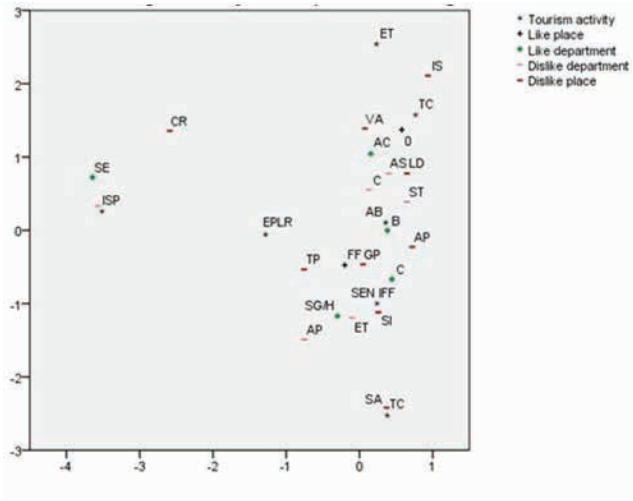


Figure 4: The correspondence map between the variables of tourist activity and tourist perceptions at the destination and Chocó Department

Source: Researchers' calculation

Note for figure 4: Categories of the variable, What do you like in the department: AC – Cultural environment, B – Biodiversity, C – Climate, SE – Ecosystem services, SG/H – people/hospitality.

Categories of the variable, What do you like about the place: A – Architecture, E – Ecotourism, FF – Fauna and flora, T – Tradition.

Categories of the variable, What do you dislike in the department: C – Conflict, I – Insecurity, AS – Absence of services, T – Transport congestion, ET – Tropical diseases, AP – Absence of publicity, ST – Tourist designation.

Categories of the variable, What do you dislike about the place: VA – Access roads, TP – Public transport, LD – Remoteness or distance, SA – Accommodation service, CR – Restaurant quality, GP – Public management, AP – No advertising.

kinds (a negative element in the practice of tourism of this type).

5 Discussion and conclusion

The tourist profiles that seek Bahía Solano as a destination to spend the night in and enjoy its rich geographical environment will find many exclusive and unique attractions. Its high component of biotic resources makes it a fascinating place for national and international tourists with a series of diverse activities to experience. However, the activities contemplated by the Tourism Development Plan of the Bahía Solano municipality must adapt to involve the structural and conjuncture components. The adequacy of the development plan focusing on the definition and organisation of the local tourist route is of vital importance since it allows the inclusion of its components. The municipality will then be better prepared for the increase in the visitors currently registered.

We took into account three groups of players and their major roles in the preparation and organisation of the new tourist route (inhabitants, tourists and organisations), with whom we worked to canvass their points of view based on their experiences in this transfer of activities from the municipality. The result of this interaction with the target groups (in Annex Figure 8) allowed us to understand the reality of the tourist activity, the inhabitants as agents inherent in local concerns, who interact either directly or indirectly with visitors.

We are proposing an action plan for developing tourism in Bahía Solano (Figure 6), which could be the first step towards the next update of the Plan of Tourism in Bahía Solano.

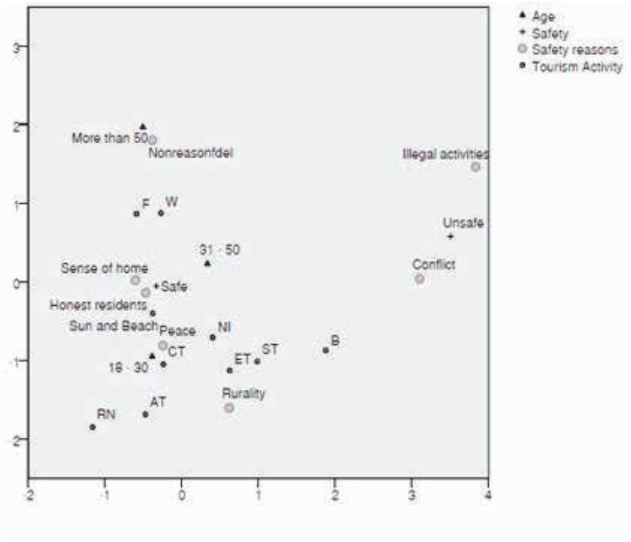


Figure 5: Correspondence map between the variables of tourist activity and the perceptions of safety in the destination Bahía Solano

Source: Researchers' calculation

Note for Figure 5: Categories of the variable Tourism activities: F - Fishing, W - Whales watching, CT - cultural tourism, AT - Agritourism, RN - River navigation, NI - Nature interpretation, ET - Ethnic tourism, ST - Scientific tourism

The tourist fulfils the role of the person who leads the activity, and the player focuses on the tourist activities. Finally, the organisations as agents work to maintain the flow of tourists in the territory as a measure of economic, cultural, social and elemental environmental development since it is the source of growth for the first three stages.

Regarding the first target group (inhabitants), it is imperative to link up their communities (African descendant and indigenous) as the ethnic makeup of the municipality. These communities possess ancestral knowledge, and they keep their customs and local traditions, which enriches the experience, and thus they are also a potential attraction for the person who visits the region.

The formation and strengthening of knowledge in the region by all the players involved in the tourist activity might generate a positive impact and shift the negative perceptions of tourists away from the region.

Due to the increase of tourism in the region, strategies must be consolidated in such a way so as to not negatively impact the ecosystems that are part of the ecotourism attractions and the management of the capacities that each one of them has in the region.

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Annexes

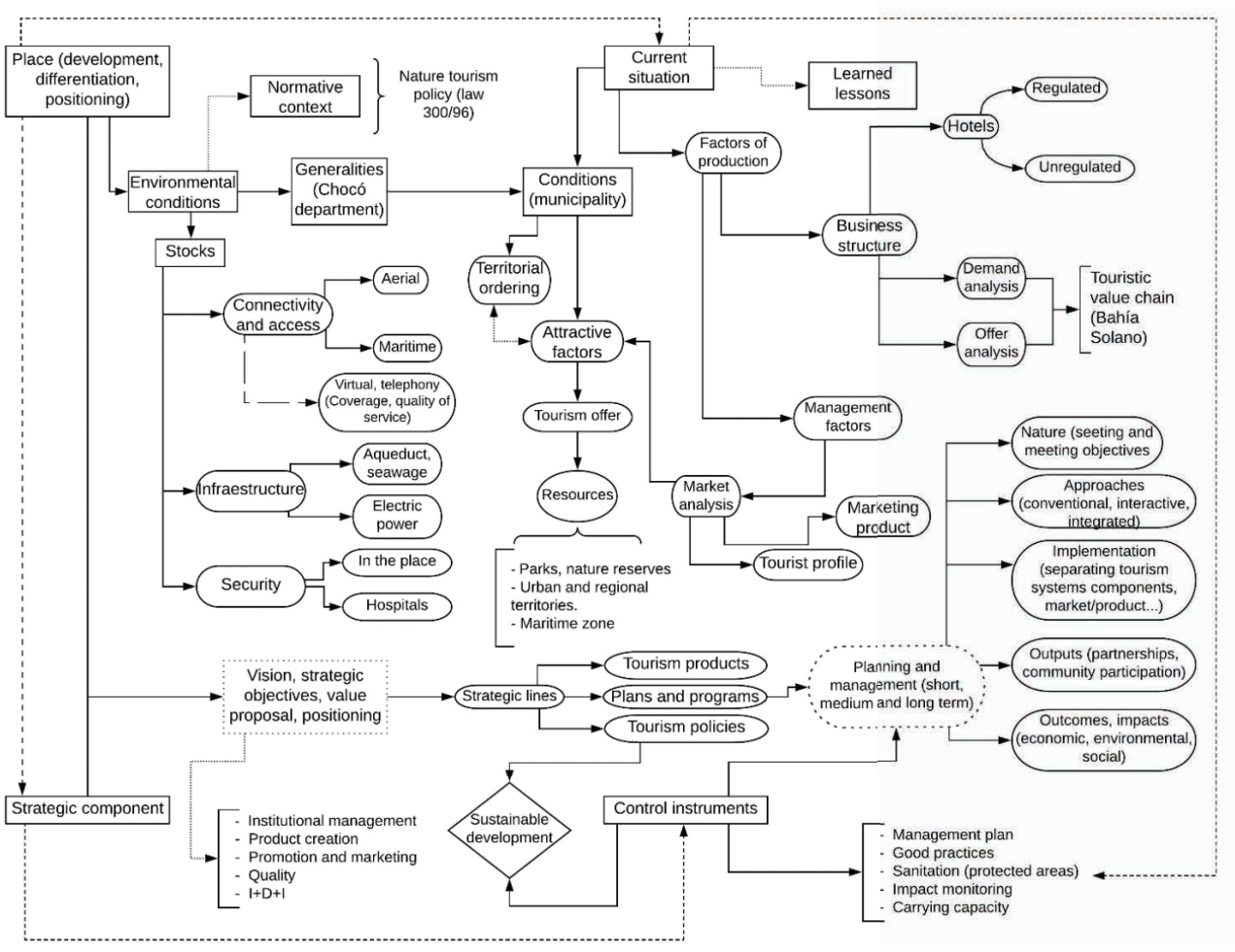


Figure 6: Tourism development process for Bahía Solano

Source: Authors' elaboration



Figure 7: View of natural sites in Bahía Solano, Colombia, July 2017
Source: Researchers' elaboration



Figure 8: Focus groups with tourism managers, Colombia, July 2017
Source: Researchers' elaboration