

Community Participation for Tourism Sustainability of the Historic Center of the City of Riobamba, 2023

Roger Badin Paredes Guerrero¹, Danilo Paul Quintana Puga¹, Andrea Margarita Garrido Patrel¹, Margoth Isabel Cali Pereira¹, Renato Hernán Herrera-Chávez²

¹Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo

²Servicios Profesionales Turísticos Integrales (SPTI)

Email: roger.paredes@unach.edu.ec

Abstract

The objective of this project is to analyze the community participation for tourism sustainability of the historic center of the city of Riobamba, based on the study of indicators established by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) around three dimensions, community access to information related to tourism sustainability, impact of information and actions that determine community participation in tourism development. The quantitative-descriptive research approach is applied, using for the collection of information a survey aimed at a probabilistic sample of tour operators in the city of Riobamba. It was determined that the level of community participation in the tourism development of the historic center is weak, which is expressed in the preponderance of the option sometimes with respect to access and impact of information on tourism sustainability; as well as with regard to the implementation of actions determining community participation in the analysis, discussion of needs and proposals aimed at strengthening tourism. It is concluded that information on tourism sustainability is deficient, it does not have a significant impact and leads to the generation of proposals, projects and tourism plans that are not very participatory.

Keywords: Community participation, tourism sustainability, Riobamba.

1. Introduction

Tourism is an important activity that energizes the economy, generates employment, contributes to prosperity, is crucial in the preservation of cultural heritage, allows interaction with different cultures, promotes tolerance and mutual respect. However, as it develops, concerns have arisen about its negative impacts; its uncontrolled growth can put at risk environmental sustainability, the authenticity of destinations, the preservation of cultural resources, affecting local communities and the environment; so it is increasingly necessary to think about the development of a tourist activity that allows the strengthening and environmental, economic and sociocultural well-being. That is, to achieve tourism growth while maintaining the appropriate balance with the aforementioned dimensions, to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

To achieve this, the informed participation of all stakeholders, actors and sectors related to tourism activity is essential, but above all the citizens or host communities who should be the main beneficiaries through the generation of sources of employment, economic growth, security, care for ecosystems, respect and appreciation of tangible and intangible heritage. In this context, it is crucial that the receiving communities are trained, made aware and develop a sense of belonging and responsibility with respect to tourism sustainability.

However, one of the main problems observed in the territory and particularly in the Historic Center of the city of Riobamba, is the weak participation of the community in the planning, execution and evaluation of tourism activities; the same that do not guarantee an adequate balance with environmental, social, economic, cultural care and tourism management, generating poor sustainability. This translates into discomfort, disinterest, lack of motivation, conditions that influence the behavior and good treatment of tourists and visitors and the implementation of projects and guidelines that do not respond to the requirements and needs of the population.

For this reason, this study aims to analyze the level of community participation for the tourism sustainability of the Historic Center of the city of Riobamba; based on the review and determination of a set of measurement parameters validated by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO); in order to clearly identify the factors that have an impact on achieving the much-desired participation. Three areas of care are considered; access to and impact of information on tourism sustainability; and, the execution of actions based on the knowledge of this subject.

It is expected that the results obtained will make it possible to raise awareness among the authorities, actors and sectors linked to tourism activity about the need to strengthen community participation effectively, establishing strategies that contribute to improving the socio-economic and cultural conditions of the population of the studied sector and the city of Riobamba, through pertinent planning and responsible and informed decision-making.

2. Framework of Reference

Contextual framework

"Historic centers are of great importance in a city, they keep in their streets, houses, squares, parks, monuments and churches, the beginning of a society that over time developed, progressed and is transforming. Over the years, these places have been adapting to the social changes and transformations that are constant in modern societies, either due to the advance of technology or new forms of social life... The historic center maintains a heritage of events that mark an era, it is a place where the past meets the future. This set of foundations called historical enrich each city of our country, keeping in each part the emergence of a society that has been developing over time..." (Erazo Tapia, 2019, p. 3)

Due to its location and topographical situation, the historic center of the city of Riobamba is located on a large plain that distinguishes the city, where the different urban environments characteristic of an ancient city are divided into five axes: 1. Maldonado Park, The Cathedral,

Municipal Palace, Governor's Office, House of Independence, House Museum, Córdova Román Museum, Chapel of the San Felipe School, Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Liberty Park and the Post Office. 2. Plaza de la Concepción, Museum of Art of La Concepción, Church of La Concepción, Heritage Houses dating from the years 1840 to 1940. 3. Sucre Park, Maldonado School, León Theater, Lara Clock. 4. Railway Station, Raúl Dávalos Bullring, Paquita Jaramillo Archaeological Museum. 5. 21 de Abril Park, San Antonio Church, Riobamba Museum and Cultural Center of the Central Bank of Ecuador, Casa de Bolívar (Calderón Delli, 2013)

Due to its importance, it is a key point to attract tourists from different parts of the world, as its architecture evidences its evolution and past transitions, in addition to the cultural heritage of its people; so it is important to guarantee its conservation, being necessary to establish strategies that contribute to the development of sustainable tourism, which responds to the interests of the inhabitants of the sector as well as to the care of the environment.

In this framework, according to the UNWTO, an important axis to achieve the development of sustainable tourism is the involvement or participation of the community in the analysis of the needs and decision-making that contribute to the conservation of the historic center without neglecting the requirements of the inhabitants of the sector. In this study, emphasis is placed on the analysis of indicators that allow validating such participation.

There are important studies, including the one carried out by Murcia García in 2019 called "Citizen participation, a factor associated with the development of sustainable tourism: the case of the city of Ibagué (Colombia), where citizen participation is investigated, considering the community as an associated factor for the development of sustainable tourism in the city. The results reflect subjective positions that permeate problems in participation.

On the other hand, in the research by Narváez Mercy, Fernández Gladys and Gutiérrez Carmen in 2018 called "Participation of Organized Communities in Local Tourism Development (Paraguaná – Venezuela), at the University of Zulia, the processes of community participation in the development of tourism and the repercussions that this activity has had on the locality were analyzed. according to the appreciation of the members of the Communal Councils of the Carirubana Municipality of the Paraguaná Peninsula, Falcón state - Venezuela. It is concluded that the participation of communities in the planning of the development of tourism activity requires synergy between the different local actors, which must support each other in social capital and the empowerment of the community to forge consensual decision-making.

In the doctoral thesis of Ionela Mihaela Damian (2016) called "Study of sustainability in tourist destinations through community participation: the case of the Costa del Sol" of the University of Malaga, a measure of sustainability through community participation was determined, using multi-criteria techniques, which intend to simultaneously aggregate the preferences of the different actors to that of a series of indicators. He concluded that the participation in the process of measuring the sustainability of the different stakeholders not only helps to have a vision of the sustainability of the tourist destination, but also makes it possible to delimit future actions that define long-term development, with the approval of those involved and avoiding conflicts of interest of the groups.

The studies indicated allow us to determine the importance of community participation for sustainable development, and in this case for tourism sustainability, being necessary a high commitment of local populations, based on their increasingly active involvement in self-management, creating a culture of participation, knowledge, responsibility contributing to the development of sustainable tourism, without neglecting the needs of the population and protecting nature.

Theoretical Framework

Tourism sustainability: It refers to the responsible and balanced management of tourism, taking into account environmental, social, economic and management aspects that seeks to preserve natural resources, promote the participation and socioeconomic development of local communities generating long-term benefits. (Rifai, 2018).

Community and participation: The community is understood as that group or set of individuals who share common elements: language, customs, values, tasks, vision of the world, age, geographical location, municipality or neighborhood, social status, or set of roles (Medina, 2000). In this, a common identity is created that differentiates it from other groups and that is shared and socialized among its members.

The use of the concept of community implies processes of participation, understood as the interaction of community members to contribute, manage, and assume the development of a project or company (Puig, 2004; Vargas, 2011). Hence the term "community participation"

Community participation for tourism sustainability: According to Gursoy, Chi, and Lu (2018), community participation for tourism sustainability refers to the active collaboration and cooperation of the local community in the development, management, and decision-making related to tourism. It engages local residents, community leaders, and organizations in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of tourism initiatives, with the goal of maximizing economic, social, and environmental benefits to the community.

3. Research Problem and Objectives

In the historic center of the city of Riobamba, as part of the dynamics that tourism activity has generated, the weak participation of the community is observed, which is evidenced in an inadequate use of spaces, poor waste management, few sources of work generated directly by tourism, lack of interest of the hosts in tourist activity, devaluation of one's own culture, among others.

Among the main causes that originate this problem is the weak participation of the community in tourism activity; as a result of the community's limited access to information on sustainable tourism practices, the poor use of information on tourism sustainability, and the lack of participatory tourism proposals and plans.

This has an impact on the waste of resources that contribute to the strengthening of tourism sustainability; lack of interest of the population with respect to sustainable tourism development

and the existence of tourism planning that does not respond comprehensively to the reality and needs of those involved.

Therefore, this research aims to answer the following question: What is the level of community participation for the tourism sustainability of the Historic Center of the city of Riobamba?

General Objectives

To analyze the level of community participation for the tourism sustainability of the Center

Historical of the city of Riobamba

Specific

- To determine the level of access to information that tourism actors have on sustainable tourism.
- To distinguish the impact that information on tourism sustainability has generated in the community.
- Identify community-driven actions based on existing knowledge regarding tourism sustainability.

Operational definition

Variable	Dimensions	Definitions	Indicators
Community Engagement for Sustainability tourist	Access to Information	If citizens know that there is information about the practice of tourism, they are more likely to try to access it, arousing greater interest in the process. (UNWTO 2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Means/channels used to promote sustainable tourism. ● Workshops, courses or training programs in sustainable tourism offered to the community. ● Tourism education and awareness programs for the community ● Meetings in which local communities are involved to discuss tourism issues ● Visitors who receive information about sustainable tourism practices before their visit to the destination and at the destination.
The intentionality of this process is aimed at promoting the initiative of the individuals with respect to the solution of problems of a community nature, and eventually, to guide his action towards the intended objectives. (Galeana and Sainz (2003) Encouraging the Making of conscience of A sense of responsibility that helps to better understand and, finally, action, people can start changing the stuff	Impact of information	Understand how they use the communities and Organisms Info rmation on sustainable tourism contributes to guarantee the possible relevance of the latter. (UNWTO, 2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aspects or principles of tourism sustainability incorporated into the strategic planning of the GAD. ● Operators in the tourism sector who apply sustainable tourism concepts in their company. ● Inclusion of community opinions and proposals in tourism planning. ● Community satisfaction with the quality and quantity of information it receives on tourism issues and sustainability. ● Percentage of residents who understand the meaning of sustainable tourism. ● Percentage of residents who recognize the advantages that tourism has for the development of the community.
	Participation from of	The people who promote The	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participation of residents in the identification of

	the impact of the information	the practice of sustainable tourism aims to	needs and opportunities for tourism sustainability
developing a sustainable tourism practice. All of this requires several indicators to measure the level of access, impact and participation. (UNWTO, 2005)		ultimately influencing the actual behavior of visitors and interested in conserve tourist attractions and community resources; and Environmental. (UNWTO, 2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of community participation in tourism decision-making. ● Percentage of community-led tourism projects. ● Participation of community leaders in tourism-related bodies and committees. ● Existence of local entrepreneurship initiatives ● Contribution of the community in the conservation and promotion of natural and cultural resources. ● Number of tour operators offering interpretation on the practice of sustainable tourism. ● Number of operators who are certified under an environmental or sustainability programme.

Scope and limitations:

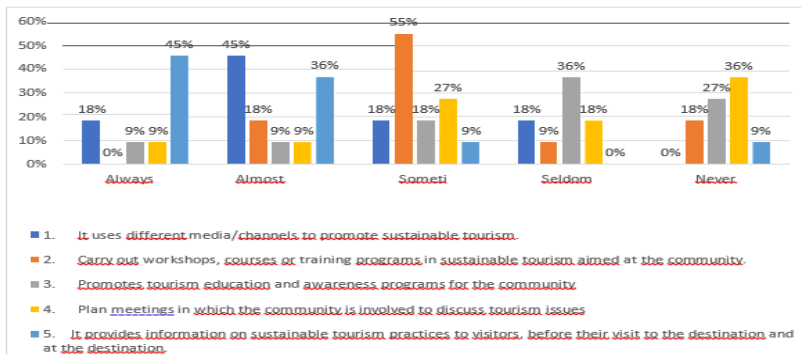
The study is carried out in the historic center of the city of Riobamba, capital of the province of Chimborazo. It is located between Diego de Almagro, Bolivia, Colombia and Junín streets. It is a descriptive study that aims to identify the level of participation that the community has in the sustainable tourism development of the place. It is carried out during the first half of 2023.

As limitations, not having access to the delivery of information on all tour operators in the city, so only 11 representatives participated.

Contribution:

The study constitutes a contribution that will be delivered to the authorities of the GAD-Riobamba in order to constitute an analysis tool for decision-making. It is expected that from this point of view, strategies will be established aimed at strengthening community participation for sustainable tourism development.

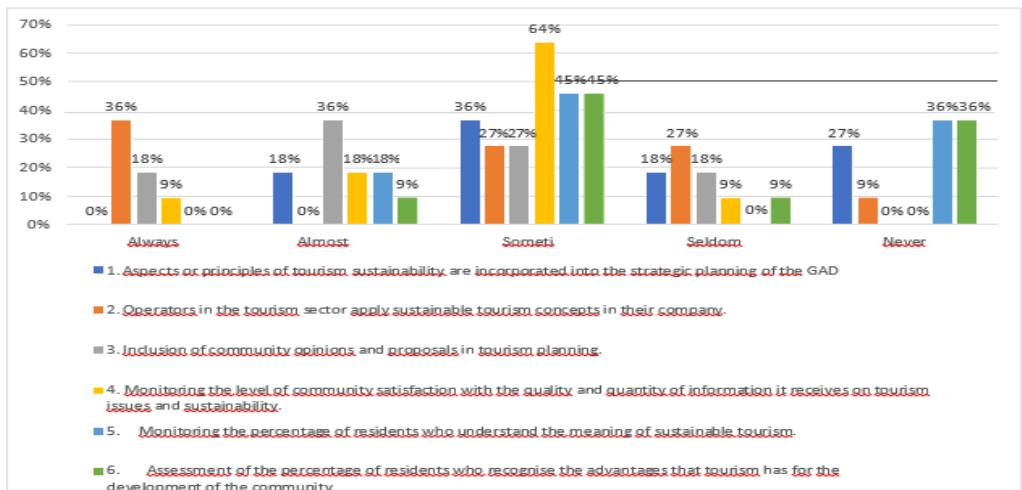
4. Presentation of Results Access to Information



Source: Own elaboration

Regarding access to information as a basic element for community participation, they show that only 45% of tour operators are almost always concerned with using different means and channels to promote sustainable tourism, 55% indicate that they sometimes hold workshops or other training events aimed at the population on sustainable tourism; recognizing that rarely (36%) and never (27%) promote tourism education and awareness programs for the community. In addition, the majority (54%) report that they never or rarely plan meetings in which the community is involved to discuss tourism issues. While when asked if they provide information on sustainable tourism practices to visitors, before their visit and at the destination, 45% always indicate and 36% almost always. It is evident that access to information for community members is deficient, which has an impact on the strengthening of the awareness and commitment of citizens, who according to Amador-Mercado (2021) will not be prepared to avoid the negative impacts that tourism activity can have on the environment and host communities, being fundamental for the prosperity of tourism activity.

Impact of information



Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the impact that information can have for greater community participation in tourism development, the involvement of 3 actors, cantonal GAD, tour operators and residents, was analyzed from the perception of the latter; obtaining the following results: with respect to the principles of tourism sustainability included in the strategic planning of the GAD-Riobamba; 36% of operators consider that they are incorporated sometimes, however 27% indicate that they never; while when asking if 36% of them apply these concepts in their companies, while the majority (54%) answer that sometimes or rarely.

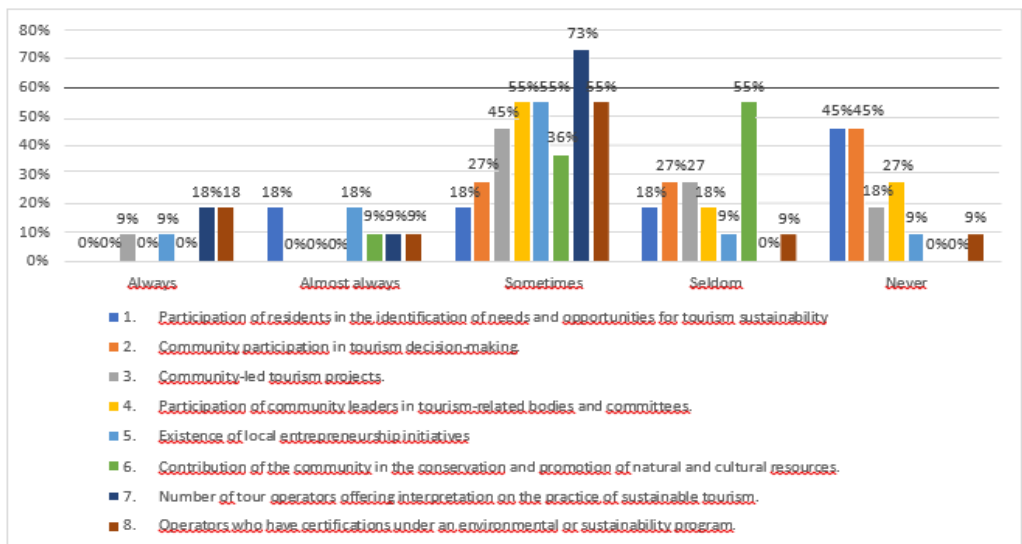
Regarding the participation of the community or residents of the Historic Center of the city, it is established that 36% consider that the opinions and proposals of the community are almost

always included in tourism planning; however, only sometimes the majority of respondents (64%) consider that the level of satisfaction of these actors with the quality and quantity of information they receive on tourism and sustainability issues is monitored.

In addition, it is detected that 45% of operators indicate that they sometimes monitor the percentage of residents who understand the meaning of sustainable tourism but contradict the 36% who indicate that they never carry out this monitoring, while when asked if they value the percentage of residents who recognize the advantages of tourism for the development of the community, the same 45% agree with sometimes, as well as the other 36%, maintain that the aspect in question is never assessed.

The results demonstrate the urgent need for a change of attitude, mainly among those responsible for tourism management and all those who, publicly or privately, are linked to this activity. It is necessary to get involved in a practice aimed at tourism sustainability, with the participation of authorities, economic, productive, service and community sectors. The purpose is to achieve their awareness and effective participation in tourism planning processes and in responsible, well-founded and relevant decision-making that promotes the conservation of tourist attractions and community and environmental resources (Tenor-Peña, 2014)

Actions that determine community participation in tourism development



Source: Own elaboration

The results obtained regarding the actions that determine the participation of the community show that the majority of tour operators, 45%, consider that there is no participation of residents in the identification of needs and opportunities for tourism sustainability, as well as the same percentage agree that they do not participate or never in tourism decision-making. This could be

related to the contribution of the community in the conservation and promotion of natural and cultural resources; where it was determined that 55% think that they worry about the issue rarely and 36% sometimes.

On the other hand, it is important to note that 45% of interviewees establish that there are sometimes community-led tourism projects, which is concomitant with 55% who believe that the participation of community leaders in tourism-related organizations and committees also sometimes occurs; as well as 55% who respond that sometimes there are local entrepreneurship initiatives.

Finally, the responsibility of tour operators to offer interpretation on the practice of sustainable tourism and regarding the concern to obtain certifications that grant them their commitment to the environment and sustainability was asked; about which 77% and 55% mentioned respectively, that sometimes; showing that it is not one of their main concerns.

It is evident that the participation of the community in the identification of needs and interests or in decision-making related to tourism activity is still limited, which has an impact on the commitment to the conservation and promotion of natural and cultural resources. Added to this is the little attention paid by tour operators to promote interpretation spaces on sustainable tourism that encourage greater community participation.

However, citizen initiatives must be rescued in the generation of projects, tourism ventures and the participation of community leaders in the different instances; which leads to the search for strategies and the construction of spaces that potentiate their contribution, because as García, Ramírez-Casallas and Valderrama-Riveros (2019) point out, "the participation of citizens in local development is relevant in these periods where social realities present vast perspectives that demand immediate solutions, requiring union and solidarity, the self-management work of the community to face the solutions proposed by the social base... The desire to serve the community involves the internal energy and the engine that moves the person to collective commitment, a determining factor required for the development of tourism from the proposals that are included in the participatory planning system" p. 145-146.

5. Conclusions

Achieving citizen participation for the development of sustainable tourism requires, in the first instance, access to information that allows educating and raising awareness among the inhabitants of tourist destinations about the importance of the preservation of heritage assets and the need for their involvement in tourism management to ensure that tourism activities contribute to collective well-being and environmental preservation.

It is necessary to strengthen the knowledge, awareness and commitment of the different actors about the importance and impact of developing sustainable tourism, so that it is a fundamental axis in the management of the bodies responsible for implementing public policies to enhance tourism activity, as well as in the work of operators. Generators services and community;

promoting projects designed in a holistic way that allow the growth of tourism activity linked to the economic, social and cultural strengthening of the community.

Finally, the need to establish proposals conducive to achieving the empowerment and participation of the community in the debate and the generation of policies, goals, strategies and actions that contribute to the construction of a sustainable tourism activity has been evidenced, through actions that help to achieve "ecological integrity, economic efficiency and social equity", creating a better life for the entire population; both in the present and for the future.

WORKS CITED

- Amador-Mercado, C. (2021). Semi-annual publication, *Vida Científica Boletín Científico* Vol 9, No. 17.
- Calderón Delli, M. D. (2013). Marketing Plan for the Tourist Product of the Historic Center of the city of Riobamba, province of Chimborazo. Degree Thesis for obtaining the degree of Bachelor of Tourism-Polytechnic School of Chimborazo. Riobamba.
- Damián , I. M. (2016). STUDY OF SUSTAINABILITY IN TOURIST DESTINATIONS THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: THE CASE OF THE COSTA DEL SOL . Málaga: University of Malaga.
- Erazo Tapia, C. P. (2019). ANALYSIS OF THE HISTORIC CENTER OF RIOBAMBA AND ITS IMPACT ON THE IMAGINARY OF THE INHABITANTS, PERIOD OCTOBER 2017-MARCH 2018. Thesis for the obtaining the title of Bachelor of Social Communication-National University of Chimborazo. Riobamba.
- García, C. M., Ramírez-Casallas, J. F., & Valderrama-Riveros, O. C. (2019). Citizen participation, a factor associated with the development of sustainable tourism: the case of the city of Ibagué (Colombia). *Annals of Geography of the Complutense University*, 40(1), 135-158.
- Murcia García, C., Ramírez - Casallas, J. F., & Valderrama Riveros, O. C. (2019). Citizen participation, a factor associated with the development of sustainable tourism: the case of the city of Ibagué (Colombia). *Annals of Geography of the Complutense University*, 135 - 158.
- Narváez, M., Fernández, G., & Gutierrez, C. (2018). Participation of Organized Communities in Local Tourism Development (Paraguana – Venezuela). *Venezuelan Journal of Management*, 106- 120.
- UNWTO. (2005). World Tourism Organization. Retrieved from Sustainable Development Indicators for Destinations Tourist - Guide Practice: https://www.ucipfg.com/Repositorio/MGTS/MGTS14/MGTSV-07/TOPIC2/OMTIndicadores_de_desarrollo_de_turismo_sostenible_para_los_destinos_turisti_cos.pdf
- Tenor-Peña, M. Á. (2014). Training and awareness of the Dominican community: Basic pillar for tourism and economic development. *Cultur: Revista de Cultura e Turismo*(1), 160-179.
- UNWTO. (n.d). World Tourism Organization. Retrieved from Sustainable Development : <https://www.unwto.org/es/desarrollo-sostenible>