

INVENTORY OF TOURISM RESOURCES AS A BASIS FOR TERRITORIAL PLANNING IN ZONA ALTIPLANO OF SAN LUIS POTOSÍ, MEXICO

*Paloma Blanco López**

*Valente Vázquez Solís***

*Juan Antonio Reyes Agüero****

Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí, México

*Mauricio Genet Guzmán Chávez*****

El Colegio de San Luis, A.C., San Luis Potosí, México

pblanco77@hotmail.com, vazquezsv@uaslp.mx

Tourism is an activity related to economic well-being as one of the main sources of foreign currency and a detonator of local development that promotes jobs and diversifying economic activities. Because of that, the State implements projects, public policy and planning that involves different levels of Government and a variety of public and private actors through plans of tourism development and sectorial, national, regional and municipal programs.

With the crisis of the traditional model of development during the 1960, emerges for tourism a theoretical and practical discussion. On the theoretical side, noted environmental damage that tourism caused in the receiving areas and identified him as a typical example of the economic growth of the 20th century that did not respect environmental, social, and cultural resources on which it was based.

In the practical side, appear a conservationist and informed visitor and tourist looking for an alternative to the large urban or mass areas, which resulted in new ways of tourism demand which are oriented towards the respect of the environmental and cultural aspects of the destination places and the search for a unique experience.

From The United Nations *Conference on Environment and Development* (UNCED), also known as the Rio Summit, in 1992; and the *World Conference on Sustainable Tourism*, meeting in Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain, on 27-28 April 1995, countries adhere to legally binding agreements such as *AGENDA 21 for the Travel & Tourism Industry Towards Environmentally Sustainable*, which have the guidelines for the design of policies and actions for sustainable tourism development. Since then, appears the incorporation of the sustainable planning of tourism at local and regional levels in Latin American countries.

However, the theoretical and conceptual ambiguity of the term “sustainable”, the use of models designed for different political, economic and environmental contexts and the tradition of a economic and sectorial planning, cause that sustainability is used in speech as best suits to legitimize policies which do not necessarily take into account the physical characteristics of the territory and their forms of social organization, economic and politics. As a result, public action fails to engage with the needs of the regions and implemented projects are a recipe for disaster.

In this context, this document argues about the need for a diagnosis of the natural and cultural resources with tourism potential in a territory, as one of the inherent conditions of an integrated tourism planning.

To illustrate it, this paper shows the results of the inventory carried out on the tourist, cultural and natural heritage of the Zona Altiplano of San Luis Potosí, taking as an example the municipalities of Catorce, Vanegas and Guadalcázar. The diagnosis starts from a documentary research complemented by fieldwork where incorporated and adapted various methodologies for the realization of tourist inventory. The proposed inventory tries to demonstrate that the Zona Altiplano of San Luis Potosí has a diversified tourist heritage and high potential for developing a model of tourism planning.

The work is divided into seven sections. The first speaks of four positions dealing with tourism as a factor of development: environmental economics, ecological economics, social economics and political ecology. Each of these theoretical positions conceives development from a particular perspective and when they are adopted by the States, the planning of tourism will adjust to global development strategy chosen. This section describes each postulate, his relationship with the tourism development approaches and then, one of them is selected conform to the objectives of this work.

The second section discusses the planning of tourism. It talks about the issues of Latin American countries to adopt and combine planning models that are tailored to the global trends of sustainable development. The concept of “tourist planning” is defined and is offered a recapitulation of the tourism planning models. Finally we adopt the regional Gunn model, since it integrates land use planning and geography to highlight the potential for tourism as a key element and starting point in decision-making in the management of local development.

The third section discussed about new trends of tourist demand, that it involves changes in the behavior and values of consumers towards the search for new tourist destinations, an awareness of environmental problems and the search for a value added through the unique experience. This section discussed on the scope and limitations of alternative or low-impact tourism, and on the issue of changes in the behavior and values of consumers for the regions.

This section also described strategies in Mexico for planning the alternative tourism into different areas of the territory and talks about arid areas as potential scenarios for the practice of a nature tourism that contributes to the well-being of the population involved, without losing sight of its economic potential. As example of these arid areas, the Zona Altiplano of San Luis Potosí is located.

The section number four explains the tourist resources and its classification methods. About the space tourist, the new models of planning conceive the territory as a tourist integral product that sum landscape, companies, infrastructure, equipment, environment

social, heritage, etc. This is important, because it could be considered that any territory can become a tourist destination by their potentially attractive resources, without considering that not all have the material and physical capacity to cater an increasing number of visitors or can develop a long-term tourism plan.

To make the selection of the available resources of a territory it is necessary to identify the places of tourist interest, make an inventory of them and categorize them, then, select those that are considered priority and which have focus for public and private projects and programs. This section mentions different methodologies for diagnosis, inventory and ranking of tourist potential and their characteristic elements stand out. These elements were adapted to a methodology to identify the natural and socio-cultural resources with tourist potential in the Zona Altiplano of San Luis Potosí.

A diagnosis of the tourist heritage of the Zona Altiplano of San Luis Potosí is made in section five. It starts with an overview of the physical, economic, socio-cultural and institutional dimensions of the Altiplano of San Luis Potosí. Subsequently, it presents the methodology that was used to identify and assess those resources susceptible of tourist use, which could be used in a tourist activity planned in the long run in the region.

The process was carried out in two stages: the first consisted of a documentary review of previous similar work on the area of study, government reports and institutional information, to identify the number, type and distribution of tourist resources in the region. The second stage consisted of field work, where we checked and compared the results of the documentary information, as well with oral information with residents, environmentalists in the region and providers of services groups.

As result we identified five routes that contain the natural attractions and cultural along the Altiplano Potosino partner: The Route 1, consisting of the municipalities of Vanegas and Catorce; Matehuala, Villa de la Paz and Cedral integrated the Route 2. The Route 3 includes Villa de Guadalupe, Charcas, Venado and Moctezuma; The Route 4 corresponds to Guadalcázar. Finally Salinas, Villa de Ramos and Santo Domingo are located on the Route 5.

In total, the inventory for the 15 municipalities of the Zona Altiplano consists of 270 tourist attractions, of which 86 are natural (51 physicists, 6 special areas and 29 biologicals) and sociocultural 184 (100 cultural events, 16 technical or scientific manifestations and 68 expressions of folklore). Subsequently cartography and SWOT analysis were elaborated for each route to characterize the potential areas of tourism development in the Altiplano Potosino.

As example, this paper presents the results of mapping and SWOT analysis for the municipalities of Catorce and Vanegas (Route 1) and Guadalcázar (Route 4), these routes and its municipalities were selected once were identified with the methodology already described, as places with similar potential and wealth in its natural and cultural tourist attractions, but with opposite planning strategies.

In section number six, we present an analysis and evaluation of instruments of tourism planning in the State of San Luis Potosi and in the Zona Altiplano. This section talks about the centralized scheme planning in Mexico, which causes that the strategies, actions and projects of tourism planning for the Altiplano are more subject to guidelines established by the Federation and the State, rather than physical and local characteristics of the area.

This section also evaluates the tourism policy for the Altiplano Potosino, their conceptual, methodological and practical problems are discussed. Under this perspective and with the data collected in documentary research, fieldwork and observation through the experience as visitors and interviews with service providers, users, population and personnel of the Ministry of tourism, we presented the results of SWOT analysis and the proposal of touristic use for the municipalities of Catorce and Vanegas (Route 1) and Guadalcázar (Route 4) as an example of the analysis of the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats (SWOT) of tourism in each one of the routes of the Altiplano potosino, aiming to carry out an initial proposal for the region, taking as starting point the regional heritage information.

The section number seven explains the methodology used to carry out an initial proposal of tourist use with base of the potential of each route and an analysis of supply and demand. The Routes 1 and 4 are presented as an example of that work. Using the institutional information and findings from the field, this section presents a proposal of use tourism for the Zona Altiplano, which takes into account the type and distribution of resources, as well as the tourist vocation of the territory.

In this context, this section presents proposals for nature tourism were integrated with religious, gastronomical and handicraft, rural activities, including: living with legends counters; the visit of the Holy places of the Huichol ethnic group and places linked to a past of mining splendor as Real de Catorce; the celebration of festivities that include cultural events, dances, rodeos, festivals, sports competitions, etc.; exploration and visit to the ancient mining, haciendas or remains of mines and the film sets; also proposals of ecotourism activities of low impact, like: interpretative hiking, mountain biking, rides in Jeep or horseback; camps and adventure activities such as abseiling and climbing.

The final part of the work is exhibited in the conclusions section. This document demonstrates, through a territorial inventory, that the Altiplano potosino has a good range of natural and cultural resources with attraction and unique value in the segment of arid and semi-arid areas that give a high potential for the development of the region. In contrast, the tourism planning instruments for the area are compact and little diversified; These does not take into account the particularities of each part of the territory, so the tourist activity and its benefits are concentrated only in some parts of the region and only in a few adventure activities.

The tourist inventory carried out in the framework of this research and that it is here exemplified through two routes, is a first approach to the basic tools for decision-making. Of course, these should be integrated into a coordinated strategy of development that integrate physical, social, economic and political peculiarities in the region; with tools that provide an analysis of the impacts; the generation of basic infrastructure and touristic quality; the creation of instruments of regulation, cooperation and coordination among the three spheres of Government, private sector and civil society, and the design of financial instruments and investment schemes which allow capitalize on sustainable tourism products the human and natural resources of the region.