

Ecotourism as Social Innovation in Durango

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Abstract. The objective of this paper is to analyze the characteristics of ecotourism as a social innovation in the Municipality of Pueblo Nuevo in the state of Durango. It is a mixed study with a quantitative and qualitative approach. Nine ecotourism centers were visited where 86 questionnaires were applied to tourists and 46 within the centers around characteristics of employees, type of services, processes, marketing, and suppliers. On the other hand, 22 questionnaires were applied to complementary services to tourism such as medical services, mechanics, convenience stores, and restaurants. The findings reveal that ecotourism activities in Pueblo Nuevo are a social innovation, fostering economic and job growth in highly marginalized rural communities. These activities have empowered women, who make up the majority of employees, and promoted the sustainable use of natural resources through waste management, market strategies, and training. In addition, ecotourism contributes to the knowledge and professionalization of the community, creating a unique niche for tourists looking for nature-based experiences.

1 Introduction

Ecotourism is a tourism modality closely linked to the principles of sustainability and environmental conservation, it is the specialized tourism segment with the highest growth in the world [1]. This movement generated by tourism plays an important role in economic development and job creation, at the same time there is evidence of a growth in the travel of travelers, who want to visit more destinations, leaving more and more foreign currency in new regions [2]. Ecotourism, a growing segment closely linked to the principles of sustainability and conservation, has experienced rapid growth around the world. In 2019 alone, 1.5 billion international tourist arrivals were recorded, further cementing tourism's role in global economic development [3]. For two decades, there has been sustained growth capable of moving more than 100 million tourists a year, a figure that is estimated to increase at rates of 30 to 50% [4]. Mexico has embraced this trend, with ecotourism generating approximately 740 million pesos annually, largely concentrated in Natural Protected Areas (NPAs) [5]. Durango, with its diverse natural resources, is becoming a key player in this sector, offering activities such as hiking, camping, and adventure tourism that attract local and international visitors.

Rural communities have found in ecotourism an alternative form of economic activity, by generating lodging services, specific recreation services in natural areas, and traditional gastronomy, these activities allow the conservation of natural resources, since instead of exploiting them, they conserve them to attract tourism to their regions.

The objective of this paper is to analyze the characteristics of ecotourism as a social innovation in the Municipality of Pueblo Nuevo in the state of Durango. It seeks to characterize the different ecotourism services offered in this region and the elements of social innovation that are developed, as well as the impact on highly marginalized rural communities in terms of employment and gender gap and care for the environment.

Due to its rich natural diversity and incredible landscapes, the municipality of Pueblo Nuevo offers its inhabitants and tourists different ecotourism options full of recreation, leisure, and adventure. According to the National Statistical Directory of Economic Units, so far in 2022, there are 13 economic units dedicated to the service of temporary accommodation near natural forests and waterfalls, where you can camp, rappel, kayak, photograph, and hike [6].

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Ecotourism

Ecotourism is one of the modalities that Rural Tourism can assume, it is characterized by leisure activities in environmentally responsible rural areas [7]. Ecotourism has its genesis in the so-called "alternative tourism" that today presents an accelerated growth, due to the new lifestyles of the population worldwide and the awareness of the sustainable use of natural resources. In other words, it responds to new leisure needs. Alternative tourism is characterized by being non-invasive, low-density, and has a closer relationship between tourism and nature and respect for customs and

ways of life within the community [8].

Carrascosa & Segarra define ecotourism as tourism that is based on nature and its protection [9]. Ecotourism is characterized by a "new attitude of the tourist towards nature, which implies an ethical valuation of it and concern for its conservation; as well as for demanding a more personalized service that improves their quality of life, and that is reflected in benefits for the host community" [8].

Some authors consider that ecotourism is a way to promote the conservation of nature and at the same time contribute to local development, it is seen as a tool that contributes to improving the quality of life of rural regions since it generates economic spillovers derived from direct and indirect activities [10-12].

Ecotourism is also considered a catalyst for rural areas to obtain optional sources of income and not have to destroy resources to survive [13]. Unlike traditional tourism, it requires little investment in infrastructure and a high investment in training, knowledge, organization, and information, that is, ecotourism demands greater preparation and capacity to face competition, which is based on the existence of exceptional resources, hence the high cost paid by ecotourists to enjoy these resources. since unlike traditional beach resorts that offer a standardized offer, the possibility of substituting a single natural resource is almost impossible [13].

In short, nature tourism or ecotourism seeks to take advantage of cultural and natural heritage resources in a sustainable way, in addition to providing an option for the generation of jobs and the development of communities. The activities known and practiced in ecotourism, in addition to lodging, are observation of fauna, flora, fossils, the ecosystem, phenomena, and special attractions of nature, geological, sidereal, and photographic safari; environmental education workshops, participation in flora rescue programs, biological research [14].

2.2 Social Innovation

The concept of social innovation has been developed by several researchers in Latin America and Europe to locate conjunctures that allow reducing the problems of social inclusion, extreme poverty, inequality, sustainability, and environmental sustainability. The first approach to the concept was made in 2004, where the factors to be considered for its transformative impact and its evaluation were defined [15].

Social innovation goes beyond a simple, statement that all innovation implies social extension. To this statement, which is otherwise entirely true, innovation includes, for example, all those changes in the organization of work or enterprises that are intended to improve the efficiency of production systems to make them more competitive and more profitable from an economic point of view [16]. Likewise, social innovation is seen as a process that must face the challenges of society through new forms of relationships between social actors [15]. The main global problems, such as climate change, aging, migration, gender, and health, among others, are both

economic and social (not only social policy issues but also an integral part of economic development) [17-19].

Innovation in the social sector generating, productivity and economic value for society transforming into well-being. Ideally, social innovation at its maximum level of development would bring the reform of society to a more participatory space of empowerment, learning, and well-being [17, 19].

In this context, social innovation is also a complex process of collaborative work that uses collective talent to address social problems with new methodologies and ways of doing things [20, 21].

An example of the above is social enterprises, where the ecotourism dynamics, especially in rural areas, have found the use of the capacities and resources of the environment an opportunity to generate innovations with a high degree of competitiveness while developing certain social practices such as participation, governance, empowerment [22] to mention a few, to solve the collective needs of its beneficiaries [23].

The social innovation approach to social practices pays attention not only to the development of technological innovations but also to the forms of organization and interaction developed by the members of this type of organization to address social issues [22], this can include to the fourth industrial revolution, which tends to replace the human worker with artificial intelligence in both manufacturing and administration. Various studies have shown that this vision of innovation, including the social, is insufficient to generate a dynamic and creative society, not even in the business world [16]. Thus, social innovation is a process intertwined with an environment of social transformation, where the collaborative work of the actors involved is required.

2.3 Regional development

At the beginning of the 90s, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) stated that development should create an environment conducive to people, individually and collectively, "to develop their full potential and have a reasonable opportunity to lead a productive and creative life according to their needs and interests" [24]. The aim is for people to have better opportunities and freedoms that generate a long and healthy life, that is, to have access to education, the guarantee of human rights, political freedom, freedom of movement and expression, eliminate oppression, violence, exploitation and the resources necessary to have a quality standard of living.

Reyes explains that development is also understood as "a social condition within a country, in which the authentic needs of its population are satisfied with the rational and sustainable use of natural resources and systems" (p.2). This definition integrates elements that impact modern societies such as technological development and globalization-related factors [25].

Thus, Regional Development is a process of structural change, understanding this as necessary, from the axiological point of view, taking into account that more than the theoretical knowledge of the events, it is necessary to know their origin and effects, to create

policies and actions for change. It also talks about the location of this process of change, alluding to the fact that it is carried out in a defined and well-identified territory, a determining condition for putting into practice a good organization, administration, and adequate management of the resources and means available, as well as the objectives or purposes set [14].

Other relevant aspects of regional development, as explained by [26], is a process that is mainly based on local resources, traditions, and culture, which gives access to local actors to be protagonists of it. This creates substantial community participation and results in local needs being prioritized, complementing community sectors and interests, and strengthening the identity of rural communities and cooperation networks. In this framework, [27], refer that the cultural issue is transversal in the study and regional/local development, as well as for the management of tourism in the receiving communities and tourist destinations [14].

3 Methodology

This study is located in the region of the municipality of Pueblo Nuevo located in the west of the state of Durango, and nestled in the Sierra Madre Occidental; it is bordered to the northeast by the municipality of San Dimas, to the northeast, and east by the municipality of Durango, to the southeast by the municipality of Mezquital, to the south by the municipality of Huajicori in the state of Nayarit, and to the southwest by the municipality of Mazatlán, the municipality of Concordia and the municipality of Rosario in the state of Sinaloa [28]. It has a territorial extension of 6,178 square kilometers [29]-

Pueblo Nuevo is characterized by a diversity of ecosystems, including mountains, forests, and semi-arid areas. This variety of landscapes has allowed the development of multiple ecotourism activities, such as hiking, bird watching and adventure tourism, which can attract tourists interested in nature and outdoor activities, along with the improved infrastructure related to land communication routes such as the Durango-Mazatlán Superhighway that facilitates access to the ecotourism centers investigated, therefore, this region was considered for this study, see Figure 1.



Fig. 1. Geographical location of the municipality of Pueblo Nuevo in the state of Durango. Source: [30]

The approach of the present study is mixed, it is a paradigm that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches in the same study, this allows to give greater depth to the research; with a non-experimental design since there is no deliberate manipulation of variables, and the phenomena are observed in their natural state to be studied [31]. In addition, it is a descriptive, correlational, and cross-sectional study.

The research began with the literature review, which allowed the construction of the theoretical foundation and the operationalization of the study variables (see Table 1).

Table 1. Operationalization of the Innovation variable social

Variable	Factor	Concept
Ecotourism Infrastructure	Infrastructure_Ecoto	A set of facilities and equipment that make ecotourism possible.
Social Innovation	Centers	All natural places or conditioned to offer different activities within the ecotourism service.
	Service	It is the acquisition of products and services such as the practice of sports in the middle of nature offered by ecotourism.
	Cost_Ecotourism_Centers	It is the value assigned to products and/or services within ecotourism.
	Imagen_Centers	These are the characteristics of ecotourism centers that generate unforgettable memories for visitors.
	Satisfaction_Recommendation	Feelings generated in visitors by the ecotourism experiences during their stay in the ecotourism centers depend on the good or bad feeling the ecotourism recommendation or return to the ecotourism centers is given.

Source: own elaboration

3.1 Research Subjects

The study subjects were the visitors to the different ecotourism centers investigated and the people who operate the ecotourism centers.

3.2 Sample

The sample was determined from the population, with a confidence level of 95% and an error of 5%, as well as the type of sampling. Non-probabilistic sampling was used for convenience, considering the characteristics of the sample. 86 visitors from the 9 ecotourism centers were surveyed and the 9 operators of the 9 ecotourism centers were interviewed: Rancho Santa Isabel, Arroyo del agua, La Pirámide, Mil diez, Hostal Mexiquillo, La Cueva, Puenteillas, Brillo de Luna and Santa Barbara. These ecotourism centers are located in 3 rural locations, El Salto, Las Adjuntas, and La Ciudad.

3.3 Techniques for collecting information

For the qualitative approach, two interviews were designed, the first of them for visitors with 22 questions focused on the quality and satisfaction of the service received during their stay in the ecotourism centers and the second for the owners of the ecotourism centers with 15 questions related to the products and services offered in the ecotourism activity.

The survey was designed for the quantitative approach.

3.4 Survey design

The survey technique was used to collect the information and the questionnaire as an instrument. 4 questionnaires were used, which were designed from the operationalization of the variables. The answers to the questions of the instrument to collect the information were given under the Likert scale from 1 to 4, where: 1 = *never*, 2 = *almost never*, 3 = *frequently*, and 4 = *always*.

3.5 Questionnaires

A questionnaire was developed for tourists from ecotourism centers. This questionnaire consisted of questions to find out the demographic data of the visitors (age, sex, occupation, place of residence, and level of education), the purpose of the trip, the main means of transport used, the services and activities contracted or acquired during the stay, companions, duration of stay and number of visits to the ecotourism center, the level of quality and satisfaction of tourists concerning the infrastructure and the service offered in the ecotourism centers.

Four questionnaires were also prepared for the management of each of the ecotourism centers. The first was focused on the marketing area, to learn about the main means that are used to advertise the services,

activities, and types of promotions offered to tourists. The second called the process questionnaire, is to know the main activities and services, in addition to the reservation system, delivery-reception of the cabin, payment system, food suppliers, and additional recreational activities. The third questionnaire made it possible to identify whether the main suppliers of ecotourism centers are local, state, national, or international. Suppliers were considered for five different types of essential products (linens and bedding, household appliances and appliances, sanitary products, cleaning products, and stationery and office equipment) and three types of services (maintenance, recreational, and food). The fourth questionnaire was aimed at probing the demographic data of the owners and workers of the ecotourism centers.

3.6 Validity of the questionnaires

The questionnaires were validated using the expert judgment technique, which consists of evaluating the theoretical correspondence of the items of the instrument with the concept of the topic of study. To carry out the validation, two businessmen, two academics, and two collaborators from the Secretary of Tourism of the State of Durango participated, who made contributions and feedback to the instruments for its strengthening.

Once validated, the instrument was piloted with 10% of the sample, the reliability of the instrument was validated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the result was 0.891, which represents strong reliability [32].

3.7 Collection of information

The information collection plan for the fieldwork was carried out during the month of April 2022 by going to the towns of El Salto, Las Adjuntas, and La Ciudad.

3.8 Analysis of information

The organization, processing, presentation, and analysis of information were carried out with the support of computer tools.

Once the interview and the survey were applied, the Excel database was created for each instrument. In the case of the interview, the results obtained were analyzed and interpreted, while for the survey, the SPSS was imported ver. 25 for the processing, analysis, and interpretation of data. For inferential statistics, normality tests were performed on the data to know the behavior of the data, by the size of the sample where $n = >50$ the *Kolmogorov-Smirnov* test was applied, obtaining a level of significance greater than $p > .05$, which means that the data have a normal distribution. which indicates that it is a parametric sample, and parametric tests were applied. To know the level of relationship of the factors used to analyze motivation as an essential element of entrepreneurship, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used.

4 Results

The results obtained show the fulfillment of the objective set in the research.

Of the ecotourism centers studied, 44% (4) are family and 56% (5) belong to an ejido society, where decision-making is carried out in an assembly. Governance seeks to ensure that the interests and needs of all ejidatarios are considered, promoting an inclusive and participatory approach. Likewise, family ecotourism centers are run by women.

The study revealed that ecotourism activities had a substantial positive impact on employment in rural communities, particularly for women. The majority of the employees of the ecotourism centers were women, signifying an important step towards gender empowerment in the region. In addition, ecotourism strengthened local indigenous communities, allowing them to sell handicraft products and reap economic benefits.

The information obtained includes the following: In relation to the answers obtained from the interview applied to visitors and owners of ecotourism centers, they allowed us to know the context and opinion of these two main actors of the research carried out.

The people who are part of this service expressed that ecotourism as an economic activity provides social and economic development in the rural communities where the ecotourism centers are located; In this same sense, the collaborators expressed their concern so that through their work visitors see their needs covered, generate satisfaction and with it the recommendation, which leads to the development of ecotourism activity, and this in turn generates local and regional economic spillover. They also expressed that administratively they were still preparing to optimize the administrative process and were seeking to break paradigms to make use of information and communication technologies and automate these processes, this will create a competitive advantage for them and improve the quality of the service offered as well as the territorial scope in terms of the way of booking accommodation in the ecotourism centers of the region.

On the other hand, the general opinion expressed by visitors regarding the service received during their stay in the ecotourism centers, they stated that it is of quality, the different activities that each ecotourism center offers due to the characteristics of the environment are attractive to recommend or return to these centers. They explained that the vacation experience was pleasant and that despite the rustic facilities of some ecotourism centers, the various amenities offered and the warmth of the people who are in charge of the ecotourism centers strengthen each of the services offered. An important factor mentioned by tourists was the cost of the service received, commenting that the cost is adequate in relation to the cost-benefit analysis, they added that the food in these places is rich and healthy, the result of the knowledge and culinary traditions of this region, explaining that it is also one of the tourist attractions in this area.

In addition, the inclusion of women in ecotourism can help challenge gender stereotypes and promote greater equity in the community, changing attitudes and social norms.

4.1 Characteristics of the surveyed ecotourist

The most relevant data indicate that 24.42% are employees of the private initiative, 19.77% are government employees, 17.44% are students and 16.28% are professionals or technicians; the place of residence of ecotourists, 59.31% are from the state of Durango, 31.40% from Sinaloa and 3.49% from Baja California, this shows that the origin of visitors can influence their consumption habits. For example, ecotourists from certain regions may be more accustomed to certain standards of service or types of food, which can affect their satisfaction.

About the educational level, 32.56% have a completed bachelor's degree, 20.93% have a truncated bachelor's degree, with 18.60% the preparatory and postgraduate level coincide, this explains that the educational level of visitors is important since depending on this, they may have different expectations about the quality of the service, the type of activities offered and the experience in general. For example, those with a higher level of education may seek out more personalized or cultural experiences. Knowing the educational profile and origin of customers allows vacation establishments to segment their market more effectively and design offers that align with the needs and desires of each group. On the other hand, users of different socioeconomic levels, which often correlate with educational level and background, may have limited access to certain services, which affects how they experience the establishment. In this way, the opinions of visitors can vary significantly depending on their training and origin.

Concerning the type of service contracted by visitors, the activity of Visit/Tour/Excursion/Tour was the most significant with 50%, followed by the activity of Restaurant/Food Service with a value of 47.67%, 36.05% hiking, 20.93% to zip line and 26.74% did not hire any service, that is, they only enjoyed nature. These data are significant for ecotourism establishments to improve their services and adapt to the expectations of different groups. Likewise, the quality of service and customer satisfaction can be affected by the diversity of users, influencing the reputation of the establishment and its ability to attract future customers.

Understanding the educational level, the origin and the type of service contracted by users is essential to adapt the service offer, improve the customer experience and optimize the marketing strategy, these data are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of the surveyed ecotourist.

Feature	Indicator	Frequency	Percentage
Occupation	1. Student	15	17.44
	2. Employee IP	21	24.42

	3. Government employee	17	19.77
	4. Professional or technician	14	16.28
	5. Housewife	6	6.98
	6. Manager/Executive	1	1.16
	7. Business Owner	7	8.14
	8. Retired	4	4.65
	9. Other	1	1.16
Place of residence	1. Durango	51	59.31
	2. Sinaloa	27	31.40
	3. Baja California	3	3.49
	4. Quintana Roo	1	1.16
	5. Nuevo León	1	1.16
	6. Coahuila	1	1.16
	7. Aguascalientes	1	1.16
	8. Zacatecas	1	1.16
Educational level	1. Elementary School (6)	4	4.66
	2. Unfinished Middle School (7-8)	2	2.33
	3. Middle School (9)	3	3.49
	4. High School Unfinished (10-11)	0	0.00
	5. High School (12)	16	18.60
	6. Unfinished University (13-15)	18	20.93
	7. University (16)	28	32.56
	8. Master's Degree (17+)	16	18.60
Type of service	1. Visit/ Tour/ Excursion/ Tours	43	50.00
	2. Restaurant/Food Service	41	47.67
	3. Bike rental	4	4.65
	4. Horse rental	5	5.81
	5. Zipline	18	20.93
	6. Gotcha	0	0.00
	7. Hunting	0	0.00
	8. Abseiling	14	16.28
	9. Hiking	31	36.05
	10. Kayak/ Boat/ Raft	3	3.49
	11. Fishing	3	3.49
	12. Glamping	0	0.00
	13. Shooting range	1	1.16
	14. Archery	3	3.49
	15. Social Events	0	0.00
	16. None	23	26.74

Source: own elaboration

4.2 Descriptive analysis of the factors of the Social Innovation variable

Table 3 shows the data obtained for the factors used for the analysis of social innovation, the most significant element being Satisfaction_Recommendation_Centers_Ecotourism with an average of 4.79, this shows that visitors felt satisfied after having carried out and enjoyed the different activities carried out during their stay in the ecotourism centers they visited, likewise, this satisfaction and good vacation and exploratory experience favors the recommendation of

these places where nature is one of the main attractions. In this order, the next factor was the Image_Ecotourism_Centers with an average of 4.64, this shows that the picturesque picture offered by ecotourism centers has been part of the choice by tourists to vacation. The factor Attractions_Centers_Ecotourism with an average of 4.53, it explains how the natural conditions where they are located make them unique in their field; then the Consumption_Service_Ecotourism_Centers with an average of 4.30, in this factor it is observed that for visitors to consume traditional products offered in the ecotourism centers themselves, as well as food makes these places located in rural localities original, Costs_Ecotourism_Centers with an average of 3.44, talking about costs is an important element in people and that sometimes prevents individuals from vacationing and enjoying nature, so their response states that the opportunity to enjoy these ecotourism centers and Infrastructure_Ecotourism_Centers with an average of 2.30, the value shows the level of importance but no less significant, since the rustic conditions of the accommodations make them cozy and comfortable, the establishment of zip line, protective equipment for their use, the implementation of different activities within the ecotourism centers make them attractive and a choice of vacation trip.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the factors of the Social Innovation variable

Factors	N	Mean	Desv. Deviation
Infrastructure_Centers_Ecotourism	86	2.30	.51100
Attractions_Centers_Ecotourism	86	4.53	.48592
Consumption_Service_Centers_Ecotourism	86	4.30	1.41525
Cost_Centros_Ecoturisticos	86	3.44	1.20560
Imagen_Centers_Ecotourism	86	4.64	.61799
Satisfaction_Recommendation_Centers_Ecotourism	86	4.79	.45143
N Valid (per list)	86		

Source: own elaboration

4.3 Relationship between the factors used to analyze the Social Innovation variable

Pearson's correlation coefficient allows us to know how associated the factors considered are to evaluate the variable of Social Innovation, where a strong effect is observed on their part; The factor with the greatest association with the variable was Consumption_Service_Ecotourism_Centers with a value of .672, followed by the Image_Ecotourism_Centers with a value of .589, then the Ecotourism_Centers_Cost factor with a value of .579, the next factor in this order was Attractive_Tourist_Centers with a value of .540, these data are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlation of factors for the variable Social Innovation

		Consumption	Satisfaction	Recreation
	Infrastructure	Attraction	Ecotourism	Cost
	Innovation	Ecotourism	Center	Ecotourism
	Ecotourism	Center	Service	Center
	Social	Center	Center	Ecotourism
	al	s	e	s
Innovation	1			
Social	.208	1		
Consumption	.540**	.672**	1	
Satisfaction	.579**	.589**	.443**	1

Source: own elaboration

From the above results, it can be deduced that in the Municipality of Pueblo, ecotourism activities are a social innovation since they have created services outside of traditional paradigms, such as lodging in cabins in the forest of different sizes and designs, recreational services according to the nature of the regions such as hiking, bird watching, mushroom collection to prepare traditional food, stargazing, among others. These activities meet a specific niche of demand that seeks new forms of tourism in contact with nature and that at the same time generate an economic and employment spillover for highly marginalized rural communities. They are a mechanism to empower women, as the majority of employees are women. In addition, they have contributed to generating knowledge of the care and proper use of natural resources, waste management, market strategies, training, and specific professionalization. By participating in ecotourism-related activities, such as tour guides, local crafts or accommodation services, women can earn their own income, which provides them with economic independence. In this same sense, the ecotourism activities offered by ecotourism establishments require training in technical and business skills, which allows women to acquire knowledge that can be useful not only in the tourism field, but in other aspects of their lives, this in turn leads them to get involved in the management of ecotourism initiatives. where women can assume leadership roles, which allows them to actively participate in decision-making that affects their communities. By engaging in sustainable ecotourism practices, women can contribute to environmental conservation, which in turn can benefit their communities and create a sense of belonging and pride. Ecotourism is helping to make visible the role of women in the conservation of the environment and in the local culture, promoting their recognition in the community.

On the other hand, the participation and form of governance of the inhabitants who offer the ecotourism service are family businesses, and others through an ejido society where the members of this society through an assembly make decisions on the planning and management of ecotourism, ensuring that the members of the participating rural localities are heard,

promoting transparency and inclusion. In turn, to develop ecotourism projects that benefit all those involved.

5. Conclusions

The study carried out revealed that ecotourism is a position of social innovation through the development of its different processes and activities, which has led to local, national, and international recognition, through the opinion of visitors to ecotourism centers and their tourist experience, impacting social and economically in the rural localities of the municipality of Pueblo Nuevo.

It is also important to point out the link that exists between the activity and the local communities, through the generation of jobs for young people and adults within the ecotourism centers, since, for the most part, the workers come from the host towns or from towns relatively close to the centers.

Ecotourism has also impacted the local indigenous communities of the municipality of Pueblo Nuevo, since it allows them to market artisanal food products and obtain an economic benefit, which is important to highlight considering that this ethnic group belongs to the population indicated in conditions of extreme poverty in the municipality.

Similarly, ecotourism activity has led to the creation of new local businesses dedicated to the provision of food services and ecotourism services to meet the existing demand in the municipality, which results in a significant economic impact to the communities. On the other hand, the different activities that can be practiced by visitors in the different ecotourism centers have generated and strengthened the culture of conservation and preservation of the environment. However, it is important to create public policies that promote ecotourism as a sustainable development strategy. This includes regulations that encourage the conservation of natural resources, protect biodiversity, and ensure the active participation of rural communities in decision-making.

Policies that promote the formation of cooperatives and the creation of spaces for participation that allow inhabitants to benefit directly from ecotourism, ensuring that their knowledge and traditions are valued.

Implementation of sustainable tourism practices, such as responsible use of resources, waste management and reduction of the ecological footprint. Policies may include incentives for tourism businesses that adopt these practices.

Promotion of education and awareness programmes on conservation and sustainable tourism, both for tourists and local communities. This can include awareness campaigns about the importance of preserving the environment and local culture.

6. Future lines of research

Comparative studies of ecotourism with a gender perspective; socioeconomic impact of ecotourism on rural communities in different municipalities; ecotourism as a sustainable development strategy.

7. Recommendations

Once the analysis of the situation in Pueblo Nuevo has been carried out and based on the data provided by this research, the implementation of a national tourism dissemination project is suggested to promote the ecotourism recreational areas of the municipality and the natural and cultural wealth of the region.

In the same way, the implementation of a financial support program by the State Government, through the Ministry of Tourism, allows small entrepreneurs to improve the conditions of their ecotourism centers and at the same time offer a greater number of jobs to the inhabitants of the region.

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