

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS INTERCONNECTED WITH SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN MEXICO**

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### **Abstract**

Tourism is one of the main activities of the Mexican economy which has focused in the last decades to attract more international tourists with different marketing strategies; new tourism products and foreign direct investment are the main objectives to accomplish this strategy.

This article showed that public relations play an important role in tourism with a sustainable approach which has a positive economic, social and environmental impact and proposes solutions to the problems caused by this industry.

Co-relational method was used taking into account documentary sources published by public and private agencies, once the information was collected.

The results showed us that even though the Mexican government has developed plans for sustainable tourism, they have not been effective because most of the tourism

### **Keywords:**

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companies still do not have the certification of sustainable tourism and do not apply an effective methodology for their evaluation, in other words, they owners of companies and public offices have change their “chip” to be friendly with the environment

This article is addressed to the society in general and in particular to the decision-makers of the private initiative (PI) and to the public sectors anyone who is interested in the concern of the environment.

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## **1. Introduction**

Tourism is one of the sectors that has maintained a constant growth around the world compared to other economic sectors, it is also known that this industry has a negative impact in the environment but this document will address how make it a positive impact using public relations (PR) on the sector as an improvement in infrastructure, job creation and carryover effects as in the construction industry, "A growing number of destinations around the world have opened up to tourism and invested in it, making it a key sector for socio-economic progress, through the creation of jobs and companies, the generation of export revenues and the execution of infrastructures "(UNWTO, 2015).

During the last six decades, tourism has experienced a continuous expansion and diversification, becoming one of the largest economic sectors and growth in the world.

Tourism has been distinguished by a virtually uninterrupted growth over time, despite occasional crises, always demonstrating its strength and endurance. The arrivals of international tourists in the world have gone from 25 million in 1950 to 278 million in 1980, 674 million in 2000, and 1,235 million in 2016.

Similarly, international tourism revenues earned by destinations around the world...”have grown by US \$ 2 billion, in 1950 to 104,000 million dollars in 1980, 495,000 million in 2000, and 1,220,000 million in 2016”. (World Tourism Organization, 2017)

The tourism industry has remained constant worldwide topic and has been very important in the economy of many countries including Mexico, which is why it is one of the industries which must have taken care of in order to continue having a solid growth.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Mexico in 2016 received 166 billion dollars from tourism, both pleasure and business, which is reflected in 16% of the country's GDP. This sets to this industry as one that offers the most contributions (of the nine analyzed in the study). Among the other industries compared with mining, with a contribution of 46 billion dollars; agriculture, 59 billion dollars; and the manufacture of cars, with 77 billion dollars. (Parcerisa, 2017); in fact, the UNWTO, 2018 issued a document expressing the positive prospect of the same sector for the coming years.

The industry has a great capacity for positive growth in the coming years. In fact, an annual growth rate of 2.9% is estimated in the next 10 years. This exceeds even the estimated rate of growth of the entire economy, exceeding it by 0.5%. In the study they see this relationship because in recent years it is precisely tourism that has been given the most support and promotion, above others such as mining or agriculture, which although they have contemplated growth, 2% and 1.9% respectively, does not manage the same approach. However, the growth of the industry is not something new; rather it is something that has been accelerating over the years. This has grown between 1977 and 2016 77.3%, while the total economy has increased only 58.5%. (Parcerisa, 2017)

This has led Mexico's tourism industry is oriented to the creation of new destinations without planning, without short-term goals and only to attract foreign investment, regardless of the consequences on the environment and on people. With mass tourism growing at such a rapid pace, the depredation of the natural capital of ecosystems is destroying the value of the zones and, therefore, the wealth and well-being of the communities.

### **An approach to the definition of sustainable business**

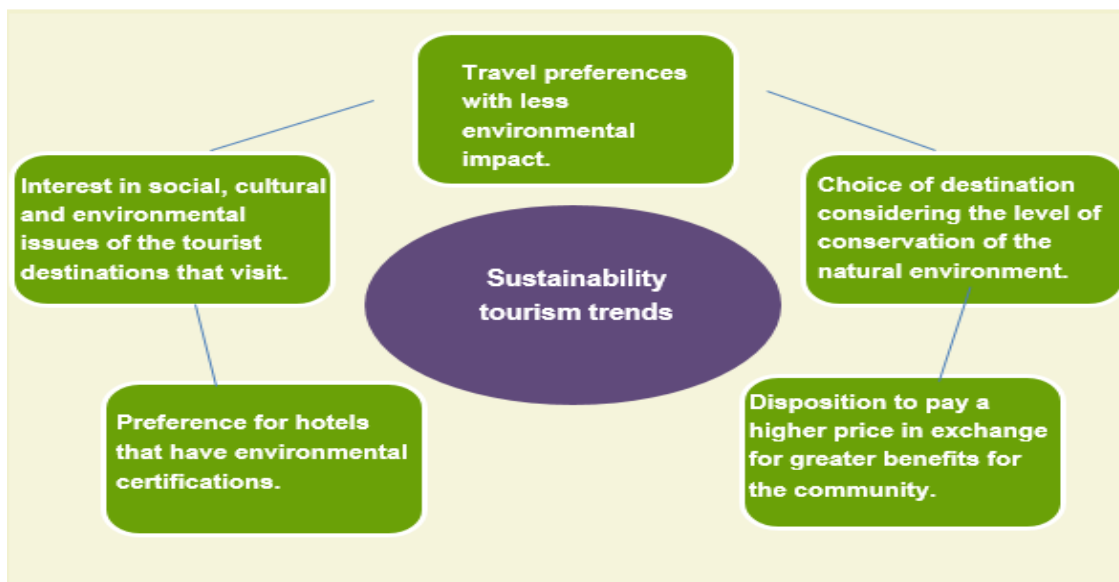
"A sustainable company is one that seeks success in various aspects, such as: welfare of its employees, quality of its products or services, origin of its inputs, environmental impact, social,

political and economic effect of its activity and social and economic development of your country.”(Expansión, 2008)

Sustainable tourism in its purest sense, is an industry committed to making a low impact on the environment and local culture, while contributing to generate income and employment for the population.

The development of sustainable tourism responds to the needs of tourists and the host regions present, while protecting and improving the opportunities of the future.

Figure 1. Tourism sustainability trends



Source: Own elaboration with information of **CONANP**, 2015

It is focused on the management of all resources in a way that satisfies all economic, social and aesthetic needs, while respecting cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems.

According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the principles that define sustainable tourism are:

- Natural and cultural resources are conserved for continued use in the future, while reporting benefits;

- Tourism development is planned and managed in a way that does not cause serious environmental or socio-cultural problems;
- Environmental quality is maintained and improved;
- It seeks to maintain a high level of satisfaction of visitors and the destination retains its prestige and commercial potential;
- The benefits of tourism are widely distributed throughout society.

### **An approach to the definition of Public Relations**

Public relations (PP: RR) are strategies that employ other strategies and sciences to approach a market segment using psychology, marketing, sociology and publicity among others; there are authors that give PP:RR's more emphasis on marketing .

Public relations apply great power in marketing, mainly because it encompasses all the actions of a company independent of its sector, with the aim of transmitting a clear, concise, transparent, positive and above all, trustworthy image and credibility with the different target audiences or communities related to the company. Communication in the company, as in relationships, plays a vital role. And not only communication from within the company to its customers, but also to employees, shareholders, among others. (Parra, 2015)

A company has different types of public, it is precisely Public Relations that try to control that communication and information that comes to them and, therefore, the valuations and perceptions that are transmitted from the company.

Therefore, this project will focus on discovering and demonstrating to the reader why public relations play an important role in sustainable tourism, which has a positive economic and social impact and resolves problems such as pollution caused by current tourism.

### **Public relations in sustainable tourism**

As it was already tried to define the RR.PP previously, addressing authors who give some emphasis to other disciplines, communication plays an important factor in the tourism industry since the empowerment is achieved between the company, the workers of the same and the customers

This boom in tourism activity makes this discipline and related disciplines come up with professional and effective proposals of great projection, with concrete development possibilities, making the Public Relations achieve not only an image and a sustainable growth, but to rescue all the senses of terms such as quality, service, attention, Communication, Image and add to these words actions that convert them into guidelines for a new country project.....”It is not utopian to think about a change, if each one of us as Public Relations, as professionals, qualified or simply as inhabitants, we become actively involved in order to make it a reality” (Easter, 2006).

Figure 1 shows the Mexican government's plan summarized in 3 important points where public relations would enter point number 3, which is the promotion of best environmental practices for companies.

Figure 2. Three broad categories of sustainable tourism in Mexico.



Source: Own elaboration with information of CONANP, 2015

To have an effective communication between the tourist and the local people, it is necessary to understand if the members of the community want tourism to be part of their daily life and that this is also part of their economic activity in order to provide tourism services.

Create awareness in the community about the importance of tourists in the local economy and generate a strong commitment through activities. At this stage we must attend with extreme care and professionalism the development of our tourism and its image, seeking growth, which is a

task with which we will continue to work together with all professionals and disciplines.....” In order to respond to the demand that is presented, we need excellence in our actions, a development and an adequate image without good actions are not reached” (Easter, 2006)

This article will demonstrate why public relations play an important role in sustainable tourism, which has a positive economic and social impact and resolves problems such as pollution caused by current tourism.

Below are the activities that can be carried out in sustainable tourism in which it does not deteriorate in the environment in the same way.

Workshops on environmental education: they seek to sensitize and raise awareness among tourists about the importance of contact with nature and its due care.

- Observation of ecosystems: it allows to know functions that each living organism and its habitat have.
  
- Observation of fauna and flora: direct contact with animals and plants in their natural environment.
  
- Observation of phenomena and special attractions of nature: visit places where you can predict natural phenomena such as volcanic eruptions, tides, migrations, waterfalls, aurora borealis and star showers, among others.
  
- Fossil observation: search and learn about fossilized life forms in natural environments.
- Geological observation: extraordinary rock bodies are appreciated.
  
- Sidereal observation: appreciation and enjoyment of the stars and the universe in the open.
  
- Photo Safari: captures images of wild animals and plants in their natural environment.
  
- Interpretive hiking: An easily accessible path is traveled along which visitors increase their knowledge of the environment and nature.

- Participation in flora and fauna rescue programs: conservation activities in general and rescue of endemic or endangered species.

There are important comparative advantages in Mexico in the ecotourism sector. The attractions offered by the ANP in Mexico are compared to some of the most biologically rich regions in the world and its vast territory maintains an impressive variety of flora and fauna: nearly 30 thousand species of flowers, including a thousand species of orchids, 50 of hummingbirds and more than a thousand birds (Conanp, 2016). Opportunities for ecotourism are scattered throughout the country, but there are some destinations that have excelled: the Gulf Islands of California, the Peninsula of Baja California, the Copper Canyon, the Sian Ka'an Biosphere and the national parks in the state of Chiapas.

In Mexico, the document entitled "National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Tourism and Recreation in Protected Areas" was published (Semarnat-Conanp, 2018), which outlines the strategies and lines of action of sustainable development and the objectives of control and mitigation of tourism impacts.

The three main lines of action of the Mexican government are:

1. Development and effective application of instruments or tools for managing impacts.
2. Support for infrastructure and sustainable tourism projects.
3. Development of knowledge and skills for the sustainable development of tourism.

### **An approach to define sustainable development.**

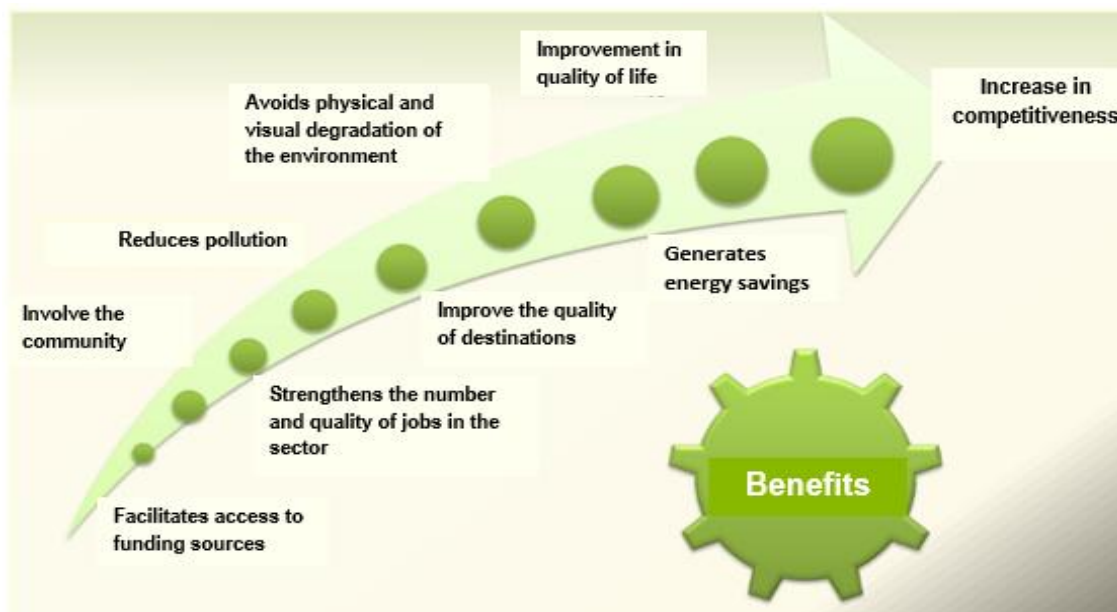
Sustainable development has been manifested through the need to raise awareness among the states that not only economic development is necessary, but that economic development should be a friendly extension to the environment; in the world forums at the beginning of the 1900s as ... "the Audubon Society to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, protect the earth, the foundation of the United Nations Organization for Agriculture and Food (FAO) , global warming and it was until 1987 with the Brundland Report "(Ortiz, 2017) these reflections were made for the need to change the mentality of the developed nations to not only prioritize the economic development and take this development hand in hand with the protection of the environment,



hence the commitment among the nations present with sustainable development .... "meeting current needs without compromising future generations" (UN, 2015).

An important part of these agreements that are generated in the global meetings are the commitments acquired by the states on how to address sustainable development divided into three pillars: social, economic and environmental.

Figure 3. Benefits of sustainability certification



Source: Own elaboration with information of **CONANP**, 2015

Currently the tourist has a greater interest in preserving the environment, according to surveys conducted by international organizations it was identified that the niche market that is interested in preserving the environment has had a greater boom.

We work to promote environmental certifications in companies and tourist destinations, on the one hand with the Environmental Protection Agency (PROFEPA) through the Tourist Environmental Quality and Clean Tourist Zone certifications, and on the other with the Australian EarthCheck Certification.

Environmental certifications are very important to create a true sustainable tourism in Mexico as they certify that in reality you have all the characteristics to be able to call sustainability as shown in figure 3.

## **2. Research Method**

In this article, co-relational research was used in which the actors of tourism and public relations are analyzed as disciplines to understand variables of supply and demand of tourism and how to approach the market with effective communication strategies.

All the instruments used are documents or research already done on sustainable tourism in the world, in Mexico, tourist pollution, public relations effect.

These instruments will be used to discover how a well-founded plan of public relations can be one of the most relevant factors for sustainable tourism in Mexico to prosper and also observe the multiple benefits that this entails.

The method used will be documentary, first locate information on tourism in Mexico in the last 20 years to see how it has evolved and what has been the economic impact of it after analyzing the cases in the country that represent sustainable tourism and by the last one will analyze the role of public relations in tourism and how it could be applied to sustainable tourism itself.

With all this documentary information, the reader will be provided with the necessary tools to determine if public relations are relevant in the development of sustainable tourism in Mexico.

## **3. Results and Analysis**

As a result of the combination of the tourism industry with sustainable development and public relations strategies, it could be concluded that it is a good hybrid mix since when applying public relations strategies such as marketing, sociology, customer service and communication improves customer satisfaction for tourists who demand tourism products and services.

**3.1 When carrying out the study of needs to have sustainable tourist destinations in Mexico, an evocation is made of the tourist training institutions and needs of improvement of the curriculum with a sustainable approach, it was identified that in Mexico 212 degrees**

related to tourism are offered; 77.4% teach in private schools. 42.5% of the 212, are focused on the administration of tourism businesses, 28.3% to tourism in general and only 1.5% to ecological, sustainable and / or cultural tourism. The latter is taught in Quintana Roo and the State of Mexico.

Experts in tourism (Secretariat of tourism, PRONATURA, CULTUR Board, hotels, travel agencies and tourist guides from different archaeological sites, among others) commented on the lack of:

- Training for the care and management of natural resources,
- Training for attention to tourism,
- Programs and projects for the adequate care and management of natural resources,
- Government investment and supervision in tourism projects,
- Integrated and systematized information about natural resources,
- Equity in the benefits provided by tourism and weakness of the state development program in terms of tourism.

3.2 The experts point out key points that stagnate sustainable tourism in Mexico are very sensitive aspects that is reduced only to government investment in training and sustainable tourism programs.

When questioning them about the need for an expert in Tourism Development, officials, experts and / or service providers agree that it is of great importance to have professionals with this profile and offer their institutions to carry out their professional practices, social service or work with them.

They also commented that: Faced with a considerable development of technology and science at the service of certain social sectors and economic activities, we find an increase in inequality, social exclusion and the fragmentation of employment. If we add to this the negative environmental impacts, we have an unsustainable development of the planet.

Within this process of global change, tourism, which due to its characteristics has a marked international character, is greatly affected, both positively and negatively.

The society has access to a lot of information about the environment and the measures taken in favor of it; However, Public Relations officers must consider that they are responsible for analyzing all this type of information, evaluating it, and even creating it to obtain the desired result in terms of what is being communicated and what is to be communicated in order to obtain the image that is required of the company, whether at the commercial or social responsibility level assumed by the companies, pursuing the well-being of society and taking appropriate decisions on the actions that are "going to take place" in the face of the crisis environmental, creating a good reputation of the company or government.

In Mexico, tourism ranks third in the generation of foreign exchange after manufacture industry and remittances. That is why it is necessary to take care of them; not only for what the tourism industry is concerned, but also for the importance they have for our planet.

That is why sustainable tourism is created, which seeks to take maximum care of natural resources, beauty of the landscape, water quality and biodiversity, also offering a more just economic development for communities.

#### **4. Conclusion**

With the inclusion of public relations to the paradigms of tourism and sustainable development or better said, a more friendly development is the reflection of changing the "chip" to entrepreneurs and public sector actors that should not only be given priority to the economic benefit, but this benefit must be accompanied by less or no harm in the environment in which they operate.

In conclusion we have already analyzed the results that Mexico has in one of the countries with the greatest opportunity due to its great biodiversity, but what is needed is more government support plus an impulse in the public relations department to encourage companies that are They want to benefit from tourism and instead of doing so in a way that destroys the ecosystem and

harms the surrounding communities that can make it sustainable and their investment as well as generating profits can protect and support the environment.

This could be achieved by encouraging both small and large companies with taxes, facilities to establish themselves and great support from the government so that they can move forward.

Considering all that tourism contributes to the national economy, a large amount of money should be invested to create a public relations department that can promote and give a good image to sustainable tourism.

This study is aimed at all Mexican citizens who want to be aware to take care of all the resources we have because each of us can get to make the best public relations giving good image to sustainable tourism so that in some not too distant future we can have a decent sustainable tourism.

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