

Proposing strategies for a sustainable tourism: a case study of El Sargento and La Ventana, BCS, Mexico

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Abstract

The effects of tourism on economic, social, environmental, institutional and spacial structures by nature require an analysis that focuses on a systematic perspective. This identifies areas of regional development based on a central strategy to develop a sustainable tourism with solutions based on possible economic requirements. Tourism has been known to provide growth in the global financial system, as the result of the relationship between a country and its regions. Therefore, the main goals of this analysis are: the first is based on the characterization of the Area of Study (AS); the second is focused on the population growth and the transformation of the economic activities in the AS, as a consequence of tourism; the third is orientated on proposed strategies to develop sustainable tourism in the area embraced by local characteristics found in the AS to be beneficial to the social sector. So far this study has proven it is feasible to adopt sustainable tourism with the proper use of natural resources and local community involvement.

Keywords: sustainable tourism, development, community involvement.

1 Introduction

Tourism is the world's largest and fastest growing industry. It has the potential to contribute significantly to the economic development of most countries, including those regions that are less developed and more peripheral. However, it depends heavily on environmental conditions, whether natural or man-made, for its market and its sustainability (Tisdell [1]). Community-based approaches are



central to tourism development plans around the world and there is a growing realization that localized cooperation, trust and networking are essential ingredients in providing the right mix for successful tourism development outcomes. Tourism is often seen as a key element in restoring communities devastated by economic footholds in regional and national economies. The complexity of the global-local nexus- and how its economic, cultural and environmental elements interact to create local development outcome is breathtaking. We cannot understand the context of local tourism unless we grapple with this complexity, and better understand how key stakeholders (government, industry, community, tourism sector) interact both between and multiple “nested” scales (Milne and Ateljevic [2]). During the first semester of 2010 Mexico was visited by approximately 43.1 million tourists, 83.7% visitors 16.3% excursionists, who generated something in the area of 6,487 million dollars, a testament to the importance of the tourism industry in the country (SECTUR [3]). In Baja California Sur, Mexico tourism has turned into a principal economic activity. Relevantly, the estimated number of visitors is around 1.6 million per year, generating around 900 million dollars, and producing about 25,000 direct jobs with different sectors. This concludes that the State identify an economy focused on the third sector (Urciaga [4]).

In recent decades the region has been seen to be an increasingly vital component in the global-local context of development (Storper [5]). Murphy argues that if host communities can define the types of tourism they wish to attract and can accommodate over the long term, they can shape the type of industry that is most appropriate to their needs (Murphy [6]).

Tourism in the AS is identified as the most important economic activity representing the main source of income for their inhabitants. Former developed models of economy based on primary activities such as agriculture, cattle farming, commercial fishing have been modified to model services for tourism, adopting a mode placed on the third sector. This was included in the national and state development policy, designed according to the international economic conditions present at the time during the decade from 1970 through 1980.

The influence of the phenomenon in which the tourism sector generates the main income is vital in laying the foundation for sustainable development and identifying the ecosystem services in order to benefit the stakeholders. AS is identified as a small rural region in which tourism activities are divided into two seasons; the high season corresponds to autumn and winter receiving approximately 3,000 visitors mainly from EU and Canada, and the low season to spring and summer, when most visitors are domestic (Lauterio [7]). The geographic location on the coastline of the Sea of Cortes the convenient climate conditions for recreational activities, its reasonable standard of living, friendly community, and access to an urban area, the city of La Paz and Los Cabos, generates an excellent scenario for tourism.

The absence of regulation in the AS as well as the interests and requirements created by traditional tourism that forced a negative development trend, has demonstrated different features of growth, generating a heterogeneous system



with a very basic infrastructure. When multinational companies and large investors have dominated the local market and generated social exclusion with the lack of participation and the insufficient commitment of the local population in planning and in regulating activities, the AS has focused towards total transformation of its original condition to the sustainable use of its resources.

2 Objective

The purpose of this study is to identify the change in the impact of the use of the land in the AS caused by the population growth and the transition of the economy model

3 Methodology

To document the changes of land use the study is based on the analysis of the population growth and the description of activities from an economic approach. In order to obtain the desired information an analysis was performed on population censuses from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI [8]).

An integral analysis was performed with aerial photography and digital orthophotography of the AS (INEGI [9]) – images from satellite GeoEye-1 and an image SRTM of 30 meters for pixel. The compiled information was processed in a geographical information system known as Ilwis 3.3, and a second one called ArcMap 9.2. It was digitized to a scale of 1:4,000 in a coordinates system of Universal Transversal Mercator Zone 12N.

To represent the land use, different periods were analyzed: 1973 is identified as the base year (BY), 1993 the pilot year (PY) and 2009, the intermediate year (IY). A strong, promoted growth starts from the PY to the IY, the most important phase to demonstrate in a detailed way the increase and change of activities in the AS. The analysis generated the growth-trend of the AS in regards to the effect of the population growth and the environmental impact caused by tourism is represented on figure 1.

Compiling data from real estate agents who promote the sale of the land in the AS, with information from cadastre plans obtained from the State Government of Baja California South, and data achieved by experts in the AS, areas potential attractive to the tourism market were identified as shown in figure 2.

The study area, “El Sargento La Ventana” is located in the coordinates 24° 04’ 12” N 109° 58’ 48 W. This region presents an emergent transformation of a rural system focused on primary activities towards the structure of an economic system based on the use of its natural resources as the principal source of revenue, represented in figure 1.

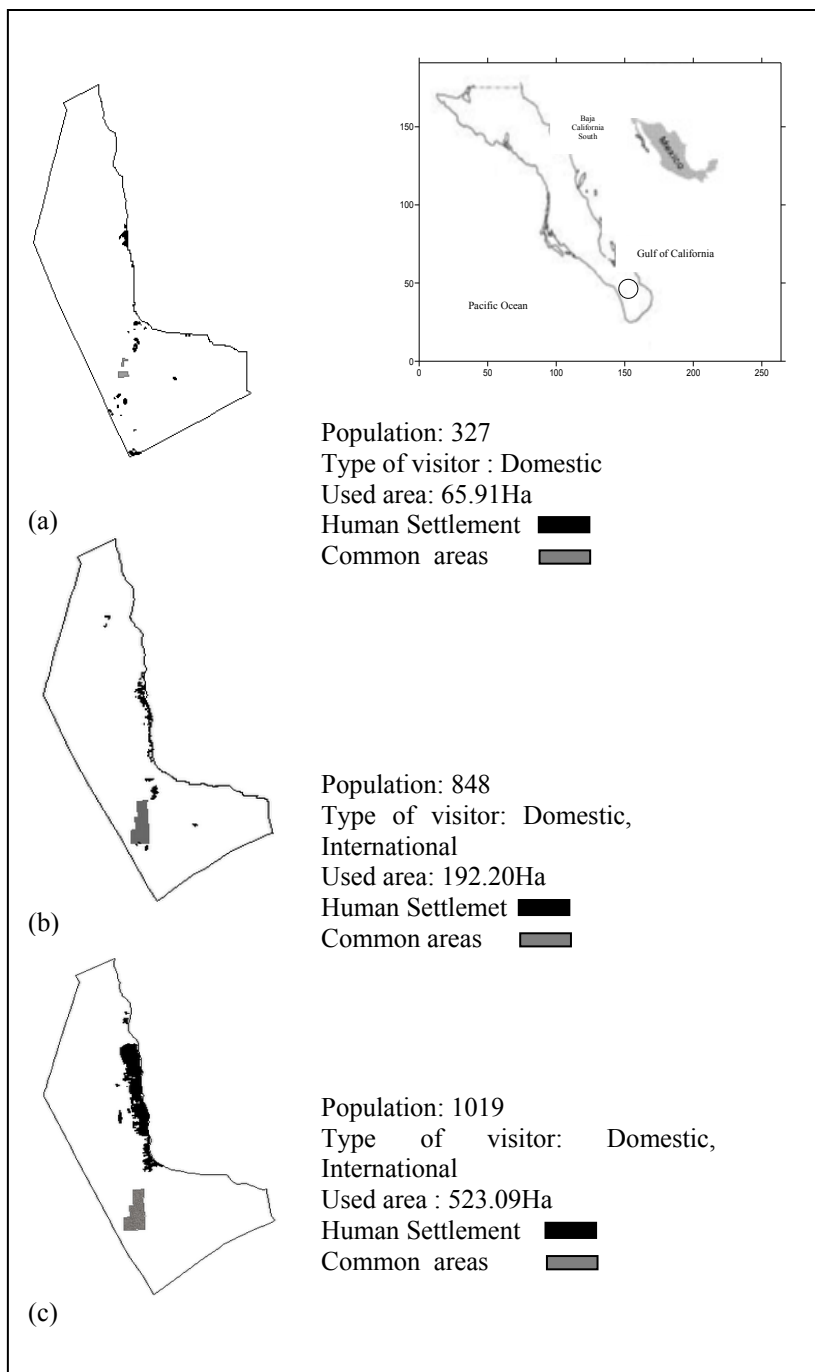


Figure 1: Land use maps: (a) 1973 BY, (b) 1993 PY (c) 2009 IY.

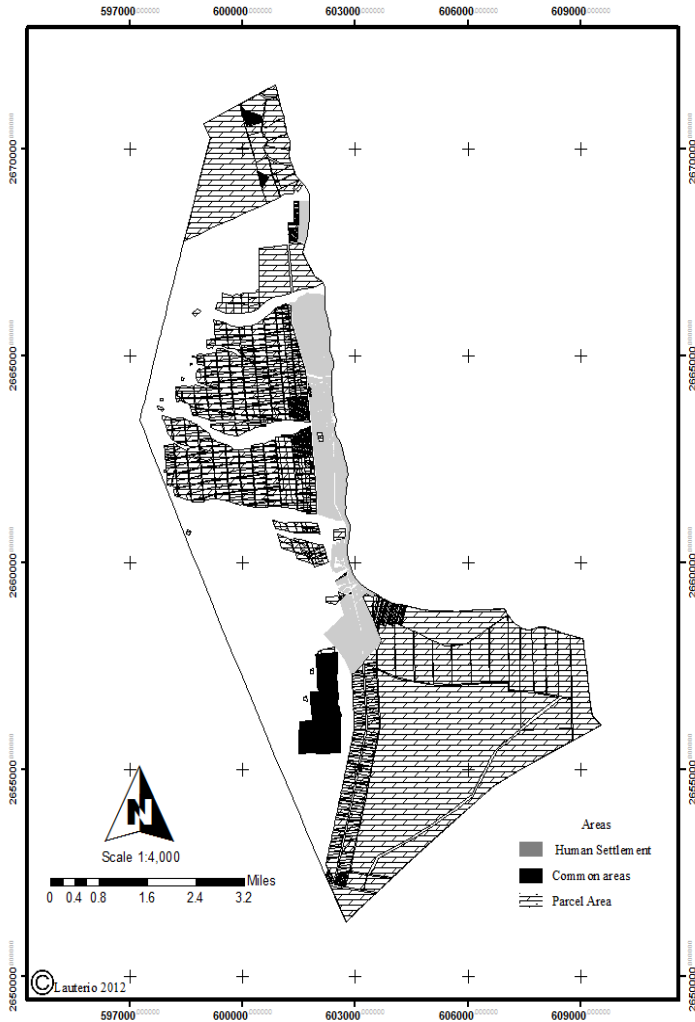


Figure 2: Use of the land and growth-trend.

4 Results

The gathered information from INEGI of the population and housing census has demonstrated how the growth-trend in the AS has increased in 52.26% from year 1970 through 2010 and also outlines the impact on the economy where it has migrated from the primary sector to the third sector.



4.1 The projected growth in the AS

Tourism and commercial development can be identified as follow; one of the potential zones for residential use is on the Northern coastal area, and the other one is on the East coastline, West and South of the AS are devoted to the local community settlements and commercial activities.

4.2 Tourism market

“El Sargento and La Ventana”, appear to be an attractive destination for the outdoor tourism, due to suitable conditions for the practice of water sports such as: kiteboarding, windsurfing, stand up paddle boarding (SUP), scuba diving, sports fishing including spearfishing and rod and reel, as well as terrestrial activities as hiking, the observation of flora and fauna, mountain biking, camping, outdoor photography, cultural tourism, and low impact activities.

Federal Mexican institutions as SEMARNAT, SAGARPA, ZOFEMAT, CONAPESCA and PROFEPA contribute with a platform to regulate and classify the activities that are practiced in the AS. Nevertheless, the lack of evaluation and surveillance of the rules and procedures, have caused irregularities in their applications. The strategies to bring on effect should have mutual benefits for all participants involved.

4.3 Proposed strategies to develop sustainable tourism

At this stage we discussed and proposed ten strategies for a sustainable development in the AS, based on the appropriate use and conservation of the natural resources in the area and the improvement of the lifestyle of the stakeholders shall be the ultimate achievement:

- (1) Define the areas for fishing activities where the local fishermen is monitored on the restricted fishing periods, the number and types of water crafts, fishing permits, fishing gear, the quantity and number of captured species, having the authority to prohibit the tourists to go fishing and being able to deny fishing license applications.
- (2) Create a special community board for activities such as kiteboarding, windsurfing and SUP that rents equipment to practice the activities mentioned above, or collecting a tax from those tourists who decide to use their own gear.
- (3) Identify specific areas for each of the water sports mentioned above.
- (4) Promote educational and recreational underwater sea life activities, bringing qualified SCUBA diving instructors to protect, guard and preserve the nature of the marine life.
- (5) Offer recreational tours by local community members to observe, preserve and research in the AS the flora and fauna.
- (6) Recover trails for terrestrial activities as mountain biking, camping, outdoor photography and sightseeing with low impact on the wildlife.
- (7) Establish markets where the locals can have access to sell their locally made items.



- (8) Implement a permanent English course to train the local community in order to communicate with tourism.
- (9) Establish guidelines to regulate the terms and conditions for the access to the campgrounds and Recreational Vehicle Park.
- (10) Practice and learn geocaching, through a hunting game where seekers can find any treasure while promoting the AS worldwide using a GPS to hide and seek containers with other participants in the activity.

The tourism activities are distributed in the AS with specific icons which have been created to indentify the area where they can be practice, this visual idea illustrates in a better perspective how the above strategies for a sustainable tourism can be combined as shown in figure 3.

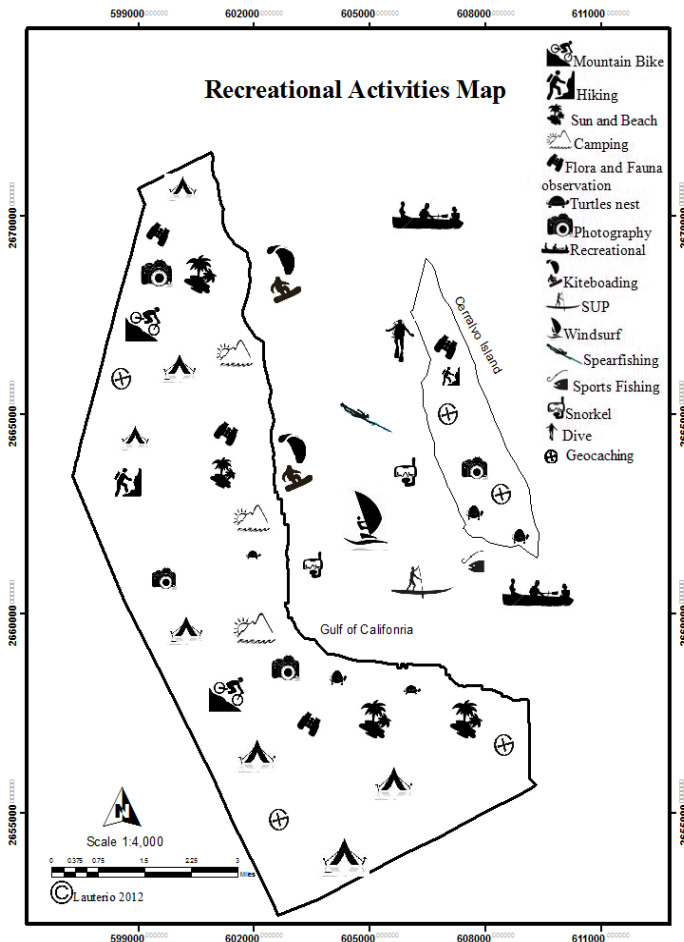


Figure 3: Zoning map for tourism activities on the AS.

5 Conclusions

The strategies for development are only a step towards the protection of the economical and social benefit that promotes the administration of natural resources in the AS. The interaction among the actors involved including the government is necessary to regulate the use of the ecosystem in the approach to reach the proposed objectives. The absence of regulation of the natural resources and the land use, causes a negative impact on the AS, and is the reason why tourism appears to be an alternative to promote the growing public and private investment. In order to create an infrastructure that promotes the tourism sector, it is necessary to create an inter-institutional structure to regulate every party involved in the system is evident.

The results of this study showed that the social impact has been negative because while tourism is increasing in the AS with the actual model, the local community has been left behind, presenting a lower quality of life. It is necessary to promote strategies to avoid the social and economical unbalance associated with the tourism present in the AS. The proposed strategies and the classification of the activities mentioned in this document tend to orientate an improved quality of the population in the AS, and, at the same time, optimize the use of its resources.

The result of the economical problems nationwide, the dependency on state policy and public investment through the local economy for development during the analyzed period have affected the structures of various communities including the AS which social, economical, and natural context requires the application of policies that demand a general regulation to promote a market focused on the approach of sustainability.

According to the actual study and due to the geographical location on the AS, a plan must be developed in order to interact with the local community as a need to strengthen the commitment to reach the proposed goals.

It is necessary to practice a diagnosis in the AS where the areas of conservation, protection, sustainable use and restoration are required in order to implement a sustainable development (Arizpe and Covarrubias [10]). The population growth stimulated by the requirements of tourism has not only caused a negative impact on the management and use of the resources, but also on the structure and proportion on land distribution. A reorganization of the tourism growth model in the AS would support the recovery of the economy, environmental resources and the social premises, and would contribute to the reduction of its vulnerability against the American and Canadian markets. A stronger strategy that not only bases its success on the economical growth, but also on wider simultaneous development, would integrate a consolidated society for the women and men who inhabit it (Gámez Alba *et al.* [11]).

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