

Original article

Critical factors, good practices and lessons learned in community-based tourism

Factores críticos, buenas prácticas y lecciones aprendidas del turismo comunitario

Fatores críticos, boas práticas e lições aprendidas com o turismo comunitário



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ABSTRACT

Community-based tourism is a form of management of this activity that boomed after the first decade of the 20th century in Ecuador. For this reason, the purpose of the work presented here was to identify critical factors, good practices and lessons learned in community-based tourism in the Ecuadorian Amazon region, starting from the Amazon as a world region. It was developed through a diagnosis using the case study method from a mixed approach, between intrinsic and collective, from which a summary and systematization was made at the international level (on the theoretical) and at the level of the Ecuadorian region (in practice) of community-based tourism, with an Online Discussion Group, from whose evaluations quantitative and qualitative inferences were made. The research showed that community-based tourism in the Amazon region presents a great diversity of experiences and results, according to the level of information available in each country, where Ecuador stands out with the largest number of documented cases, as well as for its legal and political

framework favorable to community-based tourism. The provinces of the Ecuadorian Amazon region with the most information related to community-based tourism were Orellana, Napo and Pastaza, where the greatest number of documented cases of community-based tourism in their territories are located. There were 23 critical factors and 16 good practices and lessons learned, respectively), and a prevalence of strong connections and influences among them was corroborated, as well as empirical coincidence with the weightings made by specialists on the outputs.

Keywords: Ecuadorian Amazon; community-based tourism; critical factors; good practices; lessons learned.

RESUMEN

El turismo comunitario es una forma de gestión de esta actividad con mucho auge después de la primera década del siglo XX en Ecuador, por tal razón, el trabajo que se presenta tuvo como propósito identificar factores críticos, buenas prácticas y lecciones aprendidas del turismo comunitario en la región amazónica ecuatoriana, partiendo de la Amazonía como región mundial. Se desarrolló mediante un diagnóstico a través del método de casos de estudio desde un enfoque mixto, entre intrínseco y colectivo, a partir de lo cual se realizó un resumen y sistematización a nivel internacional (sobre lo teórico) y a nivel de la región ecuatoriana (en la práctica) del turismo comunitario, con un Grupo de Discusión Online, de cuyas valoraciones se realizaron inferencias cuantitativas y cualitativas. De la investigación resultó que el turismo comunitario en la región amazónica presenta una gran diversidad de experiencias y resultados, según el nivel de información disponible en cada país, donde Ecuador se destaca con el mayor número de casos documentados, así como por su marco legal y político favorable al turismo comunitario. Las provincias de la región amazónica ecuatoriana con más información relacionada con turismo comunitario fueron Orellana, Napo y Pastaza, a la vez que se localizan mayor número de casos documentados sobre turismo comunitario en sus territorios. Se obtuvieron 23 factores críticos y 16 buenas prácticas y lecciones aprendidas, respectivamente), y se corrobora una prevalencia de conexiones e influencias fuertes entre estos, además de coincidencia empírica con las ponderaciones realizadas por especialistas sobre las salidas.

Palabras clave: Amazonía ecuatoriana; turismo comunitario; factores críticos; buenas prácticas; lecciones aprendidas.

RESUMO

O turismo de base comunitária é uma forma de gestão do turismo que vem se expandindo desde a primeira década do século XX no Equador. Por essa razão, o objetivo do trabalho aqui apresentado foi identificar fatores críticos, boas práticas e lições aprendidas no turismo de base comunitária na região amazônica equatoriana, partindo da Amazônia como uma região global. Foi desenvolvido por meio de um diagnóstico utilizando o método de estudo de caso a partir de uma abordagem mista, entre intrínseca e coletiva, a partir do qual foi feita uma síntese e sistematização em nível internacional (na teoria) e em nível da região equatoriana (na prática) do turismo comunitário, com um Grupo de Discussão On-line, a partir de cujas avaliações foram feitas inferências quantitativas e qualitativas. A pesquisa mostrou que o turismo comunitário na região amazônica apresenta uma grande diversidade de experiências e resultados, dependendo do nível de informação disponível em cada país, onde o Equador se destaca com o maior número de casos documentados, bem como por sua estrutura legal e política favorável ao turismo comunitário. As províncias da região amazônica equatoriana com mais informações relacionadas ao turismo de base comunitária foram Orellana, Napo e Pastaza, onde se localiza o maior número de casos documentados de turismo de base comunitária em seus territórios. Foram obtidos 23 fatores críticos e 16 boas práticas e lições aprendidas, respectivamente, e foi corroborada a prevalência de fortes conexões e influências entre eles, bem como a coincidência empírica com as ponderações feitas por especialistas sobre os resultados.

Palavras-chave: Amazônia equatoriana; turismo de base comunitária; fatores críticos; boas práticas; lições aprendidas.

INTRODUCTION

The design of a more sustainable, responsible tourism, developed by local communities, which privileges the originality and uniqueness of the territory where they are located is a topic at the center of scientific discussion (Alves de Abreu et al., 2024), especially in the pandemic context experienced by humanity since 2020.

Authors such as de Azevedo Irving et al. (2020) state that everything that happens on the planet is the result of the way of life of current societies, including pandemics, global warming, loss of

biodiversity, agricultural expansion, trade, consumption of wild animals, unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, among other environmental and social problems that exist today. Criteria such as those of these authors contribute to the approach of community-based tourism as a necessary alternative for sustainable development from the local level.

Currently, alternative tourism (to mass tourism) has gained relevance worldwide, therefore, its activities are strengthened by demand, becoming a development opportunity for the community - both socially and economically- which brings with it the possibility for the villagers to produce, promote and market products and services, thus improving the economy of the community itself (Mendoza Reategui et al., 2022; Witchayakawin et al., 2024).

In turn, community-based tourism has been very well received by stakeholders. At the international level, the different Latin American communities have had the opportunity to showcase their history, culture and modes of organization (Alonso Fernández & De La Cruz, 2020). However, there is a diversity in the tourism culture of the host communities (providers), which is still a barrier to overcome.

According to Campos Sánchez et al. (2024), the evident problems of community-based tourism focus on several points, especially the poor relationship between travel managers (such as travel agencies and tour operators) and community businesses and the image of insecurity in open natural spaces, as well as the problems of environmental degradation, poor connectivity and poor prioritization in the provision of basic services, the low quality of tourism services, the limited diversification of the products offered, the limited management of small tourism businesses and insufficient access to and knowledge of markets.

Ecuador recognizes the importance of community-based tourism and its links to national development. However, there are communities that, despite their potential, have not been able to develop this activity due to the limitations they face in meeting the needs of tourists and, above all, in sustaining the conservation of their natural and cultural attractions (Giler Moreira et al., 2022). These problems demonstrate the growing need for improvement in the planning and management of the activity, avoiding the empirical development of the same, improvement directed towards a greater coherence of community tourism with the higher goal of achieving sustainable development of the communities.

Specifically in the Ecuadorian Amazon, community-based tourism experiences are still insufficient (Padilla Buñay et al., 2019), however, interest in this modality is growing every day due to the high ecological and socio-cultural potential accumulated in the originality and uniqueness of the communities in the region. In addition to this, there is a growing need for sustainable development, since about 72% of the people are poor, and lack basic services, placing the province of Pastaza as the one with the highest income inequality in the country, with a Gini coefficient of 0.58, which indicates a high concentration of wealth in few hands and low social redistribution. These data reveal the urgency of implementing public policies that promote comprehensive and equitable development (Inec, 2023).

In general, the Ecuadorian Amazon faces numerous economic, social and political challenges that limit its growth and well-being. However, it also has a cultural richness and variety that distinguishes it and makes it attractive to visitors. It is therefore possible to boost the region's development by generating business ideas based on community-based tourism that involve the local community and take advantage of its comparative advantages. In this way, tourism would become a source of income and improve the living conditions of a greater number of community inhabitants.

These inadequacies have led to the fact that, at present, this area is not located in an important place within the commercialization of community-based tourism products, and the potential of the natural and anthropic heritage accumulated in its communities is not taken advantage of, thus limiting one of the main strategic lines of sustainable development, so necessary for this region of Ecuador, which has a great social responsibility towards the Amazon.

Therefore, in order to develop instruments, mechanisms or platforms for community-based tourism management, it is necessary to interpret the essential elements existing in the context and the theoretical and practical references, and this article aims to identify critical factors, good practices and lessons learned in community-based tourism in the Ecuadorian Amazon region.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The work was developed in the period from 2018 to 2023 in two stages. The first was the diagnosis, which started from the bibliometric characterization of community tourism, taking advantage of the result of the VOSviewer program from the Web of Science (WoS) database platform, produced by Clarivate Analytics for a grouping (cluster) and from the set of nodes closely related by the

community tourism link. Next, the case study methodology was used (Avalle, 2022). From a mixed approach, due to the fact that the practical experiences of community tourism are described quantitatively and qualitatively. The type of case study was selected as a combination of intrinsic and collective, and it was agreed that it would be intrinsic because it focused on a single topic, community tourism, in order to better understand it and assess its current status in the Amazon region of Ecuador.

Collective case studies were selected, as various reports were examined to understand the instrumental patterns and find differences between similar types of cases in order to achieve a much deeper understanding of the current state of community-based tourism as a complex phenomenon and its expression in various contexts. The design variant was used where more than one case is analyzed and the simple presentation of particular cases is made as references for the updating of the specific field in which the study was framed as a general (or thematic) case.

In the second stage, the diagnosis was systematized at the international level (theoretical) and at the level of the Ecuadorian region (in practice) of community-based tourism. This constituted the starting point for making inferences about the critical factors (FC - essential elements that determine the competitiveness and performance of the activity), good practices (BP - approaches or methods that have proven to be effective in management), and lessons learned (LA - systematized knowledge from an experience) about the case studies (CE). These were interrelated by running the data in IBM SPSS Statistics v.26.0.10.

The FCs, BPs and LAs were then taken to the Discussion Group (GD) methodology. This was developed online (GDO). Forty-one specialists related to community-based tourism in the Amazon region were convened. Of these, only 13 integrated the GD (Table 1).

Table 1. Definitive specialists (E) participating in the GDO

Code	Institution	Specialization	Other information
E1	Universidad Federal de Pará, Brazil	Community-based tourism management	https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4957-8244
E2	Swissport EMSA. Quito, Ecuador	Travel	https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6977-9954

E3	Universidad Nacional Toribio Rodriguez de Amazonas, Peru	Amazon Economy	https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5102-7594
E4	Universidad Nacional Toribio Rodriguez de Mendoza de Amazonas, Peru	Anthropology, Environment	https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3669-3123
E5	Universidad del Valle, Colombia	Geography	https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1726-9888
E6	Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo, Ecuador	Tourism and Travel Agencies	https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7810-0667
E7	Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo, Ecuador	Entrepreneurship and innovation	https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=YAp-QUIAAAAJ&hl=en
E8	Universidade Federal de São Carlos, Brazil	Geography and Tourism	https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2387-9180
E9	Universidad de Los Andes, Venezuela	Local development	https://www.escavador.com/sobre/492730640/orlando-jose-bastidas-betancourt
E10	Universidad San Francisco Xavier de Chuquisaca, Bolivia	Genre	https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2764-9961
E11	Universidad Estatal Amazónica, Ecuador	Tourism	https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4659-8090
E12	Cámara de Turismo de Pastaza, Ecuador	Tourism and Management	https://www.facebook.com/CAPTURPastaza/?locale=es_LA
E13	Universidad Estatal Amazónica, Ecuador	Tourism Management	https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7533-4924

Source: Own elaboration

The GDO was carried out in five virtual work sessions in which different group work techniques were applied, such as: idea generation (through idea writing), as well as idea clarification, criteria support and direct voting as consensus techniques. The goal was a consensual list of FC, BP and LA. To this end, each member of the Group was asked to independently organize the lists in hierarchical order. This action allowed that, once the hierarchical lists had been provided, a weighting was made by means of a scale that awarded points to each element of the lists separately, according to the place it occupied in the hierarchy (Table 2).

Table 2. Scale for weighting the lists

Location	1st	2nd-3rd	4th-5th	6th-7th	8th-9th	10th and more
Score	5	4	3	2	1	0.5

Source: Own elaboration using a Likert scale according to Urcádiz Cázares and Monroy Ceseña (2022)

Finally, a histogram was made to reflect the frequency counts of values of the different levels of the lists on FC, BP and LA, as nominal variables, based on the hierarchical ranking.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Amazon is a set of tropical environments that occupies more than 7.5 million km² in eight countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, Guyana and Suriname) and one overseas territory (French Guiana). In this context, many documents related to tourism were found, but no documented experiences on community-based tourism among the nine (9) Amazonian countries. There is an imbalance in the available information reflected in the number of documents related to tourism among countries, which is further deepened with respect to the documented cases, and thus three groups of countries can be differentiated:

- one advanced (more than 60,000 documents) in community-based tourism (Colombia, Ecuador and Brazil),
- another one in development, between 10,000 and 60,000 documents (Peru, Bolivia and Venezuela), and

- a third incipient one, with less than 10,000 documents (French Guiana, Suriname and Guyana).

Secondly, of the total number of documented cases (1276) among the countries analyzed, only 31% refer to cases located in the Amazon region, while Ecuador is the country with the highest number of documented cases of community-based tourism.

From the analysis, several case studies were found, except for Guyana and Suriname, where no community-based tourism experience could be located, which is indicative of the low level of tourism development in these countries, so they were only taken into account globally. In summary, 16 FCs, and 10 BPs and LAs, respectively, were identified from the case studies by country (Table 3).

Table 3. List of FC, BP and LA of the global Amazonian context

FC-Critical Factors	BP-Good practices	LC-Lessons learned
FC1. Investments	BP1. Use of endogenous	LA1. Community-based tourism
FC2. Tourism Infrastructure	resources to achieve ecological	products are conceptualized and
FC3. Training	tourism constructions.	designed based on endogenous
FC4. Strategic Marketing	BP2. Community workforce, no	resources and attractions, without
FC5. Poverty Reduction	outside employees	pretensions that demand
FC6. Inventories of tourism	BP3. External support for	externalities.
resources	community training	LA2. The community tourism
FC7. Tourism planning and	BP4. Use of calls for proposals to	model must be adapted to the
management	seek financing for	worldview of the offering
FC8. Community Governance	entrepreneurial projects.	community.
FC9. Diversification of supply	BP5. Use of available natural	LA3. Tourism entrepreneurship
FC10. Tourism development	and cultural resources as	must start at the community level
model	resources and attractions.	LA4. Community leaders must
FC11. Digitization of the	BP6. Associativity and	have measurement instruments
destination	cooperativism for sales	that allow them to monitor their
FC12. Digital Marketing	management.	tourism projects in the short
FC13. Tourism destination life	BP7. Cultural manifestations of	term.
cycle	the community linked to the	LA5. The articulation of local

<p>FC14. Sustainability FC15. Accessibility FC16. Effective Communication</p>	<p>preservation of natural resources. BP8. Tourism support services provided by indirect agents to the management of the tourism product. BP9. Development of infrastructures that guarantee accessibility BP10. Priority to meeting the needs of local residents of the host community. BP16. Linkages between territories in the tourism cluster</p>	<p>stakeholders is the basis for the planning, organization and management of community-based tourism. LA6. Community-based tourism is an alternative to local solidarity production and fair trade. LA7. The use of technologies and digital <i>marketing</i> to community-based tourism are necessary contemporary axes for its enhancement. LA8. Inter-institutional alliances guarantee the best development of community-based tourism. LA9. Community-based tourism is an alternative for the renewal and diversification of sustainable tourism when it takes advantage of the background of the activity in the territory. LA10. Community-based tourism contributes to the creation and maintenance of productive projects for the community and generates more secure endogenous employment.</p>
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Source: Own elaboration, based on the study of the case studies (CE) of the Amazon countries (Bolivia CE1-Bo, Brazil CE2-Br, Colombia CE3-Co, Ecuador CE4-Ec, French Guyana CE5-GF, Peru CE6-Pe and Venezuela CE7-Ve)

From the bibliographic search, several documents related to the triplet [Tourism + Community + Province] and following were found (Fig. 1).

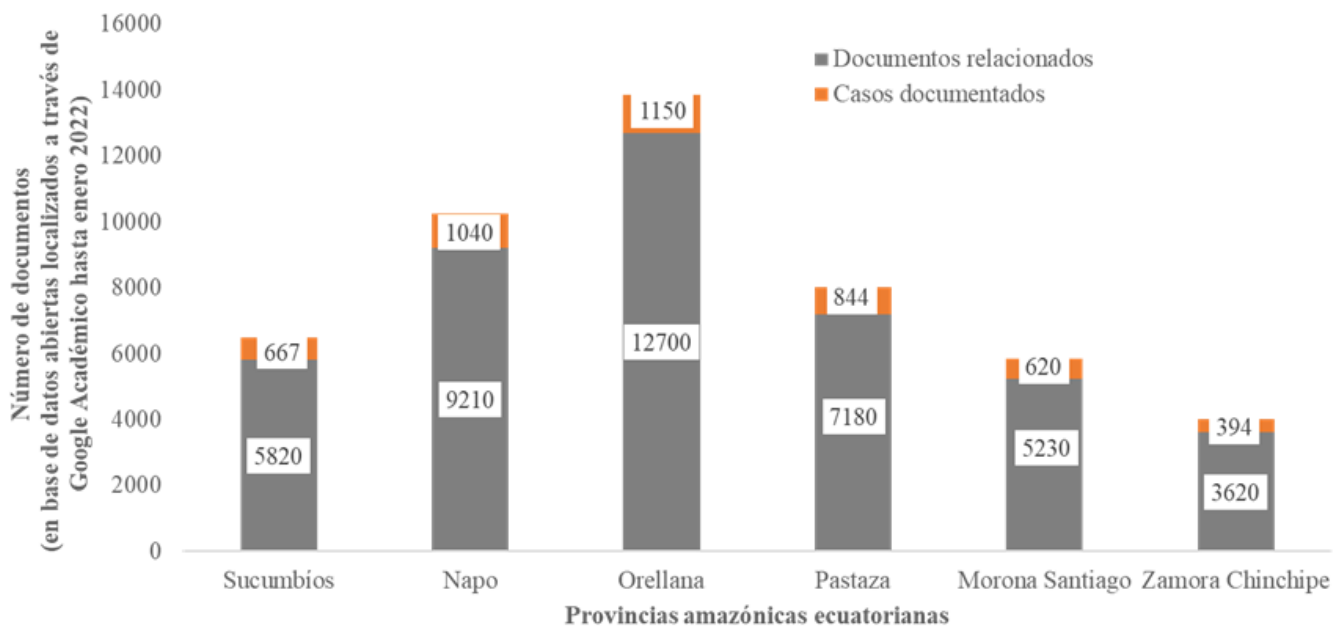


Figure 1. Documentation of community-based tourism cases in the Ecuadorian Amazon

Source: Own elaboration based on Google Scholar (2018-2022)

Due to the particular attractiveness of its variety of natural features, biodiversity and outstanding natural landscape, the Ecuadorian Amazon region is a national and international tourist attraction. Based on this, the Inter-American Development Bank proposed in 2007 the design of the Sustainable Tourism Development Plan for Ecuador to 2020 (Mintur, 2020), framed in the tourism situation at that time, the desired future, a strategic approach and proposal, and the monitoring of the process for the search of target markets, professional information and a clear positioning of Ecuador (Tamayo et al., 2015).

It is also corroborated that the provinces with the most information on community-based tourism were Orellana, Napo and Pastaza, and that the highest number of documented cases is located in the same order. From this point on, a case study selected for each province is presented, of which there was a verification of the publication source (Table 4).

Table 4. Selected case studies from the Ecuadorian Amazon region

Province	Code	Name	Year
Sucumbíos	CE8-Su	Kichwa Shayari Community	2022
Napo	CE9-Na	Environmental interpretation in the rescue of the Amazon Chakra	2018
Orellana	CE10-Or	Tourism reactivation post Covid-19 in Omaguas Pakcha, San Luis	2022
Pastaza	CE11-Pa	Family enterprise Centro Turístico Comunitario Kichwa Lisan Wasi Ancestral Commune San Jacinto del Pindo, Pastaza	2019
Morona Santiago	CE12-MS	Cueva de los Tayos de Coangos (Cave of the Tayos de Coangos)	2017
Zamora Chinchipe	CE13-ZC	Ecotourism route in the Zamora, Centinela del Cóndor, Yantzaza and Yacuambi cantons.	2015

Source: Own elaboration based on selected cases

CE8-Su. Kichwa Shayari Community: it is located in the Nueva Troncal parish, Cáscales canton, Sucumbíos province. It has 500 hectares of land populated by 13 families that have been directly and/or indirectly involved in tourism since 2004. At that time, they began managing community tourism informally, creating the Shayari Community Center. This is legally registered in the tourism establishments registry of the Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador since 2015.

The center offers visitors lodging services in typical cabins or squares inside some of the community's houses, food, guided tourist activities and exhibitions of ancestral cultural manifestations. It is directly accessible from Quito, the capital of the country, which facilitates the influx of visitors. There is a system of group organization, distribution of roles and activities to be carried out on specific dates to contribute to the Center's tourism activity, which generates alternative employment for the community for about 32% of its members.

The community has a high level of communication with all the inhabitants. They are frequently informed through meetings about important and current issues related to tourism activities, and at the same time they receive training on environmental issues and other topics of interest for the

development of tourism. In summary, in the case appear: FC2, FC3, FC15, FC16, BP10, BP11 and LA10, and as a new FC17. Host community satisfaction.

CE9-Na. Environmental interpretation in the rescue of the Amazon Chakra: the case takes place in the community tourism center of Sinchi Warmi in the parish of Puerto Misahuallí, Canton Tena, Napo province in eastern Ecuador. The work with the Chakra contemplates several biological factors such as the *habitat* of reptiles, amphibians, insects, birds, etc., and traditionally involves field work carried out by women in the company of their children where they share stories, legends and traditions.

Until 2019, the environmental interpretation of the Chakra has been based on the activities and interpretive guides of the Sinchi Warmi trail. For this, it was necessary to devise several guidelines such as: design, number of stations, assessing the most effective length, type of layout, texts, scripts and thematic map. In a general sense, the natural and socio-cultural components of the Chakra have allowed the owners to offer new experiences to tourists and have improved the appreciation of the community tourism center. Community members have improved the tourism offerings and, consequently, the efficiency of environmental interpretation in community tourism in the locality has been proven. In summary, FC3 and FC7 were identified and derived from this case: FC18. Innovation of the tourism product, BP12. Application of environmental interpretation for the improvement of the community tourism product, and LA11. Participatory action research is an effective community research approach that can lead to product innovation.

CE10-Or. Post Covid-19 tourism reactivation in Omaguas Pakcha, San Luis: The case focused on the application of a Strategic Plan for post-pandemic tourism reactivation in the Omaguas Pakcha Community Tourism Center, in the parish of San Luis de Armenia in Orellana, specifically in the Kichwa Paco Rumi community, which is made up of about 60 people. The main reason for creating the tourist center in the community was an incentive to have an additional economic income. However, during the first three to five months there was a flow of 20 to 30 tourists only on weekends, exclusively on Saturdays and Sundays. From the first to the fifth year, the flow of tourists was established with an average of 50 people per month. So far, only national tourists have visited.

Through a situational diagnosis and SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), they designed a Strategic Plan. One year after its implementation (2022), it favored the reactivation of the tourist center and projects a better positioning in local tourism with innovative

tourism packages, modern infrastructure, and the conservation of the natural resources of the area by 2026.

In summary, FC1 and FC7 were identified and resulted from this case: FC19. Strategic direction, BP13. Use of situational analysis for the strategic diagnosis of tourism activity, and LA12. Strategic direction with its planning and management tools can be effective in post-crisis community tourism recovery.

CE11-Pa. Family enterprise Kichwa Lisan Wasi Community Tourist Center Ancestral Commune San Jacinto del Pindo Pastaza: in this case, the San Jacinto community was characterized, where information was collected regarding population, education and health services, transportation, access, governance, needs of each community and tourism potential in the natural and cultural context. A total of 31 tourist attractions were identified in the localities visited, of which 21 correspond to natural sites and 10 to cultural manifestations. The population of the commune was composed of 93% Kichwa, 6% Shuar and 1% Achuar. Summarizing, FC8 and FC14 were identified and transcended from this case: FC20. Customer focus, BP14. Materialization of the experiential tourism approach and LA13. Demand segmentation and specialization in a tourism niche can guarantee the growth and sustainability of community tourism.

CE12-MS. Cave of the Tayos de Coangos: The study was framed in the Shuar community of Coangos, in the province of Morona Santiago, where there are multiple caves and rocky caverns. One of them is the Cueva de los Tayos, an enigmatic place with a variety of legends and myths for which, until 2015, the Shuar of Coangos had not received any compensation. For this reason, a legal association was formed, represented by José Saant, a Shuar leader, which has promoted the development and advancement of tourism in the community through agreements with different public and private institutions, which must provide direct and indirect support with non-reimbursable funds.

Currently they have managed to build the access road to the main cave, 12 km from the beginning of the Santiago River, and an adventure is being promoted for national and international tourists to enjoy the routes and hiking by crossing in rafts with specialized guides, with equipment and accessories of the latest technology. In this way, the flow of tourists has increased and they have had access to resources and benefits such as a restaurant serving typical regional food, traditional

cabins, and a shower system. This has allowed for the sustainability and development of this ethnic group.

When systematizing the case, FC8 and BP9 were visualized and the following were contributed as peculiarities of this case: FC21. Leadership, FC22. Public-community articulation, BP15. Entrepreneurship with community leadership, LA14. The attractiveness from the uniqueness and rarity as the mysticism of tangible and intangible resources can be used to undertake tourism community, and LA15. Governmental support can be a determining source for the success of community tourism as a local development strategy.

CE13-ZC. Ecotourism route in the Zamora, Centinela del Cóndor, Yantzaza and Yacuambi cantons: the case study focuses on the process of community outreach and involvement in the identification and enhancement of the natural and cultural resources of four cantons in the province of Zamora Chinchipe. In 2014, the tourism project Ruta Ecoturística began in the Zamora, Centinela del Cóndor, Yantzaza and Yacuambi cantons, which has offered development alternatives.

One year later (2015), three productive projects had been prioritized in the area. These were based on endogenous development and sought to improve the quality of life of the community, respecting the principles of sustainability and contributing to building a more competitive and equitable area with greater opportunities. The summary identified FC22 and as new elements: FC22. Public-community articulation, BP16. Linkages between territories of the tourism cluster, and LA16. The use of different tourism products of a nature cluster can strengthen the results of community tourism.

The diagnosis was summarized by systematizing each of the outputs FC, BP and LA, originated from all the case studies as inputs, adding those originated in the Ecuadorian Amazon context (Table 5).

Table 5. Outputs of the Ecuadorian Amazon case studies

FC-Critical Factors	BP-Good practices	LC-Lessons learned
FC17. Host community satisfaction	BP11. Implementation of sustainability indicators in tourism management.	LA11. Participatory action research is an effective community-based research approach that can lead to product innovation.
FC18. Innovation of the tourism product	BP12. Application of environmental	LA12. Strategic management with its
FC19. Strategic Direction		

<p>FC20. Customer focus</p> <p>FC21. Leadership</p> <p>FC22. Public-community articulation</p> <p>FC23. Tourism cluster</p>	<p>interpretation for the improvement of the community tourism product.</p> <p>BP13. Use of situational analysis for the strategic diagnosis of tourism activity.</p> <p>BP14. Materialization of the experiential tourism approach</p> <p>BP15. Entrepreneurship with community leadership</p> <p>BP16. Linkages between territories in the tourism cluster</p>	<p>planning and management tools can be effective in post-crisis community tourism recovery.</p> <p>LA13. The segmentation of the demand and the specialization in a tourist niche can guarantee the growth and sustainability of community-based tourism.</p> <p>LA14. The attractiveness from the uniqueness and rarity as the mysticism of tangible and intangible resources can be leveraged to undertake community-based tourism.</p> <p>LA15. Governmental support can be a determining source for the success of community-based tourism as a local development strategy.</p> <p>LA16. The utilization of different tourism products of a nature cluster can strengthen the results of community-based tourism</p>
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Source: Own elaboration

With the total of ECs, FCs, BPs and LAs, statistical inferences were made on the relationships between outputs and inputs (Fig. 2). As can be seen, there is, in the first place, a close relationship between the SCs and all their outputs, since, theoretically, a systemic approach is materialized in the visual representation, where the latter are results of the former. Secondly, the connections and influences that each node (variable) has on each other and the resulting link, which on average is between medium and strong, are corroborated. On the other hand, the largest nodes turned out to be for CE6-Pe, followed by CE1-Bo and CE8-Su, which confirms their greater influence on the results obtained.

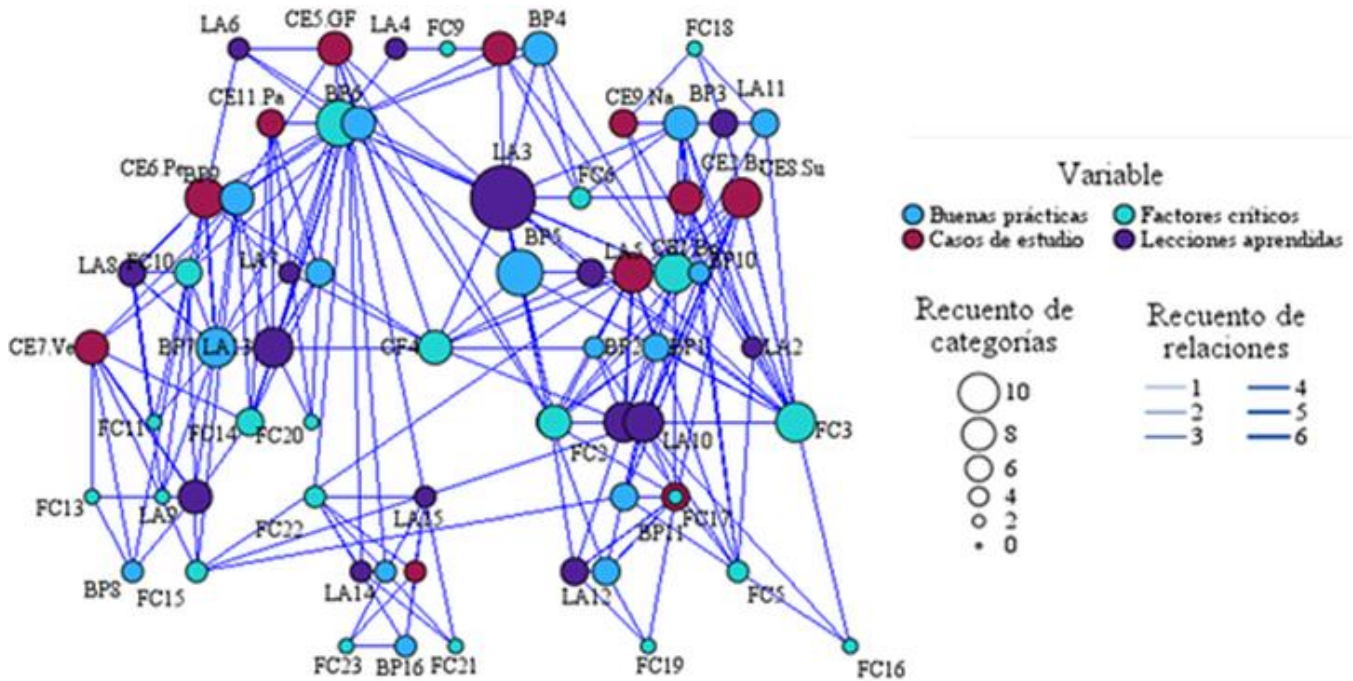


Figure 2. Map of output-input relationships of the case study system

Source: Own elaboration based on IBM SPSS Statistics v.26.0.10 for Windows

This meant that the cases of Peru and Bolivia in the general framework of the Amazon and Sucumbíos in the Ecuadorian Amazon region are the ones that contributed the most with respect to the determination of the FCs. This is visualized by thick linkage lines, which represent strong connections and influence. In turn, the most influential CFs were FC8 (Community governance), FC3 (Training) and FC5 (Tourism planning and management), which is an important finding that can be implemented in the design of methodological tools and public policies to enhance the development of community tourism in the aforementioned region.

Closely interrelated with the FCs, the interconnections and relevance of the BPs are visualized on the same map. On this occasion, BP5 (Use of natural and cultural resources available as resources and attractions), BP7 (Cultural manifestations of the community linked to the preservation of natural resources), BP6 (Associativity and cooperativism for sales management) were among the most influential for the general theme of the CEs.

After analyzing the most influential FCs and BPs, it can be said that the LAs with the greatest strength in the connection with the CEs of community-based tourism were: LA3 (Tourism entrepreneurship

should start from the community), LA13 (Segmentation of demand and specialization in a tourism niche can guarantee the growth and sustainability of community tourism) and LA10 (Community tourism contributes to the creation and maintenance of productive projects for the community and generates more secure endogenous jobs).

Finally, after having systematized the CE, BP and LA, highlighting the most influential ones, it can be explained that the smallest nodes and the thinnest linking lines represented the weakest connections and influence. However, they were all included in the lists made available to the members of the GDO, who evaluated them and ranked them in order to obtain the consensus lists of the outputs of the cases.

As shown in the histogram in figure 3, the critical factors FC7, FC8 and FC6 were the three most weighted by the specialists, which allows us to affirm that "Tourism planning and management" and "Community governance" are ratified as the two most influential factors, to which is added "Inventories of tourism resources" (FC6) which had not been among the most important in the map of relationships, although FC3 (Training) remains among the most significant, as it remained in 4th place.

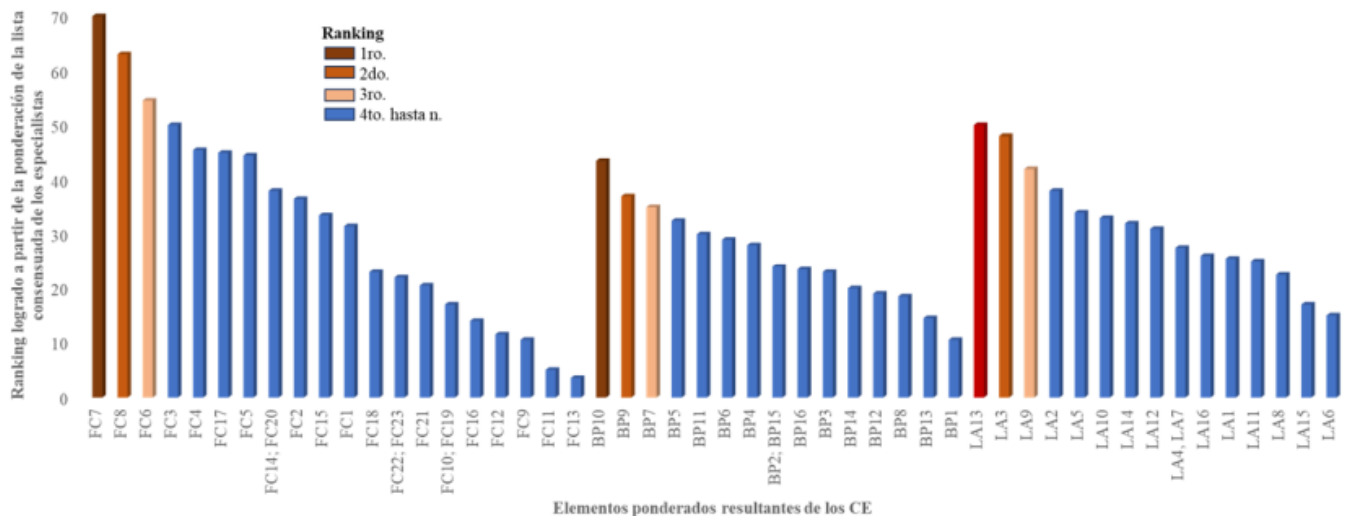


Figure 3. Hierarchization of the outputs of the case study system

Source: Own elaboration based on IBM SPSS Statistics v.26.0.10 for Windows

Very similar was the result with respect to lessons learned. Both from the weightings of the specialists and the map, the following were of greater hierarchy: "the segmentation of demand and

specialization in a tourism niche can guarantee the growth and sustainability of community tourism" (LA13) and "tourism entrepreneurship should start from the community" (LA3), followed in third place by LA9, "community tourism is an alternative for the renovation and diversification of sustainable tourism when it takes advantage of the background of the activity in the territory", which was not shown to be influential in the map. However, LA10 (community tourism contributes to the creation and maintenance of productive projects for the community and generates more secure endogenous jobs) remained positioned with relative importance in 6th place.

In contrast to the results weighted by the specialists in the two previous elements, only one (BP7) of those positioned among the top three in the ranking coincided with one of the three resulting in the map (i.e., BP5, BP7 and BP6). In this case, the consensus indicated BP10 (priority to meeting the needs of local residents of the host community) as the first, BP7 (community cultural manifestations linked to the preservation of natural resources) as the second and BP9 (development of infrastructure ensuring accessibility) in third place.

However, the issues of "use of natural and cultural resources available as resources and attractions" (BP5) and "associativity and cooperativism for sales management" (BP6) will continue to be relevant practices to take into account when formulating instruments for the management of community tourism in the Ecuadorian Amazon, both were among the first, in 4th and 6th place, respectively.

The following should also be considered: training and continuing education of local tourism stakeholders in technical, administrative, cultural and environmental aspects; diversification and complementarity of the tourism offer, based on the resources and potential of each territory and community; effective promotion and marketing of community tourism through communication and marketing strategies that highlight its differential values and attract specific market segments; and articulation and cooperation among the different community tourism stakeholders, at the local, regional and national levels, to generate synergies and strategic alliances that strengthen the sector.

From all the work done so far, it can be systematized, first of all, that the tools used in the research allowed confirming that community-based tourism is a tourism model that combines elements of nature and culture so that a community, with unique natural and cultural resources, can take it as a strategy for sustainable development from community autonomy and for the benefit of the community in its local area that seeks to improve the socioeconomic situation and conserve natural resources through the participation of the community in tourism management.

Secondly, community-based tourism in the Amazon region presents a great diversity of experiences and results, depending on the level of information available in each country. Some countries, such as Colombia, Ecuador and Brazil, have extensive documentation of successful cases, where local communities have managed to manage their own tourism resources in a sustainable and participatory manner. Among all of them, Ecuador stands out for having the largest number of documented cases, as well as for its legal and political framework favorable to community-based tourism.

Thirdly, the provinces of the Ecuadorian Amazon region with the most information related to community-based tourism were Orellana, Napo and Pastaza, with the highest number of documented cases of community-based tourism in their territories.

Finally, there is a close relationship between the case studies and all their outputs (23 critical factors and 16 good practices and lessons learned, respectively), and a prevalence of strong connections and influences between them is corroborated, as well as empirical coincidence with the weightings made by specialists on the outputs.

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Conflict of interest

Authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Authors' contribution

Luis Eduardo Álvarez Cortez y Yudemir Cruz Pérez designed the study, analyzed the data and prepared the draft.

Víctor Hugo Del Corral Villaroel y Tania Cristina Cevallos Punguil were involved in data collection, analysis and interpretation.

All four reviewed the writing of the manuscript and approved the version finally submitted.



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