

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i1.636>

Challenges and Opportunities in Local Sustainable Tourism: A Systematic Review Focusing on Community Participation and Regional Development

Jael Dolores Zambrano-Mieles¹, Dolores Narcisca Mieles-Cevallos², Lourdes Janneth Suntasig-Tuasa³, Leonardo Fabiani-Orbea⁴

Abstract

Sustainable local tourism is positioned as a key tool for balancing economic, social, and environmental development in local communities, promoting the active participation of their inhabitants. This study presents a systematic review focused on the challenges and opportunities of sustainable local tourism, with emphasis on community participation and regional development. The main trends and gaps in the literature were identified through a bibliometric analysis of 28 relevant studies published between 2020 and 2025. The findings highlight the benefits of community-based tourism, such as employment generation, economic diversification, cultural preservation, and strengthening of the social fabric. However, significant challenges remain, including the lack of community organization, limited access to financial resources, and ineffective public policies. In addition, it became evident that community participation and local empowerment are fundamental to ensure the sustainability and equity of these initiatives. This paper offers practical recommendations to overcome structural barriers and maximize the positive impacts of sustainable local tourism. It also proposes integrative strategies that promote participatory governance and cooperation between public and private actors. This study contributes to knowledge about the transformative role of sustainable tourism in local communities, providing a basis for future research and action in the field of sustainable development.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Community Participation, Regional Development, Sustainability, Bibliometric Analysis.

Introduction

Sustainable local tourism has been consolidated as a key strategy to promote economic (Gantait et al., 2024), and social and environmental development in communities (Yang & Bi, 2024), especially in developing regions (Odunga et al., 2024). This approach not only seeks to balance economic growth with the preservation of natural and cultural resources but also prioritizes the active participation of local communities as a central axis of development. The importance of sustainable local tourism lies in its ability to generate direct economic benefits, strengthen the social fabric, and foster greater environmental awareness, all contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Suastuti et al., 2024).

However, the implementation of sustainable strategies faces numerous challenges that limit their reach and impact. These include a lack of adequate infrastructure, restricted access to financial

¹ Universidad Estatal de Milagro, Email: jzambranom@unemi.edu.ec, Orcid ID: 0000-0002-2796-8420

² Universidad Estatal de Milagro, Email: dmielesc@unemi.edu.ec, Orcid ID: 0000-0002-1681-2076

³ Universidad Estatal de Milagro, Email: lsuntasigt@unemi.edu.ec, Orcid ID: 0000-0003-2070-6468

⁴ Universidad Estatal de Milagro, Email: bfabiano@unemi.edu.ec, Orcid ID: 0000-0002-0327-2250



resources, resistance to change by some sectors of the community, and lack of clear public policies that support community-based tourism (Aliu et al., 2024; Indriastuty et al., 2024; Tinonetsana & Musariwa, 2024). These obstacles are particularly visible in rural and marginalized regions, where communities often rely on limited resources to develop tourism initiatives (Gomez & van Niekerk, 2022).

Local communities play a key role in sustainable local tourism, as they possess valuable knowledge about their environment and the specific needs of the region. This knowledge includes traditional resource management practices, strategies for biodiversity conservation, and a deep understanding of the cultural value of tangible and intangible heritage (Adamowicz, 2023; Luo et al., 2024; Kamakaula et al., 2024). By integrating local knowledge into development strategies, regions can achieve more sustainable outcomes that are culturally sensitive and tailored to the specific realities of each community. This also fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment among the inhabitants, who become key actors in tourism management and the conservation of their heritage.

Despite the challenges, sustainable local tourism offers several significant opportunities. These include employment generation, economic diversification, preservation of natural and cultural resources, and promotion of innovative participatory governance practices. The success of these initiatives lies in the ability of communities to organize themselves, develop local leadership, and establish strategic partnerships with public and private actors. These partnerships can overcome structural barriers and enhance the positive impacts of tourism on communities.

This article presents a systematic literature review focused on the challenges and opportunities of sustainable local tourism, with a particular focus on the role of community participation in regional development. Through the synthesis of recent findings, it seeks to identify good practices, areas for improvement, and innovative strategies that can guide future research and actions in this area. It also proposes recommendations to strengthen the implementation of sustainable tourism models, maximizing their positive impact on the economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

Methodology

This study follows the guidelines of the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) approach for conducting a rigorous systematic review (Elsman et al., 2024). The methodological process includes the following steps:

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Articles published between 2020 and 2025 in journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) that focus on local tourism, sustainability, and community participation were included; for WoS, the Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI EXPANDED) and Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) editions were used to ensure the quality of the documents. Studies that did not directly address community participation or sustainable regional development were excluded, as well as non-peer-reviewed publications and duplicate articles, and studies only in Spanish and English were included.

Strategy and search equation

The search equations were performed using keywords such as: "local sustainable tourism", "community participation", "regional development", "sustainability challenges" and

"opportunities in tourism". and Boolean operators (and, or), for Scopus the following search equation was used: TITLE-ABS-KEY(("local sustainable tourism" OR "community-based tourism" OR "community participation" OR "participatory tourism") AND ("regional development" OR "local development" OR "community development") AND ("regional development" OR "local development" OR "community development")) and in WoS the equation used was: TS=("local sustainable tourism" OR "community-based tourism" OR "community participation" OR "participatory tourism" AND ("regional development" OR "local development" OR "community development" AND "sustainability challenges" OR "tourism opportunities" OR "sustainable practices" AND "sustainability challenges" OR "tourism opportunities" OR "sustainable practices").

Study Selection

The selection process began with the identification of 7364 initial records in the selected databases, 1077 in Scopus, and 6287 in WoS. After the elimination of duplicates, 7048 unique studies were obtained. Then, titles and abstracts were reviewed, selecting 120 relevant studies. Finally, after thorough reading and critical appraisal, 28 studies were included in the analysis. The entire process was documented using a PRISMA diagram.

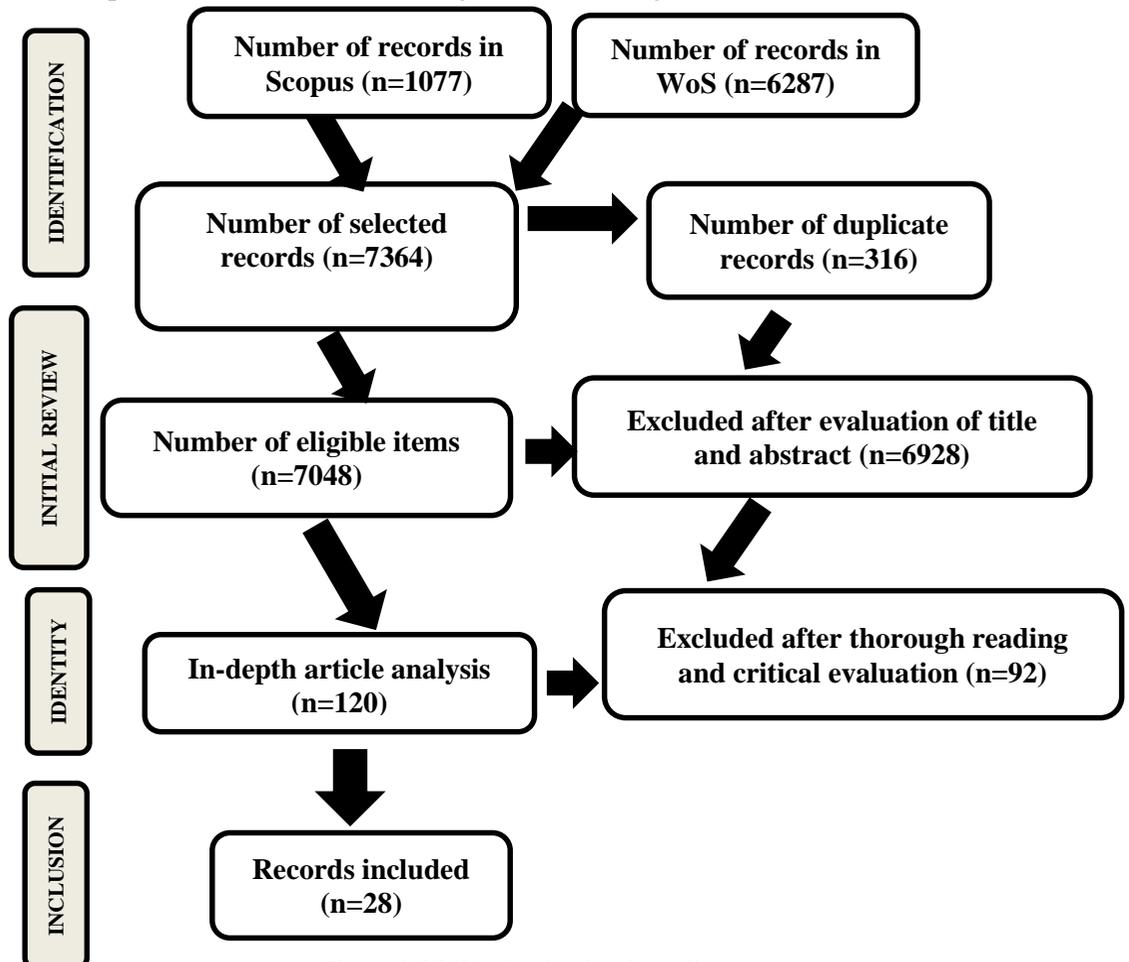


Figure 1 PRISMA selection flow diagram

Data Extraction

To ensure the quality and uniqueness of the articles selected in this systematic review, an automated procedure was implemented to identify and eliminate duplicates in the consolidated database, using the R programming language (version 4.4.2). The process began with consolidating files from different databases, such as Scopus and Web of Science, into a single CSV file using the `rbind()` function. Subsequently, the title fields were normalized by converting them to lowercase and eliminating special characters. To detect duplicates, the `left_join()` function was used to identify repeated records efficiently. This automated approach optimized the integrity and consistency of the data analyzed.

Bibliometric Analysis

To perform the bibliometric analysis, information such as authors, title, year of publication, source, affiliations, and author keywords were downloaded. The bibliometric analysis included:

- Productivity analysis
- Collaborative network analysis
- Keyword analysis

Productivity analysis was performed using R software (version 4.4.2). For keyword and collaborative network analysis, VosViewer (version XXX) was used.

Literature Analysis

The literature review was used to answer the following research question: What are the main challenges and opportunities identified in the implementation of sustainable tourism strategies with a participatory approach in local communities?

Results

Analysis of the 28 selected studies revealed the following findings:

Bibliometric Analysis

Time Productivity Analysis

Figure 2 shows the evolution of scientific publications from the registries selected for this study, evidencing a clear increasing trend in the number of works carried out. In 2020, two studies were published, which could be interpreted as the beginning of an emerging interest in exploring the interactions between sustainable tourism, community participation, and regional development.

By 2021, the number of publications increased slightly to three. However, 2022 marked a significant turning point with an increase to seven publications. This growth could be related to an increased global awareness of sustainability and recognition of the positive impact that participatory strategies have on local tourism.

In 2023, academic interest in the topic was consolidated, with six publications, reflecting the continuity of research in this area. Finally, in 2024, the highest number of publications in the period analyzed was reached, with a total of ten papers, reaffirming the growing relevance of this field in research agendas.

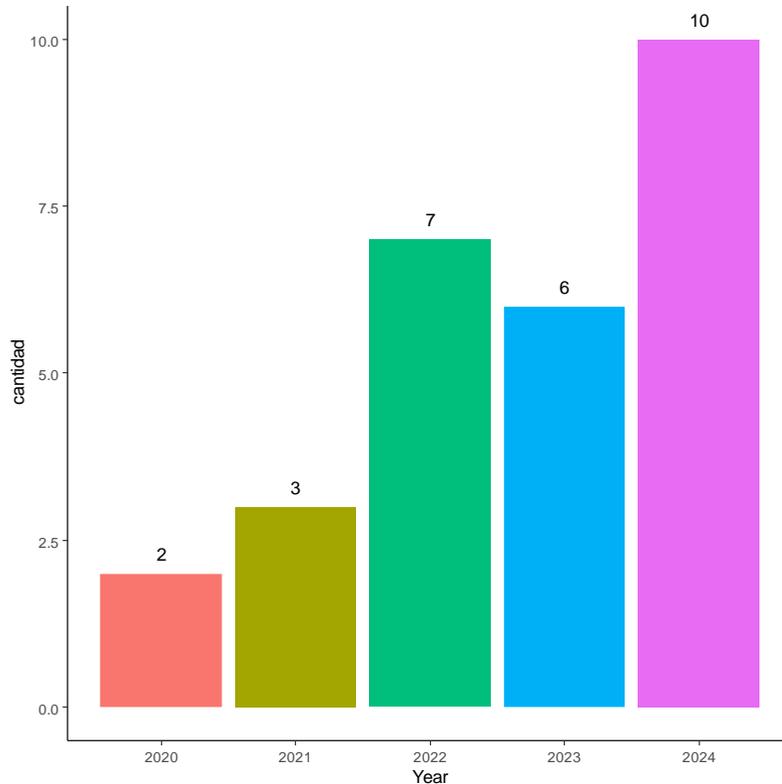


Figure 2 Annual distribution of scientific publications

Analysis of Collaboration Networks

Figure 3 represents a network of collaboration between academic institutions in the field of sustainable tourism. Each node of the network corresponds to an academic institution, while the connections (arcs) indicate collaborations between these institutions in research related to the topic.

Among the main nodes, institutions such as the "School of Business and Management", "Faculty of Business and Management", and "School of Tourism, Universitas" stand out and seem to be the most active within the network. This can be deduced from the number of connections they maintain with other institutions, which is evidence of their central role in the development of research in this thematic area.

Likewise, it is observed that the connections between institutions of faculties related to business, tourism, and accounting are significant. This suggests that the topic of sustainable tourism is being approached from an interdisciplinary perspective, integrating economic, administrative, and social aspects. However, the network is not completely dense, indicating that there is still room to strengthen inter-institutional collaborations, especially between faculties that could complement each other in terms of research.

The presence of terms such as "business", "management" and "tourism" in the nodes reinforces that research in this area combines elements of sustainability, economics, and strategic planning. This combination is key to addressing the challenges of sustainable tourism in a holistically.

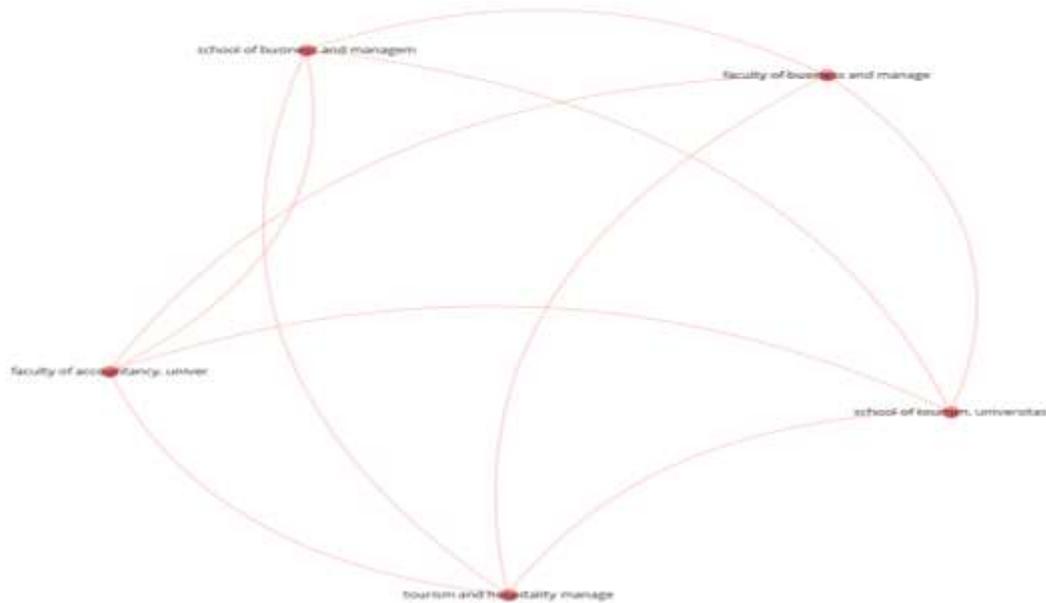


Figure 3 Collaboration network between academic institutions

Keyword Analysis

Figure 4 represents an author keyword co-occurrence map based on the selected articles on the topic. Each node in the network represents a keyword, while the connections between nodes indicate that these words have appeared together in the same articles, forming thematic clusters that reflect the main areas of focus within the field.

Central node: "Community Participation"

The node "Community Participation" appears as the most prominent and central term, suggesting that this concept is key in sustainable tourism research. Its centrality indicates a strong connection to several related areas, such as sustainable development, community-based tourism, and sustainability.

Thematic clusters identified:

Red cluster: Focuses on sustainability and sustainable development issues, including terms such as "sustainable practices", "sustainability", "environmental impact", "circular economy" and "climate change". This reflects a focus on environmental impacts and sustainable strategies for tourism development.

Green Cluster: Represents issues related to community-based tourism, local development, ecotourism, and conservation. This cluster emphasizes the role of communities in the management and development of sustainable tourism initiatives.

Yellow Cluster: It is associated with health and social participation issues, including public health, social participation, and health promotion. This suggests a link between sustainable tourism and social aspects such as inclusion and community well-being.

Blue Cluster: encompasses terms related to tourism development, governance, empowerment, and collaboration, indicating an interest in organizational structures and management strategies.

The multiple connections between the clusters reflect the interdisciplinary nature of sustainable tourism research, which combines environmental, social, economic, and governance aspects.

In addition, terms such as "COVID-19" and "resilience" appear in the network, indicating that recent challenges, such as the pandemic, have significantly influenced the field and have given rise to new lines of research related to sustainable recovery.

Figure 4 highlights that community participation is a central theme in sustainable tourism research. It also shows how this concept is interconnected with key issues such as environmental sustainability, conservation, social welfare, and governance. The thematic clusters and their connections reflect a holistic approach that encompasses both challenges and opportunities in sustainable local tourism development.

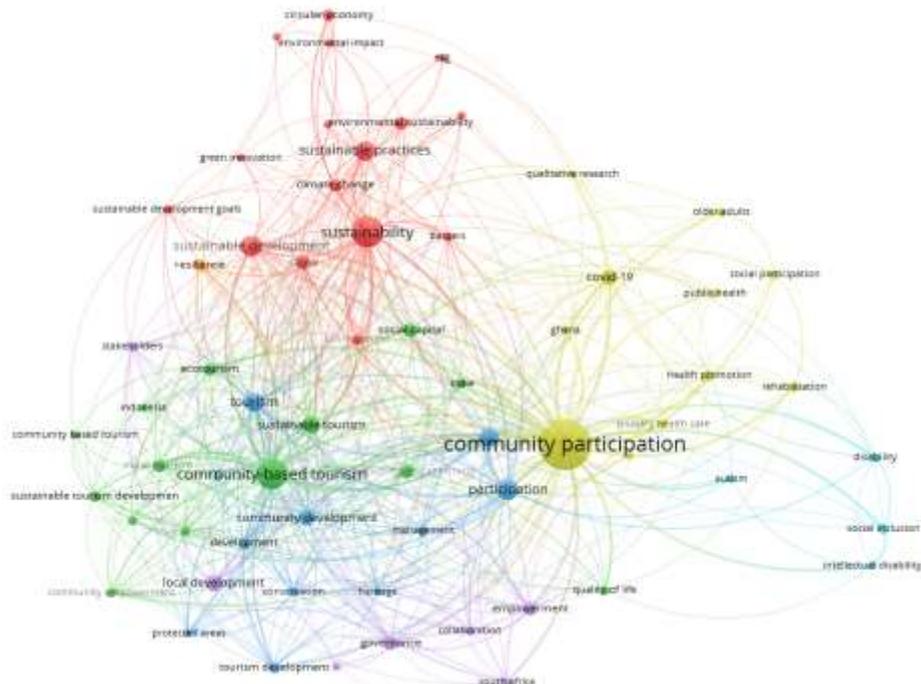


Figure 4 Keyword co-occurrence map

Literature Analysis

This section presents the results obtained from the analysis of the 28 studies related to community-based tourism and its impact on sustainable development. Table 1 summarizes the key findings of the articles analyzed, highlighting the main results of each research, as well as their contribution to the research question posed. This synthesis allows us to identify patterns, challenges, and opportunities in the various community-based tourism initiatives documented, providing a solid basis for the conclusions of the present study.

Authors	Title	Findings	Answer to the research question
(Montoya, 2024)	External actors, tourism and rural crisis. Reflections from the Sierra de Huelva (Andalusia)	External actors generate employment, and increase tourism, but externalize benefits, raise costs, reduce local profitability, impact resources, and generate community conflicts.	External actors compromise the principles of locally based tourism, displacing local management and increasing inequalities. However, they promote economic diversification and tourism flow, highlighting the need for participatory governance.
(Canales-Gutiérrez & Pacheco-Vizcarra, 2024)	Rural tourism in Quechua communities on Lake Titicaca: an alternative for improving economic income	61.2% of families dedicated to tourism and 38.4% to handicrafts. 194% increase in the number of tourists in Llachón (2004-2007). Income improved by up to 21.8% thanks to the project's intervention. Training and revolving fund improved tourism services and quality of life.C10	The article shows that community-based rural tourism significantly improves economic income and quality of life in local communities. However, it also highlights the importance of sustainable strategies such as the ecosystem approach, which encompasses social, economic, and environmental systems, ensuring long-term sustainability.
(Saavedra & Muñoz, 2024)	Community Involvement in Child Development Support Systems and Programs	Community participation improves the implementation and effectiveness of children's programs. Initiatives driven by external organizations predominate over community-based initiatives. Effects include community empowerment and improved program sustainability.	The article highlights how community participation can transform policy implementation in child development. It identifies that community-led initiatives have a greater sustainable impact, but external approaches predominate. This underscores the need to strengthen participatory mechanisms with decentralized and context-sensitive models.
(Venceslao et al., 2024)	Participación comunitaria en los centros de secundaria desde una perspectiva intercultural	Participation improves coexistence and promotes democratic values. Lack of integration between students, families, and teachers in participatory projects. The intercultural perspective promotes respect for diversity.	This study highlights that educational participation has transformative potential, but faces barriers such as lack of involvement and collaboration. It highlights the importance of intercultural approaches and participatory models that include the entire educational community, promoting social cohesion and justice.
(Hariyadi et al., 2024)	The Role of Community-Based Tourism in Sustainable Tourism Village in Indonesia	Development of a sustainable tourism model based on local wisdom in Dermaji Village. Increased community income through employment in tourism and cultural preservation. Public awareness and environmental commitment have been key to the success of the model.	This article highlights how community-based tourism can promote sustainable development in rural areas. Local participation has strengthened the economy and preserved cultural and natural resources. However, planning is required to ensure equity of benefits and long-term sustainability.
(Indrianto et al., 2024)	Exploration of the Teaching and Learning Model Using the Design Thinking Method in Developing Community-Based Tourism	The use of Design Thinking (DT) improves sustainable community tourism in Bromo and Peniwen. Community and student participation developed innovative tourism models. The collaborative approach increased environmental awareness, problem-solving, and leadership.	This study shows how the Design Thinking approach promotes sustainable models of community-based tourism. The methodology allows for the integration of creativity and collaboration, strengthening community and student participation. It highlights the importance of DT-based strategies to overcome social, cultural, and environmental challenges in CBT.
(Gascón & Milano, 2024)	Community-Based Tourism: A Global South Perspective	Identification of the "Dilemma of Duality" in community tourism projects. Context, methodology, and paradigms as key factors. The case of Amantani: concentration of benefits in a minority versus attempts at equity.C12	The article discusses how contextual, methodological, and paradigmatic characteristics influence the results of community-based tourism. It highlights challenges such as the concentration of benefits in dominant sectors and opportunities for improving quality of life. It suggests participatory planning and longitudinal analysis for sustainable solutions.

(Odunga et al., 2024)	Community Support and Socioeconomic Impacts of Cultural Tourism Development in Western Kenya	Cultural tourism improves employment, income, and community engagement in rural Western Kenya. Community perception strongly influences tourism support.	Positive perceptions of tourism enhance local support, while tailored socioeconomic strategies, such as cultural entrepreneurship and infrastructure, are needed to maximize sustainable development benefits. Negative effects, like cost increases, need mitigation.
(Suastuti et al., 2024)	Reconstruction of The Policy License for Tourism Businesses: Challenge and Opportunity for Social Welfare	The centralization of tourism licensing by the central government in Indonesia generates conflicts with local authorities, affecting the supervision and implementation of policies adapted to the regional context.	The centralization of licenses affects local governance, creating gaps in the supervision of tourism activities. It is proposed to return authority to local governments to strengthen sustainable tourism development and ensure equity in benefits.
(Lee & Sam, 2024)	Community Sustainability Through Sustainable Community-Based Tourism	Community revitalization combining bottom-up and top-down approaches. Integration of local cultural and ecological assets into tourism projects. Volunteers play a mediating role between the community and society. Sustainable tourism as a key tool to overcome economic and demographic problems.	The article emphasizes how sustainable tourism can revitalize rural communities by integrating cultural identity and ecological assets into their strategies. The combined bottom-up and top-down approach ensures local participation and equity, promoting sustainable models that strengthen social and economic ties in the community.
(Ribera, 2023)	Social Dynamics and Structural Coupling	Social dynamics and cultural structures affect adherence to global health programs. Participatory strategies such as structural coupling increase the success of projects such as MASSIV and RHOST. Social pressure and community leadership are key to participation.	This study shows that the integration of socio-cultural dynamics and the adaptation of projects to local structures are essential for their success. It underscores that community programs must co-strategize with local leaders and leverage positive social pressures to foster greater sustainability and buy-in.
(Canclini et al., 2023)	Turismo cultural, patrimonio y comunidades locales: el caso de Cabildo (Buenos Aires, Argentina)	Creation of an integrated cultural tourism circuit through participatory research. Intergenerational identity is reflected in spaces such as the Railway Station and the Prado Español. Lack of coordination between local actors and institutions to promote tourism.	This article shows how cultural tourism can act as a tool for community cohesion and heritage preservation. It identifies challenges such as heritage fragmentation and disconnection among stakeholders, highlighting the importance of participatory schemes led by public agencies to ensure sustainability.
(Gascón, 2023)	The Participatory Process in Community-Based Tourism: An Ethnographic Analysis	The success of rural community-based tourism depends on social capital, solid organizational structures, and knowledge of the sector. Real participatory processes avoid becoming empty rituals. Risks include intra-community conflict and socioeconomic inequality.	This study shows that effective participatory processes require robust organizational structures and a deep understanding of the tourism sector. The lack of these factors can lead to conflict and inequality. It underlines the importance of integrating sustainable and participatory models that respond to local dynamics.
(Vela Riera et al., 2023)	El turismo comunitario y su impacto en el desarrollo socioeconómico de la comunidad Valdivia en la península de Santa Elena en Ecuador	Increase in quality of life and employment generation, although growth is slow. Basic tourism infrastructure; lack of marketing and funding. Strong correlation between tourism and socioeconomic development in infrastructure and economic opportunities.	The study demonstrates that community-based tourism can significantly impact communities such as Valdivia. However, financial barriers, lack of marketing, and limited infrastructure hinder full sustainable development. It highlights the need for comprehensive strategic plans and promotion.
(Mora-Forero & Nieto-Mejía, 2023)	Analysis of the Solidarity Economy in Rural Tourism	Community empowerment is key to the success of tourism. Valorization of local resources and rural multifunctionality. The social organization improves cohesion and sustainability.	This article highlights that tourism based on economic solidarity generates cohesion and sustainable development in rural territories. It identifies that community empowerment and collective management are essential to revalue resources and overcome agricultural dependence, promoting inclusive and participatory models.

(Boscán Carroz et al., 2023)	Emprendimiento peruano en el marco del desarrollo sostenible	Moderate positive relationship between entrepreneurship and sustainable development. Increased contribution to the SDGs through innovation and adaptability. Low correlation with community participation.	This study demonstrates that entrepreneurship contributes to sustainable development by promoting innovation and adaptability in the Peruvian context. However, community participation is still limited, highlighting the need for policies that strengthen community engagement in sustainability strategies.
(Bozzato & Pollice, 2022)	Perspectives for Community-Driven Tourism in Cape Verde	Tourism in Cabo Verde is dominated by exogenous investments and unsustainable models. Community-based tourism proposal focused on culture, nature, and local participation. Creation of community hotels and tourist routes to revitalize the local economy and mitigate negative impacts.	This study highlights the need to shift towards a community-based tourism model in Cabo Verde, away from exogenous developments that negatively affect the environment and local culture. It highlights that the active participation of communities and respect for cultural and natural heritage are key to sustainable tourism.
(Garzón & Toloza, 2022)	Coevaluación de las condiciones de viabilidad en iniciativas de turismo comunitario en Colombia	Strengths in natural resources, knowledge, and culture. Weaknesses: lack of organization and financial support. Main motivations: income, heritage preservation, and community work. Threats: internal conflicts and lack of government support.	This article shows that community-based tourism in Colombia has great potential based on cultural and natural resources. However, it faces critical challenges such as informality, lack of planning, and limited financing. It highlights the importance of co-evaluation and organizational strengthening to ensure viability and sustainability.
(Oppliger & de Oliveira, 2022)	Tourism as an Economic Possibility for the Sustainable Development of the Quilombola Community of Furnas dos Baianos	Tourism in the community is not developed and is not a common interest. Potential tourism resources include nature trails and local products. Lack of preparation and community organization.	This article highlights that, although there are valuable natural and cultural resources, community-based tourism faces significant barriers such as lack of interest, preparation, and organizational support. To achieve sustainable development, strategic planning, community participation, and intersectoral public policies are required.
(Arratía et al., 2022)	Cooperativismo como una herramienta para el turismo de base comunitaria	Cooperativism promotes community integration, governance and territorial empowerment. It improves the quality of life, social cohesion, and sustainability. Limitations: internal conflicts and lack of leadership.	This study shows that cooperativism is fundamental to the success of community-based tourism by fostering social cohesion and sustainable local development. However, it highlights the need for strategies that reduce internal conflicts and strengthen community leadership to ensure its long-term viability.
(Russell, 2022)	Supporting Community Participation in a Pandemic	Community engagement during a pandemic creates innovative solutions, increases community resilience, and fosters social cohesion.	This study emphasizes that an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach strengthens local capacity to cope with crises, promoting resilience and context-specific solutions.
(De La Llave et al., 2022)	Analysis of the Relationship Between the Establishment of Community-Based Tourism and Multidimensional Poverty Reduction in Rural Households	Community-based tourism reduces multidimensional poverty, especially in education, health, and quality of life indicators. Greater impact in communities with strong social capital and participatory engagement. Limitations: unequal distribution of benefits.	This study shows that community-based tourism is an effective tool for reducing multidimensional poverty in rural areas. However, its effectiveness depends on social cohesion and local leadership, which highlights the importance of inclusive and sustainable strategies to maximize benefits equitably.
(Gomez & van Niekerk, 2022)	A social innovation model for equitable access to quality health services for rural populations: a case from Sumapaz, a rural district of Bogota, Colombia	Social innovation improved access to health services, promoted community empowerment, and addressed environmental and social factors affecting health in vulnerable rural communities.	The social innovation model demonstrates that equitable access to health care is achieved with strategies adapted to the rural context, community participation, and multidisciplinary integrative approaches.
(Trejo et al., 2021)	Community Participation in the Formulation of Tourism Public Policy	Active and collaborative participation legitimizes public policies in tourism. Process in Usiacurí: community empowerment, code of ethics, accreditation as a sustainable tourism destination. Community organization and collaborative mechanisms are key to success.	This article shows that organized community participation is essential for the formulation of legitimate public policies. The Usiacurí experience highlights how collaboration between government, community, and academia promotes sustainable development and social cohesion, consolidating participatory governance.

(Pascoli, 2021)	Community Involvement in Tourism: Exploring the Place Image Guided by the Locals	Coincidences between the official tourism image and community perception, but with differences in experiences and cultural meaning. Strong emphasis on cultural resources and local narratives that are not promoted. Community participation is key to building an authentic and sustainable image.	This article demonstrates that the inclusion of local communities in the creation of the tourism image is essential to guarantee its authenticity and sustainability. Active participation allows the incorporation of cultural and heritage meanings that enrich tourism experiences but requires constant efforts to align the interests of local and external stakeholders.
(Yan et al., 2021)	Comprehensive Evaluation of the Water Environment Carrying Capacity of a River Basin	Use of combined AHP and SD models to assess environmental carrying capacity. Optimal scenario improves sustainability by 2040. The integrated approach achieves a balance between the economy, society, and the environment.	This study shows that a detailed assessment of water-carrying capacity can guide sustainable river basin development. It highlights the importance of a multidimensional approach to balancing economic growth with environmental protection, optimizing water resources, and minimizing negative impacts.
(Ramos Zúñiga et al., 2020)	Community-Based Tourism in the Honduran Caribbean: The Case of the Communities of East End and Chachahuat	Increased income for families involved. Social benefits such as support for education and female empowerment. Challenges: lack of government support, training, and coordination with tour operators.	This article shows that community-based tourism can improve the quality of life in communities such as East End and Chachahuat, but faces structural barriers such as insufficient organization and external support. It highlights the importance of greater community integration and institutional collaboration to ensure sustainability.
(Anzaldúa-Soulé et al., 2020)	Turismo Comunitario Sustentable en la Microrregión Costa Chica-Montaña, Guerrero, México	Development of a community tourism model based on five phases: identification of tourism potential, design, integration, promotion, and maintenance. Strengthened community participation through workshops. Reduction of poverty and marginalization in indigenous and Afro-Mexican communities.	This article demonstrates that community-based tourism can be a key driver of sustainable development in marginalized communities. However, its success depends on comprehensive planning, community training, and public and private sector involvement, promoting equity and cultural conservation.

Table 1 Synthesis of findings and analysis of studies on community-based tourism

Discussion

The results obtained in this research allow us to identify important challenges and opportunities associated with the development of community-based tourism, as evidenced in diverse geographic and social contexts. This analysis offers a comprehensive view of the key factors affecting the sustainability and impact of these initiatives, highlighting both their limitations and their potential.

Among the main challenges is the **lack of community organization and governance**. The absence of strong organizational structures hinders the ability of communities to efficiently manage tourism. This situation is aggravated by internal conflicts and inequalities in the distribution of economic benefits, especially in rural communities where local leadership and training are limited. For example, in Colombia, informality and lack of financing have hindered the full development of community-based tourism, compromising its long-term viability (Garzón & Toloza, 2022).

Dependence on external actors is also a significant constraint. Although these actors often increase tourism supply and revenues, they often externalize the benefits, displacing local management and exacerbating economic inequalities. This phenomenon is evident in cases such as the Sierra de Huelva, where external actors raise investment costs and reduce local profitability, generating community tensions (Montoya, 2024).

Another challenge identified is **limited government and institutional support**, which restricts the ability of communities to access resources, improve tourism infrastructure, and promote their destinations. In Cabo Verde and Honduras, the lack of inclusive public policies has left communities exposed to structural barriers that hinder the sustainability of their tourism projects

(Bozzato & Pollice, 2022; Ramos Zúniga et al., 2020). In addition, **negative environmental and cultural impacts** are a constant challenge in community-based tourism, as the overexploitation of natural resources and cultural gentrification can undermine the principles of sustainability and conservation (Canclini et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, community-based tourism offers numerous opportunities. One of the most relevant is **the generation of employment and improved income**, with a significant positive impact on the reduction of multidimensional poverty. For example, in the communities of Llachón and Chachahuate, tourism has diversified the sources of income and strengthened the local economy, improving the living conditions of its inhabitants (Canales-Gutiérrez & Pacheco-Vizcarra, 2024; Ramos Zúniga et al., 2020).

Another outstanding opportunity is the **strengthening of social cohesion and community empowerment**. Community-based tourism encourages active participation in decision-making, promoting democratic values and strengthening the social fabric. In addition, these initiatives enhance female and youth leadership, as was observed in projects developed in Indonesia and Mexico (Hariyadi et al., 2024; Anzaldúa-Soulé et al., 2020).

Preservation of cultural and natural heritage is another key benefit. By integrating cultural identity and natural resources into their strategies, communities are able to enrich the tourism experience while protecting their environment and traditions. In this sense, collaborative and participatory approaches are essential to ensure the sustainability of these projects, as evidenced in the cases of Dermaji Village and Cabildo (Lee & Sam, 2024; Canclini et al., 2023).

Finally, **innovations in integrative approaches**, such as the use of methodologies like Design Thinking, have proven to be effective tools for the development of sustainable tourism models. These strategies foster creativity and collaboration, helping to overcome the social, cultural, and environmental challenges of community-based tourism (Indrianto et al., 2024).

While community-based tourism faces significant challenges, its opportunities position it as a powerful tool for sustainable development. To maximize its positive impact, it is essential to address structural problems, promote participatory governance, and strengthen local capacities. This integrative approach will enable communities to not only efficiently manage their resources, but also ensure the long-term sustainability of their tourism initiatives.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its results. First, although a comprehensive search of relevant databases was conducted, the analysis was limited to studies published mainly in English and Spanish. This may have excluded relevant research in other languages, restricting the diversity of approaches and perspectives incorporated in the findings.

In addition, the great variability in the geographic and socioeconomic contexts of the studies analyzed makes it difficult to generalize about the challenges and opportunities of community-based tourism. Each community has unique characteristics that significantly influence the results, limiting the applicability of the findings to other settings.

Another important aspect is the paucity of longitudinal analysis in the field of community-based tourism. Most studies focus on short-term evaluations, making it difficult to assess the sustainability and viability of these initiatives over time. Likewise, certain particularly vulnerable

communities, such as those in extreme conditions of social or economic exclusion, are underrepresented in the data, limiting the understanding of the effects of community-based tourism in these contexts.

Finally, conceptual heterogeneity is identified in the definition of "community tourism", which varies according to the context of the studies analyzed. This lack of conceptual uniformity poses a challenge for establishing common criteria and making consistent comparisons among the research reviewed.

Conclusions

From the results obtained, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Positive Impact on Socioeconomic Development

Community-based tourism has significant potential to improve the quality of life in rural and marginalized communities. Employment generation, increased income, and the reduction of multidimensional poverty are recurrent benefits in many of the initiatives analyzed. However, these impacts are highly dependent on social cohesion, local leadership, and access to financial and organizational resources.

Preservation of Cultural and Natural Heritage

Many communities have managed to integrate their cultural and natural resources into tourism strategies, promoting the conservation of their identity and environment. This approach contributes to the authenticity of the tourism experience and strengthens the link between communities and their heritage. However, it is crucial to implement regulations to mitigate the risks of cultural gentrification and environmental degradation.

Persistent Structural Challenges

Despite the benefits, community-based tourism initiatives face significant barriers, such as a lack of community organization, internal conflicts, dependence on external actors, and limited institutional support. These limitations compromise equity in the distribution of benefits and the long-term sustainability of the projects.

Importance of Participatory and Collaborative Approaches

The active participation of communities is a key factor in the success of community-based tourism. Models such as Design Thinking and participatory governance have proven to be effective in overcoming social and economic challenges. However, local capacities need to be strengthened through training, access to finance, and strategic planning.

Need for Governmental and Intersectoral Support

Community-based tourism requires the support of inclusive public policies and collaboration between governments, communities, and private actors. This support is essential to ensure financial sustainability, improve tourism infrastructure, and promote equity in communities.

In conclusion, community-based tourism represents a powerful tool for sustainable development, provided that inclusive and participatory strategies are implemented. To maximize its positive impact, it is essential to address the challenges identified and promote public policies that foster equity, conservation, and community empowerment. Future research should focus on assessing the long-term impact of these initiatives and explore innovative approaches to strengthen their

viability and sustainability.

Practical Strategies to Overcome Barriers and Enhance Sustainable Local Tourism

Strengthening Community Organization

Sustainable local tourism development requires strong community organization to facilitate the efficient management of tourism resources. It is essential to implement training programs in leadership, strategic planning, and business management that empower communities and build their capacity to lead sustainable initiatives. In addition, promoting cooperativism and local associations can improve collective decision-making and ensure that benefits are distributed equitably. The active inclusion of women, youth, and minority groups in these structures strengthens social cohesion and promotes a more inclusive approach.

Access to Financial Resources

Lack of access to financing is a recurrent barrier to the development of community-based tourism. It is crucial to establish mechanisms such as microcredit, revolving funds, and government subsidies that allow communities to initiate or expand their tourism projects. In addition, tax incentives for sustainable ventures can attract responsible investment that respects local priorities. Partnering with investors who share community and environmental values is a key strategy to ensure long-term success.

Improvement of Tourism Infrastructure

Infrastructure is an essential component to enhance sustainable tourism. It is necessary to invest in basic services such as transportation, potable water, sanitation, and signage to make tourist destinations more accessible and attractive. In turn, ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities contributes to an inclusive experience. The incorporation of renewable energies and clean technologies not only reduces environmental impact but also strengthens the destination's image of sustainability.

Development of Sustainable Public Policies

Public policies play a crucial role in supporting sustainable local tourism. It is essential to establish clear legal frameworks that regulate tourism activities, protect natural and cultural resources, and promote equity. Participatory territorial planning that involves communities in decision-making can ensure that development strategies are inclusive and sustainable. Institutional support through technical and administrative advice will also strengthen the communities' capacity to implement their projects.

Fomento de la Conservación y el Patrimonio

The preservation of natural and cultural resources should be a central focus of sustainable tourism. Communities and tourists should be sensitized to the importance of conserving the environment and protecting cultural heritage. This can be achieved through educational campaigns and activities that promote respect for local traditions. Integrating cultural and ecological elements into the tourism offer enriches the visitor experience and ensures the authenticity of the destination.

Creation of Collaborative Networks

Strengthening collaborative networks between communities, governments, universities, and the private sector can maximize the benefits of sustainable tourism. Sharing experiences, best

practices and lessons learned helps communities overcome common challenges. In addition, cross-sector partnerships can leverage joint projects that combine resources and expertise, while collaborative marketing at the regional level amplifies the promotion of destinations and highlights their unique identity.

Innovation and Technology

Technological innovation is a powerful tool for overcoming structural barriers in community-based tourism. The digitization of processes, such as reservation management and destination promotion, facilitates access to the global market. In addition, innovative methodologies such as Design Thinking can be integrated to foster creativity and collaboration in the design of tourism initiatives. It is also essential to implement digital monitoring systems to assess the environmental and social impact of tourism activities, ensuring that they are aligned with sustainability objectives.

Promoting Participatory Governance

Participatory governance is key to the success of sustainable local tourism. Including community representatives at all levels of decision-making ensures that strategies reflect local needs and priorities. It is crucial to establish transparent mechanisms for benefit sharing and resource management, promoting trust among stakeholders. In addition, community empowerment through training and strategic planning activities strengthens local leadership and ensures the sustainability of tourism initiatives.

References

- Anzaldúa-Soulé, K. R., Sandoval-Melo, B., Lorenzana-Núñez, O., & Avilez-Pineda, H. (2020). Sustainable community tourism, in the costa chica-montaña microrregions of the state of guerrero, México. *Revista Venezolana de Gerencia*, 25(90), 546-562. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.37960/rvg.v25i90.32400>
- Arratia, E. M., Palmas Castrejón, Y. D., Jiménez Ruíz, A. E., & Serrano Barquín, R. D. C. (2022). Cooperativism as a tool for Community Based Tourism. The answer from the literature. *PASOS Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural*, 20(1), 195-208. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.pasos.2022.20.013>
- Boscán Carroz, M. C., Meleán Romero, R. A., Chávez Vera, K. J., & Calanchez Urribarri, Á. (2023). Peruvian entrepreneurship in the framework of sustainable development. *Retos(Ecuador)*, 13(26), 223-236. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.17163/RET.N26.2023.03>
- Bozzato, S., & Pollice, F. (2022). Perspectives for community-driven tourism in Cape Verde. *PASOS Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural*, 20(3), 549-561. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.pasos.2022.20.038>
- Canales-Gutiérrez, A., & Pacheco-Vizcarra, M. Y. (2024). Rural tourism in Quechua communities on Lake Titicaca: An alternative for improving economic income. *PASOS Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural*, 22(2), 339-355. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.pasos.2024.22.023>
- Canclini, E., Pupio, M. A., & Cara, R. B. (2023). Cultural tourism, heritage and local communities: The case of Cabildo (Buenos Aires, Argentina). *PASOS Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural*, 21(3), 609-624. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.pasos.2023.21.042>
- De La Llave, A. N., Monroy, H. C., & Castrejón, Y. D. P. (2022). Analysis of the relationship between the establishment of Community Based-Tourism and multidimensional poverty reduction in rural households. *Journal of Tourism Analysis*, 29(2). Scopus.

- <https://doi.org/10.53596/jta.v29i2.417>
- Elsman, E. B. M., Mookink, L. B., Terwee, C. B., Beaton, D., Gagnier, J. J., Tricco, A. C., Baba, A., Butcher, N. J., Smith, M., Hofstetter, C., Aiyegbusi, O. L., Berardi, A., Farmer, J., Haywood, K. L., Krause, K. R., Markham, S., Mayo-Wilson, E., Mehdipour, A., Ricketts, J., ... Offringa, M. (2024). Guideline for reporting systematic reviews of outcome measurement instruments (OMIs): PRISMA-COSMIN for OMIs 2024. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, 22(1), 48. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12955-024-02256-9>
- Garzón, D., & Toloza, A. (2022). Co-evaluation of viability conditions in community-based tourism initiatives in Colombia. *PASOS Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural*, 20(4), 837-857. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.pasos.2022.20.056>
- Gascón, J. (2023). THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS IN COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS. *AIBR Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana*, 18(1), 41-65. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.11156/aibr.180103>
- Gascón, J., & Milano, C. (2024). Community Based Tourism: A Global South Perspective. *Tourism and Management Studies*, 20(3), 27-37. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.18089/TMS.20240303>
- Gomez, M. M. B., & van Niekerk, L. (2022). A social innovation model for equitable access to quality health services for rural populations: A case from Sumpaz, a rural district of Bogota, Colombia. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 21(1). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-022-01619-2>
- Hariyadi, B. R., Rokhman, A., Rosyadi, S., Yamin, M., & Runtiko, A. G. (2024). THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM VILLAGE IN INDONESIA. *Revista de Gestao Social e Ambiental*, 18(7). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.24857/rgsa.v18n7-038>
- Indrianto, A. T. L., Oktavio, A., Azmi, A., Abdullah, A., Isa, N. M., Adityaji, R., & Subadi, L. C. (2024). EXPLORATION OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING MODEL USING THE DESIGN THINKING METHOD IN DEVELOPING COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM. *Revista de Gestao Social e Ambiental*, 18(1). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.24857/RGSA.V18N1-061>
- Lee, L., & Sam, T. H. (2024). COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM. *Revista de Gestao Social e Ambiental*, 18(3). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.24857/rgsa.v18n3-120>
- Montoya, J. M. Á. (2024). External actors, tourism and rural crisis. Reflections from the Sierra de Huelva (Andalusia). *Gazeta de Antropologia*, 40(2). Scopus.
- Mora-Forero, J. A., & Nieto-Mejia, A. (2023). Analysis of the solidarity economy in rural tourism. *DYNA (Colombia)*, 90(228), 74-82. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.15446/dyna.v90n228.108608>
- Odunga, S., Szente, V., & Szabó, K. (2024). Community Support and Socioeconomic Impacts of Cultural Tourism Development in Western Kenya. *Tourism and Hospitality*, 5(4), 1510-1524. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.3390/tourhosp5040084>
- Oppliger, E. A., & de Oliveira, A. K. M. (2022). TOURISM AS AN ECONOMIC POSSIBILITY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE QUILOMBOLA COMMUNITY OF FURNAS DOS BAIANOS, AQUIDAUANA, MATO GROSSO DO SUL. *Revista Brasileira de Gestao e Desenvolvimento Regional*, 18(2), 87-97. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.54399/rbgdr.v18i2.6498>
- Pascoli, M. (2021). Community involvement in tourism: Exploring the place image guided by

- 1078 *Challenges and Opportunities in Local Sustainable Tourism*
the locals. *Cuadernos Europeos de Deusto*, 64, 111-136. Scopus.
<https://doi.org/10.18543/CED-64-2021PP111-136>
- Ramos Zúniga, T. V., Chávez Dagostino, R. M., & Schlemer Alcântara, L. C. (2020). Community-based tourism in the Honduran Caribbean: The case of the communities of East End and Chachahuate. *PASOS Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural*, 18(5), 707-719. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.pasos.2020.18.051>
- Ribera, J. M. (2023). Social dynamics and structural coupling: Two key, yet often neglected, elements of community participation in Global Health projects. *Revista de Antropologia Social*, 32(2), 155-168. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.5209/raso.91743>
- Russell, C. (2022). Supporting community participation in a pandemic. *Gaceta Sanitaria*, 36(2), 184-187. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gaceta.2021.01.001>
- Saavedra, R. Q., & Muñoz, X. R. (2024). Community Involvement in Child Development Support Systems and Programs: A Systematic Literature Review. *Psykhē*, 33(1), 1-17. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.7764/psykhe.2021.45375>
- Suastuti, E., ul Haq, H., Muishot, G., Djamiati, T. S., & Arif, F. (2024). Reconstruction of The Policy License for Tourism Businesses: Challenge and Opportunity for Social Welfare. *Bestuur*, 12(1), 82-103. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2022.105384>
- Trejo, G. Z., Freitas, Z. M., & Caridad, M. I. C. (2021). Community participation in the formulation of tourism public policy: Systematizing your legitimizing process. *Juridicas CUC*, 18(1), 497-518. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.17981/JURIDCUC.18.1.2022.20>
- Vela Riera, P. A., Mendiburu Rojas, A. F., López Aguilar, W. P., & Bustamante Piguave, F. E. (2023). Community tourism and its impact on the socioeconomic development of the Valdivia community on the Santa Elena peninsula in Ecuador. *RISTI - Revista Iberica de Sistemas e Tecnologias de Informacao*, 2023(E64), 71-87. Scopus.
- Venceslao, M., Marí, R., & Esteban, B. (2024). Community participation in secondary schools from an intercultural perspective. *Pedagogia Social*, 44, 87-101. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.7179/PSRI_2024.44.05
- Yan, B., Wang, Y., Li, G., & Ding, X. (2021). Comprehensive evaluation of the water environment carrying capacity of a river basin: A case study of the Weihe River Basin in China. *Water Policy*, 24(1), 31-48. <https://doi.org/10.2166/wp.2021.097>