

Correlation between Creative Tourism and Agrotourism Services Experiences: An Empirical Research in the Mexican Rural Tourism Environment

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There is an immediate need to promote rural areas, where Mexico's highest poverty is concentrated, but the most potential exists for future development. The preferences of the new modern tourist are based mainly on living experiences rather than just sights and souvenirs. The creative experience as the basis of Creative Tourism can be adopted by agrotourism, a type of Rural Tourism, that consist of tourist activities which are based on experiences that natives in the rural area experience on a daily basis. Thirty tourists from 18 to 23 years of age participated in agrotourism activities such as ointment workshops, food workshops, pulque (an alcoholic beverage made from the fermented sap of the maguey- agave-plant) preparation workshops, embroidery workshops, farming workshops, and a guided trip to the ecological reserve.

With the use of narratives, experience maps, and audiovisual materials, the results show that the essence of Creative Tourism was understood as active participation and creativity. Many of the participants expressed novelty as a written and graphic expression of creative tourism which enabled them to have a better overall experience. This finding suggests that agrotourism should include different aspects of creative tourism as part of a "creative experience" for those in charge of the tourism industry in Mexico.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The UN recognizes that global tourism is a concept that is becoming increasingly important and is a useful instrument for developing the global economy and fight against poverty. The UNWTO emphasizes the importance of carrying out responsible practices seeking the development of sustainable tourism to optimize the use of resources, respect the socio-cultural authenticity of communities and ensure long-term economic activities (UNWTO, 2014. UN, 2013). One way to get sustainable tourism is by promoting creative tourism. According to Chang, Backman, and Huaung (2014), creative tourism should be used as

a method for countries to separate themselves from each other distinctively. In an industry that is very competitive, creative tourism offers developing countries the opportunity to be unique and showcase their natural beauty (Chen & Chen, 2010).

Having tourist directly submerged within the culture of the country creates a memorable experience because of the practical application (Cai, Lehto & Huang, 2010). Creative tourism is not meant to replace traditional tourism but rather enhance the experience. Developing countries can use creative tourism as means to bridge the gap with countries who possess more resources (Chen & Chen, 2010; Lo & Lee, 2010; Richards, 2011; Richards & Marques, 2012). Because of its purity, creative tourism provides the opportunity for developing countries to showcase its culture in an inexpensive manner (Prebensen, Woo, Chen & Uysal, 2012).

Developing countries are afforded the opportunity to create new services and industries and combine existing sectors that may not have been possible with traditional tourism (Stojanovic, Petkovic & Mitkovic, 2012). For example, tourism can now be paired with education by providing classes to tourist on different topics such as cookery, painting and other arts and crafts. With the combination of tourism and cultural activities, countries will be provided the chance to increase jobs across many sectors while sharing its norms and beliefs with the world (Tan, Kung & Luh, 2013). In Mexico, there is a great need to promote areas where the country's highest poverty is concentrated and have a rich culture and an abundance of natural wealth that is unused. The tourism sector may be a viable option for this need, however, during the last decades, Mexico has promoted an agrarian policy that has increased poverty levels in the rural population, mainly among indigenous groups. Rural tourism in marginalized spaces represents an alternative to encourage rural territorial development (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013). This type of tourism as an opportunity for rural areas is being threatened and is at risk of potentially disappearing (Saarinen & Monkogogi, 2014).

Designing successful strategies, and preservation of cultural identity to avoid commercial development is needed in developing countries (Ting et al., 2015). Rural tourism turns out to be a viable solution to achieve these objectives. By understanding the experiences of agrotourism, this considers the specific personality of those involved in the community. Tourist and natives have to physically and mentally coexist in agricultural activities, such as the cultivation of food, a collection of food, and gastronomic process (Daniloska et al., 2015). There is an immediate need to promote rural areas in the country which would take advantage of the benefits of the new modern tourism (Jaković et al., 2015). This type of tourism is based on natural resources and cultural norms that the community has with a particular focus on the promotion of the countryside and agriculture (main activity in rural areas). This is designed to meet tourist expectations, and create an economic activity based on the tourism industry. Also, this type of tourism is sustainable and is a viable source of income and jobs.

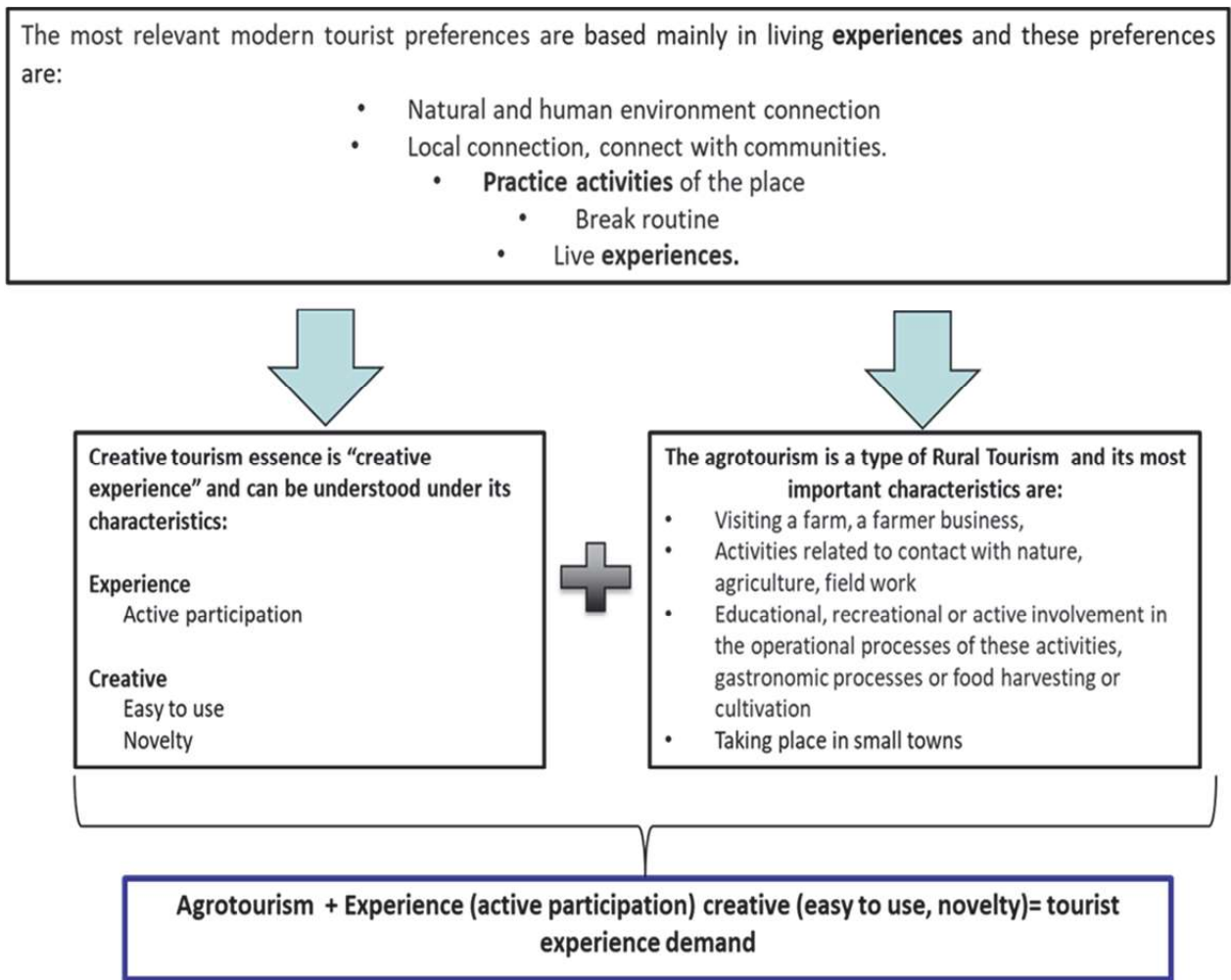
Creative tourism opens the door to a world of innovative strategies that revolutionize tourism in ways previously never experienced. Creative tourism is tourism that seeks the active participation of tourists, enhancing their creativity while learning and achieving local connection (Richards, 2007). Creative tourism is a form of tourism that listens to today's tourist, who theoretically defines how to achieve differentiation from one destination to another in a sustainable way and much more attractive to the tourist market. According to Kiralova et al., (2015), the expectations of visitors have changed, and they are looking for interactive experiences and personalized approach. Kiralova et al. (2005) explain the concept of creative tourism as an advantage for agrotourism. the

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This primary purpose of the research is to bring the principles of creative tourism, specifically its essence embodied in the concept of creative experience to agrotourism, to design experiences in agrotourism services considering the demands of today's tourists. The construct of "Experience" is defined under the subcategory of "active participation" from the perspective of involvement in the process of the workshops, and "creativity" under the categories of "Easy to use", defined as instructions, concrete steps, level of difficulty, and the level of "novelty", defined as the differentiation between usual life and

tourist experience. (Tan et al., 2013, Ting, 2015, Richards, 2011, Ohridska-Olson et al., 2010, Chang et al., 2014, Luo et al., 2016,). The main concepts of the research objective are defined in figure 1, The Agro-Creative Tourism Service Model.

FIGURE 1
AGRO-CREATIVE TOURISM SERVICE MODEL



After the literature reviewed the following hypotheses were defined:

H1: *The inclusion of creative tourism in the design of agrotourism services can satisfy tourist experience demands.*

H2: *The design of agrotourism services must include the "creative experience" to cover the demands of tourism experience in the agrotourism consumer.*

H3: *The variables "active participation" to define "experience" and "easy use" and "novelty" to define "creative" positively impact the satisfaction of the tourist who consumes agrotourism.*

H4: *The new modern tourist knows and has consumed rural tourism, specifically about agrotouristic services related to*

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology proposed is a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques. The quantitative study was carried out in the city of Puebla and Cholula in State of Puebla, Mexico. Tourist centers in June of 2016 were used to collect a sample of 483 tourists through the application of a survey. The primary objective was to analyze how many tourists have experienced rural tourism, and what kind of rural tourism. The survey examined the characteristics of tourist who experience agritourism and their perceptions about the experiences.

As for the qualitative study, the study used narrative interviews. The narrative is a traditional way of communicating content with meaning that allows lived experiences to be transmitted (Horkheimer et al., 1975). Narratives can be gathered from different research sources such as observation, written documents, images, among others (Creswell JW, 2014). For this study, in June 2016, the narratives were taken from 30 tourists between the ages of 18 to 23 who reside in the State of Puebla, and the surrounding areas, particularly the La Preciosita community. Six native women offer agrotourism services (workshops), ointment, food and pulque preparation, embroidery and, a visit to the ecological reserve.

For the qualitative study, the following steps were followed: 1. The participants were given the definition of agritourism as, Tourists who have greater knowledge and awareness are more inclined to engage in the creative experience (Tan et al., 2013). 2. The participants then experienced the agritourism services (workshops) offered by the La Preciosita community such as embroidery, food and pulque preparation, field, ointment and, a visit to ecological reserve. 3. The participants were invited to narrate through texts, trajectory maps, and materials such as photos and videos and document their experiences of the lived process. All the participants were asked to narrate their experiences and represent them using graphics that would allow them to map their experience and identify the negative and positive points from their perspective as tourist consumers. They managed to collect 20 graphics and their interpretations, which were sent in digital format via email or shared in the cloud and addition 260 videos, photos and audios of their experiences during the consumption of the workshops.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH MAIN FINDINGS

Regarding the sample demographics, the average sample's age was 35 years old. Most of them (56%) were men, and just over 30% were students. Also, it is important to consider that 64% were national tourists and only 37% foreign tourists. Another significant statistic is that most of the tourist, 75%, travel accompanied. Tourists that stayed longer than six nights were older than 25 years old and most of them, 70%, were foreigners.

The survey's results suggest that the subjects in the sample's motive to travel was mainly leisure (80%), and although the 67% of the tourists in the sample have never done rural tourism, most of them, 59%, would like to carry out activities of rural tourism at some point in time. Of the group that said they would want to try rural tourism, 43.4% said that they would like to try agrotourism as a type of rural tourism, 21.70% nature tourism, 20.85% gastro-tourism and little more than 10% food routes or other rural tourism activities. This is as an opportunity to support agrotourism development and to improve this tourism experience through active participation.

Of the rural tourists, more than 85% said they had done activities of observation, long walks or routes like the most mentioned.

Half of the tourists that have participated in rural tourism evaluated the experience as fun, creative and active participation.

More than 70% of the tourists who participated in rural tourism, evaluated the experience as an experience that provides them with cultural richness about the destination. Something interesting but maybe not surprising is that the most common ages of those who have done rural tourism are between 20 and 35 years old.

In conclusion, the results suggest that there is an interest in carrying out rural tourism activities. It was also indicated that the rural tourism activities that the tourist performs are related to agrotourism.

Tourists are willing and able to participate in creative tourism and are ready to experience the culture of rural Mexico.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH MAIN FINDINGS

For the analysis and reporting of results the technique of Discourse Analysis was used, this technique can be studied as text analysis, content analysis, conversation analysis. "The core of the study of all textual analysis does not refer to the text itself, but to something that is within it, what the text means, to its meaning" (Martínez, 2004).

The graphs that represent the trajectory of the lived experience have the following characteristics: Maps define 7 to 20 positive, negative and neutral points by experience. Also, the experience by the national tourist can be encompassed in three stages according to the analysis of the 20 graphs received: Path to the community and arrival, consumption process of the workshop, a way of return and arrival to exit point.

In the stage "process of consumption of workshop," the texts and the graphs (experience journey maps) are analyzed, and it was determined that the tourists are looking for more participation and interaction in the workshops. Also, they are looking for active involvement, clear communication, and adequate equipment. The narratives also suggest that the tourist enjoyed mainly, the community sharing their knowledge and experience in the theme of the workshops and observing and interacting with the natural resources of the community.

In conclusion, the tourists appreciate the culture of communities and their natural resources. They are interested in learning the culture of the people, making connections with the local people, and contributing to economic development while having a different experience. The tourist's expectations in these agrotourism workshops are to enjoy the experience, know the instructions and have useful and enough equipment to participate. The tourists prefer interaction with the community as the novelty part of the experience as well as learning as part of the expectations of the agritourism workshop. It can be said that the analyzed variables of the concept of creative experience in agrotourism are tied with tourist preferences (according to previously defined categories and subcategories).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study will contribute to the theory of agrotourism models by incorporating variables that are based on the concept of creative experience within creative tourism: experience "active participation" and creative "easy to use" and "novelty."

It is expected to contribute to the theory of the design of agrotourism services through retaking the negative points in the analysis of the text and graphs (consumer journey maps).

Reaffirming theories that propose models of rural tourism with a focus on agrotourism that includes the community/community participation factor as a critical element for tourism while tourists are looking for novelty by connecting to local people. Mexico can develop different tourism with a sustainable and creative social impact, taking advantage of natural and cultural resources and generating differentiators in rural tourism and specifically in agrotourism.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this study provides contributions to the understanding of the agrotourism service design, there are some limitations. First, the present qualitative research focuses only on the discourse analysis, which limits the different perspectives that content could provide. For this reason, further research should explore other narrative analysis techniques such as content holistic analysis, categorical structural analysis, and conversational analysis. Also, since the quantitative research was conducted in 3 different locations (tourist centers) by different applicants of the survey, a potential bias in the common method variance can be present, therefore controlling it in further research is suggested.

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