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The local perspective of tourism development in Ticuantepe

Residents' pre-perceptions of future tourism development in a Nicaraguan municipality

The University of Gothenburg

School of Business, Economics and Law

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Author: Niclas Elving

Supervisor: Kristina N Lindström

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ABSTRACT

Nicaraguan tourism has accelerated with more than 300 % over the last 15 years and this increase can make sustainable tourism, which nowadays is highly recommended in tourism studies, more difficult to achieve. One reason for this is suggested to be that a too fast tourism development leads to insufficient time to use community participation in tourism planning, something that is considered important in the aim for a sustainable tourism development. This paper investigates one part of community participation, more specifically by analyzing residents' pre-perceptions towards future tourism development in the Nicaraguan municipality Ticuantepe. Here qualitative semi-structured interviews were performed with nine local residents and the Tourism Minister of the municipality, to gain knowledge about the local perspective as well as a background to tourism in the region. As the terms indicate this is a preparative stage of tourism development, in a municipality that has not experienced much tourism yet but is likely to do so in the future. The results suggest that residents strongly favor a probable tourism increase, mostly because they realize the potential economic benefits of tourism, which is similar to results in other previous field studies. Residents also had many recommendations regarding future tourism development, and mentioned among other things continuing community participation, careful organization, improved marketing and infrastructure and education about tourism as important aspects. These results have also been translated to Spanish and delivered to the Tourism Minister, who in an early stage welcomed the study and explained that the results could be of value in their tourism development.

Keywords: *Sustainable tourism development, tourism impacts, community participation, residents' perceptions and pre-perceptions, Ticuantepe.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

“This is the way to save our country while at the same time bring economic development, because what we want in the end of the day is for people to live well in Nicaragua, with better conditions for housing, health and education.” (Mario Salinas, *The Nicaragua Dispatch*, 03/01/2012).

This quote from 2012 is from the tourism minister of Nicaragua, Mario Salinas, who explained his thoughts about what tourism can do to improve the life of the Nicaraguan people. Whether he is right or wrong, it is beyond doubt that the local people in the country are in need of improvements, especially when it comes to the economy. Nicaragua is the largest country in Central America and at the same time one of the poorest countries in all of Latin America, with 48% of the population living below the poverty line (indexmundi.com 2011). One line of business that can reduce poverty is tourism, which among other things has the ability to create job opportunities, build infrastructure, provide indirect income and strengthen the social capital of the poor (Ashley & Mitchell 2010). This seems closely connected to what the tourism minister strives for, and another factor that indicates the country’s belief in tourism is the rapid development of the sector. Statistics prove that Nicaragua is one of the countries in Latin America where tourism has developed with the highest speed during the last 15 years (landguiden.se). A similarly fast increase of tourism and belief in its advantages is also evident in Ticuantepe, a municipality in the Managua region that was chosen for this case study.

Nevertheless the fast growth of tourism and the optimistic approach towards the sector is not enough to state that Nicaragua is on its way of reducing poverty through tourism. Even though the intention is poverty reduction, tourism can have negative impacts on the environment, the social capital and the economy itself, with consequences like localized inflation, loss of local ownership and destruction of nature and wildlife for example. To avoid this scenario, the need for a sustainable tourism development (from now: STD) is becoming widely recommended. This is supposed to treat environmental, social and economic consequences of tourism and result in a positive impact (Hall 2008 p. 30-31; unesco.org). It is suggested that some of the consequences within these categories are more likely to be positive if the local people of the tourism destination are involved in decisions and planning,

something called local or community participation (Simmons 1994; Kruger 2005 p. 592 & 596-597). One aspect that can be categorized as a part of this approach is to gain knowledge about local residents' attitudes and perceptions about tourism and its impacts, which also is claimed to increase the chances of achieving a STD (Nunkoo, Smith et al 2013 p. 6). To gain this knowledge in a preparative stage, before the actual tourism impacts are evident, can also be achieved and is often referred to as residents' pre-perceptions. This has not been done as frequently as in a later stage of tourism development but it is suggested to be important when striving for a STD (Keogh 1990 p. 463-464; Mason & Cheyne 2000 p. 1). Nevertheless the procedure of gathering this kind information from residents in general is argued to be time consuming (Simmons 1994 p. 99-100), which is logical, but also raises an important question: Is there sufficient time to involve the community in tourism planning in Ticuantepe, where the competition against other tourism destinations is accelerating the tourism development? The hope is that this paper will contribute to some extent with approaching a yes as an answer to this question.

1.1 Problem and purpose

As briefly described before, the problem is not the tourism development in itself, but the possible negative impacts that may occur because of it. It is probable that these impacts will be noticed in countries with a fast tourism growth like Nicaragua, judging by for example tourism professor Michael C Hall's ideas. He claims that among other things STD requires patience, diligence and a long-term commitment and explains that one problem is that people responsible for making decisions regarding tourism often plan with a shorter perspective (Hall 2005 p. 144). This can be interpreted like that it is more difficult to avoid the negative impacts of tourism, if the tourism growth is too rapid. One thing that is argued to be important but time-consuming in the aim for a STD is the process of gathering information about local opinions towards tourism (Kruger 2005 p. 592 & 596-597; Nunkoo, Smith et al 2013 p. 6; Simmons 1994 p. 99-100).

With this in mind, it is possible that the focus of this study, Ticuantepe, might be in the danger-zone of noticing negative tourism impacts in the future. The numbers of tourists are rapidly increasing in the municipality and in an interview conducted in this thesis with the Tourism Minister of Ticuantepe, further information was given. A hotel is soon to be constructed in the municipality and they also seem to rush tourism development to compete

with other regions, judging by what was expressed in the interview (Interview with Tourism Minister, Carlos Adán Arguello). Something else that may serve as a warning are the results from previous research in the country, where lack of consideration of local people's ideas in tourism planning has been argued to cause negative tourism impacts in several studies. For example one of these studies demonstrates the importance of including local people's opinions in order to get positive social and economic impacts of tourism, like higher economic benefits to the communities and life expectancy of the tourism projects (Zapata et al 2011). Another paper concludes that exclusion of local people from management and planning in ecotourism in a specific region was noticed, which according to the authors resulted in communities not benefiting enough from tourism (Somarriba-Chang & Gunnarsdotter 2012 p. 1038).

The conclusion of the problem is that community participation is argued as important in order to achieve a sustainable tourism development, but difficult to implement with a fast tourism growth. It is also probable with a rapid acceleration of tourism in Ticuantepe in the future, for which the risk that community participation might be neglected increases, specifically since other Nicaraguan communities mentioned have shown these tendencies. Because of this it is justified and important to investigate one part of this, for which the purpose of the study is:

To gain knowledge about local residents' pre-perceptions of future tourism development in their own municipality.

In order to achieve this purpose, the following two research questions were developed:

- **How do residents perceive possible future tourism impacts?**
- **How do they recommend their municipality to develop and manage tourism?**

The first research question was answered both by asking residents about their spontaneous feelings towards a probable tourism increase and then by introducing certain impacts of tourism that have been evident at other destinations. These actual impacts are treated in the theoretical background, and in the interviews they were described and residents were asked to analyze and discuss if they were possible to occur in Ticuantepe as well, and to explain what they thought about this. Another aim with the first research question was that it could generate more profound answers from residents to the second research question, which logically can form the material most useful for tourism planners. It should be mentioned already here that in the theoretical background residents' pre-perceptions treats only how residents perceive

possible future tourism impacts. Specifically residents' recommendations about development and management of tourism are not treated in the theoretical background since no such information was found, but it can also be seen as a part of their pre-perceptions.

Tourism in Ticuantepe is not highly developed yet, but as the purpose indicates with pre-perceptions the focus is on the future, when a tourism growth is to expect. The hope is that the choice to perform the study in an early stage, will give more time to make use of the actual results. Besides hopefully having gathered some valuable information to the specific case study, this paper may also contribute to some extent with adding material to the tourism research field. For example has it been tested if the discussion of future tourism impacts can lead to profound reflections about tourism and therefor meaningful recommendations for tourism planning and management in the municipality. It has also been compared if the results are similar to findings in previous tourism research about residents' perceptions and specifically pre-perceptions about possible tourism impacts. In the best case scenario the results may also give rise to more investigation about STD in the region and in the long run facilitate the process of understanding if and how tourism can help to reduce poverty in Nicaragua.

1.2 Background to Nicaraguan economy and tourism

The poor economy in Nicaragua should be considered as a major problem and there are several reasons for today's poverty. It is often argued that a great deal can be blamed on the dictator Anastasio Somoza, who surrendered 33 years ago. The war that ended his era was negative for the country's economy and has also led to insufficient infrastructural, financial and social capital (SNV, 2007). Natural disasters and the bank crisis of 2000-2001 are other factors that are claimed of having increased the poverty (regeringen.se).

According to UNWTO (unwto.org 2012) tourism is one of the biggest industries in the world with an estimated annual share of 6 per cent of the total exports of service and goods in the world. As explained earlier, tourism can also in the best case scenario help to reduce poverty. Many less developed countries, like Nicaragua, have natural resources that are popular for tourists, which is shown with numbers indicating that 40 % of international tourist arrivals take place in these countries. If the host country and its citizens are able to employ more

people within tourism related jobs and keep a high extent of the money the tourist spend in the country, tourism has the ability to reduce poverty (Spenceley & Meyer 2012).

Without, for the moment, focusing on the quality of tourism, it is obvious that the quantity of the same is increasing in Nicaragua. The only country in Latin America that shows a similarly growth of tourism counted in number of international arrivals during the last 15 years is Honduras. The figures from Nicaragua demonstrates that from 1996 to 2010 arrivals of international tourists have accelerated from 303 000 to just over one million, an increase of more than 300%. In 2008 the estimated value of tourism revenue was 276 million dollars, compared to 103 million ten years earlier (landguiden.se). Statistics from the Institute of Tourism in Nicaragua (intur.gob.ni) show similar numbers regarding tourist arrivals over the last five years, which is a further proof of the recent growth. Another economic aspect that demonstrates the focus on tourism is the current amount of investment in the sector. The tourism minister of the country says that today the Nicaraguan Tourism Institute receives 60 million dollars for tourism development, compared to nothing five years ago. He explains that the money is used to restore historical buildings and improve the country's infrastructure (*The Nicaragua Dispatch*, 03/01/2012). Despite the fast tourism growth in Nicaragua, most of the other countries in the region, like Costa Rica, Cuba and the Dominican Republic have superior numbers of tourist arrivals today. Since Nicaragua in comparison is geographically more extensive, has a tremendous amount of tourism attributes, and at the same time seems very optimistic of the consequences of tourism, there is reason to believe that there is space for a continuing fast tourism development in the country.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

This chapter holds the theoretical concepts used in the study, previous research in the field and personal interpretations of some of the key terms. First the term sustainable tourism development (STD) is explained and the known impacts of tourism that the interviews of this study are built upon are listed and analyzed. Then follows a description of the term community, to better understand the following chapter community participation, which is one of the supposed ways to approach a STD. After that it is described why community participation is argued to be important in tourism and how previous studies have used it, with some examples from Nicaragua getting plenty of attention. This is followed by some of the critics and limitations to community participation in tourism, and then a short part with the standpoint of this study regarding these issues. After this the terms residents' perceptions and attitudes are introduced, which can be seen as one part or the first steps of community participation. Also here the terms are defined, the importance of these in order to strive for a STD is described, and some examples are given about how previous research has been performed. It is then described what has been discovered specifically when it comes to pre-perceptions, which treats residents' perceptions towards future tourism development and is more concrete what is used in this study.

2.2 Sustainable tourism development and impacts of tourism

According to UNESCO STD means, in short terms, to consider economical, cultural, social and ecological aspects of tourism impact and through this avoid negative consequences within these areas (unesco.org). There are several other definitions of STD that are often similar and frequently it is divided into only three categories: environmental, social and economic impacts of tourism (Hall 2008 p. 27). In order for tourism to be sustainable, it is now widely recognized that the idea is to strive for impacts as positive as possible in previously mentioned categories. It is also becoming generally accepted that when developing and planning tourism, STD is what should be strived for, which can be done in several ways where in one is the use of community participation, which later will be treated. When it comes to the actual impacts it

is evident that there are a high number of known examples and some of these will be more thoroughly described. It serves to understand the basics of STD and besides this parts of the interview guide in this study have been constructed around these impacts. As briefly explained before, tourism impacts, or consequences, are often referred to as environmental, economic or social and some of the most frequently listed (Ashley & Mitchell 2010; Beeton 2006 p. 18; Hall 2008 p. 29-30; Mathieson & Wall 2006 p. 89-90; Williams 2009) are described here below.

Regarding environmental aspects something positive that may occur is that tourism contributes to preservation of natural and built heritage. Tourism generated income can be used to protect for example wildlife reserves and the fact that tourists arrive can work as an incentive to teach about aspects like environment, traditions and historic values in school. On the other hand tourism can cause loss of biodiversity and destruction of natural surroundings. Too high numbers of tourists or insufficient rules and guidelines has been showed to, among other things, intimidate animals and affect the vegetation negatively. Economically, tourism can for example create employment and income possibilities to a community. This can obviously occur in for example the hotel- and restaurant sector, but tourism can also help services not as closely connected to the sector, as agriculture and the transport industry. Nevertheless a negative economic effect of tourism is that it can lead to price increases in restaurants, shops and other services. Since much tourism takes place in poor countries, this often affects the local people of the destination rather than wealthy tourists. Besides this tourism can cause loss of local ownership since foreign investors realize income possibilities, for example by constructing hotels or investing in the restaurant sector. This has been argued to cause less local influence and economic benefits that in a varying degree leaks out from the country that holds the destination. When it comes to social, or sociocultural, consequences, one favorable example is that tourism works as an incentive to improve infrastructure. Sometimes poorly constructed roads must be improved to attract more tourists, which can be positive if it occurs for both the tourists and local people who can use the road. Another social impact is that tourism can create increased cross-cultural understanding between host communities and tourists and stimulate these groups to learn from each other, which in the long run may work as a force for peace to some extent. Contradictory, tourism can also cause extra pressure on existing infrastructure, if no precautions are made. For example, more people in need of transport on existing roads or making use of public transport can destruct the roads and worsen the situation for local people. Also regarding culture negative examples

have been demonstrated, with tensions between traditional and imported lifestyles and misunderstandings leading to host/visitor hostility as examples (Ashley & Mitchell 2010; Beeton 2006 p. 18; Hall 2008 p. 29-30; Mathieson & Wall 2006 p. 89-90; Williams 2009).

Hall (Hall 2008 p. 27-31) argues that environmental, economic and social impacts overlap to some extent, which can be justified to agree on. For example, it is difficult to tell if more pressure on existing infrastructure is a negative environmental, social or economic effect. This fact might complicate the issue, but in the end the important thing is to show which the actual effects are. As long as it is not the most important to compare which category holds most or least impacts, the fact that they can overlap will hopefully not be a problem. Another thing that is necessary to be aware of is that, as Hall also explains, these mentioned impacts of tourism can be positive or negative, or both at the same time, depending on from who's perspective it is analyzed (Hall 2008 p. 27-31). Price increases in restaurants for example might be negative for the major parts of the local people, but probably not for those who own the restaurants. Because of this it has been stated as important to really value the perceived impacts from the local point of view, given that the main purpose is to gain knowledge specifically about the opinions of this group (Beeton 2006 p. 80). The intention in this study is clearly to have the perspective of the local people, so here it is analyzed if the impacts are positive or negative according to this group. In the end it comes to trying to figure out how local people of a tourism destination are affected by tourism, which leads to my interpretation of the issue. My interpretation of STD is that the local people of a tourism destination, their economy and their environment are better off with tourism, than they would have been without it, both now and in the future. Of course there will always be varying opinions, but it is important that tourism development leads to more positive consequences than negative, and that significantly more people are in favor than against a tourism increase, even if this might be difficult to verify. Maybe it is wrong to claim that such a tourism development is actually sustainable, but at least can the tourism development be justified to a higher extent.

2.3 Community

To approach a STD one aspect that is claimed to be important is community participation (Kruger 2005 p. 592 & 596-597; Byrd 2007), which is why this chapter shortly describes the term community. Community is often defined geographically, for example in smaller areas in a valley or villages, but also in major places such as town and even countries. Besides

geographical definitions, it is suggested that a community is a mix of living things that share an environment, where the people living there may have different conditions, but always something in common, for example similar beliefs, resources and conditions. Regarding tourism the term destination community, or host community, has also been used (Beeton 2006 p. 4-10). Tourism has always been about visiting places and people, so it can be said that tourism could never have existed outside of a community. As a matter of fact, tourism has been argued to be one of the most significant tools in order to develop communities (Beeton 2006 p. 16). As noticeable, the word community is very wide and basically every place can fit in the various definitions. Instead of analyzing it any further, a short description of how the municipality of Ticuantepe could be defined as a community is more relevant. The municipality is obviously delimited geographically, not as extensive as a country, but not as small as a minor village. The local people are of course not a homogeneous group, but they have several things in common. For example, they belong to the same municipality, with the same rules and laws and many of them share cultural beliefs and have similar life conditions.

2.4 Community and local participation

Community participation is also often referred to as local participation. The approach of involving communities and residents in planning has its roots in other industries than tourism, for example was it evident early in urban development, transport and energy (Simmons 1994 p. 99). Basically it means to allow local people to participate in decision-making regarding aspects in their local area (elard.eu), but this was more profoundly explained already in the late 1970's. James, J Glass (1979 p. 181-183) then stated that there are five different objectives with, what he called, citizen participation; information exchange, education, support building, decision-making supplement and representational input. In this paper the objective is closely attached to number four in this list; decision-making supplement. According to the author this is about to consult individual citizens and through this provide them with better possibilities to contribute with their own input in planning. This is also supposed to be favorable because the people responsible for planning gain new perspectives. Logically the actual process of consulting individuals can be achieved in various ways, and in early tourism research various techniques were used. Simmons (1994 p. 103-106) consulted individuals through both interviews, surveys and focus groups, where the main perspective was to welcome their ideas about tourism, how they considered it and what role they wanted

tourism to play in the society. It was during the 1980's that the approach of involving communities in tourism planning started to gain more focus, at the same time as the tourism sector started to grow significantly (Simmons 1994 p. 98).

In other words community participation has been a popular word in tourism since the 1980's, but also the term local participation has been used. Even if there are two terms, they several times mean more or less the same thing and are used to describe similar aspects and processes (Somarriba-Chang & Gunnarsdotter 2012; Tosun 2000). To not complicate things the term community participation will be used when possible in this study, since the interviews take place within a community and most of the articles referred to also use this term. Nevertheless when referring to some other previous research the term local participation sometimes occur, but in this study it has the same meaning

2.5 The importance of community participation in tourism

For the purpose of this study, it is now necessary to thoroughly analyze why community participation is important. There are two main reasons why this approach can be considered important which have been cited frequently. First, it is claimed that the local people of a tourism destination are the ones that will be most affected by tourism and its consequences, and second, they are also a part of the actual destination (Simmons 1994 p. 98-100). Besides this, more recent research has pointed out local participation as one of the most important aspects in order to achieve a STD. A study from 2003 uses 251 case studies, with 25 % of these from Central America, on ecotourism in an intention to generalize among other things what causes sustainable or unsustainable tourism. In the study it is showed that two aspects clearly leading to unsustainability in tourism where: 1) too many tourists and 2) the fact that the local community was not involved, with the second aspect noticed in 25 % of the unsustainable cases. It is therefore suggested in the study that local participation will increase the chances of a STD (Kruger 2005 p. 592 & 596-597), something that also has been argued in other recent research (Byrd 2007). Even though STD is a very wide-ranging conception, with no single solution able to achieve it, these studies at least strongly indicates that community participation could be one of the ways to approach a STD.

It also seems to exist a logical link between community participation and the term empowerment. The definitions of this word may be even more complicated than the word

community, but a short description of how it has been described in tourism literature could be of value. For example, it has been explained with the meaning of self-determination, to empower people to make decisions, and often the focus is on groups that earlier have been disempowered. More specifically can this be achieved through increasing the capacity of local people to make decisions in affairs that affect them. One way is to make information about the relevant aspects available to the local people and another course of action can be to welcome their evaluations or thoughts about the actual development (Beeton 2006 p. 88-91).

Considering empowerment in this way, it is not difficult to see a connection between the term and the possible positive outcomes of community participation. In other words, according to this use, community participation can also have the ability to empower people, in the case of this study hopefully through welcoming their thoughts and ideas about tourism development.

2.6 Examples from Nicaragua

Something that further might justify this study is that local or community participation has been shown important also in previous research in the country in question, Nicaragua. An article from 2012 treats community-based tourism and the importance of local participation in these tourism projects (Zapata et al 2011). The term community-based tourism (from now: CBT) can be defined and used in various ways, and the Nicaraguan study briefly interprets it as follows; it should be placed within a community where the members are involved in decision making and to some extent are part-owners of the actual projects. Something that can differ between these projects is whether they are funded and managed with a top-down or a bottom-up approach. Briefly described top-down is when for example the government, development agencies or other external actors starts the projects and have more control of them, and bottom-up is when the local community are further involved and more responsible for funding of the projects (Zapata et al 2011 p. 726-727, 741). What the study intended was to compare those of the CBT projects that had a top-down structure with those who worked more with a bottom-up approach. It is clearly stated in the study that the socioeconomic impacts of tourism were far more positive in projects using a bottom-up approach. The socioeconomic impacts of tourism were usually negative, when ideas in tourism planning came from external actors and decisions were made under external control. For example, it is demonstrated that there were lower rates of employees and economic benefits to the communities, besides lower life expectancy of the projects, when local knowledge was

neglected and western ideas were directly implemented to the Nicaragua context. It was also a stronger ownership and better connections with local supply chains in the bottom-up projects. It should not be neglected though, that some impacts were mentioned as more favorable with a top-down approach, such as environmental awareness and equity issues (Zapata et al 2012 p 741, 744-747). Nevertheless the conclusion of the study is that bottom-up is a more favorable way to reach a positive development for the communities through the many positive impacts mentioned before (Zapata et al 2012 p 744-747). Since the study is relatively extensive comparing 34 CBT projects, it should be fair to say that more community participation with a bottom-up approach many times is important in CBT projects in Nicaragua. In other words, as interpreted here, more involvement of local people can be of importance in the aim for a STD in Nicaragua.

Another study in Nicaragua fills in with similar conclusions regarding lack of community participation, this time when it comes to ecotourism and a comparison between two nature reserves. This is a comparative study and both reserves were not homogeneous regarding results and conclusions, but community participation was stated as important according to the authors, because of following reasons. In one of the reserves it was clear that exclusion of the local community in management had caused insufficient benefits from tourism to that community. In both reserves the community showed a great will to participate, and the conclusion was that both reserves should and could improve the way they handled community participation (Somarriba-Chang & Gunnarsdotter 2012 p. 1038-1039). These findings could be seen as something that might be important to be aware of also when it comes to the focus of this study, Ticuantepe, since their main tourism attributes are specifically two nature reserves. The fact that other similar areas have shown negative results because of insufficient community participation, might serve as an incentive to increase the involvement of locals' ideas.

2.7 Limitations and critics of community participation

The issue of community participation and the belief in its advantages is more complex and other studies call attention to the fact that local participation in tourism decisions has limits. In many developing countries the administration of tourism is centralized and decision makers consider it difficult, or are unwilling, to include local people in tourism planning. It may also be difficult for the local people to contribute with valuable input since tourism statistics often

are vague or complicated to them. The other way around, experts planning tourism have knowledge to a great extent which can make them blind to other points of view, and further obstruct local participation. Aspects like laws and insufficient economy can also be obstacles to local participation in tourism planning (Tosun 2000). These aspects can obviously make the procedure of local participation more complicated, but many of the aspects are not impossible to reduce. If now law opposes local participation, steps can probably be made to encourage locals to participate, show statistics in a more comprehensible way, and make planning experts more open-minded to new ideas.

Something else that can complicate the issue of local participation is that doubts have been raised that it does not necessarily render a more sustainable tourism. A study from a community in China argues that tourism there had been successful with residents feeling like they benefited from tourism, despite a seemingly weak local participation. The conclusion of the study is not that they oppose local participation, but they state that it may not be necessary under all circumstances. Nevertheless the authors admit that even if there had been apparently weak local participation, many local residents had been working in administrative roles in the tourism development, and they might have, to some extent, contributed with local opinions. In other words, the degree of local participation may have been higher than what was obvious (Li 2005, p 139-141).

2.8 The study's standpoint regarding community participation

Having all of the previous arguments about the question in mind, this study's standpoint is the same as the researchers that have emphasized the importance of community participation. Direct social and economic impacts have been demonstrated as more positive with this approach (Zapata, Hall 2012 p 741), and it is also possible that these impacts will have a long term effect. Logically local people will be satisfied and feel respected if they are allowed to contribute, and then hopefully give tourists a more enjoyable experience. This can later on increase the chance of a positive encounter between the tourist and the local people, and maybe a greater cross-cultural understanding. Besides this it has also been argued that community participation does not need to be money and time consuming. The positive fact that conflicts are more likely to be avoided later in the process thanks to community participation, can outweigh the direct increases in economic costs and resources spent (Byrd 2007). Despite the fact that it may be difficult to implement all of the residents' ideas, in this

study it is considered important to at least listen to their point of view. In the next stage their thoughts can be taken into consideration when it is possible and seemingly important. The specific contribution of the study is to gather the actual information, summarize it and deliver it to the responsible for tourism development, and whether the information will be implemented and used or not is for them to decide. To gather this information can be achieved in various ways, and in this case it has been done through interviews regarding residents' pre-perceptions about future tourism development. Because of this, the terms residents' perceptions and pre-perceptions will now be described, in one chapter each, since these can be seen as the first steps of community participation.

2.8 Residents' perceptions

The part of gathering information about the local people's ideas and thoughts about tourism and its impacts has been made numerous of times and is often referred to as residents'/hosts' attitudes/perceptions (Nunkoo et al 2013; Brunt & Courtney 1999). Even if the words residents and hosts may not necessarily mean the same thing to all researchers, they are so similar that this study only uses the word residents from now on. The words attitudes and perceptions are no exact synonyms, but as interpreted here they have been used in previous tourism research with the intention to show similar things, together with the words perceived impacts (Azakli & Erdal 2002; Belisle & Hoy 1980; Brunt & Courtney 1999; Haralambopoulos & Pizam 1996). It can be argued that the word perception can indicate more profound aspects like feelings and attitude is more concrete with for example someone having a standpoint. Therefore, in this specific study it might suite better with perceptions, since the focus is on the future and it is unlikely that residents have any clear attitudes towards tourism impacts at this stage, but when referring to previous research attitudes is sometimes used.

It should also be described why knowledge about residents' perceptions, and pre-perceptions, which is treated in the following chapter, is claimed as important in order to succeed with a STD. There are several explanations and statements to this, which are similar to why community participation in general is important. The tourism industry depends on the hospitality of local people, something that is more probable to occur if the residents support tourism. To gain knowledge about whether or not residents do support tourism, there is obviously a need to gather information about their attitudes and perceptions about it. Without doing so it is often suggested that tourism projects are unlikely to be successful and tourism

impacts likely to be negative (Gursoy et al 2002 p. 80; Plaza-Mejía et al 2011 p. 461). Besides this, research of this kind is argued to be of importance in order to make the encounter between the tourist and the residents of a destination less tense (Belisle & Hoy 1980 p. 1). In other words, studies about residents' perceptions may have the possibility to improve the situation for residents and tourists, as well as tourism planners.

When it comes to research about residents' perceptions it has been performed to a high extent since the 70s and it has been suggested to be one of the areas most analyzed within the tourism field (Tosun 2002 p. 1). Even so, further studies in the area are recommended to gain new perspectives about STD and increase the chances of achieving it (Nunkoo et al 2013 p. 20). As in this study, previous research has often used the various known tourism impacts as a base to gather residents' perceptions. For example, socioeconomic positive effects like "standard of living" and "personal income", and negative effects like "price increases" and "increased drug traffic", have been frequently analyzed. Many times residents have been asked to list or rank their perceptions about these and other impacts, and the results have often been categorized into the three previously mentioned categories: perceptions about social, economic and environmental impacts (Belisle & Hoy 1980; Haralambopoulos & Pizam 1996; Azakli & Erdal 2002). When it comes to residents' general perceptions about tourism impacts, one thing that seems clear is that the economic effects often are what is most recognized by residents (Tosun 2002; Liu & Turgut 1986; Belisle & Hoy 1980). Even if this categorizing can be complicated because of the fact that the impacts might overlap, as mentioned before (Hall 2008 p. 27-31), it can be interesting to at least discuss if the findings of this study point at the same direction.

Another thing that has been common to analyze is if there has been any differences in perceptions between certain groups of people. For example has it been measured to what extent spatial factors, such as distance between residents and tourists, and economic dependency from the tourism sector, affects residents' perceptions (Belisle & Hoy 1980; Haralambopoulos & Pizam 1996). Other factors that have been taken into consideration are gender, education, income and age (Azakli & Erdal et al 2002; Faulkner & Tomljenovic 2000). This study makes no effort to analyze differences in perceptions, but more to increase the knowledge of residents' perceptions in general. Previously mentioned papers have many times been performed after the impacts have been noticed to a varying degree and the difference with this study is that the focus is more on the future and how residents perceive

possible future tourism impacts. When it comes to perceptions about the future, the term pre-perceptions has often been used in tourism research, for which this will now be treated.

2.9 Residents' pre-perceptions

The difference between residents' perceptions and pre-perceptions is that the first is supposed to treat how residents perceive already evident tourism impacts and the second how residents perceive possible future tourism impacts. In previous tourism research, the term pre-perception has been frequent specifically in the preparation stage of certain events. For example before major sports events, when impacts of tourists and visitors are likely to be noticeable, information about residents' pre-perceptions has been gathered to facilitate planning and also to compare with perceptions afterwards (Hermann, U, P et al 2013; Greenidge, D et al 2011). When it comes to residents pre-perceptions of tourism in general and not only regarding events, it has been stated that relatively few studies have been performed in a preparative stage, when tourism is not that well developed (Cheyene & Mason 2000 p. 1). Here the authors referred to two previous examples of pre-perceptions, with residents' pre-perceptions gathered in an early stage when tourism was likely to increase. Both of these studies also stated that studies about residents' pre-perceptions deserved more focus (Keogh 1990 p. 463-464; Hernandez et al 1996 p. 776).

Tourism in Tiquantepe is also expected to grow and the intention of this paper is to gain similar knowledge as in these mentioned examples. Because of this it can be interesting to shortly describe what the results were in these studies and why they were performed, which allows a comparison between them and this paper. Keogh wanted to interview residents to find out what they considered to be the main issues regarding possible impacts of a new tourism park in Canada. The other authors (Hernandez et al 1996) used similar methods to gain knowledge about residents' attitudes before the construction of a resort enclave in their community, in Puerto Rico. The two studies showed results that indicated that residents in general were positive to the different types of proposed tourism increase, but in the case of Puerto Rico the results were more ambivalent. In general the residents there were positive towards the proposed resort enclave, but their feelings were mixed. When it comes to which positive aspects of tourism impacts that were most perceived in these two examples, the results were even more similar. Both cases showed residents that most of all thought and hoped that the proposed tourism increase would improve economic factors. In the Puerto Rico

case the term local employment was perceived as the most favorable outcome and in Canada the categories creation of jobs and income gained absolutely most recognition from residents (Hernandez et al 1996 p. 767, 774-775; Keogh 1990 p. 454-455).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Methodological approach and choice of methods

The methodology that has been used in this study is a qualitative approach, with semi-structured conversation interviews as the specific method. A total of ten interviews, one informant interview with the Tourism Minister of the municipality, and nine respondent interviews with people living in the municipality, were performed. The informant interview is supposed to be with someone who has knowledge about aspects important to the investigation, in this case a logical choice with the person responsible for tourism development and planning. The results of this interview are demonstrated in the beginning of the results in order to increase the understanding of Ticuantepe and its tourism development before the rest of the results. Respondent interviews should more treat the respondents' own thoughts and perceptions about the questions important to the study, which was the case here as well (Esaiasson et al 2012 p 227-228). Besides this two test interviews were conducted in a previous stage, which are not included in the study, but helped to improve the following interview guide. The interview time ranged from 20 minutes to 75 minutes, with an average time of just over 35 minutes. All of the interviews were performed in Spanish and every respondent interview but one were then transcribed in the original language. This really helped in the process of summarizing the results, which was done by selecting the most important parts, translating these into English and creating a fluent text.

It is argued that conversation interviews is a suitable method when the aim is to discover something that to the researcher is unknown, or when unexpected answers are likely to occur. When the important thing is to understand what meaning people ascribe different phenomenon it is also recommended (Esaiasson et al 2012 p. 251-252; Starrin & Svensson, 1994, p. 29). Qualitative methods like this kind of interviews are also stated to be preferable in order to gather information about the different meanings and perceptions that might be expressed. Besides this it has a better ability to give a more holistic understanding of the question that is in focus (Desai, & Potter 2006 p. 116-117, 120-122). Specifically semi-structured interviews ascertain the researcher to cover the topics and details that are important, but at the same time it allows the respondent to answer the questions more spontaneously and freely. They also have the opportunity to add more details, ask questions in return, focus their answers on what according to them is important and have their own angle

of approach (Desai, & Potter 2006 p. 144-145; Starrin & Svensson, 1996, p. 60; Merriam 2010).

In the case of this study it seemed like a logical approach to use a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews. It was relatively unknown to me what was going to be discovered; given that the main theme undoubtedly is tourism and the study area has had relatively minor experience with tourism. It was also likely that unexpected answers would arise and that respondents would need to ask questions in return in order to give valuable answers. Several answers were of the character that I could not have predicted beforehand and there were some questions that the respondents sometimes did not understand very well. I am aware that this means that the questions could have been developed differently, but thanks to the semi-structured approach they were at least always answered with sufficient depth. Another detail with the approach that really helped was that the respondents now sometimes could answer the questions in an order that was not planned by me. If they started to talk about certain aspects that I intended to take up later, I could easily adapt and interact with the respondent which led to a comfortable interview situation. It felt like this many times made the respondents feel like they were in control, which might have been difficult to achieve with more structured interviews. The purpose of the study was to gain knowledge about local peoples' pre-perceptions for future tourism development. Since this is very closely connected to one of the advantages with the qualitative approach, to gain a holistic understanding of different perceptions and meanings (Desai & Potter 2006 p. 116-117, 120-122), the choice of method seemed even more relevant.

Of course there are some aspects with interviews that sometimes are considered as disadvantages with the method, one of them that the researcher has an impact on the interview situation, which is more explained later how this was the case in this study (Desai & Potter 2006 p. 120-122; Esaiasson et al 2012 p. 235). Another detail that often is claimed as the major shortage with the interview as a method is the difficulty to in a reliable way being able to generalize the results (Desai & Potter 2006 p. 120-122; Esaiasson et al 2012 p. 229). If this is the aim it is often recommended to use a quantitative approach, for example surveys, where the main goal often is to figure out how often or how much something occurs (Esaiasson et al 2012 p. 197). It should be acknowledged that in this study it could have been interesting to compare for example to what extent the population was positive to tourism development, or how many who favored a new hotel. To perform the study like a questionnaire, with some answers open-ended, which is an approach closer to the interview (Esaiasson et al 2012 p.

228-229), could also have been an option. Different survey and questionnaire methods were considered, but some concerns made me choose interviews before. First of all I saw a potential difficulty in the ability people have to read and write, and I was simply not sure that they would understand all of the questions fully just by reading them. This is connected to the fact that I was worried that the questions I needed to ask to fulfill my purpose were too complicated to answer without sometimes asking questions in return. Besides this I had been strongly recommended by other tourism researchers with experience in Nicaragua to work with interviews¹. One approach that was actually closely considered was to use focus groups as a complementary method, since it is argued to be favorable in search for many ideas and answers with great diversity (Desai & Potter 2006 p. 154, 157). In this case I tried to arrange it, but for various reason it was too difficult to achieve.

When it comes to the value of generalizing the results of the research into statistics it has been argued to be specifically important in studies performed in developing studies, where the responsible often favor statistics. Nevertheless this may have led to the fact that qualitative methods at the same time have been stated as neglected in development studies (Desai & Potter 2006 p. 117). In this case it was early recognized that the Tourism Minister, who is the person responsible in this case, liked the idea of interviews and was interested in the results even if they cannot be translated into statistics. Because of this, and the fact that I considered the pros of the qualitative methods to outweigh the cons, the choice of method in this study seemed relevant and correct.

3.2 Selection of respondents and the interview guide

It should also be explained how I have selected people for the interviews, and how this can affect the study. The first interview was with the Tourism Minister, with whom my contact person arranged the meeting. As for the respondent interviews a mix of snowball sampling, where one person recommends the next and so on (Esaiasson et al 2012 p. 189), and some respondents that my contact person recommended, was used. In total I was recommended even more people to interview than I did, which was favorable because I could chose respondents to make the selection more wide. To use snowball sampling and the network of one person might difficult just this process; the aim of achieving a maximal variation of

¹ Email-contact with María José Zapata

respondents (Esaiasson et al 2012 p. 189-190, 260). Nevertheless I soon realized that this was the best option for me to be able to perform sufficient interviews. During my test interviews I tried to approach people more on my own, and ask them if they wanted to participate, either right away or later on. I felt like I did not gain enough trust from these people to perform decent interviews, besides the fact that I at this point focused on a specific rural area, where tourism was a concept they barely heard before. Because of this I had to rely more on snowball sampling and that my contact person could help me with connections with people, which also made me shift focus from the rural area to the municipality in general. The fact that someone had told the participants about me coming beforehand logically facilitated the actual interviews. It also seemed that a bit of luck, besides strategic choices of me regarding which of the recommended people to interview, led to a situation relatively close to a maximal variation, and the importance of this in this study will now be explained.

In studies using respondent interviews the main aim is often not to have a high number of participants, but that the participants logically can contribute with different ideas and ways of thinking (Esaiasson et al 2012 p. 262). In the nine respondent interviews that are concluded in this study five are with men and four with women and the age of the respondents differs from 25 to 70. Three of the respondents lived in rural areas and six lived close to the center of the municipal and they also had a varying degree of educational background. These are all qualities that have been stated as important in order to achieve a maximal variation before (Esaiasson et al 2012 p. 260-261) and also in tourism research has results many times been divided within this categorization of people (Azakli & Erdal et al 2002; Faulkner & Tomljenovic 2000). In this study it is not important in the sense that the results are compared between any of these groups of people, but the hope is that the variety in qualities has contributed with further perspectives, which as stated earlier is easier with a maximal variation (Esaiasson et al 2012 p. 262). This can be useful in this study in the aim of answering the second research question specifically; how the residents recommend their municipality to develop and manage tourism. The goal is not to discover how many of the respondents have the same recommendations, but to expose all of their ideas, and it is more probable with more ideas with a maximal variation than by interviewing only people in the same age group for example.

The table below shows the participants in the nine respondent interviews and their qualities more specifically. Each respondent has been given a number from 1 to 9, later referred to as R 1-9, to indicate which of the quotes later showed that belongs to which respondent. The actual

quotes are also numbered from 1 to 14 because there are 14 quotes, to make it easier to find the corresponding ones in Spanish in the annex (Annex 2).

Table 1: Interview respondents

Respondent nr	Gender	Age	Rural/urban resident
1	Female	32	Urban
2	Male	64	Rural
3	Female	21	Urban
4	Male	28	Rural
5	Male	68	Urban
6	Female	40	Urban
7	Male	26	Rural
8	Male	45	Urban
9	Female	62	Urban

About the interview guide I mainly built this around the known impacts of tourism that are described in the beginning of the theoretical background. In the first part of the interviews there were some warm up questions, which is recommended (Esaiasson et al 2012 p. 265). The actual interview guide is available as an annex (Annex 1), but it can be of value to explain the main idea here. The aim was to understand the respondents' pre-perceptions of future tourism development in the municipality, which I wanted to achieve through them reflecting towards the future. First of all the respondents discussed what they had seen of tourism so far and also what they thought about this, and also how they perceived a probable tourism increase in the future. The next stage was that they analyzed and reflected upon the proposed tourism impacts that were introduced by me. I mentioned these impacts by explaining what had been observed in other tourist destinations, and formulated the questions towards what their opinions were if it was to be the case in Ticuantepe as well. Of course I tried to avoid asking the questions in a leading way as much as possible. After having reflected around these issues I encouraged the respondents to come with recommendations and ideas regarding tourism planning and management. I also asked them if they thought of ways they did not want their municipality to approach tourism. Here most of the respondents seemed to have many ideas, where some were very similar and some more wide-ranging. A common course of events was that respondents introduced their recommendations already when discussing pre-perceptions about the impacts. Many times they perceived an impact as negative, and immediately started to talk about how to avoid or diminish this impact, which also gave valuable recommendations. Since the interviews were semi-structured, the actual

guide was followed in different ways in each interview. Every question was always asked, except once which is explained later, but the order of the questions and how they were asked differed to a relatively high degree, mainly in order to make the interview situation comfortable.

3.3 Interview effects

Regarding problems with performing the actual interviews; it should be acknowledged what has been the case here. Some parts of this probably have to do with the fact that I am new as a researcher, and that the study was performed in a developing country. Interviewing effects is always evident to some extent between the researcher and the respondents, and obviously an experienced researcher many times handles this in a more correct way (Esaiasson et al 2012 p. 235). In developing countries these issues have been claimed as specifically sensitive, especially when it comes to power imbalances. The researcher might be perceived as someone that has the ability to help the respondents in some way, which might change their answers. In some cultures it is also different how women are used to being asked their opinion, and sometimes they act like their man is present which affects the answers (Desai & Potter 2006 p. 34-37, 45). I tried to avoid all of these scenarios by being honest about my purpose and encourage them to speak freely, wear informal clothes and act in a way far from superior to the respondents. It felt like they did perceive me as someone that was just curious about things that they without problem liked to share, and there was no tendency that women spoke less freely or had fewer ideas than men. Despite this it should not be neglected that power imbalances could have been the case sometimes, and that answers might have been different with a more experienced researcher or someone with the same cultural background.

Another aspect that might be problematic with conducting research in other countries in general is the question of language. Here the interviews were performed in Spanish, which is my second or maybe even third language regarding level of skill, and the respondents' mother tongue. Because of this it can be even more difficult to ask the right questions, to ask them in the right way, have knowledge about how your body language affects and how to smoothly interrupt if the conversation is losing track of what is important (Desai & Potter 2006 p. 39-40). I must admit that there were occasions when I did not understand a word or phrase correctly, but in these cases I either asked them to explain it, or looked it up later when I transcribed the interviews. I also experienced it to be a bit more difficult to change direction

of the interviews when this was needed, than it would have been in Swedish. Nevertheless the alternatives for me would have been to perform interviews in English or to use an interpreter. The first idea is not logical since my English is probably at the same level as my Spanish, and to find respondents that spoke English would have narrowed down my selection of respondents too much. There are interpreters with a higher level of Spanish and English than me, but to work with interpreters can have other disadvantages. It has been suggested that it can cause loss of control, be more money- and time-consuming and it has also been demonstrated that sometimes interpreters have certain interests of their own (Desai & Potter 2006 p. 172-177).

In conclusion, I think and hope that the fact that I spoke Spanish increased the respect the respondents had for me, decreased the potential feeling of inferiority and gave them more control of the situation, which can be valuable (Desai & Potter 2006 p. 40). I felt like the advantage of this without doubt outweighed the risk that I might have misunderstood some minor aspects. Nevertheless one thing that I did experience specifically problematic was how to handle the question of quotes. A quote can lose a bit of its meaning when translated, maybe even more when this is being made from one's second to third language. I struggled with the issue of translating the quotes into English in an adequate way, to make it easier for those reading the paper. Nevertheless all of the quotes are also evident in the original language in annex 2 (Annex 2), and the quotes are numbered both there and in this paper to easier find the corresponding ones.

When it comes to difficulties I have experienced that are not connected to language or culture, there are some, but hopefully not that serious. Two interviews were not transcribed, one because of the fact that I happened to delete it after listening to it, and the other was with the Tourism Minister, where the opportunity to interview him came when I did not have material to record. In the first case I had already listened to the interview before it was deleted and written down important aspects, so the main parts were saved, for example one quote I used. In the other interview I could not use any quotes, but much material was sent to me afterwards with statistics and other important details. All of the interviews except these two and one more were conducted in the home of the respondents, which is argued as important for them to feel comfortable (Esaiasson et al 2012 p. 268).

The interviews that did not take place in the respondents' homes were instead performed at their jobs while they were supposed to be working. In one case the respondent seemed a bit

stressed about the interview in the beginning, and gave short answers to the first questions. Neither were we alone in the room and his colleagues seemed to listen to our conversation which also could have affected the situation. After a while the respondent got more relaxed, gave reflecting answers and had many interesting ideas that are included in the result. Despite this it is probable that this interview would have been even more valuable if it was performed in his home. In another case there was no feeling of stress, but it was the work place per se that may have affected the interview to some extent. The respondent owned the bar at which the interview was performed, which I did not know before we met, which made her a “subjective expert” to some extent (Esaiasson et al 2012 p. 259). She sometimes lost track of the questions and started to discuss her bar, but in the end all of my questions except one were answered profoundly. The only question I choose not to ask was regarding price increases in restaurants and bars as an effect of tourism, since I figured this as potentially sensitive with her profession. Both of these interviews were performed in a shorter time than the rest, which can make the profoundness of these interviews questionable. Nevertheless I would say that all of the interviews together created a sufficiently profound material with many ideas and perspectives to the questions asked. The third interview which was not performed in the home of the participant was with the Tourism Minister, who I met at his office, with two of his colleagues participating. I knew beforehand that this interview was planned, but it was with shorter notice than I had anticipated. Because of this I did only have 30 minutes to prepare the interview and as mentioned I forgot to bring the recorder. Nevertheless the interview was very comfortable and spontaneous, with them talking mostly and telling me details about tourism in their municipality. I also managed to explain to them my ideas, and they promised to help me in case I needed it and also considered the coming results of the study important and possible for them to use in tourism planning. That I gained a profound understanding of tourism in the municipality and that I introduced my potential contribution was the two most important aspects with this interview.

During the rest of the interviews no major difficulties were experienced, but some details must be mentioned. A couple of times we were interrupted by friends or relatives which either only stopped by to say hello or, as one time, sat down to listen. This may have caused respondents to lose track of the interviews, but it never seemed to affect to a high extent. There were also some cases where the respondent started to talk about things that simply were not connected to the purpose. This might have affected the convenience of the rest of the interview since I felt I had to interrupt, but the respondents did not seem to take any offence.

3.4 Source criticism and further limitations

In this study the main parts of the sources used are electronic academic articles written by researchers in the relevant subjects, mostly within tourism research. Plenty of books treating tourism, development research and methodology, other types of articles, newspapers and websites, have also been used. It is argued important to have plenty of material and sources to increase the reliability of what is written (Esaiasson et al 2012 p. 288), which is why a relatively high number of sources have been used. The intention was also to have several sources claiming similar things as often as possible to further strengthen the information.

There are though some further details, besides previously chapters treating the interviews, which have to be recognized as a bit problematic in this study. The first thing is that it sometimes was difficult to be situated in Nicaragua during the period of the thesis. I had gathered plenty of material from tourism research and written parts of the theoretical background previous to the field study, but even so I encountered some problems. For example it would have been easier with access to the library of Gothenburg during the whole period, to consult more books about tourism and methodology. Now I had to rely to a higher extent on academic journals through internet, which therefore is the main part of references that has been used. Another challenge was that tourism in Ticuantepe was not that developed that I thought from the beginning. An initial idea was to build interviews more towards already experienced tourism impacts, but this had to be changed to a more preparative stage and pre-perceptions. Regarding this it was also difficult to find many studies about pre-perceptions in tourism research, specifically new examples. Nevertheless I consider that the ones treated explain the term in a decent way and it was also interesting to compare the results in this paper with these examples.

3.4 Summary

I have not written concretely about the validity and reliability of the study, but the intention is that this can be measured and valued reading previous parts of this chapter. It is up to the reader to judge my sources and analyze how the decisions made and the problems encountered on the way could have affected the study. I have been as honest as possible in revealing every detail of the process since I thought this was the best way to write this chapter.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Introduction to the results

The first part of the results shows the empirical findings from the interview with the Tourism Minister of Ticuantepe, Carlos Adán Arguello and his two colleagues, where there perspective of tourism in the municipality is described. There is also some information about Ticuantepe in general from other printed sources in this part of the chapter called the study area. Thereafter the empirical findings regarding residents' pre-perceptions are presented. Since there are two research questions in this paper, the empirical findings are also divided into two parts. The first one shows how residents perceived possible future impacts of tourism, first by describing their spontaneous feelings towards a probable tourism increase, and second by presenting their opinions about if and how already known tourism impacts from other destinations are likely to be the case in Ticuantepe. Here the results are described within the categories economic, social and environmental known tourism impacts. The last part of the results holds residents' recommendations for future tourism management, where these are also summarized and listed in a table.

The study area

The geographical area that has been chosen for this study is the municipality of Ticuantepe, which is situated just 20 km from the center of the capital of Managua. The municipality belongs to the region of Managua, and has its border with the region of Masaya in the south, which has plenty of tourist attractions such as volcanos and markets. It is estimated that the municipality holds 34 000 residents, living either in the town of Ticuantepe or some smaller rural areas and villages (inide.gob). It is close to the rural areas that the two major tourism attractions of the municipality can be found, which both of them focus on nature and wildlife. These are located in different locations from the city center, but both within a distance of 15 to 20 minutes going by car or motorcycle. The first one is called the Montibelli Private Reserve, where hikes with guides and package deals are available for those who find especially birds and butterflies interesting. The other one is a protected area and the main tourism attraction of the region; the Wildlife Reserve El Chocoyero. Here the tourism attributes are animals such as monkeys, snakes, lizards and green parakeets, besides waterfalls

and lakes which supply most of the water to Managua, and the reserve has shown a very fast increase of visitors over the last three years (Benchwick & Egerton 2013 p. 63-64; nicaragua.com). 6000 people visited the park in 2011, in 2012 the numbers were 6500 and in 2013 they had 7100 visitors between January and September. With this information the Tourism Minister estimated the total number of visitors to be almost 10 000 in 2013, with more than 10 % of these being international tourists (interview, Carlos Adán Arguello).

Even if the actual town of Ticuantepe is not yet well visited by tourists, this is something that probably will change in the near future according to the Tourism Minister. There are already some tourism attributes within the actual town and its proximity, such as an archeological museum, a zoo, and another archeological site which is called “the wall of snakes.” The zoo is frequently visited by Nicaraguans, and here the municipality sees a growing potential for international tourism as well. When it comes to restaurants there exist more than ten of these, mostly in the town but also close to the reserves and there is a variety both in food, prices and style. Nevertheless the aspect that is supposed to influence most on future tourism in the town of Ticuantepe, is the construction of a new hotel that is about to start. Until now the only accommodation possibilities for tourists in the community have been a couple of rooms in one of the restaurants and a minor hostel. With a new hotel, the municipality seems very optimistic that the tourists will both arrive in higher numbers, and also that they will stay for a longer time in the actual town. Another fact that is pointed out as an advantage in attracting more national and international tourists to Ticuantepe is that it is located only 15 minutes from Managua. The capital of Nicaragua holds a million habitants (nationmaster.com) and also the international airport, where a high amount of international tourists arrive every day (Interview, Carlos Adán Arguello).

Figure 1: Map of Nicaragua and Ticuantepe. Source: weatherforecast.com



Keeping the focus on the municipality of Ticuantepe, further information was given to me in the interview with the Tourism Minister. A SWOT-analysis had been developed which described how they desired tourism to be developed and what were seen as the major advantages and difficulties with tourism. The most obvious strengths are those that already have been described, such as many tourism attributes and the proximity to Managua. Weaknesses that they were aware of were for example lack of a proper hotel, insufficient infrastructure and no website which consequently made advertising harder. They seemed optimistic about the opportunities of tourism, such as the creation of employment and income to the citizens, and also that tourism could help to protect the nature and environment. Regarding threats they had realized the risk of natural disasters, such as earthquakes and volcano eruptions, unfavorable weather during the rainy season, and possible destruction of the environment if they do not work carefully with tourism. An aspect they mentioned both as a threat and an opportunity was the proximity to other destinations that also wished to invest in tourism, for example Masaya. A threat because they had to compete for both tourists and sources of investment to improve their tourism product, but an opportunity because they now had to “step up their game” and work harder, as the Tourism Minister explained.

In this interview the issue of community participation was also introduced, and it seemed that no significant focus had been on these aspects. They mentioned that it was important, and after a while that they had worked with this to some extent in certain projects. They also welcomed my idea to gain knowledge from the residents of Ticuantepe about their pre-perceptions of future tourism development in the municipality. They had not done anything similar regarding tourism before, and they said that the results of this study absolutely could be valuable to consider in future tourism management.

4.2 Residents' perceived impacts in general

“Well, this is positive, you know why? Because one way or another the country grows, and we are so poor, economically we are very poor, almost the poorest in Latin America.” (Quote 1, R 8)

This answer came from one respondent when he was asked what he thought about a probable tourism increase in Ticuantepe. In a decent way it points out the general perception residents had about tourism and their hopes for what it could contribute with in their community. When asking respondents about how they perceived tourism to impact them and their society in general, without proposing any potential impacts, the pattern was positive thoughts about tourism, but there were also some concerns. The advantages that were mentioned were creation of employment and income and that people would care more about the appearance of their restaurants and shops. Another detail that one respondent hoped for was that tourism would make students more interested in learning English. That tourism could work as an incentive to teach students about protection and conservation of nature, wildlife and historical values, was also expressed. The only negative aspects perceived, before the proposed impacts were introduced, were that they did not yet have sufficient conditions like infrastructure and hotels for any significant tourism development, and that it would be difficult to find investment.

After that residents in the interviews had described their spontaneous feelings about what a probable tourism increase would mean, tourism impacts that have been demonstrated in some more developed tourism destinations were introduced, which are treated in the theoretical background. Respondents were asked to give their opinions regarding if these possible impacts were likely to occur in Ticuantepe and to analyze and discuss this. These reflections

will now be demonstrated within the three categories economic, social and environmental proposed impacts.

4.3 Perceived possible economic impacts

Two introduced impacts here were creation of employment and income possibilities. Not surprisingly, here further positive perceived impacts were expressed by residents. That it would actually happen was perceived as most likely and also that it could increase circulation of capital in the community and through this spread these advantages. Other aspects that were mentioned were that it would bring better opportunities for women and that it could create possibilities for young educated people in the community to find jobs in Ticuantepe and not move to Managua for this purpose.

Regarding the next introduced impact in the interviews, what residents perceived about potential price increases in restaurants, shops and taxis for example, mixed feelings were expressed. One respondent with experience from other destinations in Nicaragua feared this to be the case here as well:

“It’s important that those in these services, well that they have a fair price, or a fair price that the product actually is worth, and that they don’t increase it for those who suffer are the ones living here. It could happen here because it has happened in every other place, actually every other place I know.” (Quote 2, R 3)

It was perceived as important to maintain prices and services and not make any changes, at least not any rapid changes. It was mentioned that price increases would not affect the tourist, but also the opposite, that it could be a risk that tourists would hesitate to come back if prices became too high. Other thoughts were that it could be the case with price increases, but that it would not matter, because other services would arise that could attract customers with different budget. One respondent also filled in with ideas that it was not probable with significant price increases since these issues were already controlled to some extent by the municipality.

When it comes to what residents perceived to be the case with potential foreign investment in tourism, there was a pattern but also some divergent reflections. Several opinions were expressed that it was positive, both for the actual investment and to gain new perspectives and

ideas. It was also mentioned that this was the only way and that the municipality had to focus their few resources on more urgent issues. Following answer regarding foreign investment clearly indicates the pattern in these opinions:

“This is excellent, we as Nicaraguans are open-minded, we are open-minded because, the poverty makes us, well we have to be open-minded, don’t you think? Poor and proud? We just can’t, right?” (Quote 3, R 8)

He continued explaining that allowing foreign investment was the only solution for them, and if they opposed it their situation would never improve. However that the issue maybe is not that simple were indicated by other respondents. That foreign investment was a risk because the profit can leave the country, and that it would be more favorable with local people in higher positions was also mentioned. One respondent stated that more focus would be on the companies and shops that already existed in the community in order to maintain control of the development and the prices of services.

4.4 Perceived possible social impacts

Within this category the impacts tourism can have on the infrastructure and on the culture, both negatively and positively, were placed. Regarding infrastructure it was described for the respondents that it has been known to work as an incentive to improve existing infrastructure, but also that tourists sometimes have caused extra pressure on existing infrastructure. The road leading to the main tourism attraction, Chocoyero, is considered to be in poor condition, and this was the focus of the answers in various ways. That the road needs improvement was well recognized and also that tourism could contribute in this process. One idea was that tourism created pressure on the municipality, which according to some had focused too much on urban development, to do something about the road in these rural parts. It was also expressed that the actual money that tourists would spend could be used to improve the road. That this was important for the sake of the tourists was well recognized, mainly because they simply would not visit Ticuantepe otherwise. One respondent also mentioned that improvement of infrastructure actually would have the ability to help local people as well, with their harvest and production. Nevertheless, concerns were also expressed that it was important to think the other way around, that more tourism could cause extra pressure on the existing infrastructure.

When it comes to cultural impacts it was mentioned to the respondents that in some tourism destinations misunderstandings and conflicts had increased because of cultural differences, but also that some destinations had experienced greater cross-cultural understanding and learned new things as a result. When discussing these proposed impacts the respondents' ideas were very similar. That there would be any kinds of misunderstandings or conflicts because of tourists with other cultures was totally neglected and that it was likely with a positive encounter was explained in several ways. First of all they perceived themselves as open-minded, humble and curious about tourism and assured that they would approach tourists with this attitude. Besides this they mentioned the fact that they already experienced cultural exchange in several villages where volunteers from other countries had been living. These arrangements had been positive with foreigners learning traditional cooking and the Spanish language among other things. That tourists also will have an approach that facilitates the encounter with the locals according to the respondents can be illustrated with the following quote.

“A foreign tourist doesn't come to learn about Coca Cola, he doesn't come to learn about hamburgers, this is too boring and they come to learn about something new, something they have never seen, and this we have to present.” (Quote 4, R 5)

That foreign tourists will be curious and respectful towards Nicaraguan and their lifestyles seemed probable judging by respondents' answers and it was also mentioned that this cultural exchange could be mutual; that Nicaraguans also would learn from other cultures.

4.5 Perceived possible environmental impacts

When discussing potential impacts on the environment, it was introduced that tourism could help to protect for example nature and wildlife, but also that it could lead to extra pressure and sometimes destruction of these things. That tourists could cause negative impacts on the environment was expressed, but more indirectly and in the long run. One respondent linked the possible improvement of the road to Chocoyero with a lot of noise because of these machines, and therefore effects on animal and wildlife. Another respondent had following concern for the future:

“If tourism is not controlled from the beginning, from the very start, it is possible that we will have some signs of damage, on the actual environment.” (Quote 5, R 9)

This was mentioned when the respondent talked about Chocoyero, which once again was in focus. But since this area is already protected as a reserve, respondents also had opposing thoughts, that the nature and wildlife were actually safe. There existed sufficient rules, guides with the right knowledge and other precautions to maintain order according to other respondents. It was also the case here as in previous parts that some respondents perceived foreign tourists as benign and very aware of their impact, which is demonstrated with following quote:

“I think that a foreign tourist knows what he should do and what he shouldn’t do, because he has traveled to other places, but the tourist here, that’s another tourist! This is a tourist, if you tell him no, he will do it, and if you tell him yes he will do it even more!” (Quote 6, R 2)

Even though the last words are a bit confusing, this explanation illustrates how this respondent trusted foreign tourists and had doubts about Nicaraguans behavior. Similar ideas, that respondents understood the potential threats of tourism but continued talking about the part they themselves should play, was further expressed in other interviews. These reflections were many times transformed into recommendations, and are more described in this part of the result which now follows.

4.6 Residents’ recommendations for tourism development and management

In the table below the residents’ recommendations and ideas have been divided into seven categories, or themes, with the keywords for each category placed in the right column. These keywords indicate the main ideas within each category, for example more specifically what it means or why it is important. The categories, the keywords and the explanation to these may overlap with each other to some extent, but hopefully it is not confusing. The categories are not ranked, and the main idea here is to make this part of the results easier to grasp, with the following text explaining the categories more profoundly and in the same order as in the table.

Table 2: Residents recommendations for tourism development and management

	Categories	Keywords
Nr 1	Community participation	<i>Why:</i> Locals are experts. Reach women and young. Empower these groups. Local awareness to support. Facilitate for authorities. Avoid apathy and isolation.
Nr 2	Education	<i>Where:</i> School. Colleges. Exhibitions. Workshops. Rural and urban zones. Public and private institutions. <i>About:</i> Tourism attractions. Tourism as subject. Protection of environment and wildlife. English. Human capacity. Higiene. Garbage.
Nr 3	Advertisement and marketing	<i>What:</i> Start website. Posters also outside community. Use television and radio. Market <i>all</i> attractions. Focus on their famous water reserve. <i>Why:</i> Attract visitors and investment.
Nr 4	Diversity of tourism attractions	<i>What:</i> Not only Chocoyero. Show local cooking and history. Rural tourism. Field tours. Arrange camping solutions. Focus more on Montibelli reserve.
Nr 5	Adequate solutions with tourism employees	<i>What:</i> Experienced people in hotels, restaurants etc. Not too many focusing on tourism. Not too many working in the sector. <i>Why:</i> Avoid unsustainable solutions. Improve tourism.
Nr 6	Planning, regulation, organization	<i>What:</i> Planification guides. Evaluation. Preventive measures. State interventions or recomendations. Rules by municipality. Colaboration in municipality. <i>Why:</i> Improve tourism. Calculate if investment sustainable. Avoid price increases.
Nr 7	Infrastructure	<i>What:</i> Construct new roads. Improve existing roads. Maintain these in good shape. Make use of their favorable public transport connections. Speed up hotel construction. Build hotels solid towards earthquakes.

As shown in the table, residents were eager to come with suggestions regarding tourism and had different kinds of ideas. This paper focuses on community participation and the residents actually recommended this approach to play a significant role in continuing tourism management in Ticuantepe. One respondent claimed the importance of considering local ideas in any project in order for the projects to be successful:

“People many times ignore what is happening, why did they do it, for what purpose, how will it benefit us? Then sometimes people get apathetic, and then they hide, do not recognize, instead of supporting. Well they become like that because they don’t feel like they are participating in the activity.” (Quote 7, R 3)

To include several sectors and a high number of locals in tourism planning were considered important. The main reason for this was that locals have knowledge about what exists and what does not exist in their community, what can be done or not, and how it should be done. Further thoughts were that with community participation it would be easier to reach groups like women and young. It was mentioned that these groups were affected more by tourism since they often worked in the sector and therefore it was stated as important to include them in decision making. That it would be easier for the authorities with more community participation was also expressed, because without knowing if residents supported tourism, it would be a higher risk to invest and more difficult with planning.

Nevertheless it was also explained that these issues can have limitations in more profound levels, which leads to the next category; education. According to one respondent it is simply more difficult with participation if the knowledge about the issues at stake is not sufficient. The following quote by this person nicely introduces category number two:

“We should teach the man how to fish, not just give him the fish.” (Quote 8, R 2)

This is also a common Nicaraguan saying, which highlights the importance of education. The respondent continued with examples of previous intentions of participation in the community connected to other business, where locals did not have knowledge about what they were supposed to participate with. He argued that the results were therefore extremely negative with plenty of money and time wasted without a likeliness of success. His conclusion was that for tourism impacts to be more positive there was a great need to teach about things related to tourism, since this knowledge at this point was vague. Another respondent filled in with similar thoughts and said that even though she had always lived in Ticuantepe, she had not visited many of its tourism attractions. She stated that children must learn about these attractions, how they work and how they can be offered to tourists, before the municipality could market them any harder. Naturally the school was suggested as a starting point for these purposes, but also to teach about it in exhibitions, workshops, public and private institutions and specifically also in rural zones. There the people, according to one respondent, *“have no clue about what we can construct with tourism for the future, to be satisfied, to be happy.”* (Quote 9, R 2)

Regarding specifically what was supposed to be taught about tourism, respondents had many ideas. The environmental aspects like nature and wildlife were considered very important, as well as to teach about historical values in the community. Further recommendations were for

students to learn English and details like garbage disposal and hygiene. One respondent added the need to work with human capacity and empower groups, especially those selling local food and artefacts in markets and similar places. There were three main reasons for working with these educational aspects. First of all it would be easier to attract tourists if, for example, the municipality was clean, healthy, tourism attractions were well conserved and people had a higher level of English. Second, as explained earlier, residents would be more likely to support tourism if they had knowledge about it and its impacts. Finally, respondents also realized that a great deal of this knowledge about things like hygiene, garbage disposal and environmental protection could increase their own standard of living as well.

Category number three, advertisement and marketing, was detected as something in need of significant improvement. That Ticuantepe lacked a website for tourism was seen as a great disadvantage at this point. Not only was it necessary, but ideas were also expressed that it had to be a website of high quality that showed all of the attractions and possibilities in the municipality. There were recommendations also regarding the need to reach a wider target group in marketing than had been the case so far, through for example posters also outside of Ticuantepe and making use of radio and television. One detail that was claimed as a possible approach to advertisement was to focus on the fact that the municipality holds Nicaragua's greatest water reserve. This is already known nationally and one idea was to use this as a marketing tool in connection to tourism. An obvious reason for these measures was to attract more national and international tourists, but also to increase investment, which was mentioned as more likely with more developed advertisement.

Regarding the need to market all of the attractions in the region, this is something that leads to the next category, diversity of tourism attractions. There were expressions that too much focus had been on the reserve of Chocoyero and that Ticuantepe also had other things to offer tourists. Another relatively well-established tourism attraction is the private reserve of Montibelli. Here one respondent had the idea to further develop a tour project that had been tested there. Tourists would simply follow guides through various fields and get to know about what was produced and the diversity that existed in these fields, and later end up close to the reserve where an opportunity to camp would be offered. Similar thoughts about showing local aspects to tourists was also mentioned by another respondent who wanted the focus to be on rural tourism, with local cooking and other traditions as main ingredients. These approaches of tourism were supposed to spread tourism related income to various parts of the community, and also to avoid too much focus and possibly negative pressure on Chocoyero.

The name of the fifth category of recommendations, adequate solutions with tourism employees, may be a bit vague, but hopefully following quotes from one respondent will make it clearer:

“Tourism has very good possibilities, but here everyone wants to do the same, if we all do the same then we are going to do it bad.” She later continued explaining: *“Doing the same, everyone selling ice, everyone selling ice-cream, that everyone opens the same shops sometimes!”* (Quote 10 and 11, R 3)

That this was a negative Nicaraguan habit seemed evident according to the respondent. She explained that people often were lazy and tried to copy others that had realized a way to earn money, but her experience was that this many times generated negative results for these businesses. A similar concern was that tourism could not be the only solution to development because then the risk would be a too fast development. This behavior and stressful way to develop tourism was mentioned as more likely to lead to negative impacts. Another respondent filled in with her experience of seeing many people opening up bars and restaurants as a fast fix for money, without having knowledge about these issues. Her recommendation was to have more experienced people in all tourism related business, otherwise these would never last.

Next on the list are the recommendations regarding planning, regulation and organization, which covers several aspects as the category indicates. To carefully organize and plan tourism development was expressed as important for various purposes. As with previous category, it was suggested to among other things diminish the risk for negative impacts. With insufficient planning and organization, one thing that could be affected was the water reserve of Ticuantepe, with for example contaminated water. Preventive measures like for example lectures by the police about different tourism related crimes, was also mentioned as a recommendation. When talking about pre-perceptions about price increases, a recommendation that came up to prevent this was interventions or rules from the state or the municipality, which one respondent expressed like this:

“I think a good thing would be state intervention. State intervention, there exist no else, because they can say: Hey you don’t increase the prices! Well, to the Nicaraguans.” (Quote 12, R 8)

With the government supervising and to some extent controlling the price increases, these impacts would not be so negative for the local people according to the respondent. Other thoughts added that collaboration in the municipality between different sectors also could contribute with this, and that it was already the case regarding certain aspects. To develop tourism with careful planning would not only decrease negative impacts, it would also give more time for evaluations. These were explained as important to make sustainable investment and to detect disadvantages and therefore being able to change and improve tourism products.

The last set of recommendations can be placed under the category infrastructure and these ideas often revolved around the road to Chocoyero. It was mentioned both that there was a need for a brand-new road and that it would be enough to make some adjustments of the existing one. Besides this was it recommended putting some effort in maintenance of this possibly improved road in the future. If this was to be done it would have the possibility to facilitate the situation for both rural residents and the tourists, which was thoroughly explained by one respondent who had just seen a bus that could not make its way through to the reserve:

“And now what will they say? Well that they’re not going to Chocoyero again! But if the road is good, well say I and everyone else, then they will go there because it’s beautiful and the road is good, then this is valid for the people living here and tourists from other countries.”

(Quote 13, R 2)

Regarding the hotel respondents thought it was a necessary step and wanted this process to start as soon as possible. An interesting idea was to build solid hotels in a material so they would be safer towards earthquakes. This was figured extra important since Ticuantepe is placed in a region with high risk of just earthquakes and that these precautions would make tourists choose the destination anyway. Another recommendation was to take better advantage of the favorable public transport connections in Ticuantepe. There are several bus stops in town and even more buses pass the community on the main road that leads all the way to Costa Rica, besides the fact that the distance is short to both Managua and Masaya. This was expressed as something that could be used to a higher extent in order to attract tourists.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter holds an analysis and comparison with previous tourism research and several details are discussed with this in mind. Here the text is divided in two parts, one treating each research question. Regarding the first research question, how residents perceived possible future tourism impacts, the results of this study are compared and analyzed first of all with research about tourism impacts in general. Then the results are also compared both with previous studies about residents' pre-perceptions and also with research treating residents' perceptions in a later stage of tourism development. This study is about residents' pre-perceptions but since also residents' perceptions was treated in the theoretical background; it was interesting to compare the results of the first research question with this part as well. The results of the second research question, how residents recommended their municipality to develop and manage tourism, were more difficult to analyze and discuss comparing previous research. These results are also a kind of pre-perceptions, but no studies about specifically residents' recommendations have been treated in the theoretical background, since no such studies were found. Nevertheless it is discussed which of the recommendations that can be argued as more important, having in mind previous tourism research in general, but it has to be mentioned that in this part it was necessary with more personal interpretations.

5.2 How do residents perceive possible future tourism impacts?

The first aspect that should be compared with previous research is if the known tourism impacts that were treated in the theoretical and introduced in the interviews, were perceived as likely to occur in Ticuantepe according to the residents. Respondents perceived most of these as possible to occur in the future, even if there were variations regarding to what extent they believed it was probable with the impacts. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that residents perceived most of the impacts as possible in the future, since the actual impacts were introduced in the interviews. The results therefore logically coincide with previous research about tourism impacts (Ashley & Mitchell 2010; Beeton 2006 p. 18; Hall 2008 p. 29-30; Mathieson & Wall 2006 p. 89-90; Williams 2009), except the part of possible cultural misunderstandings, which was totally negated by residents. It is interesting that this was the

only impact that residents did not perceive as possible, and that they considered it much more likely with positive cultural encounters. One explanation might be that Nicaraguan people are extremely open-minded, and it can be hard for them to picture negative consequences in the future with meeting people from other cultures. Hopefully they are right, but just because they negate this possible negative impact at this moment, it should not be forgotten to look into when tourism is more developed and multicultural encounters are more frequent.

Another detail that is interesting considering previous research about tourism impacts is the fact that there was a pattern in this study that residents warmly welcomed foreign investment, which is frequently described as a negative effect of tourism (Hall 2008 p. 29-30).

Nevertheless, as earlier mentioned, these questions are often complicated and what is regarded as positive for one group might be negative for another (Hall 2008 p. 30-32), which can be discussed further having in mind the results of this study. It may be easy for researchers in the global north to calculate that there are disadvantages for the local people with foreign investment compared to national investment, but it must not be forgotten what the alternatives are. Of course, one thing that seems important in a sustainable tourism is that few economic benefits leak out to already wealthy countries, but the question is if such a sustainable tourism development even can be achieved. Perhaps is it more suitable and achievable to strive for a *more* sustainable tourism instead? In this case it is possible that it can be more economically sustainable with foreign investment than no investment at all. If people with few economic resources see an opportunity to increase their earnings, it is probably hard to ignore this chance because of the fact that it in theory exist even better solutions in the long perspective. This might be a part of the answer to why the pattern in this study was that respondents welcomed foreign investment.

Besides the aspects of cultural misunderstandings, residents perceived all of the known impacts that were introduced as possible to occur to some extent, but that there was a pattern towards most recognition of positive impacts. As already mentioned, it was relatively expected that residents were going to perceive most of the tourism impacts as possible to some extent because of the way the interviews were performed. Nevertheless, something that can be further compared with previous research is whether or not the results are in line with studies about specifically residents' perceptions and pre-perceptions towards tourism impacts and to some extent discuss this, which now follows.

As already stated it is quite obvious in this case that the pattern is that residents are positive to a probable tourism increase in Ticuantepe. This coincides with the two earlier mentioned examples of pre-perceptions in Puerto Rico and Canada where residents also were positive to a proposed tourism increase (Hernandez et al 1996; Keogh 1990). That residents' feelings were mixed, like in the Puerto Rico case, was evident in this study as well, but at the same time this seems hard to avoid. Residents had concerns about some of the proposed impacts when they were introduced, but their spontaneous feelings towards a tourism increase were far more positive than negative. That this more or less was demonstrated in these two cases as well as in this case study may be an indication that people in general have a positive view of tourism in such an early stage of its development. A continuing comparison between these two cases of pre-perceptions, other previous research regarding residents' perceptions in a later stage, and the results of this study demonstrates that it is one aspect that often generates these hopes; the economy.

In this study the economic aspects were the most recognized impacts of tourism since it was these issues that residents introduced to a high extent themselves, mostly that tourism could lead to a more favorable economy and creation of jobs. In the other two cases of pre-perceptions from Puerto Rico and Canada the results were very similar, with economic aspects gaining most recognition. Something that further strengthens the fact that economic factors are commonly in focus are the results from previous research about residents' perceptions towards tourism impacts also in a later stage of development (Tosun 2002; Liu & Turgut 1986; Belisle & Hoy 1980). A high extent of previous research and this paper show that the economic impacts are the most recognized by residents, and this might deserve further discussion. It can be argued that since economic aspects often are more important to residents, it may be problematic to ascribe social and environmental aspects similar value. Not always, but mostly in tourism research, it seems like these three categories are equal in the aim for a sustainable tourism development. Maybe this is easy to state in theory, coming from wealthier countries, but in developing countries, where much of tourism is placed (Spenceley & Meyer 2012), the poverty gives other perspectives. It is probably harder to care about the environment when an opportunity arises that can lead to a better economic situation, both individually and for societies that wishes to develop tourism. Since the economy often seems to be in focus according to the people that are living at the tourism destination, it can be argued that maybe more focus in research should be on these issues and how to make the economic part sustainable.

5.3 How do they recommend their municipality to develop and manage tourism?

This research question is as already mentioned more difficult to compare with previous research. Nevertheless this part of the results also deserves further discussion, with some personal interpretations. Of course all of the residents' recommendations should be considered as important, but having in mind previous research some of the recommendations will be discussed further and may be argued as more valuable.

First of all the actual recommendation about further community participation can be mentioned as an important recommendation, for several reasons. Most important, residents themselves expressed this part as important to continue with, and second, it has been stated as important in several studies (Kruger 2005 p. 592 & 596-597; Simmons 1994 p. 98-100; Zapata, Hall et al 2011). Besides this it has not been the focus yet in tourism in the municipality and it was also evident that residents actually had many ideas and were willing to share these, which are important steps of participation. It is therefore suggested that the municipality continue with what has been started by having workshops, seminars and other forms of possibilities for community participation.

Besides further community participation, there are some other parts of residents' recommendations in this study that can be argued as extra important, which are number six and two in table 2 (table 2, page 40); "planning, regulation and organization", and "education". These can be seen as long term-projects, which as mentioned earlier are something that is more likely to be forgotten or neglected by tourism planners (Hall 2005 p. 144). Judging by the interview with the Tourism Minister in this study these aspects had not been considered, and therefore can they be of value to further emphasize. Two details that may be relevant to discuss in the first of these categories is the question of evaluating and price increases. Like residents suggest, it can be important to have time with evaluation to avoid negative impacts, something that may occur if there is a rush to develop tourism. They also had some great ideas regarding how to avoid or diminish the risk of price increases, which is recommended for the municipality to look into.

Also education about tourism can be seen as an important recommendation to further discuss, first because it might be forgotten since it has few direct benefits, and also because it is evident that there is a relatively vague understanding about what tourism actually is in Ticuantepe. Like one respondent mentioned, she did not even know what tourism attractions they could offer, and I later realized that she was far from the only one in the municipality

with similar lack of knowledge. Since the rapid tourism increase has been evident relatively recently in Nicaragua this may not be so strange. A country that has relied on other products as means for income, has logically focused towards these issues in education as well. But now tourism is rapidly increasing in Nicaragua and may soon be one of the major income opportunities, which highlights the importance of teaching about it. It may be of value for people to understand to a higher extent what tourism is, how it can help them, and what the potential threats are. This is easy to say, but it may be more problematic to introduce the topic of tourism in schools for example, when Nicaragua faces many other challenges as well. Since it is a solution that is more likely to give positive results in the future than in a short perspective, it is even less probable that the aspect will gain major focus in Nicaragua in general or Ticuantepe specifically. Because of this it might suite well to end this discussion with a quote that indicates the importance of education:

“The children need to learn first of all which tourism attributes we have got, and how these things work, and then also how to treat them, before tourism can be successful.” (Quote 14, R 1)

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Conclusion of the thesis

The purpose of the study was to gain knowledge about residents' pre-perceptions towards future tourism development in their own area by using semi-structured qualitative conversation interviews. The aim with the theoretical background was to give a base to STD, explain key terms and justify the need of the study. I feel confident that the purpose of the study has been fulfilled and that the results in a satisfactory way answer to the two research questions, which now will be concluded.

The first question regarding how residents perceive possible future tourism impacts received a great variety of answers and angles of approach. Almost all of the introduced possible future tourism impacts were perceived as likely to occur to some extent, except that tourism could lead to cultural misunderstandings and conflicts. There was a significant pattern towards recognition of possible positive tourism impacts in the future; among other things that students would learn more about subjects like English and protection of nature and wildlife in school and that tourism would lead to creation of employment and income opportunities. These economic factors were the main reasons to why residents perceived a probable future increase in tourism as positive, which to a high extent is in line with results in previous research about residents' pre-perceptions about tourism impacts (Hernandez et al 1996; Keogh 1990).

Research question number two treated how residents recommended their municipality to develop and manage tourism and these recommendations could be divided into seven categories (Table 2 p. 36). Hopefully all of these can be valuable in tourism planning but having in mind previous research claiming that tourism is often planned with a short perspective (Hall 2005 p. 144), three categories were further discussed. These are the recommendations "community participation", "education" and "planning, regulation and organization". Within these categories residents expressed plenty of ideas and some of these aspects can be seen as long-term projects and are therefore more likely to be forgotten by tourism planners if they are not emphasized. Some of the other categories, as "infrastructure" and "advertisement and marketing" had also already been considered by the Tourism Minister and logically these recommendations do not provide brand new ideas.

The qualitative method that was used, with semi-structured interviews, seems to have been a suitable choice. Several answers were unexpected and would have been difficult to obtain with a more quantitative method. The actual interview guide did also function well, having adjusted it after the test interviews. For example was it common that reflections regarding perceived impacts generated interesting ideas and recommendations, which was favorable since this was a part that was supposed to be achieved. It can therefore also be recommended to use a similar approach in order to gain meaningful information about residents' recommendations and ideas about tourism in other studies.

Finally it may suite well to short mention how this study can be useful and valuable in practice. The results have been summarized and translated into Spanish, with most focus on residents' recommendations, and sent to the Tourism Minister, who now has to decide how to make use of the information. It should be admitted that maybe some of these ideas would have been, or will be, taken into consideration by the responsible for tourism development in the municipality even without this study. For example, they had acknowledged some of aspects that residents expressed before this study had begun. Anyway in these cases it may not be the residents' ideas per se that are important, but their opinions can be seen as a sign that they do agree to what has already been detected. The fact that the residents have participated at all, just by mentioning their ideas, can also be of certain value since they may feel like they are contributing and therefore probably are more likely to support future tourism development. The hope is also that some of the recommendations gathered here are new and that they are considered and implemented to some extent in tourism planning and management. It is also possible that the interviews performed and the collaboration with the Tourism Minister can lead to further studies and discussion about tourism in the municipality of Ticuantepe.

6.2 Suggestions for future research

Regarding suggestions for future research, I first of all consider that studies of pre-perceptions deserve more recognition. It has been claimed that residents' perceptions have not been gathered sufficiently in a preparative stage (Cheyene & Mason 2000 p. 1), and my personal experience is that it is not that difficult to achieve. Besides this my opinion is that it can be of more value investigating these issues in an early stage of tourism planning, in order to being able to use the results before it is too late. It can also be interesting to perform these studies in

several ways, with various methods and in different places to compare what is the best approach to gain valuable results. One example is to treat other tourism impacts than in this study, since there are a high number of examples. Other ideas are to focus on economic, social or environmental aspects, to gain a more profound understanding of one of these categories, or simply to gather information about pre-perceptions in general, without proposing impacts.

Something else that I have to mention as a possible approach for future research is to analyze future tourism specifically in Ticuantepe. One suggestion here is to investigate whether or not the recommendations collected in this study have been taken into consideration and what the results have been. It can also be interesting to perform a study in a later stage when the hotel is built, for example to investigate what residents think about this process and how it will have affected the municipality. Regarding the environment, there may be a need to investigate the precautions that has been taken in Chocoyero, if similar studies have not been done, since tourist arrivals increase rapidly there.

The detail I consider most interesting to analyze and discuss is if and how the educational aspects of tourism are worth investigating any further, not only in Ticuantepe. This was a strong recommendation from the residents in this case study, but the question is how to best use this idea? It is possible that tourism research can contribute with figuring out how education about tourism in different ways can facilitate the process of reaching a sustainable tourism. One suggestion is to analyze if an increased knowledge about tourism in communities renders more positive multicultural encounters between tourists and residents in a later stage of tourism development. It would also be interesting to investigate if education about tourism in some way can lead to a more successful community participation in a long perspective.

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Interviews:

Informant interview with Carlos Adán Arguello, Tourism Minister of Ticuantepe, and two of his colleagues. 2013-10-11.

9 respondent interviews with local people living in Ticuantepe, all performed in November and December, 2013.

Contacted researcher:

Zapata, María José. University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg Research Institute.

ANNEX 1

Interview guide

Introduction

For how long have you been living here in Ticuantepe?

What have you noticed about tourism and tourists so far?

What do you think about this?

Background

It is probable here with an increase in tourism since a construction of a hotel is on its way, they are looking for investment in tourism business, and besides this you have many attractions here. What do you think if this would be the case?

Can you think of something positive/negative?

How can it affect the citizens?

How can it affect Ticuantepe in general?

Do you have any recommendations for this probable development?

Impacts

Now I will introduce certain impacts that have been noticed in some other destination where tourism have been developed. I would like you to reflect about if it is probable here as well and what you think about this.

Tourism can create job opportunities and increase income to the community?

More tourism and tourists can cause increases in prices of restaurants, shops and taxi for example?

Tourism can lead to foreign investment in tourism related business?

It can work as an incentive to improve infrastructure or it can cause extra pressure on existing infrastructure?

It can increase cross-cultural understanding and learning from other cultures, or it is more likely that it leads to misunderstandings and host/visitor hostility?

It can work as an incentive to protect the environment, nature and wildlife or it will lead to destruction of these things?

Recommendation and ideas

Do you have any further ideas regarding how to develop tourism in Ticuantepe?

Do you see any potential threats more than what we have talked about?

How do you think these or previous mentioned impacts can be avoided or diminished if this is desirable?

ANNEX 2

Original quotes

“Ah eso es positivo, sabes porque? Porque de una o otra forma el pais se proyecta, y somos tan pobres, economicamente, somos muy pobres, casi los mas pobres de america latina.”

(Quote 1, R 8)

“Pues es importante que los que estan en esos servicios, que tengan un precio, o que sea un precio justo lo que vale realmente el servicio y no aumentar porque los que sufrimos somos los que vivimos aqui. Puede ocurrir aquí porque ha ocurrido en todos los lugares, en verdad en todos los lugares que conozco.” (Quote 2, R 3)

“Exilentissimo, nosotros como nicaruenses aqui somos abiertos, somos abiertos porque, la misma pobreza nos hace, pues tenemos que ser abiertos, no te parece? Pobres y orgullosos? No podemos, verdad?” (Quote 3, R 8)

“Un turista extranjero no viene a conocer la Coca Cola, no viene a conocer la hamburguesa, eso es tan aburrido, y vienen a conocer algo nuevo, algo que nunca ha visto, y esto tenemos que presentar.” (Quote 4, R 5)

“Si no se controla el turismo al inicio, desde el inicio, es posible que tengamos algunas manifestaciones de dano, al mismo medio ambiente.” (Quote 5, R 9)

“Yo creo que el turista extranjero sabe lo que debe hacer y lo que no debe hacer, pero el turista aquí, esto es otro turista! Eso es un turista, si le dice no, el lo hace, si le dice si, el, mejor todavía lo hace mas!” (Quote 6, R 2)

“La gente ignora muchas veces lo que está pasando, por qué lo hicieron, para qué va a ser, qué beneficios vamos a tener de eso? Entonces a veces la gente se hace apática, y entonces se hace a un lado y desconoce, en vez de apollar. Pues se hace asi porque no se siente participe de la actividad.” (Quote 7, R 3)

“Al hombre ensengemole a pescar, no le entregemos el pescado.” (Quote 8, R 2)

“No tiene ni idea de lo que podemos construir con turismo para el futuro, para estar contento, estar alegre.” (Quote 9, R 2)

“Turismo tiene muy buenas posibilidades, pero aquí todos quieren hacer lo mismo, si todos hacemos lo mismo lo vamos a hacer mal.” (Quote 10, R 3)

“Haciendo lo mismo, todos vendiendo hielo, todos vendiendo helado, que todos ponemos los mismos negocios a veces!” (Quote 11, R 3)

*“Yo pienso que sería bueno con la intervención del estado. La intervención del estado, no hay otro, porque pueden decir: Mire usted no suba los precios! Pues, a los Nicaraguenses.”
(Quote 12, R 8)*

“Y ahora que dirán? Pues que no van nuevamente a Chocoyero! Pero si el camino está bueno, digo y dicen los demás, quieren ir allí porque es bonito y el camino está bueno, entonces esto es válido para la gente acá y para los turistas de otros países.” (Quote 13, R 2)

“Los niños tienen que aprender primero lo que tenemos de turismo, como funcionan y como cuidar esas cosas, antes de que el turismo tenga éxito.” (Quote 14, R 1)