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Eco-Cultural Tourism: Sustainable Development and Promotion of Natural and Cultural Heritage

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Abstract

Ecotourism has the eradication of poverty and environmental protection at its core. Both of these goals were established by the United Nations in 2012 though their development began in the 1980s. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse, using a comparative methodology, global and local eco-cultural tourism (natural, rural and urban areas) in tourist destinations of countries with emerging economies (Asia: China, Malaysia, Thailand), developed countries (Europe: Spain), and developing nations (South America: Peru, Argentina, Bolivia). The working hypothesis states that local, sustainable planning, endorsed by all the tourist agents is required, and should be led by the load capacity and the economic and environmental balance (green economies and ideologies), in order to answer to poverty and climate change problems by means of Tourist Projects directed by governmental policies and administrations. The outcomes suggest a need for a logistical change of policies, to prevent economies from generating pollution and carrying out abrasive activities associated with tourism. This change will create sustainable tourist destinations, the inclusion of populations, and the protection and conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

Keywords: sustainable development, nature, culture, tourism planning, government policies

1. Introduction

Eco-cultural tourism stems from ecotourism, which has been supported by the United Nations since 2012 [1] in order to eradicate poverty, protect the environment and incorporate sustainable development. It recognises the importance of preserving and protecting biodiversity and natural areas, and of using them in a sustainable manner. It fosters entrepreneurship and development among local communities, and encourages tourists to preserve and respect natural and cultural heritage.

This development has been possible after numerous recommendations from the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). Member States were urged to adopt incentive ecotourism policies, emphasising the positive effects of the creation of revenue, employment and education. Since the start of the nineties, ecotourism has been worked on at regional conferences and global summits, and 2002 was named the International Year of Ecotourism.

The majority of ecotourism-related terms emerged from English-speaking media [2]: natural tourism, rural tourism, wilderness tourism, alternative tourism,

environmental tourism, anthropological tourism, low impact tourism, travel with Mother Nature, adventure travel, jungle tourism, cultural tourism, ecotravel, green tourism, science tourism, soft adventure tourism, bio tourism, ethnic tourism, appropriate tourism, sustainable tourism, ecotripping, socially responsible tourism, ecoventures, nature vacations, wilderness tourism, and ethical travel. As a whole, they are related to responsible, respectful and honest tourism. It's educational because it offers information before, during and after the trip. It's interactive because it entails life experiences involving real contact and participation. It's democratic because the benefits it creates are equally distributed; it encourages the participation of rural communities and supports resource conservation.

The growth of ecotourism began in the eighties, notably because of the economic benefits of natural tourism. What is characteristic of ecotourism is that it is a tool for sustainable development [3] and it's categorised as an activity that mixes the excitement of travelling with caring for the environment. Its main goals are sustainability, preservation and participation of the local community.

With the modern tourist's demands and new trends, ecotourism is moving on to its next stage and is asserting itself as eco-cultural tourism. It binds searching for contact with nature with valuing cultural authenticity, environmental sustainability, new experiences and a higher number of trips with a shorter stay in each place. That is to say, it's created a symbiosis between natural tourism and cultural tourism, supported by sustainability and limitations on use, by small-scale activities and a high-quality tourism experience.

Eco-cultural tourism is a new form of tourism where the main goal is not to generate wealth, expropriate land and exploit resources of inhabitants and countries in order to benefit big companies. It's established itself within a new concept of tourism, both in socioeconomic terms and as a practical activity, that combines the conservation of natural and cultural sites with economic and recreational benefits through sustainable development, and improves the conditions of the recipient communities. The main motivation is observation, appreciation and contemplation as an experience within the natural and cultural environment.

Table 1 shows the characteristics of eco-cultural tourism from its inception, together with the synergy of the United Nations resolution that emphasises poverty eradication and environmental protection through ecotourism. It's a small-scale and fundamentally emotional form of tourism that promotes sociocultural and traditional values and environmental awareness, and offers benefits both to rural and urban areas. It requires a platform and type of tourism planning that encourages local sustainable development, involving all tourism sectors. It's currently

Birth of ecotourism: It's born together with the synergy of the United Nations resolution (2012) that emphasises poverty eradication and environmental protection through ecotourism [1]. It's small-scale tourism, with small businesses, with a specific and limited quality production and it's fundamentally based on experiences
It encourages: Sociocultural and traditional values; environmental awareness; respect for the biosphere, local cultures and traditions; brings benefits to rural and urban communities; economic potential for public and private companies, as well as a high-quality tourism experience
It requires: A platform and local sustainable development involving all tourism sectors (touristic planning, carrying capacity); socioeconomic and environmental balance.
It currently responds to: problems related to climate change and imbalances in economic globalisation through Tourism Development Projects supported by government policies

Source: own compilation.

Table 1.
Characteristics of eco-cultural tourism.

unique due to how it responds to problems related to climate change and imbalances in economic globalisation that have led to dead end conventional and/or traditional tourism. Tourism Development Projects offer a new path for tourism.

Once eco-cultural tourism has been contextualised and treated together with its goals, a Planning Model with alternative tourism and the development of Tourism Projects is incorporated. In addition to this, a comparative methodology will be used to analyse global and local tourism in countries from Asia, Europe and South America. This will be guided by the following hypothesis: eco-cultural tourism requires local sustainable planning, endorsed by all tourism agents, and led by the load capacity and economic and environmental balance (green economies and ideologies). In this way, eco-cultural tourism will respond to the problems of poverty and climate change through Tourism Projects, directed by government policies and administrations.

2. Planning alternative tourism and tourism development projects

Planning for alternative tourism and creating Tourism Development Projects in eco-cultural tourism is carried out in unique spaces that, generally, have received little impact from conventional and/or traditional tourism. They are concrete, different or special spaces that are distinguishable from others. They are easier to design, manage and carry out [4]. The tourism development projects are based on planning models that involve the participation of all agents: representatives, politicians, businessmen and women, neighbourhood associations, indigenous communities, environmental groups, etc. The entire population of the natural and cultural area is involved in economic and social sustainable development and can obtain income, employment, and material and cultural wellbeing. Therefore, all agents organise their own tourism model based on the available resources, the existing heritage and the characteristics of the inhabiting communities.

Table 2 shows a Planning and Sustainable Development Model for Eco-cultural Tourism comprising three phases, that can be applied to natural, cultural and urban areas, and that includes the following types of tourism: interior tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism, rural tourism, natural tourism, domestic tourism, national tourism, experiential tourism, adventure tourism, agrotourism and green tourism. The first phase known as the PRELIMINARY STUDY of the whole area, is derived

Natural, cultural and urban areas	Planning, sustainable development and the promotion of nature and cultural heritage
Original natural, cultural and urban area	1st Phase: preliminary study Data (indicators, surveys, interviews), analysis and report according to the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) FAS model.
Natural, cultural and urban area to be planned	2nd phase: planning and carrying out the tourism project Specifying and planning goals according to the model: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) Developing the Tourism Project based on sustainable development and the load capacity
Natural, cultural and urban area consolidated	3rd phase: implementing and evaluating the tourism project Implementing and managing the Tourism Project (Tourism and Entertainment Policies)

Source: own compilation.

Table 2.
Planning and sustainable development model for eco-cultural tourism.

from a comprehensive study that seeks to obtain specific data (indicators, surveys, interviews) and carry out an analysis and report in accordance with the Factors or Resources, Attractors and Support Systems model (FAS) [5]. This tool allows you to order and classify the main elements that make up a tourism destination. It's divided into factors or resources, attractors (tourism products) and support systems.

The *factors or resources* are the baseline conditions of the original area and are made up of natural and cultural heritage, and of human capital resources. They are the natural resources (water, land, climate); human resources (human capital, cultural traditions, myths and legends, working conditions within the workplace) capital resources (existing financial capital, existing physical capital (airports, ports, roads, railway, etc.) and potential foreign capital investments.

The *tourism products* (attractors) are elements that belong to the natural and cultural heritage of the original area and that have earned value through the application of human factors and capital, and that are now available on the market. Natural tourism products (natural spaces, beaches and adventures in nature) are part of the natural area, just as cultural products (historical heritage, events and a population's lifestyle) belong to the cultural area. Last but not least, artificial products are those such as leisure and entertainment, conventions, exhibitions, shopping centres and shops.

Support systems are there to satisfy the needs of tourists, and facilitate their trip and stay in the natural and cultural area of origin. They include catering (hotels, accommodation—tourist apartments, rural homes, guesthouses, etc.—catering establishments). It also includes air, land and sea transport, complementary services (tourist information services, tourist information offices, tourist guides, destination planning).

This data and their indicators and analyses carried out by specialised technicians and specialists, are complemented by researching tourist populations that visit these destinations, their characteristics and preferences, their economic status, their destination images and attitudes towards the environment and biodiversity. A social investigation is carried out on these populations, and the planning and sustainable development model proceeds with the analysis of the following [6]:

1. Tourist populations that visit the local place of origin.

2. Preferences regarding cultural, social and religious traits.

3. Economic and consumption situation.

4. Perceptions regarding artistic and cultural heritage in the destination images of tourist populations.

5. Attitudes towards the environmental surroundings and biodiversity.

To be more specific, the aspects studied within the investigation [7] through national surveys can be useful for the PRELIMINARY STUDY of the natural and cultural area of origin. For example: tourist movement, tourists' profile, why people feel encouraged to choose a specific tourist destination, information habits, purchase and consumption of the real or potential demand, image offer, competitors, tourist expense and the effect of tourism on the area's economy. The reality obtained gives us a general map through which we can find out which resources are available in the area, and the general characteristics of its population and tourists.

The second phase is PLANNING AND CREATING THE TOURISM PROJECT. This involves the detailed analysis of the general map of results from the PRELIMINARY STUDY in order to organise the planning and creation of the

Tourism Project's goals through the following model: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) [8]. Some relevant *Weaknesses* one can find in the planning of the natural and cultural area are the threats to employment, competing with other destinations, the lack of a sustainable tourism model, the lack of education and training, and the lack of coordination between public and private administrations in matters related to tourism. As for *Strengths*, some examples are natural and cultural historical heritage, biodiversity preservation, lakes, water reservoirs, natural parks, historical roads, the protection of endangered species, handicraft markets and shops, etc. *Threats* include COVID-19, closure of borders of entire cities and countries, emergencies in certain regions of the world, the lack of national rural plans, employee retention and economic slowdown. Finally, *Opportunities* refer to the creation of employment, entrepreneurship support, valuing natural and cultural heritage, and the development of digital competencies, among others.

The development of the Tourism Project must be based on sustainable development and the load capacity. By doing so, the project will help to maximise the strengths of the area to the fullest, improve the identified weaknesses as far as possible, keep the potential threats under control, and reap rewards from the opportunities the cultural and environmental settings offers. Both public and private administrations of the town must agree on a local plan for the project. Such a plan is intended to develop specific programmes and find sources of funding, as well as to facilitate coordination with other programmes and activities from other departments in order to achieve ongoing, day to day management. This is what a tourist destination that is included in a local plan [4] (p. 61) needs in order to succeed:

1. Attractive natural and cultural resources.

2. Environmental protection in the places to be visited, around the tourist centres and the access routes.

3. Good weather conditions.

4. Easy access from outside and within the destination areas.

5. Tourist safety and protection: legal assistance, health care, complaints.

6. Value for money, especially when compared with other rival destinations that are in the same region or offer similar products.

7. Information and promotion of the tourist destination. Population awareness regarding the benefits arising from tourism. Kindness and hospitality.

8. Range of leisure activities: cultural tours to eco-museums, walks along historical roads, sports and birdwatching.

9. Authenticity of the tourist experience: how many distinguishing features the place has.

10. Clear and distinguishable positioning contrasted with other competitive destinations.

11. Possible complementary relationship with other destinations nearby that are already well-known in the marketplace: exploit synergies.

Last phase: IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT OF THE TOURISM PROJECT. At this point, the principles and pillars of sustainability are applied, as well as the purposes of the tourism project, which must be done over temporary phases so that it is possible to make improvements, to turn down alternatives that have not worked out, and to formulate different strategies that help strengthen the project. In this context, the state, policies on tourism and leisure, and the sustainable development of eco-cultural tourism in the cultural and natural area are important. The Marrakech Process [9] recommends sustainable policy management. It also states that the policies should be led by local authorities, indigenous and local communities, any international organisation linked to the plan, the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and consumers.

3. Sustainable development of eco-cultural tourism with green policies and economies in natural, rural and urban areas

The concept of tourism as a factor of sustainable development has been addressed by the UNWTO [10] in Article 3 of its Global Code of Ethics. It expressed the duty for all tourism development practitioners to safeguard the environment and natural resources, taking into consideration continuous and sustainable economic growth, so that all needs and aims of the present and future generations can be fairly met.

The model of sustainable tourism curbed, to some extent, the almost unstoppable devastation created by a model of extensive growth that had deeply exhausted natural resources. Undoubtedly, the essence of eco-cultural tourism takes root in the principles of environmental planning, which is the preservation of any natural area and historic, cultural and archaeological sites. **Table 3** shows the case report of eco-cultural tourism in Asia, Europe and South America with the global and local dimension.

Asian countries including China, Malaysia and Thailand are a modern example of countries with emerging economies, which have experienced significant economic growth and rapid urbanisation. Scientific studies have addressed, from a global dimension, the impacts of tourism and its destinations on logistics and economic dynamics, especially the effect the tourism industry has had on transport,

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ASIA: China, Malaysia, Thailand [11–15]

1. Global dimension, natural, urban and rural areas: countries with emerging economies with high economic growth and rapid urbanisation.
2. Developed/consolidated and developing tourist destinations: impacted by environmental pollution. Tourism policies with Ecotourism, green energy and economies.

EUROPE: Spain [16–21]

1. Local dimension, natural rural and urban areas: A country with a developed European economy and outstanding natural and cultural heritage.
2. Developed/consolidated tourism destinations: Tourism policies developed and promoted for recovery and not extinction.

SOUTH AMERICA: Peru, Argentina and Bolivia [22–24]

1. Local dimension, natural, rural and urban areas: Countries whose developing economies have natural and cultural attractions and activities that focus on sustainable tourism.
2. Unspoiled/developing tourism destinations: Tourism projects with proposals for sustainability, quality, continuity, balance and community intervention.

Source: own compilation.

Table 3.
Case report of eco-cultural tourism in Asia, Europe and South America.

especially by air in terms of travel and access to places of recreation. The latest research by Rehman Khan, Zhang, Kumar, Zayadskas, Streimikiene on measuring the impact of renewable energy, public health expenditure, logistics, and environmental performance on sustainable economic growth [11], is part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). They study secondary data from the World Bank's website with structural equation models, concluding that the use of renewable energy will improve environmental sustainability and the creation of a better national image. The promotion of sustainable economic growth should be based on adequate planning that formulates policies in line with sustainability.

Indeed, environmental policies and sustainable development have been the priority axes in literature reviews and existing theoretical models relating green logistics and the economy to environmental sustainability and general social factors. This has been pointed out by Rehman Khan, Zhang, Kumar, Zayadskas, Streimikiene in their research. Measuring the impact of renewable energy, public health expenditure, logistics, and environmental performance on sustainable economic growth [12]. In this case, future research trends will have to be redirected to the micro-level, which means local and precise levels.

Within the same context, the relationship between tourism and globalisation in environmental degradation is investigated in China [13], where a quantum distributed delay model is used. They show that economic growth stimulates environmental degradation and suggest a comprehensive policy framework that could achieve Sustainable Development Goal No. 7 (Affordable and clean energy), No. 8 (Decent work and economic growth) and No. 13 (Climate Action). Reorientation of policies to ensure sustainable development appears to be diffuse in the existing literature, if not entirely absent. The transportation and accommodation associated with tourism has an impact on carbon emissions and is an issue that must be addressed by reducing environmental degradation, promoting renewable energy, boosting tourism, and creating employment opportunities in both the public and private sectors. Technologies should not replace all manual labour. From this point, a new perspective towards ecotourism, with all its variants, is opened, and serves as a general platform for the proper running of these policies.

Alongside this, the quantum auto-regressive distributed delay model (QARDL) [14] is being studied in Malaysia, in order to analyse the impact of economic growth, tourism, transport and globalisation on carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions. The results of this study suggest that ecotourism is beneficial for economic growth in underdeveloped areas, in favour of protection and development. The long-term vision is that governments should encourage the development of low-carbon ecotourism and achieve green development of both tourism and the economy. All in all, the aim is to promote green consumption through policies and the ethical consideration between the local communities, the relevant agencies and the tourists. Such a mechanism will ensure responsibility in the behaviours towards the natural environment of the tourist destinations of the country.

Finally, the last Asian country listed in **Table 3**, Thailand [15], analyses all the elements mentioned in the previous research, adding the negative influence of high crime levels on tourism. It concludes the only solution to protect the tourism industry involves clean energy promotion by the government, and the application of biofuel use in the transport sectors to improve environmental sustainability.

Spain represents one of the developed economies in Europe with the most remarkable natural and cultural heritage. Destinations are consolidated and there are tourist policies in most established destinations, together with promotion for recovery and not extinction. One of the most significant activities corresponds to wilderness tourism, which usually begins to thrive after all stages of general tourism development, in an effort to satisfy a desire for outdoor recreation and appreciation

of nature in large areas. It is related to development and sustainable tourism, so it refers to natural habitats and its biodiversity. In this context, natural parks, conservation areas, ecotourism, agricultural tourism, the rural environment and the involvement of the communities in the area of implementation are incredibly important [25]. This is why three consolidated projects have been chosen, projects of three national parks in Spain out of fifteen that are today included in the list [26].

Figure 1 presents a panoramic view of Ordesa National Park (Huesca, Spain) [16]. In the visitor's guide, there is a map showing the location of the park in the north of the peninsula, located in the heart of the Pyrenees in the autonomous community of Aragon. A media guide (with pictures of the landscapes) can also be found. In the fact sheet of the informative brochure, there are useful addresses and recommendations for visiting and appreciating this park. The sheet also highlights that the place has been designated as a World Heritage Site, Global Geopark and Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO, and that it has also been awarded the European Diploma by the Council of Europe. There is accurate information about cultural aspects (customs and traditions), flora, fauna, and information about relevant visitor centres and information points. At Ordesa National Park, there is a plan for the recovery of bearded vultures and for the tracking of the chamois. It's working towards improving the quality of visits, reducing the impact created of vehicles and permitting access to the park at any time during the fixed opening times. This has been known as the Visitor Access Plan in the Ordesa Valley since 1998.

Figure 2 presents the Tablas de Daimiel National Park [17], a wetland that is considered virtually unique in Europe, and that is the only example of floodplains in an ecosystem, which was once characteristic of the inland plains of the peninsula. This ecosystem originates from the flooding that occurs in a plain when the Guadiana and Cigüela rivers jointly overflow at a point where they both discharge groundwater coming from a large aquifer. The preservation of this ecosystem has ensured the survival of the bird fauna, and has created a specific area for aquatic birds. The park is internationally acknowledged for being a Biosphere Reserve since 1981 and a Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention since

Figure 1.
Ordesa y Monte Perdido National Park (Huesca, Spain). Source: https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/es/red-parques-nacionales/nuestros-parques/ordesa/.

Figure 2.
Tablas de Daimiel National Park (Ciudad Real, Spain). Source: https//www.miteco.gob.es/es/es/
red-parques-nacionales/nuestros-parques/daimiel/.

1982. It has a wide range of aquatic birds and, among the flora, the aquatic plants that comprise the substrate of the Tablas de Daimiel are of special importance. For the promotion of the park, a visitor's guide, park guide and media guide (with pictures of the landscapes) are available.

Figure 3 shows the Timanfaya National Park, located in the western central area of Lanzarote, one of the Canary Islands (Spain) [18]. It was designated a Biosphere Reserve in 1993. It has undergone continuous volcanic processes, specifically in 1730, 1736 and 1824; with eruptions that completely changed the previous island's morphology. Some natural values are volcanology (especially the preservation and beauty of the Montañas del Fuego or the Macizo de Timanfaya), the
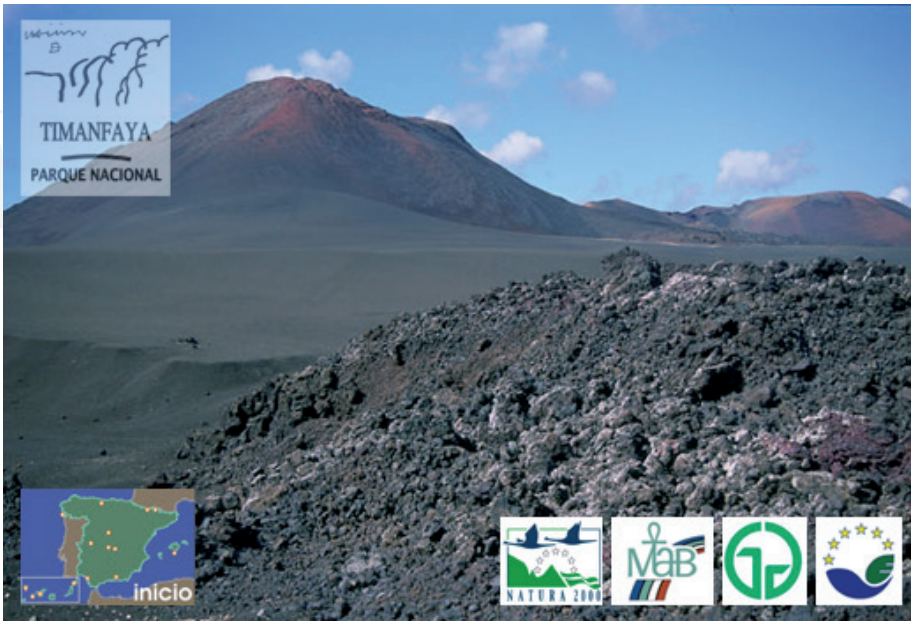

Figure 3.
Timanfaya National Park (Lanzarote, Spain). Source: https//www.miteco.gob.es/es/es/red-parques-nacionales/
nuestros-parques/timanfaya/.

geomorphological forms, the scarce vegetation and the unique weather conditions. Visitors can get acquainted with these natural values while doing tours in small groups led by qualified guides.

The park management team also organises activities for students, with the purpose of teaching them about nature and culture and to introduce them to the park's flora and fauna, cultural and historical values, agricultural activities, restoration of native crops, fishery, scientific activities and environmental volunteering. In the media guide, wonderful pictures of natural landscapes are shown, with unique volcanoes that make this a valuable and a high-quality tourist visit.

Projects with proposals are another kind of case report, classified as intermediate level, so that in the future the eco-tourism destinations can become consolidated projects. **The continental salt pans in Andalusia**, Spain [19] have tourist and educational potential as they are a specific type of wetland, inland salt pans. They are an industrial heritage site in danger of extinction, and could be reused as a tourist, cultural and educational destination. They could also help revive the economy of this area located in the heart of Andalusia, which has a promising range of architectural heritage, landscapes and nature, although it's now practically abandoned. The proposal formulated in this research will contribute to the preservation of this land heritage and help spread knowledge through the protection of the cultural, educational and tourist product. There is still a need for institutional support, for professionals that can implement the plan and for the opinion of people living in the area. Some matters need to be discussed, such as, what the tourist-educational tours will consist of, a survey on the economic, environmental and social impact during the development of the plan, if there is territorial and inter-administrative cooperation, and what limitations need to put in place so as to avoid causing irreversible damage to the area.

Finally, the **Research to propose projects for a tourism product** is the last case in Europe (Spain), and deals with **cultural landscapes (target images) as a tourism product. Spain** [20, 21]. The opportunities that the landscapes offer, especially the cultural landscapes, are likely to become a tourism product by means of sustainable planning and management. It applies to visitors and tourists that are mainly interested in historical towns and want to extend their stay in these destinations. The landscape is an integrated whole which presents the geographical facts on the earth's surface and includes physical features and elements created by humans, where the natural and cultural dimension can jointly be observed [27].

The panoramic and urban settings together make up the cultural landscapes. This specifically refers to historical towns, where the cultural tourists come and combine the feeling of the trip during their stay with the contemplative experience of the historic heritage. The protection of landscapes and heritage values led to the introduction of landscape conservation in urbanism and spatial planning during the 80s and 90s, and encouraged the valuing of landscapes as an enriching element by means of tourism [28]. Cultural landscapes are, in short, the result of people's interaction with the natural environment over time, the result of which is a territory perceived and valued for its cultural qualities, which express a process and the support of a community's identity. It represents a dynamic, complex reality which is difficult to manage [29].

Research on the perception and assessment of the **cultural landscape as a tourism product** [20] examines the perception of cultural landscapes and target images in a representative sample (500) of tourists from all of the autonomous communities in Spain. Its goal is to learn, among other aspects, the cultural tourist's interests, and their activities during their visits to historical towns. The context in which this research takes place is marked by a rediscovery of historical towns as tourist destinations, based on the experience of the visit and the short duration of the stay. The

ten most visited monumental cities or historical places by tourists surveyed were the following: Toledo, Madrid, Barcelona, Granada, Sevilla, Córdoba, Santiago de Compostela, Salamanca, Segovia and Valencia.

With regards to the interests of the cultural tourist during the visit (**Table 4**), visiting panoramic viewpoints of the town is highlighted in first place (4.29), second, visiting monuments and seeing museums (4.20) and, in third place, taking guided tours around the different viewpoints of the town, from outside and inside (4.01). In the end, the activities that generate most satisfaction for the cultural tourist during the visit can be classified into the five activities set out below: the views of the whole town and its interiors (4.45), visiting monuments (4.38), interacting with people from the town (4.21), viewing natural landscapes (4.04), and the atmosphere of the streets and public squares (4.01).

Our last block in **Table 3** relates to South American countries with developing economies, natural and cultural attractions, and activities determined by sustainable tourism. In most cases, their destinations are unspoiled/developing, with tourism projects based on sustainability, three of which have been selected: **The Amazon eco-cultural circuit, Peru** [22]**, the eco-cultural tourism project with proposals is based in Catamarca, Argentina** [23] **and finally, the Chalalán Project, Bolivia** [24].

The Amazon eco-cultural circuit, Peru [22] is a programme intended to improve competitiveness of the tourism sector on the eco-cultural route comprising Chachapoyas, Levanto, San Isidro del Maino and Magdalena (Universidad Nacional Toribio Rodríguez de Mendoza en Amazonas). This circuit offers 9 attractions and 7 activities, including trekking, horse riding, rural community-based tourism, ecotourism, archaeology, camping and cycling. All of this complies with sustainable fair and conservational tourism, which offers nature, culture, adventure and experiences. Tourists want to get involved, enjoy new experiences, feel connected and be a part of the conservation process of the places they visit. This experience forms part of their personal growth. This region, where the Incas once lived, has a vast biological and cultural diversity, magnificent waterfalls and valleys, private conservation areas, native species that are unique in the world and mysterious pre-Inca archaeological ruins. Among the tourist resources this area has, there are picturesque places such as natural viewpoints, Lopsol Forest, Purur river, Pumaurco

Interests of the cultural tourist during the visit to the historical towns	$\bar{X}$	Mode
-Visit panoramic viewpoint of the town.	4.29	5
-Visit monuments and see museums.	4.20	5
-Take guided tours of the different viewpoint of the town, from outside and inside.	4.01	5
Activities of the cultural tourist during their stay in the cultural towns		**Mode**
-Views of the whole city and its interiors.	4.45	5
-Visiting monuments.	4.38	5
-Interacting with people from the town.	4.21	5
-Viewing natural landscapes.	4.04	5
-Atmosphere of streets and public squares.	4.01	5

Source: own elaboration [20.]

Table 4.
Interests of the cultural tourist and activities during the visit to historical towns.

viewpoint, Convento cave, Tusa bridge, Camino Prehispánico [pre-Columbian road] and endless abandoned archaeological sites that are under no conservation programme. The circuit would require planning that fosters social, economic and cultural integration, and that enhances integrating, progressive, unifying and sustainable tourism. For this plan to be implemented joint work is necessary. It is recommended that local and regional governments opt for innovative tourism projects, placing value on the archaeological resources they have.

The **eco-cultural tourism project** with proposals is based in **Catamarca, Argentina** [23], It is also included in the strategy for sustainable development, in which many environmental, sociocultural and economic criteria converge with quality, continuity and balance. Here, eco-cultural tourism is trying to establish itself, together with the opportunities offered by local economies, for example, adventure travel, agricultural tourism, observation of flora and fauna, birdwatching, scientific tourism, potholing and cultural tourism. It should be noted that the negative and destructive effects resulting from the massive and uncontrolled use of cultural goods and the surrounding landscapes cannot be ignored or minimised. Long-term political decisions making is key. Ultimately, the tourism project evaluates the archaeological historic heritage and its rehabilitation, local craftsmen, market studies, technical-economic evaluation, financial studies and the environmental impact evaluation.

The Chalalán Project, Bolivia [24] falls under responsible tourism in a natural area, and belongs to a poor area within the tourist market, where the indigenous community interferes to avoid, among other things, the disappearance of their community. It is located in the valley of the Tuichi river along the banks of the Chalalán lagoon, and consists of the creation of a series of rustic huts around it. The indigenous community of San José de Uchupiamonas is in a complicated situation, specifically because of its involvement in safeguarding its identity and its culture. In order to avoid its disappearance, they use an alternative economy to enable economic viability and attract visitor flows so as to reactivate the tourist destination at different levels and improve living conditions. They make use of solar energy through panels, and the use of batteries for flashlights and fossil fuels is kept to a minimum. They offer programmes to learn to experience the tropical forest, bird watching, canoe rides, swimming, bathing in the lagoon, observation of the flora and fauna, vegetarian cooking, conference rooms, etc. It's experience tourism that is based on authenticity, community development and economic activity, all performed in harmony with a tourist activity directed towards the local community, whose main purpose is survival.

4. Conclusions

Eco-cultural tourism is aimed at meeting the needs and problems that traditional and/or conventional tourism has set aside during its development phase and economic success. It is a central core piece around which alternative forms of tourism will develop, and acts as a counterweight in the resolution of the imbalances and inequalities created. It's returning to the original form of tourism, a beginning *ex novo* but with the acquired experience and knowledge and the tracks left in the natural and urban cultural areas. In reality, it is the antithesis of mass tourism in the globalisation era and the digitalised world, which aims to preserve, protect and restore damaged or even irreversible areas, as well as to maintain the few spaces still untouched by humans and experience the impulses that have always motivated people on their journeys throughout history.

The first steps of eco-cultural tourism are found in the ecotourism which was born out of the United Nations in 2012 to eradicate poverty—with the participation

of the locals—, protect the environment and incorporate sustainable development. The 80s showed remarkable economic benefits in areas such as natural tourism, and comes together at different points with sustainable tourism and community tourism. Dangi and Jamal [30] carefully examined the chronology of sustainable community tourism, which resulted in the existence of integration approaches at a local-global level with community development. They also determined that good governance, guided by clearly defined ethical principles and justice, closed the local-global gap and guided the development and management of tourism.

These new improvements, along with the demands of the modern tourist, have led to ecotourism consolidating itself as eco-cultural tourism, which promotes socio-cultural and traditional values, environmental awareness, and benefits to rural and urban communities. Additionally, it opens up possibilities to develop economies at various levels for public and private enterprises, and offers the enjoyment of a unique high-quality experience. The responses given to climate change issues and the imbalances from economic globalisation are made possible through the planning of local sustainable development, comprising all tourism sectors involved in the creation of a Tourism Project, an Application Phase and the Evaluation of the structured project.

The methodology used in the study of eco-cultural tourism, uses the global and local levels of tourist destinations located in countries with emerging economies (Asia: China, Malaysia, Thailand), developed countries (Europe: Spain) and developing nations (South America: Peru, Argentina, Bolivia). This highlights the need for a local level planning, which is endorsed by all tourism agents and has an accessible economic and environmental load capacity and balance. Promoting planned tourist areas will be possible with the support of government policies, aimed at progressively implementing clean energies, promoting the growth of undeveloped areas and including citizens in the evolution of tourism economies. Our initial hypothesis is confirmed and the path towards the logistic change of sustainable development is aimed at the protection and conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

Other declarations

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