

Critical success factors for tourism in developing countries: A critical reflection

SUSANA LIMA * [sulima@esec.pt]

CELESTE EUSÉBIO ** [celeste.eusebio@ua.pt]

MARIA DO ROSÁRIO PARTIDÁRIO *** [mrp@civil.ist.utl.pt]

Abstract | The idea of using tourism as a tool for development has been established as a major priority by multilateral institutions, donors, governments, non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), national and international tourism bodies. Nevertheless, only few studies have analysed the factors that have had major impacts in such initiatives in developing countries. In order to overcome this gap, the main aim of this paper is to provide a comprehensive reflection about the critical factors that determine the success of the tourism development strategies adopted by developing countries. To accomplish this aim a literature review was conducted. The theoretical discussion suggests that there is a set of factors that should be evaluated when tourism is used as a tool for development. Despite the context in which this process takes place, the main focus of a tourism development strategy should necessarily approach a capacity-building reinforcement of the communities it strives to help. It will be postulated that these factors are essential to guarantee that the targeted communities are in full control and are the main beneficiaries of the whole development process.

Keywords | Development, Developing countries, Tourism, Capacity building.

Resumo | A ideia de usar o turismo como estratégia de desenvolvimento tem constituído uma prioridade por parte de diversas organizações multilaterais, doadores, governos, Organizações não Governamentais (ONG) e diversas organizações de turismo nacionais e internacionais. No entanto, poucos estudos se têm debruçado na análise dos fatores que maior impacto exercem sobre as iniciativas adotadas nos países em desenvolvimento. No sentido de colmatar esta lacuna, o principal objetivo deste artigo é propor uma reflexão abrangente sobre um conjunto de fatores críticos que podem determinar o sucesso das estratégias de desenvolvimento adotadas nos países em desenvolvimento. Para atingir este objetivo, a metodologia adotada neste estudo assentou numa extensa revisão da literatura. A discussão teórica efetuada sugere que existe de facto um conjunto de fatores que deveriam ser considerados e relevados em qualquer iniciativa que tenha como objetivo utilizar o turismo como instrumento de desenvolvimento. Independentemente do contexto e da natureza destas estratégias de desenvolvimento turístico, estas devem trabalhar mais ou menos aqueles fatores de forma a garantirem como prioridade de intervenção o reforço da capacidade das comunidades que se pretende beneficiar através do desenvolvimento turístico para conduzirem elas próprias esse processo de desenvolvimento, garantindo a obtenção e distribuição justa dos benefícios líquidos gerados para as comunidades de destino.

Palavras-chave | Desenvolvimento, Países em desenvolvimento, Capacidade das comunidades.

* **Doutoranda em Turismo** na Universidade de Aveiro. **Professora Adjunta Convidada** em Turismo na Escola Superior de Educação de Coimbra.

** **Doutora em Turismo** pela Universidade de Aveiro. **Professora Auxiliar** no Departamento de Economia, Gestão e Engenharia Industrial da Universidade de Aveiro, e Investigadora da Unidade de Investigação GOVCOPP.

*** **Doutora em Avaliação Ambiental a Níveis Estratégicos de Decisão** pela Universidade de Aberdeen, Escócia. **Professora Associada** no Instituto Superior Técnico da Universidade de Lisboa.

1. Introduction

While tourism constitutes one of the world's largest industries and a significant growing economic sector in most developing countries (UNWTO, 2013), it is widely recognised that it can also generate several constraints, exacerbating inequalities and aggravating the general living conditions of a great proportion of the local population. For this reason it is crucial to have caution when tourism is assumed as a tool for development, comprehending the overall characteristics of developing countries in which tourism takes place and analysing the inherent complexities of the respective tourism system. It is this level of analysis that should determine under what conditions tourism may contribute effectively for development in such a way that guarantees that at least its benefits are higher than the potential associated costs.

Mainly since the 1990s the various approaches to tourism as a tool for development have taken increasing importance as assumed by diverse development agencies and programs. The scope of initiatives that can be considered in this debate is diversified and has varied throughout the last decades depending mainly on the dominating development paradigms. Some of them include projects focused, on one hand, on the pro-poor strategies, solidarity or fair tourism, community-based-tourism, volunteer tourism, among others; and, on the other hand, there are a range of programmes implemented by NGOs, international development agencies, including the World Bank, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and various United Nations agencies.

However, the multidimensional and complex nature of development objectives makes it difficult to identify objectively the factors that influence the success or failure of such projects. Depending on the type of project, the stakeholders involved, the specific context in which it takes place, the development objectives thus the success factors may widely differ

from each other (e.g. increase mean income, reduce poverty, increase literacy, access to sanitation, inoculations, empowerment and capacity building). As Abdullah, Rahman, Harun, Alashwal and Keskin (2010) state, there are no common denominators for project success as is evidenced by the extended list of project success factors identified in the scientific literature as well as the lack of agreement on the definition of success.

As complex as it may be, and as pointed out by Font, Goodwin and Walton (2012, p. 16), identifying critical success factors is crucial to understand the "necessary and sufficient conditions for the success of the original intervention, and an understanding of the situation where replication is planned". To understand these factors is essential to ascertain if a development strategy can be successfully implemented in the same conditions or if it should be subject to some adaptations.

Therefore, it is important to define success even if there is no agreement on its meaning. In a broad sense, a successful development intervention may be defined as one in which the goals and objectives are achieved in the planned timeframe, cost and quality within the context of the planned intervention (Abdullah et al., 2010). In turn, success factors may comprehend the "variables that affect the likelihood of success, although all too often they are expected to explain success without taking into consideration the complex and dynamic relationships between the objectives, the interventions and the social and economic context in which the intervention occurs" (Font et al., 2012, p. 2). It is worth to note that in any case "there is no 'absolute' success or consistency in success appreciation over time: there is only 'perceived success'" (Diallo & Thuillier, 2004, p. 238) which will differ among the stakeholders involved.

Several studies have already been published that relate tourism and development. Some have focused on tourism and poverty alleviation (e.g. Zhao & Ritchie, 2007) with many of them discussing specifically the impacts of pro-poor initiatives at

various levels (e.g. Chok, Macbeth, & Warren, 2007; Harrison, 2008; Nadkarni, 2008); others have discussed tourism in developing countries and the importance of avoiding the problems inherent to the outward-oriented development strategies (e.g. Brohman, 1996); while a few analysed the role and approaches of multilateral development agencies programs in the fulfilment of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (e.g. Hawkins & Mann, 2007).

Nevertheless, there is still a gap in the literature regarding a comprehensive reflection about the factors that may influence the effects of such strategies on developing countries. It is with this background that the aims of this paper were set: (i) to analyse the relationship between tourism growth and development; (ii) to discuss the main benefits and costs of tourism in developing countries; (iii) to present a critical reflection among the factors that should be reconsidered so that tourism can be used as a useful tool for development.

In order to achieve these aims, the paper is structured in three main sections. Section 1 discusses relevant concepts about development and diverse terminologies associated to developing and developed countries, after which some major characteristics of the former are presented. In section 2, a general overview of tourism in developing countries is provided, following two major topics: firstly, it is discussed the relevance of this area of study through the international tourism trends, including the growing economic importance of tourism in developing countries, crossing this data with the human development index; secondly, the costs and benefits of tourism in developing countries are dealt. With this background in mind, it is presented in section 3 a critical reflection about the main factors that should be worked out for tourism to function as an effective tool for development. The final section presents the main conclusions, limitations, implications and further research.

2. General characteristics of developing countries

The concept of development “entails complex social, cultural and environmental changes” rather than only economic growth and diversification of a country’s economy (Donnellan, 2005, p. 23). Nowadays, it is widely recognized that development is not just about increased wealth as it involves broader concerns related to the standard of living and quality of life (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008; Tosun, 2001). In this regard, it has been frequently adopted the terminology ‘developing countries’ to identify a group of countries with specific common development features. OECD (2012) remarks that it is usual to consider almost high-income developed countries as developed and all the other countries as developing countries.

Consequently, it is worth to note that developing countries are heterogeneous in terms of their economy, culture and historical backgrounds, society, politics and environment (Tomlinson, 2003). While it is beyond the scope of this paper to distinguish among developing countries and their specific development contexts according to that heterogeneity, it is possible to identify some features and problems that are common to almost all of them. This identification process should be carried out at a time when development strategies for the developing world are being devised.

Strong economic dependence on traditional agricultural activities, low level of capital accumulation, limited industrial production, high levels of imports and low levels of exports, low per capita national income and low income growth rates are frequently pointed out as economic constraints within developing countries (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008; Tosun, 2005; UNDP, 2012). The low economic growth associated with high rates of population growth have exacerbated various social problems, such as low standards of living, high unemployment rates, lack of services of welfare state, low education level, high incidence of health problems and

widespread poverty (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008; Tosun, 2005; UNDP, 2012).

The cultural features of people living in developing countries are, frequently, shaped by socio-economic and political factors. A vast majority of the population is excluded from socio-political life as they are absorbed by the daily challenge of survival. Additionally, a lack of effective community organization, a certain inertia among the poor, religion, language and other socio-cultural differences divide the poor and undermine their chances of making a united challenge to the position of powerful elite groups (Tomlinson, 2003; Tosun, 2005).

Despite the wealth of natural resources of many developing countries, most of them are threatened by environmental problems. A high vulnerability to climate change and intensity of climatic phenomena, water and sanitation shortages, desertification and deforestation, overexploitation of natural resources and increased levels of pollution, are just some examples of environmental threats in developing countries.

Finally, in terms of the common social-political problems of developing countries, the scientific literature raises more attention to the limited socio-political structures, lack of governance, high level of centralization in public administration systems, high level of favoritism and nepotism, political instability and conflicts among supporters of different ideologies or tribes (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008; Tomlinson, 2003; Tosun, 2005).

Apart from some common features in developing countries like the outlined above, there are always major differences to consider either between developing countries as well as within them. Like pointed out by Tomlinson (2003, p. 308), "there are rich and poor people, empowered and disempowered citizens to be found inside all states and societies in the world". In any case, for the majority of the population in the developing world and mainly in the least developed countries, often the biggest challenge appears to be the daily

survival that occupies all their time and consumes their energy making it difficult for many of them to become actively involved in issues of public concern (Tosun, 2005).

Therefore, there are major challenges to consider when adopting novel approaches for development strategies in developing countries. Due to the characteristics of tourism as an economic activity, this has been often considered one of the sectors offering more potential as a tool for development. Nevertheless, many of the outlined problems are not evaluated before tourism development strategic plans and associated initiatives take place. Hence, it is considered that it is essential to evaluate the specific context of each country concerning the extent to which those problems may influence tourism development processes. Before discussing the key factors that should be considered in this regard, the next section presents some important data that will support the discussion about tourism relevance in terms of its contribution to economic growth and human development in developing countries.

3. Tourism in developing countries

3.1. Relevance

Tourism became one of the world's largest industries and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world, having passed from 25 million international tourists arrivals in 1950 to 1.035 million in 2012. Moreover, despite the economic uncertainty, political turmoil and natural disasters that may influence the growth of this industry, the UNWTO forecasts reveals that, in 2030, 1.8 million international tourists will cross borders (UNWTO, 2013). As a result of this tourism demand increase, both in developed and in developing countries, the economic relevance of this sector has also increased

significantly. Nowadays, tourism contributes with 9.3% of total GDP, 5.4% of the world exports, about 30% of the world's exports of commercial services, 8.7% of total employment, and 4.7% of total investment (WTTC, 2013).

In the last decades many new destinations have emerged, mainly in developing countries, challenging the traditional ones of Europe and North America (UNWTO, 2013). In fact, emerging economy destinations have grown faster than advanced ones and in consequence the market share of these destinations has increased from 30% in 1980 to 47% in 2012 and is expected to reach 57% by 2030, equivalent to over one billion international tourist arrivals (UNWTO, 2013). Moreover, while the number of international tourist arrivals worldwide is expected to increase by 3.3% a year on average from 2010 to 2030, arrivals to emerging economies destinations are expected to increase at double the pace (+4.4% a year) of those of advanced economies (2.2% a year).

Furthermore, while tourism has already a relevant role in developing countries, it is expected an increase in its importance in the future. Therefore, in order to analyze more specifically the overall relevance of tourism in these countries, a cross-analysis of development indicators (Human Development Index) and economic indicators (total contribution of tourism and travel to GDP), in 2000 and 2011, is presented as illustrated in figures 1 and 2.

A general overview on the list of four subgroups of countries according to its 2011's HDI (Very High Human Development – VHHD, High Human Development – HHD, Medium Human Development – MHD, and Low Human Development Countries – LHD) and corresponding share of total contribution of tourism and travel to GDP reveals a strong heterogeneity. In the majority of the 45 countries belonging to the subgroup VHHD (37 countries) the total contribution of tourism to GDP is lower than 15%. There are only 3 countries in which this share surpasses 25% in GDP (Croatia – 26.4%; Malta – 27.7%; Barbados – 43.5%) and five countries in

between 15% and 25% (e.g. Portugal – 15.2%; Cyprus – 17.7%). Observing the period from 2000 to 2011 (Figures 1 and 2) it is clear to detect a decreasing trend of this indicator in some developed countries.

In the group of HHD countries, despite the contribution of tourism to GDP being lower than 15% in 30 countries (e.g. GDP: Mexico, 12.4%; Malaysia, 14.8%), in 11 countries this share actually surpasses 25% (Antigua and Barbuda – 74.8%; Seychelles – 60.7%; Bahamas – 46.1%; St Lucia – 42.5%; Lebanon – 35.1%, Belize – 33.2%; Dominica – 31.7%; Mauritius – 28.55; St Kitts – 27.9%; Jamaica – 26.7%, St. Vincent and the Grenadines – 25.2%). In the group of 44 HHD analyzed it is visible, in about 50% of countries, an increase in GDP's tourism share, from 2000 to 2011. In countries like Brazil, Mexico, Costa Rica and Tunisia this indicator decreased while in countries such as Montenegro, Armenia, Lebanon and Panama this indicator registered a considerable increase. Although the travel & tourism total contribution to GDP has registered a decrease in 22 HHD countries, this does not mean that tourism lost its importance as an economic driver, but that these countries have diversified their economies. This economic diversification explains in many cases why these countries are reaching higher positions in the Human Development ranking.

Concerning the MHD countries subgroup (38 countries), the total contribution of tourism to GDP and employment is lower than 15% in 25 countries (e.g. Congo – 2.7%; China – 9.1%). There are only 4 countries in which this share exceed 25% (Maldives – 70.5%; Vanuatu – 53.0%; Cape Verde – 43.4%; Fiji – 35.3%), and 9 countries in the range of 15% to 25% (e.g. Cambodia – 22%; Morocco – 19%; Honduras – 15%). In this group of countries, from 2000 to 2011, a growing trend of the tourism total contribution to GDP was observed.

Finally, in the LHD countries the total contribution of tourism to GDP is still relatively modest. However, it is significant that within the

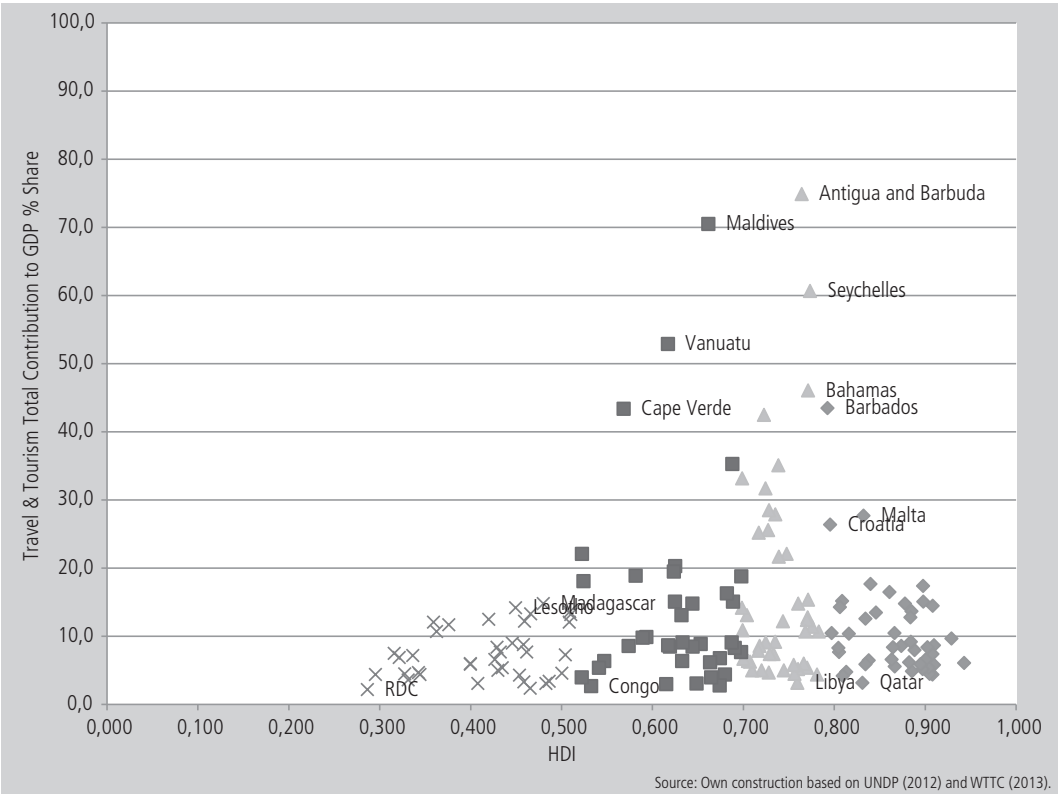


Figure 1 | Cross analysis: Human Development Index and total contribution of tourism and travel to GDP (2000).

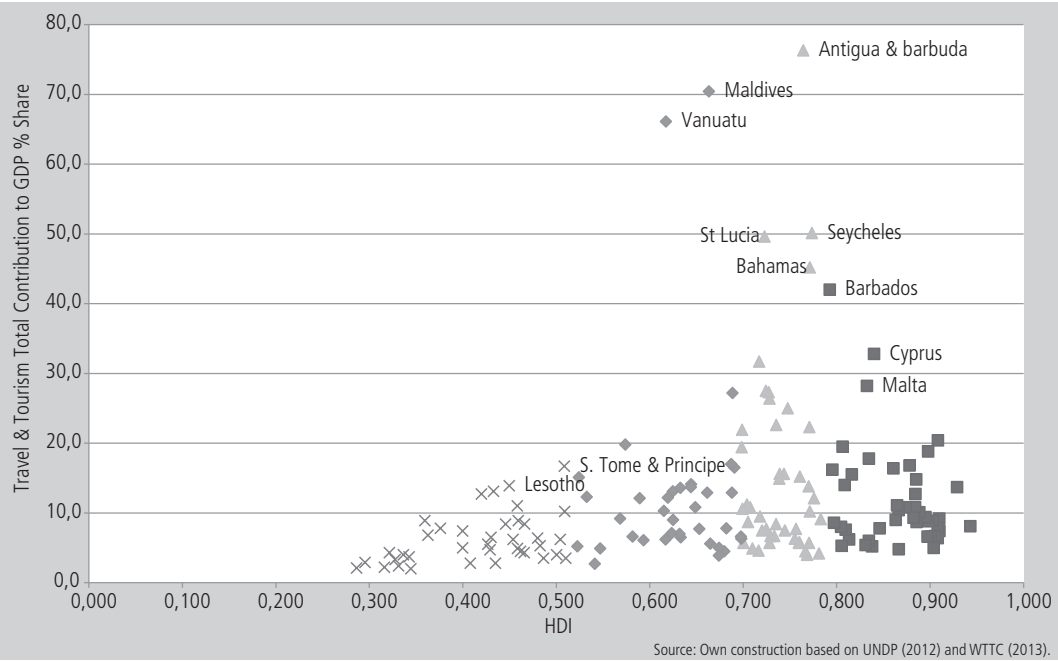


Figure 2 | Cross analysis: Human Development Index and total contribution of tourism and travel to GDP (2011).

LHD countries, 27 registered very high increases in tourism share of GDP (e.g. Kenya, Mozambique, Guinea, Burundi) in the period from 2000 to 2011 (Figures 1 and 2).

Considering that developed countries are in general considered all those integrating the VHHD countries' group and developing countries all the remaining, one concludes that regardless of diverse scenarios in developing countries their global evolution in the last decade in terms of total tourism contribution to GDP has been very positive. These trends are expected to be reinforced in the long-term, according to the forecasts provided by UNWTO (2013), with arrivals to developing countries being expected to increase at double the pace of those of developed countries. In this context and despite the general positive expectations that these figures concerning tourism potential in developing countries may originate, some key challenges must be addressed. This is discussed in the next sections.

3.2. Tourism development in developing countries: Benefits and costs

The debate about how tourism can contribute for the development of developing countries is not new. This matter has been discussed in several books

and papers. Sadler and Archer (1975) and De Kadt (1979) were pioneers in the scientific discourse about this subject. However, after four decades, De Kadt's (1979) discourse about the advantages and disadvantages of tourism as a development tool remains surprisingly up to date. In the literature it is consensual that tourism in developing countries can generate several economic, cultural and social benefits but, especially when its development is not properly planned, the costs (economic, social, environmental and cultural) may be significant. Consequently, the debate about the costs and benefits of tourism to developing countries remains at the center of discussion among the scientific community (e.g. Brohman, 1996; Brown 1998; Chok et al., 2007; Harrison, 2008; Mowforth & Munt, 2003).

The most cited type of benefits and costs of tourism in developing countries are synthesized in Table 1. While it is considered that there are many challenges facing the process of tourism development, the net benefits of that process for the local communities should always outweigh the costs. However, due to the characteristics of most developing countries, as described in the previous section, there are several constraints that impede that those communities can really benefit of that tourism development process. Therefore, it

Table 1 | Benefits and costs of tourism in developing countries: Examples of the most cited in the literature.

	Economic	Socio-cultural	Environmental
Benefits	Generates employment and income Generates tax revenues Increases exports (balance of payments equilibrium) Increases production	Increases self-esteem Valorization of cultural assets Skill development Enhancement of infrastructure and public health	Establishments of land and resources use limits Valorization of natural assets Awareness of conservation needs
Costs	Inflation Dependency on foreign capital, skills, management personnel and imports Abandonment of traditional economic activities (e.g. agriculture and fishing) High leakages	Social disruption (e.g. sex abuse of women and children). Socioeconomic inequality and spatial unevenness Displacement of local population Criminality increase Loss of cultural identity Loss of access of local resources Residents marginalization of tourism development process	Pollution Depletion of community natural resources Increases conservation costs Wildlife traffic

Source: Own construction based on Brohman (1996), Brown (1998), Clancy (1999), Chok et al. (2007), Mastry (2001), Mowforth and Munt (2003).

is essential to understand the nature of this balance between the costs and benefits as discussed below.

In the economic domain, although tourism has a high potential to generate employment, income and tax revenues, the usually high dependency on foreign inputs and interventions implies great levels of leakages and less potential for linkages, due to a lack of articulation with other domestic economic sectors (Brown, 1998; Chok et al., 2007; Mastny, 2001). All of these factors lead to low multiplier effects. Consequently, a large proportion of the tourism revenue that enters developing countries does not remain in the local or national economy. Mastny (2001) highlights that about 50% of tourism earnings manage to 'leak' out of the developing world, either in profits earned by foreign-owned businesses, promotional spending overseas, or payments for imported goods and labor. This high dependence on foreign inputs and interventions may lead to uneven socioeconomic relations which are normally the rule in international cooperation within the context of tourism development (Mowforth & Munt, 2003). Thus, this contributes to the perpetuation of long-standing economic imperialism (Brohman, 1996; Chok et al., 2007). Moreover, frequently, in these countries the tourism contributes to increase the price of goods and services (inflation) (Brohman, 1996).

Crime and tourism are strongly interlinked in developing countries. Rates of exploitation of women and children continue to increase as well as human and wildlife traffic and other illegal activities (Smith, 2001). Moreover, one of the main constraints to tourism development in developing countries is the lack of skilled people to work in the tourism industry. This implies that there are many foreign skilled workers being contracted and leaving for the local population less skilled tasks. In addition, local workers face difficult conditions, particularly in the hotel industry, characterized by "low wages, overdependence on tips, long working hours, stress, lack of secure contracts, poor training and almost no promotion opportunity" (Beddoe, 2004, quoted by Chok et al., 2007, p. 157). Many workers are subcontracted making them

particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse which "does not allow for the accumulation of assets, nor does it provide safety nets or any real escape from the poverty cycle" (Chok et al., 2007, p. 158). Furthermore, indigenous minorities and rural communities are being resettled or displaced to make way for tourist infrastructure in developing countries (Chok et al., 2007; Mowforth & Munt, 2003).

On the other hand, tourism may generate positive sociocultural impacts for developing countries. The literature review in this field (Table 1) suggests that tourism may increase the scope for a broad participation, compared with other non-agricultural sectors, and employs a high proportion of women (Chok et al., 2007). Nevertheless, the extent to which the local people can benefit from tourism depends on how they are involved in it. Some pro-poor tourism initiatives in developing countries may contribute to a manipulation of opportunities to serve the self-interests of powerful stakeholders, leading to an uneven development (Brohman, 1996; Chok et al., 2007).

Regarding environmental tourism impacts, although this activity may have a positive effect, for example in terms of a valorization of natural assets and awareness of conservation needs, the high costs involved in conservation are often hard to sustain for the most impoverished areas. Moreover, frequently tourism in developing countries is referred as an activity that contributes to the reduction or degradation of natural resources, wildlife traffic and pollution. Once the livelihood of the majority of the local population of these countries depends on those natural resources, the depletion of community natural resources caused by tourism (e.g. water shortages) will have a very negative impact on their survival (Brohman, 1996).

In general, the poorest have less capital and skills to exploit the economic opportunities, are more fragile and vulnerable, and are more likely to suffer the overall negative impacts of tourism. There are other constraints that should be addressed in this debate as they are mutually reinforced, like

low levels of education, literacy and qualifications that impede the adoption of new technologies and which in turn generate barriers to the enhancement of production (Perry, López & Maloney, 2006). In this context, how can tourism become a blessing instead of a blight? (Smith, 2001). What kind of factors may have an influence on most of the overall effects of tourism development process and which should therefore be weighed by initiatives or programs aimed at enhancing development through tourism in developing countries? Although it is a complex exercise to answer these questions, the discussion conducted in the next section aims to provide some useful insights to the ongoing scientific debate about these matters.

4. Factors that influence the role of tourism in development countries

Considering that there is a vast range of initiatives implemented in developing countries by different type of actors and organizations that aim to enhance the role of tourism as a development tool, it is essential to address some critical factors that may influence the achievement of net benefits for the local communities. Based on the review of contemporary development studies and practices,

Table 2 outlines some of the most cited critical factors in this regard. Afterwards a brief explanation of their relevance will be presented

As a service industry, tourism is highly dependent on the goodwill and cooperation of host communities. Therefore, community participation should be guaranteed in any development initiative as the local community is more likely to know what will work and what will not in local conditions contributing for more suitable decisions (Cole, 2006). For a fully participatory project, local stakeholders should take part in management and decision-making. Nevertheless, there are operational, structural and cultural limitations to community participation in the tourism development processes that should be taken into account. These limitations are well discussed through studies conducted in developing countries by authors like Tosun (2005) and Cole (2006), to name a few.

In many developing countries, particularly within the hotel industry, ownership and leadership is confined mainly to foreign chains and large-scale national businesses. This means that only multi-national companies and large-scale national capital reap most of the benefits associated with the industry leading to higher leakages (Cole, 2006; Scheyvens, 2007; Tosun, 2005). Local and central governments have been ignoring the struggle between elites and local people to control local resources. It is essential

Table 2 | Influencing factors in tourism development processes in developing countries.

Factors	Authors
Increased community participation	Brohman (1996); Chok et al. (2007); Cole (2006); Tosun (2005)
Ownership and leadership	Brohman (1996); Cole (2006); Scheyvens (2007); Tosun (2005)
Opportunity in commercial viability and access to markets	Harrison (2008); Zhao and Ritchie (2007)
Empowerment	Cole (2006); Sofield (2003); Zhao and Ritchie (2007); Schilcher (2007)
Information, knowledge & communication	Cole (2006); Nadkarni (2008); Romanow and Bruce (2006); Sheate and Partidário (2009); Tosun (2005); White (2004)
Networks and clusters	Breda, Costa and Costa (2006); Romeiro and Costa (2010); Shaw and Williams (2009)
Safety and security	Brown (1998); Zhao and Ritchie (2007)
Equity	Harrison (2008); Schilcher (2007)
Role of the state / governance	Brohman (1996); Clancy (1999); Harrison,(2008); Scheyvens (2007); Schilcher (2007)

Source: Own construction.

to adopt political economic policies that can attain a balanced equilibrium between local and external ownership of resources as well as its control (Cole, 2006; Tosun, 2005).

Zhao and Ritchie (2007), in their integrative framework for anti-poverty tourism research, state that any development effort or approach, to be justified and successful, should consider three main determinants: opportunity, empowerment and security. Opportunity means the poor ought to have access to economic opportunity of which they can take advantage to change their destiny. As far as Empowerment is concerned there are different dimensions to be considered: economic (removing the barriers that work against the poor and building their assets to enable them to engage effectively in markets); psychological (e.g. self-esteem and pride in local traditions); social (enhancement of community cohesion); and political (enhance the capacity of the poor to influence the state and social institutions, and thus strengthen their participation in political processes and local decision making; a shift in balance between the powerful and the powerless) (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). Safety and Security refers to the reduction of the vulnerability of the poor to various risks such as ill health, economic shocks and natural disasters. Therefore, a social security system specifically for the poor would be required.

While knowledge is a crucial element for empowerment (Tosun, 2005), communities need access to a wide range of information. Furthermore, "meaningful participation cannot take place before a community understands what they are to make decisions about" (Sofield, 2003, quoted by Cole, 2006, p. 632). In fact, as pointed out by Ashley, Roe and Goodwin (2001), the poor have a weak understanding about tourists as well as the way the tourism industry works, and changing this state of affairs would be very important to make informed and suitable decisions about their own tourism development. Nadkarni (2008) adds that a knowledge deficit perpetuates a vicious cycle of economic deprivation and poverty. Therefore,

Schilcher (2007, p. 184) defends that "rather than promoting tourism (in whichever form) as a cure for poverty, policy-makers, donors and researchers should (re-)discover local knowledge instead of merely using the rhetoric under the umbrella of alternative or sustainable development".

Communication lies at the basis of all human development in any context (Romanow & Bruce, 2006). It is therefore a central dimension for capacity building as it is a condition for knowledge sharing that in turn leads to empowerment. Current theories of communication for development consider the lack of political, economic and cultural power of lower-status sectors as the major problem to be tackled in development (White, 2004). The most important thing to build capacity is to engage in multidirectional dialogue with all the community stakeholders (Romanow & Bruce, 2006).

Where stakeholder engagement needs to be focused, it is crucial to generate strategic competitive advantage through networks which, associated with clusters of interests, are preconditions for innovation and community capacity building (Romeiro & Costa, 2010). Nonetheless, many organizations and stakeholders need to understand that cooperation will enhance their own competitiveness (Shaw & Williams, 2009).

As far as equity is concerned, there should be a focus on redistribution, which entails closer attention to the role of the state (Brohman, 1996; Clancy, 1999; Harrison, 2008) as well as to the wider world system "so that developing countries are granted greater decision-making power in institutions such as the World Trade Organization" (Schilcher, 2007, p. 182). To be sustainable, the processes of change induced by any development intervention must promote equity between, and for all women and men.

The role of the State is crucial. Without genuine government intervention, including industry regulation, the poorest are bound to carry a heavier burden in terms of costs of environmental degradation, cultural commodification and social

displacement (Schilcher, 2007). However, in the current economic environment, many governments need tourism growth, which tends to discriminate against the needs and interests of the local community in favour of the goals of the industry *per se* (Brohman, 1996; Schilcher, 2007).

In this context, governance is a critical issue in moving development towards sustainability. This can be interpreted with different views by the diverse development organizations. UNDP (2000, p. 1) definition of democratic governance focus on the essential role it plays for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, considering it as "the system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and private sector". In the tourism context, effective local governance enhances local participation and ownership of policy actions and initiatives. This in turn provides an opportunity for knowledge sharing, discussion, negotiation and learning.

The outlined factors are all interconnected and should be taken into account in any initiative aiming to enhance the role of tourism to work as an effective tool for development. The effectiveness of this process will rely to a great extent on the approaches taken towards those critical factors in the context of each specific intervention. It is considered that the overall goal in all this process should be to reinforce local capacity building. This concept is interpreted here in its wider context, as presented by Partidário and Wilson (2011), who state that this is founded on sound principles of democracy, participation, development and continuous improvement of skills, shared learning processes and equal access to opportunities.

The re-emergence of the debate on sustainable development, preceding and following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in 1992, has placed capacity building at the top of priorities for international development cooperation, as a condition to enable the achievement

of effective and sound development in all regions of the world. Currently it is recognized that capacity building is not only about international development assistance, but it is about ensuring technical and decision capacities in all countries and regions, that will lead to new ways for making better decisions that ensure that environment and social issues are integral parts of economic development (Partidário & Wilson, 2011). If development initiatives manage to have a positive influence on some of the outlined factors, then it is possible that capacity building becomes reinforced thus contributing to the foremost goal that is to provide net benefits for the local communities of developing countries throughout tourism development.

5. Conclusions

The theoretical research conducted in this paper attempts to enhance the debate about the relationship between tourism development and its effects in developing countries. The main theoretical contribute of the research is to provide an integrated perspective about several factors that may influence to varied degrees the effects generated by tourism development processes in those countries. In this regard, it is defended that although there will be always several costs and benefits associated to tourism development, as long as the latter are higher than the former, then net benefits are generated. Whether or not this process can really prompt development for local communities will depend to a great extent on their specific characteristics in the context of developing countries.

Due to the intrinsic characteristics of tourism it is often considered one of the most viable options for their economic and social development. In fact, as reviewed in section 2, tourism became one of the world's largest industries and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world with many new destinations emerging in developing countries. As

a result, the market share of these destinations has increased from 30% in 1980 to 47% in 2012 and it is expected an increase in its importance in the future.

Nevertheless, many of the characteristics of developing countries outlined in section 1 (e.g. low level of capital accumulation, high unemployment rate, lack of community organization, environmental vulnerability, among others) are not properly weighed before the tourism development strategic plans and associated initiatives are delineated. Hence, it is considered that it is essential to evaluate the specific context of each country concerning the extent to which those problems may influence tourism development and in particular the ability of development initiatives to reinforce capacity building.

Therefore, a pre-requisite condition to enable the achievement of effective and sound development in developing countries would require integrated and long-term strategies that could reinforce capacity building. For that to be achieved some major critical factors that should be addressed in the context of those development strategies were identified in the literature review: community participation; ownership and community participation; empowerment; opportunity in commercial viability and access to markets; information, knowledge, and communication; networks and clusters; safety and security; equity; and the role of the state and governance. It is believed that development processes that work for the enhancement of these factors and which take into consideration the specific characteristics of the local communities that attempt to benefit, are those that are more likely to allow local stakeholders to be the authors of, and sign-off, their own development. In doing so, the probability for them to get net benefits from tourism development will be higher.

It should be noted that although the main purpose of this paper was to develop a comprehensive reflection about the critical factors that may determine the success of the tourism development strategies adopted by developing countries in

order to benefit local communities, this research is not intended to be a definite work and it has its limitations due to the wide scope of the issues being addressed. One of the limitations in the current study has necessarily to do with the diversity encountered among the various developing countries and their position within the Human Development Index. Additionally, the type of development strategies adopted may also vary considerably according to the pre-established goals and approaches and the stakeholders involved in it. The complexity of this exercise is further enhanced thanks to the multidisciplinary nature of the tourism sector. Therefore, this demands a dynamic perspective as opposed to the static approaches that are often held. The level of importance of the critical success factors discussed in this study should take into consideration the specific context and idiosyncrasies inherent to the respective destinations that aim to use tourism as a tool for development.

Therefore, further research is needed in order to analyse the role of diverse development initiatives and programs for tourism development, coupled by the development of monitoring and evaluation approaches. The lessons learned with these approaches would enhance the discussion conducted in this paper and in particular about the most efficient ways of working on the identified critical factors for development through tourism. Analysing their nature and influence and establishing a set of indicators to measure them is an important area of research. This can lead to a deeper understanding of how tourism can be a valuable development strategy that can guarantee that the benefits are higher than the costs considering the specific characteristics of developing countries.

References

- Abdullah, A. A., Rahman, H. A., Harun, Z., Alashwal, A. M., & Beksin, A. M. (2010). Literature mapping: A bird's eye view on classification of factors influencing project success. *African Journal of Business Management*, 4(19), 4174-4182.

- Ashley, C., Roe, D., & Goodwin, H. (2001). *Pro-poor tourism strategies: Making tourism work for the poor – A review of experience*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Breda, Z. Costa, R. & Costa, C. (2006). Do clusters and networks make small places beautiful? The case of Caramulo (Portugal). In L. Lazzeretti & C. S. Petrillo (Eds.), *Tourism local systems and networking* (pp. 67-82). Oxford: Elsevier.
- Brohman, J. (1996). New directions in tourism for third world development. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23(1), 48-70.
- Brown, D. O. (1998). In search of an appropriate form of tourism for Africa: Lessons from the past and suggestions for the future. *Tourism Management*, 19(3), 237-245.
- Chok, S., Macbeth, J., & Warren, C. (2007). Tourism as a tool for poverty alleviation: A critical analysis of 'pro-poor tourism' and implications for sustainability. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 10(2-3), 144-166.
- Clancy, M. J. (1999). Tourism and development evidence from Mexico. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26(1), 1-20.
- Cole, S. (2006). Information and empowerment: The keys to achieving sustainable tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 14(6), 629-644.
- De Kadt, E. (1979). *Tourism: Passport to development?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Diallo, A., & Thuillier, D. (2004) The success dimensions of international development projects: The perceptions of African project coordinators. *International Journal of Project Management*, 22(1), 19-31.
- Donnellan, C. (Ed.). (2005). *Responsible tourism* (Vol. 109). Cambridge: Independence.
- Font, X., Goodwin, H., & Walton, R. (2012). Donor funded tourism projects: Factors for success. *ICRT occasional paper*, 25, 1-20.
- Harrison, D. (2008). Pro-poor tourism: A critique. *Third World Quarterly*, 29(5), 851-868.
- Hawkins, D. E., & Mann, S. (2007). The World Bank's role in tourism development. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 34(2), 348-363.
- Mastny, L. (2001). *Travelling light: New paths for international tourism*. Washington: WorldWatch Institute
- Mowforth, M., & Munt, I. (2003). *Tourism and sustainability: Development and new tourism in the third world*. London: Routledge.
- Nadkarni, S. (2008). Knowledge creation, retention, exchange, devolution, interpretation and treatment (K-CREDIT) as an economic growth driver in pro-poor tourism. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 11(5), 456-472.
- OECD (2012). *From aid to development: The global fight against poverty*. OECD Insights. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Partidário, M. R., & Wilson, L. (2011). Institutional and professional capacity-building for SEA. In B. Sadler, R. Aschmann, J. Dusik, T. Fischer, M. R. Partidário & R. Verheem (Eds.), *Handbook on strategic environmental assessment* (pp. 472-486). London: Earthscan.
- Perry, G. E., López, J. H. & Maloney, W. F. (2006). From vicious to virtuous circles. In G. E. Perry, O. S. Arias, J. H. López, W. F. Maloney & L. Servén (Eds.), *Poverty reduction and growth: Virtuous and vicious circles* (pp. 154-156). The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Washington DC: The World Bank.
- Romanow, P., & Bruce, D. (2006) Communication & capacity building: Exploring clues from the literature for rural community development. *Journal of Rural and Community Development*, 1, 131-154.
- Romeiro, P., & Costa, C. (2010). The potential of management networks in the innovation and competitiveness of rural tourism: A case study on the Valle del Jerte (Spain). *Current Issues in Tourism*, 13(1), 75-91.
- Sadler, P. G., & Archer, B. H. (1975). The economic impact of tourism in developing countries. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 3(1), 15-32.
- Scheyvens, R. (2007). Exploring the tourism-poverty nexus. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 10(2-3), 231-254.
- Schilcher, D. (2007). Growth versus equity: The continuum of pro-poor tourism and neoliberal governance. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 10(2-3), 166-193.
- Shaw, G., & Williams, A. (2009). Knowledge transfer and management in tourism organisations: An emerging research agenda. *Tourism Management*, 30, 325-35.
- Sheate W. R., & Partidário M. R. (2009). Strategic approaches and assessment techniques: Potential for knowledge brokerage towards sustainability. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 30, 278-288.
- Smith, V. L. (2001). Tourism change and impacts. In V. L. Smith & M. Brent (Eds.), *Hosts and guests revisited: Tourism issues of the 21st Century* (pp. 107-121). New York: Cognizant Communication Corporation.
- Sofield, T. (2003). *Empowerment for sustainable tourism development*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Telfer, D. J., & Sharpley, R. (2008). *Tourism and development in the developing world*. London: Routledge.
- Tomlinson B. R. (2003). "What was the third world?". *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38(2), 307-321.
- Tosun, C. (2005). Stages in the emergence of a participatory tourism development approach in the development world. *Geoforum*, 36, 333-352.
- UNDP (2012). *Indices and data*. Accessed on 29th December, 2012, at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/indices/hpi/>
- UNDP (2000). *Good governance: A user's guide*. Accessed on 29th December, 2012, at http://gaportal.org/sites/default/files/undp_users_guide_online_version.pdf
- UNWTO (2013). *UNWTO: Tourism highlights 2013: edition*, Madrid: UNWTO.
- White, R. (2004). Is 'empowerment' the answer?: Current theory and research on development communication. *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies*, 66(1), 7-24.
- WTTC (2013). *Travel & tourism economic impact 2013: World*. Accessed on 25th January, 2014, at http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/world2013_1.pdf
- Zhao, W., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (2007). Tourism and poverty alleviation: An integrative research framework. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 10(2), 119-143.