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# Innovations in Community-Based Tourism: Social Responsibility Actions in the Rural Tourism in the Province of Santa Elena–Ecuador

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**Abstract:** Although in many cases community-based tourism does not take place within the formal parameters of the company, your practices encompass responsible tourism activities that allow the active participation of the community, from an intercultural perspective, adequate management of the natural and cultural heritage, based on a principle of equity and the distribution of local benefits. The aim of this research was to understand the relationship between the actions and dimensions of social responsibility carried out in communities that practice community-based tourism, with the aim of establishing appropriate indicators of organisation and sustainable local development. However, no studies linking community-based tourism and social responsibility were found in the literature, as the latter was always related to formal organisations. In order to achieve this objective, a interview was carried out from an exploratory qualitative perspective. The data analysed made it possible to understand the level of SR of the actors in rural communities and its close relationship with the social responsibility actions carried out in the practice of community-based tourism. Indicators of local organisation and development that influence the sustainability of rural communities as tourist destinations were also detected.

**Keywords:** entrepreneurship; community; active participation; social responsibility; community-based tourism

## 1. Introduction

The academic interest in the study of Social Responsibility (SR) is evident, with the 19th century, Riccardi (2004) [1] indicates who the Industrial Revolution being the period that concentrated the greatest dedication to the subject. On the other hand [2], suggests the year 1953 as the beginning of the CSR construct in the scientific literature. Likewise, SR is a dynamic fact that can vary over time and space, the latter being the variables that directly affect its form and content, which takes on different forms according to the place and economic sector in which it is developed, therefore, its content and application can vary from one country to another, depending on the time and nature of the companies [3] This research focuses on the tourism sector, being one of the most important sectors for the world economy and considered key for development, prosperity and global welfare [4].

The traditional stream of tourism thinking has been in charge of reviewing topics such as: promotion, marketing and tourism development, among others. At present, the topics addressed by researchers have not changed much [5] and they point out that the main lines are still focused on tourists or visitor studies, destination studies, tourism planning and marketing. Community-based tourism emerges as an alternative to the hegemonic model of tourism, focusing on the residents of the destination. In this model of tourism, the community is part of the management and planning, as well as controlling the ownership

of the infrastructure supporting the sector. In addition, the community participate in the development of new ideas, products and activities that foresee a future for rural areas, thus it is understood that community tourism represents an opportunity for community entrepreneurship, whose economic benefits are redistributed in the community [6].

Likewise, and considering that the studies carried out on SR, it can be seen that in the tourism sector it has been concentrated in large accommodation companies and airlines [7]. There are few studies of SR in communities where CT is developed, so this paper contributes to an analysis of SR in the behaviour of communities, specifically in Ecuador (Santa Elena province) seeking to relate the perception of SR constructed by tourism entrepreneurs and their experience in the CT with respect to their localities. A first contribution arises from this fact, given that indicators of organization and sustainable development in host communities were not located in the literature. Tourism activity is the third source of income for the economy of Ecuador [8] with an important public investment in the promotion of destinations. Although in the central regions of tourism, such as Quito or Cuenca, the offer follows the most conventional marketing channels, seeking travelers interested in historical and cultural heritage, in other provinces the destinations are presented differently. Thus, in Santa Elena and in other outlying provinces, the rural environment, the contact with the communities and the quiet way of life are the great attractions. Some attractions that justify that community, SR and sustainable development are implicit in a different tourist practice.

## 2. Social Responsibility Actions in Community-Based Tourism

The contributions on the responsibility of businessmen and their actions with respect to the objectives and needs of the social environments in which they operate are the starting point of the SR construct [2,9]. This was affirmed with the publication of the book "Social Responsibilities of the Businessmen", postulated by Carroll as the father of SR.

However, there is no consensus on the term that should integrate the responsibilities that the organisation has to face in the development of its activities. Thus, Social Responsibility (SR) is also known as Corporate Social Responsibility. The distinction between the above terms lies in the responsible agent [10], in the case of SR this lies with citizens, institutions, communities and social organisations. Therefore, this is the concept we assume in our research.

Relating the fundamentals of the social, economic and environmental dimensions of SR, it is concluded with the premise that: economic aspects emphasise the generation of employment and the contribution of benefits that the company receives from society; social aspects indicate that SR includes activities to promote development among communities, respecting their culture and organisation, promoting their initiatives, gender equality and the application of ethical practices by both workers and tourists; and finally, environmental aspects relate to the rational use of natural resources, materials, energy, water, biodiversity, and the internal and external promotion of a culture concerned with pollution prevention [11].

More than 30 years ago, SR was defined as a bright, abstract term with a different meaning for everyone [12]; this is why the interest in SR has been maintained despite the practical complexity of its interpretation. Today, it is indisputable that many SR scholars continue to support this trend. Following this line, SR depends on the concrete demands of society [13] and this, in turn, presumes to bring business conduct in line with the norms, social values and expectations prevailing at a given time. Thus, the way SR is understood and applied varies from one community to another (companies and industries) across time and space, a visible example in the world being its differences between countries [14].

To recapitulate, a single definition of SR applied to all contexts does not exist and if it did, it would hinder the operability of the concept, its dimension and implementation [15], so that specific definitions should be accepted, the product of research from different approaches [16,17] applied to different contexts, from different areas of knowledge and from different sectors of society. Not far from this and as a basic rule, the SR construct must

be born from the assumption that Social Responsibilities are universal for all. Likewise, the basic elements that make up these responsibilities must be globalised [13].

This crystallises when the principles and ethical values that underpin social responsibility are in tune with companies through their processes and strategies. It becomes effective when there is shared value between business and society in a broad sense. Finally, its implementation will be visible when its actions contribute, in the right way, "to the reduction of poverty and to the human and sustainable development of society" [18].

Already when we talk about community-based tourism, it is understood that it is developing in different geographical areas of the world as a consequence of the change in the tastes and motivations of tourists in recent years. Not only that, CT is completely related to the way tourism is developed, involving the local community in all stages of planning [19]. From the tourist's perspective, it is carried out by travellers in search of new experiences far from the traditional and more massified ones, which is enabling the creation of certain destinations that allow the local communities themselves to generate wealth as a result of this activity, which is always considered as complementary and never as an alternative. Thus, tourism is configured as a tool for minimising social inequalities, contributing to new employment possibilities, boosting the economy and preserving natural resources.

This article deals with aspects of social responsibility in community-based tourism. In this sense, it is understood as an organisation characterised by the way in which it is being managed, that is, by community organisation as a particular aspect. A look towards a "model of tourism activity developed mainly in rural areas and in which the local population, especially indigenous peoples and peasant families, through their different organisational structures of a collective nature, play a preponderant role in the control of its execution, management and distribution of benefits" [20]. Its entry into the political agenda of local NGO intervention is a result of its developmentalist thrust, in such a way that the management of CT in Latin America is influenced by the controversial role played by international development cooperation agencies [21,22]. Against this background, we find different descriptions of the successes and limitations produced by CT projects and the intervention of NGOs in their implementation. Specifically, and for the case of Ecuador, this article adopts the concept established by the Pluractional Federation of Community Tourism of Ecuador (FEPTCE): "Community-based tourism is any tourism activity based on solidarity that allows the active participation of the community from an intercultural perspective, adequate management of the natural heritage and appreciation of the cultural heritage, based on a principle of equity in the distribution of local benefits" [23].

In 2015 onwards, Cabanilla made an important contribution from anthropology, researching on the development and characteristics of CT in Ecuador, on trends in sustainable tourism businesses and destinations, manuals for the development of SMEs and for field work with rural communities. It has come to the conclusion that CT in the coming years will have to continue facing many of the problems it inherited from the end of the 20th century: connectivity, scarcity of basic services, diversification of supply, lack of training in tourism operations and marketing, poor command of foreign languages, insufficient professionalization of personnel, among others [24]. This approach shows us the general framework of CT in Ecuador, but there is still a lack of concrete, detailed approaches based on participant observation of the phenomenon. However, in 2017 and 2018, the scientific production in Ecuador about the practice of CT was amplified with doctoral theses. The results of all the road travelled for more than 30 years in the country invite us to think that community tourism is emerging as an activity that diversifies the economic fabric and sources of income of some indigenous communities. At the same time, this type of tourism has been acquiring an emerging presence within the Ecuadorian tourism offer. However, there are several difficulties that CT has to face in order to achieve greater development and achieve true recognition as a tourism activity in Ecuador [25]. The main stakeholders in the communities are made up of consumers, employees, suppliers, distributors, public administration, non-profit organizations, collaborating companies, the media, the local community, and society in general [26]. In this sense, considering the absence of work relat-

ing SR and CT, it is considered to work directly with these stakeholders in the fieldwork. It is they who will offer their impressions in the interviews and it is on the basis of their reality that the framework for studying the relationship between social responsibility and community-based tourism will be created.

## 3. Methodological Steps

An exploratory qualitative study was carried to provide a next stage (quantitative) of theories and variables to measure. This is because, although there are many works on the dimensions that make up Social Responsibility, none of them tried to relate it to community-based tourism.

Thus, due to this lack of understanding about the dimensions of social responsibility related to CT, it was decided with this stage to seek to interpret reality and understand tourism phenomena, in order to provide a vision of reality from the perspective of the research participants [27]. Furthermore, the decision was taken to carry out this exploratory research based on a series of qualitative interviews in order to draw questions and variables that will be part of the development of a more quantitative tool. All of this with the aim of not replicating existing tools for measuring SR. This is because the existing indicators previously identified in the literature review refer to other economic sectors or are not related to the governance of the Community Tourism. In this regard, the enormous paucity of official data on tourist activity in Santa Elena must be taken into account and, much more, referring to company turnover, generated employment and occupancy levels of establishments. For this reason, a methodology initially interested in quantification is used and, given its insufficiency, has to be completed with interviews that seek qualitative information on the activity.

It should be noted that exploratory qualitative research was chosen for this study given its usefulness in an area with little accumulated and systematic knowledge [20]. Thus, this approach allowed us to understand stakeholders' perceptions of the impacts of tourism development. Furthermore, all stakeholders identified in the community can participate in the development of a real tourism project [28]. In this case, with SR and CT, the aim is to understand the phenomenon under study according to the perception of the subjects [21,22].

As for the main objective, this stage of the work focused on gathering variables for measuring the organisation and development of Community Tourism Centres (CTC). The aim was to understand the level of SR of the actors in rural communities and to identify appropriate indicators of local organisation and development that can influence rural communities to become sustainable tourism destinations.

The qualitative interview with open-ended questions was used to collect the data (Appendix A), the purpose of which was to seek spontaneity in the answers to the questions posed [23,24]. Moreover, being unstructured, there is an "openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions, to deepen the answers the interviewees give and the stories they tell" [25]. The questions should be based on the knowledge acquired by the researcher in the literature review on the topic [26]. In order to design the interview script, it was identified what should be considered, collecting data through a set of questions previously determined and addressed to a representative sample [29]. Likewise, the procedures and techniques of observation and analysis of the empirical reality were elaborated with a subjectivist approach, where the subject responds to the questions that are constructed in the course of the research with the aim of understanding the subjects under study [30].

This qualitative technique makes it possible to explore a topic by seeking information, opinions, interests and implications from different subjects [30] in order to analyse and present them in a structured way. Thus, it is considered to be "a strategy used to answer questions about groups, communities and human interactions and has a descriptive purpose of the phenomena of interest or predictive of tourism phenomena, or of human behaviour and its relation to tourism" [31].

For the analysis of qualitative data, content analysis (CA) was used [32]. It is supposed to be a method of text analysis developed within the social sciences [33] and "is considered a technique for data processing that aims to identify what is being said about a certain topic" [20]. In addition, CA lends itself to exploratory stages in research of this type.

In this research, an analysis was proposed in which the phenomenon of significance should be understood as a reality of individual subjectivity. As for the presentation of the results, the fragments considered to be the most significant in each interview should be presented in narrative form according to the behaviour of the subjects themselves [34]. Furthermore, it is emphasised that CA "is a technique that produces inferences from a focal text to its social context in an objective manner" [33].

The first step undertaken was the close and repeated reading of the documents used in the data collection, which helped in the selection of the categories. An interpretation of the data was chosen by matching, associating the results with the theoretical reference used [20]. The design of the script considered characteristics of the interviewees and their involvement in the community and addressed a number of responses through information gathered. A large number of perceptions, experiences and experiences of this target group were obtained in relation to the variables identified in the literature review.

For the initial data collection (pre-interview), the literature review was carried out and then individual semi-structured interviews were conducted. It was decided to interview tourism entrepreneurs in the province of Santa Elena, specifically in the canton of the same name, as it is the largest in geographical extension and has the largest number of rural communities and natural and cultural tourism attractions. To select the subjects, we sought to collect the vision of the entrepreneurs with tourism experience in the communities in order to gather information on the dimensions of SR (economic, legal, ethical or philanthropic) that they carry out in the communities, as well as to seek participation in the CT, thus covering a maximum of different experiences. The CTC of Santa Elena were contacted and permission was requested to interview the tourism entrepreneurs registered in this centre for different economic activities (art-health, gastronomy, fishing, catering, accommodation, shops . . . ). The twelve people listed in Table 1 were those who agreed to be interviewed. A time and place was agreed for individual interviews with each person and each person was visited on the agreed date. The interviews were recorded with informed consent from each participant and then coded so that they were anonymised. Each interview lasted about 60 min, although some have exceeded 90 min. Finally, the interviews were transcribed for content analysis. The whole process took place between October and November 2019.

**Table 1.** Demographic profile of participants.

| Code | Sex | Age/Years | Years Dedicated to the Activity | Activity |
|------|-----|-----------|--------------------------------|----------|
| ET1 | Female | 43 | 23 years | Artisan |
| ET2 | Female | 47 | 27 years | Gastronomy |
| ET3 | Male | 53 | 43 years | Artisanal fishing |
| ET4 | Male | 65 | 50 years | Organic farm |
| ET5 | Male | 40 | 10 years | Restaurant |
| ET6 | Female | 38 | 6 years | Cabins |
| ET7 | Female | 45 | 5 years | Neighbourhood shops |
| ET8 | Female | 42 | 8 years | Restaurant |
| ET9 | Male | 32 | 5 years | Tourist guide |
| ET10 | Male | 34 | 10 years | Gastronomy |
| ET11 | Female | 38 | 10 years | Neighbourhood shops |
| ET12 | Female | 31 | 5 years | Artisan |

Source: Own elaboration.

For the processing of the interviews, the following methodological stages were used: Reception of the interview; Coding of the interview; Interpretation of results based on the participatory community approach [35], specifically on the practices of residents and small entrepreneurs associated with SR and CT. The profile of the interviewees is detailed

in Table 1. They are identified by an alphanumeric code to ensure the anonymity of the participants who collaborated with this research. The reason for the selection of these profiles is that the responses help to understand what motivation exists for each segment to engage in such activities for their personal wellbeing. In the same way as [36], theoretical saturation was achieved with this number of interviews, devised through the repetition and redundancy of the results. Moreover, the work was more concerned with deepening, breadth and diversity in the process of understanding the object of study than with generalisation, as [37] points out, which is related to saturation and sampling in qualitative studies.

## 4. Presentation of the Territory and Study Area

The study territory is the province of Santa Elena (Figure 1), which has 489 years of history and was the settlement of the Las Vegas Culture, a marine population characterised by high levels of organisation of the territory and its resources [38]. Due to its strategic position on the Pacific coast, nature is an essential part of its ecosystem and it contains the second coastal marine biological corridor in the country [39]. The province currently has a population of 308,693 inhabitants, with a total area of 3762.8 km$^2$ distributed among its three cantons: Salinas, La Libertad and Santa Elena, where the latter has the largest territorial extension with 3668.90 km$^2$ with the largest rural area in the province, followed by La Libertad 25.3 km$^2$ and Salinas with 68.7 km$^2$. Its inhabitants' main sources of income come from tourism, fishing, the oil industry and services. In this region, as in other parts of the country, its people live from tourism, which is essential, as this activity is important for the locality because of the products derived from it, such as sun and beach, adventure, sports, religious, gastronomic, ecological, community and rural tourism, among others, located in areas that are not very far from each other, offering the tourist a wide range of options to choose from.

The practice of tourism in this province is relatively new and tourism activities have only recently been incorporated into the local economy, as tourism resources and attractions are at an early stage of their life cycle, with immense potential to be developed, which is reason enough to be studied. The decision to travel to the province has increased significantly in the last three years compared to 2015 [39]. The main motivations for travelling to the area are for holidays, recreation and leisure. It should be noted that tourist destinations in the province are concentrated in the canton of Santa Elena.

With regard to the tourist offer in the province of Santa Elena, in terms of tourist services, the months where visitors come with the greatest force are those between December and April, the most important dates within these months are: the end of the year and the carnival holiday, with the highest percentage of visits [40]. It is important to indicate the main reasons for visitors to choose the area as a tourist destination, among them the desire to get to know its tourist attractions, as well as to leave their everyday environment, the latter being the best motivation for visiting the place.

In terms of demand, this province is characterised by periods of affluence and scarcity, and has come to form what is known as seasonality [41], delimiting two seasons; the summer season, also known as the Sierra season (low season), characterised by a mild climate with temperatures averaging 22 °C, which coincides with the months from May to October. And the so-called winter or high season, which is characterised by very high temperatures of up to almost 40 °C and very hot, ideal for being by the sea and spending the day enjoying water sports. In short, we are facing fundamentally national flows, conditioned by the traditional practices of rest in quiet spaces and with an attractive image, revalued at certain times of the year.
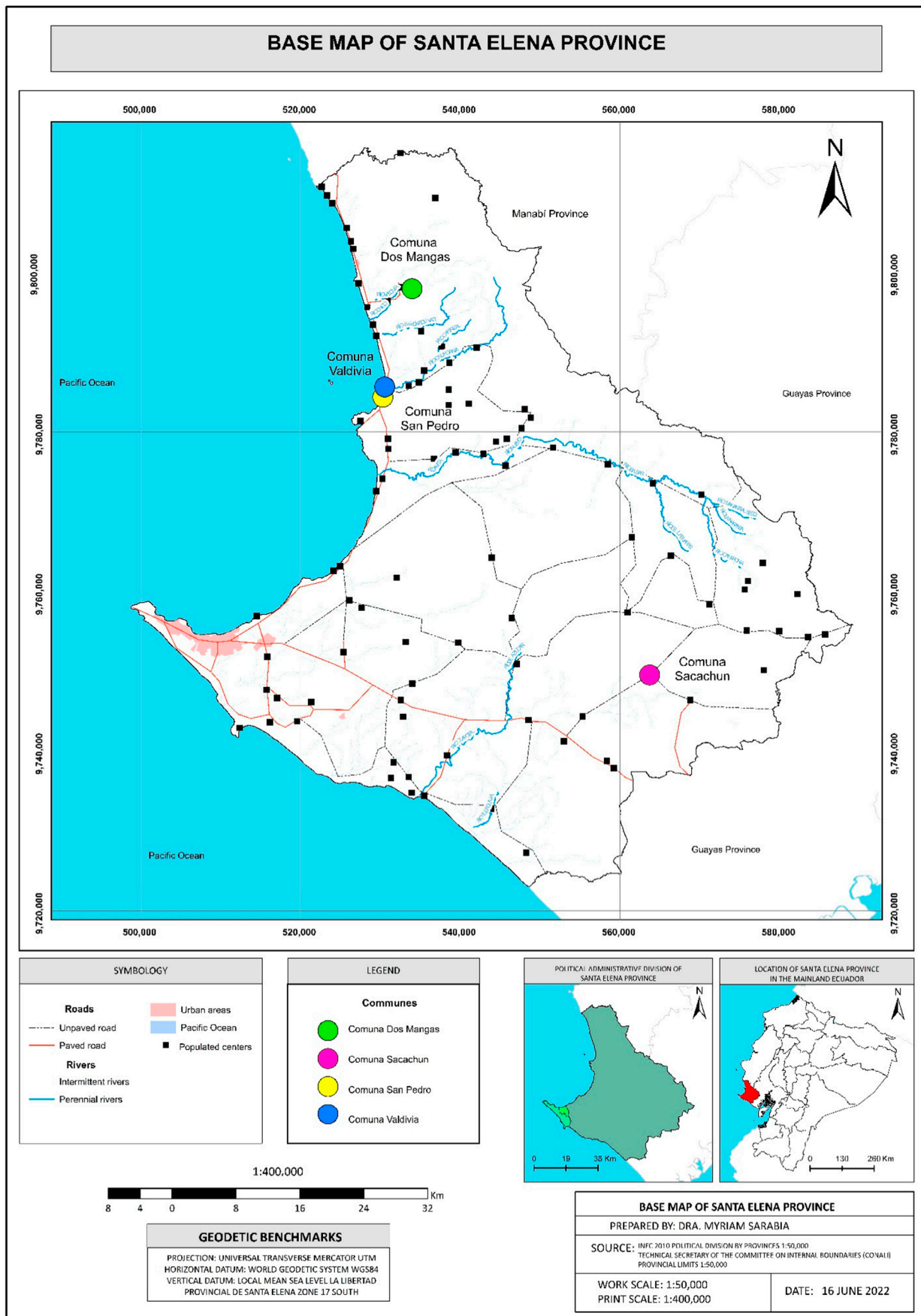
**Figure 1.** Map of Ecuador, Santa Elena province (4 CTC's).

## 5. Analysis of the Results of the Interviews

Once the interviews were carried out, the discourses were classified according to the different activities that the interviewees addressed, relating their experiences and the con-text in the rural communities of the canton of Santa Elena. The interview is presented in a simple way and ordered by thematic axes. In each part, the most relevant answers of the interviewees are compiled. The way the results were divided for better interpretation and an extensive strategy [42] was developed with several interviews to be able to examine in a concrete and precise way. Furthermore, through the aggregation method, a set of texts was considered as a product of the same subjectivity.

Like other studies [34], the questions were based on a community and participatory approach, through the knowledge dialogue, facilitating a better understanding of responsible relations within the community. In the first part, SR actions that are usually carried out on a daily basis by small entrepreneurs living in the community were studied. In the second part, detailed information was collected on the tourism activities they carry out within the dimensions of SR (economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic). In the third part of the interview, information was collected on the actors' participation in the community's SR activities (economic, social and environmental) in the CT. Their motives and obstacles for engaging in these activities were also identified. The wording of the questions did not vary according to the interviewee, but the intensity of the answers varied, so the questions were reformulated to obtain more detailed information from the interviewee about their life experience.

### 5.1. Social Responsibility in Community Tourism

Through the launching question "What general activities do you carry out in the community?", a variety of answers were obtained, however, despite the heterogeneity of the answers, it was possible to generalise aspects that were present, facilitating the design of the categories. Thus, it is observed that the activities they carry out on a daily basis include: ET1 "elaboration of handicrafts", ET2 "gastronomy" and ET3 "artisanal fishing"; these being their ways of life transmitted intergenerationally and preserved by the fact that they have never left the community.

When we consulted the community's tourism entrepreneurs, their general responses were ET1, 2 and 3 "we generate family employment", ET2 "gastronomy" and ET3 "artisanal fishing".

> We work according to the demand that comes to the community by season, when it is high season people come from the mountains of Cuenca, Ambato, Quito, they like fresh seafood, fish, ceviche's are the dishes that sell the most, there is work every day, but when it is low season we only work on weekends, but in reality there is always work, the national tourist likes to eat well. (ET2).

Likewise, the consultation of the older inhabitants on what general activities they carry out in their communities in the canton of Santa Elena produced the following homogeneous answers: "agriculture in organic farms and artisanal fishing", because, as ET4 mentions, it is the activity they know how to do well.

> I live and work in this community because there are large tracts of land to cultivate, here there is primary forest that is protected, the products we grow are orange, green, passion fruit, people like to buy from us when they visit us, they want us to explain how we do it, what kind of fertilizer we use, how often we harvest, they like it and they come back to our communities. (ET4).

Another of the questions asked to the interviewees was: What responsible activities do you carry out within the community? In the interviews, the importance of respecting the organisation of the community and collaborating in the care of the community was recognised ET5:

Here we respect the culture, the tradition, the organisation that we have, helping each other to take good care of our home, because it is the place where we were born, where our lives are, and we want to be respected, to be visited, to promote what we do here so that tourists from all over the world can come to visit us. (ET5).

Regarding the responsible activities carried out by the visitors received in the communities of the canton of Santa Elena, ET7 and ET11 mention that they do not seek information because they stay for a short time and only go for specific activities such as "adventure sports, rest, gastronomy, photography" and that they notice that the community is not fully prepared to receive tourists, despite having sufficient tourist attractions. They respect their "customs and traditions" but expect more tourists offer (as ET7 states) to stay longer in the communities.

These assessments, supported by the literature review, show that all tourism actors (residents, small entrepreneurs and tourists) have very specific social responsibilities [38] both in their behaviour in their different roles and in the level of importance that their actions generate in the care of the natural and cultural resources of the communities.

Therefore, the variables found for the present work are:

1. Respect for community organisation, culture and tradition.
2. Environmental care of the community.
3. Local participation, decision-making, planning
4. I facilitate self-respect, security, happiness.

When we asked the residents how important these activities are to you, the immediate response was high (ET6, ET7 and ET9), as it is their livelihood and therefore they try to protect their resources. ET9 comments "artisanal fishing is a male activity, it is a natural resource that must be taken care of and permission must be requested from the sea to catch fish", they agree that it must be carried out responsibly in order to conserve the resources, customs and traditions of each community.

They argue that "we have no boss, no timetable, we are heads of household" and that the activities they carry out allow them to be "close to the family", they feel that it is an activity that stimulates local development in the communities. In the case of other interviewees (ET7) also but their motivation is "the tourists' rest", "to get out of the routine" coinciding with the opinion of ET11 with the arrival of tourists. ET5, ET6 and ET10 agree that within the tourist activity, SR is valued for the conservation of natural and cultural resources [17]. In summary, both residents and small tourism entrepreneurs living in rural communities are important actors in the specific actions and activities they carry out.

In view of the above, the following categories were identified:

1. Interest in learning more about the community.
2. Supporting local development.

However, it is found that tourism entrepreneurs carry out socially responsible actions in the execution of community tourism practices, thus developing in a sustainable manner. This result coincides with those of [43], confirming with his theory of sustainable tourism development. It was assumed that, in carrying out community tourism practices, the participation, resource management and local well-being of a community are considered, confirming the so-called community tourism [23]. These activities are related to the SR variables and to the categories created from the discourse of the interviewees (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Activities de RS.

| Variables | Categories |
|---|---|
| Respect for community organisation, culture and tradition Interest in Getting to know the community better | Interest in learning more about the community |
| Community environmental care | Supporting local development |
| Local participartion, decisión-making, planning | |
| I facilitate self-respect, self-confidence, happiness | |

Source: Own elaboration.

*5.2. Dimensions of Social Responsibility among Residents and Small Entrepreneurs*

SR varies from community to community and its definition cannot be worldwide, nor valid in all contexts or for all companies, but on the contrary, in each case it should be implemented according to its purpose. Therefore, at this point, information is collected on SR activities applied in the CT by residents and small entrepreneurs according to the different social, economic, cultural, legal and political contexts of the canton of Santa Elena.

With regard to the economic dimension, and starting with the question: describe the most popular tourist activities in the community, very similar responses were obtained. Residents perceive that they are sports, gastronomy, purchase and elaboration of handicrafts and photography. In the case of ET9, he mentions that seasonal tourists prefer "rest, short walks or water sports for the most part" and "gastronomy" and agrees with ET7 in the "purchase of handicrafts and photographs". Another related point between the two is that in the morning they visit the beach when the fishermen arrive: "they are surprised and look at us as we unload our catch".

With regard to the small entrepreneurs, ET3 commented that the local tourists who arrive and require their services are food preparation, the most sold dishes are based on fresh seafood, as well as ET1 and 4 mentioned that according to the season the most requested activities for them are "sale of tagua handicrafts because they are economical" elaboration of handicrafts of toquilla straw, gradual cane and tagua, the tourists are interested in knowing how we make the handicrafts and ask how we do it. They also all agreed that the "most demanded activities for tourists to rest on the beach are the rental of tents and chairs".

Following this line, ET7, ET9, ET11 point out that tourists prefer "outdoor sports, water sports, whale watching in season and tasting the gastronomy" and "contemplate, photograph, ask what material the handicrafts are made of, to make the decision of what to buy". ET5 continues this argument by pointing out that tourists engage in "hiking activities, outdoor walks, flora and fauna observation and spend time talking to residents in the communities".

In relation to the most requested tourist activities, "gastronomy, visitors want to eat when they come to visit or pass through the communities" (ET1, ET2, ET7) and rest in a tent to protect themselves from the sun and rent chairs (ET5, ET9, ET11). "It all depends on how long the tourists stay in the place to ask for the services we offer, as some decide to stay one night and ask for lodging".

Finally, and citing the previous interviews, we were able to categorise the most requested tourist activities in the communities studied as follows.

1. Guidance and interpretation.
2. Gastronomy.
3. Purchase of handicrafts.
4. Community hospitality.
5. Rental of chairs and tents.

We found that the actions performed influenced the dimensions of SR. This coincides with the contribution of ethical behavior [2]. Thus, during the course of the research, the

close relationship that exists between the SR actions performed and the dimensions of SR throughout the process was confirmed. Our results are consistent with those of [44], who states that SR is a life strategy where values are combined that prioritize ethical commitment, which begins intrinsically in the individual and then reaches an external environment through of their actions to contribute to the development of society (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Dimensions of SR in tourism residents and entrepreneurs.

| Variables | Categories |
|---|---|
| Social | Guidance and interpretation |
| Economic | Gastronomy |
| Cultural | Purchase of handicrafts |
| Legal | Community hostelry |
| Political | Renta lof chairs and tents |

Source: Own elaboration.

*5.3. Dimensions of Social Responsibility in Terms of Commitments Made*

Regarding the legal dimension, understanding this as the one related to compliance with the law, we sought to find out the frequency with which these activities are carried out, for which the following statement was formulated: "Identify the activities that you carry out periodically in your community. In general terms, among the activities that they habitually carry out, ET1 and ET8 indicate that "we try to pay our obligations on time, as well as our companions who sell us the raw materials for the elaboration of handicrafts". It all depends on how sales develop, with occasional payments to staff who collaborate on a seasonal basis.

Thus, ET1, 2 and 12 also mentioned that the periodic activities that they carry out are:

> Here we pay the debts we have because we don't like to have problems, we all know each other and we look at each other every day, we comply with what we agreed in the community because we believe it is to be better and orderly. (ET12).

Other legal activities that are carried out are those of the visitors when they enter the community, in this case ET5, 6 and 7 coincide responding that "there are communities that are organized among themselves and charge an entrance fee as in the case of the commune Dos Mangas, they are symbolic values more for entering the nature trail, there are also communities that request payment from the guides that make the tour with us and it is fine we agree with those payments, because they are their resources" in this regard ET9 mentioned that "the activities that depend on us it is necessary to comply and respect".

As a result of the data collected in relation to the above, the following categorization was proposed:

1. Make purchased payments.
2. Community membership payments.
3. Payments established by the community to the native guides.
4. Respect decisions made in the community.

With regard to the ethical dimension, through the question: Identify what specific activities do you carry out in the community to generate tourism development? we sought to distinguish the behaviours that are manifested in the communities. With the answers obtained and given that everyone agrees on these, it can be concluded that the concrete activities must be evidenced by all those who belong to the communities, residents and small entrepreneurs (European Commission Bélica). On the other hand, for small entrepreneurs, concrete activities imply good customer service and the offer of fair prices for products as an element of distinction between one community and another (CERES) Ecuador.

In this section, it was possible to categorise the specific activities they carry out as follows:

1. Respectful behaviour towards members of the community.
2. Provision of tourism services at fair prices

3. Customer care
4. Complete and transparent information to tourists.

By asking a question about the special (philanthropic) activities, which are carried out voluntarily in the community, it was possible to verify the behaviour of the subjects who are part, in general, in the communities.

In this sense ET3 affirms:

> Here you participate with your colleagues or family members who want to do artisanal fishing, I have been a fisherman all my life, I tell them that it is not so easy to do work, the sea is jealous, you have to have a lot of respect and ask permission to fish, people also ask me how this work is enough to live, the answer is days there are, days there are not, that's how you live from the sea, who wants to give (ET3).

In the same vein ET4 replied:

> Transmitting our knowledge to young people is our commitment in the community, just as our grandparents and parents have taught us these jobs to continue transmitting them to our children [...] Here we women voluntarily get together to talk about which business is having problems to help [ . . . ].

In the consultations with ET5, 6 and 8, it was mentioned that in general, when tourists visit a community and are well looked after, they recommend their family and friends through social networks to visit and get to know it, and "they come back every time because they like it and they feel good". Likewise, ET9 commented that the action he takes when he starts his work as a guide in his community is to help by taking out the rubbish so "I think I help the environment that is polluted with waste".

Specifically, the interviewees think that the commitments they have in the community are high because they are the actions that they carry out every day, so that the community develops (Table 4), to achieve this they mention that they need leaders who look for solutions to their needs in order to obtain improvements in their communities [45].

**Table 4.** RS dimensions in commitments.

| Variables | Categories |
|---|---|
| Make payments purchased | Respect among community members |
| Community entrance fees | Fair pricing of tourism services on offer |
| Payments established by the community to the native guides | Customer care |
| Respect decisions made in the community | Transparency of information to tourists |

Source: Own elaboration.

Therefore, the characterisation of philanthropic actions is as follows:

1. Voluntary participation in operational efforts for the good of the community.
2. Contribution to the organisation of the legacy of their customs from their ancestral knowledge.
3. Meetings with members of the same guild and support for those who require it.
4. Carrying out actions without expecting any reward from the leaders of the community.
5. Collaboration by taking out the rubbish generated by visitors to the community.

The concrete actions that each subject carries out are presented again in the approach addressed through the questions on the "implementation of concrete actions that they carry out in the CT" and the economic activities in the communities.

In the case of ET6, the subject relates it to the organisation of the community in order to generate employment opportunities for families. As evidenced in the response of ET2, "the responsibility we have here is high in our community that lives from the CT because they are the women's enterprises that have generated economic and social development

and are the ones that will last in time because they teach others, here people know that they have to treat tourists well so that they return".

As a result of these interviews, on the one hand, it was possible to recognise the high level of importance of economic activities for the communities that carry out community tourism [17], because it is their local development and their future, and on the other hand, the following categories could be determined:

1. SR is integrated into the country's public policy strategy.
2. They offer good quality products and/or services at competitive prices.
3. They know the needs, expectations and satisfaction of customers.
4. They offer complete, transparent and honest information about the commercial offer.
5. They encourage customers to use and consume local products and services.

For the question "To what extent are the social SR activities of the CT being implemented? The informants believe in the importance of social activities because they are part of their everyday life, they are values and actions that they carry out on a daily basis. This is confirmed by ET1:

> We promote the right of all citizens of the community from the youngest to the oldest because that is how our parents have taught us to respect each other, to live in harmony with our neighbours, respect for our culture, our own roots, there are many young people who do not like or know where they come from, they prefer to live in the big cities... (ET1).

Values are also present in the answers of other interviewees. Thus ET2 "The work of women in the economy and housework is taken into account" in gender equity. ET4 also mentioned "the organisation that we maintain through the community council means that we are clear about our social activities in the community and respect our rights as people".

Regarding barriers for people with reduced mobility, other interviewees detected that tourists do not look at whether the communities are prepared or not. For ET9 "it is very difficult for people in wheelchairs to enter the beach, they have no access or tourist offer for them". ET10 "it is not observed that businesses are employing people with disabilities" ET11 "some businesses and guides take care of their presentation, personal care and hygiene". In this regard, ET5 mentioned:

> They promote respect for the heritage, values, culture and customs of local communities among tourists, which makes them more responsible and interested in community-based tourism.

Therefore, in relation to social commitments, residents and small entrepreneurs in the context of rural communities in the canton of Santa Elena assume the duty to fulfil commitments in their localities. Thus, these activities are very positive for the development of the CT.

These characteristics are found in rural localities because there is a community commitment [45] and they seek social activities that allow for the well-being of all their members (Table 5). The actors also confirm that the consensual community commitments are fulfilled and the commitment that they assume is very strong, which leads to a SR that is present in their activities. This demonstrates the inclusion of social and environmental concerns in the implementation of economic activities and in their relationship with the subjects that are part of the community's sustainability ambition levels [46]. Therefore, the proposed categorisation is as follows:

1. Respect for the Human Rights of workers and the local community.
2. Care for occupational health and hygiene conditions.
3. Promotion of gender equality in all work activities in the community.
4. Adequate infrastructure.
5. Inclusion.
6. Respect for heritage, values, and culture.

**Table 5.** Dimensions of SR in philanthropic actions.

| Variables | Categories |
|---|---|
| Voluntary participation in operational efforts for the good of the community. | SR is integrated into the country's public policy strategy. |
| You contribute with your ancestral knowledge to organise the legacy of your customs | They offer good quality products and/or services at competitive prices. |
| You meet with members of your guild and contribute where support is needed | They are aware of the needs, expectations and satisfaction of customers |
| Community leaders take action without expectation of reward | They offer complete, transparent and honest information about the commercial offer |
| Collaborate by removing rubbish generated by visitors from the community | Encourage customers to use and consume local products and services |

Source: Own elaboration.

The last question in this theme revolved around environmental activities: Tell us what environmental care activities do you carry out in the community?

Finally, it should be noted that from the literature review we have identified the four dimensions that have supported our empirical part. At this point, with the empirical part carried out with these interviews, we have found the indicators that will form the four theoretical dimensions in a future quantitative study. This is the unpublished part of the study, identifying the indicators that make up the dimension of social responsibility for community-based tourism enterprises. A social responsibility implicit in the business model and that on certain occasions is difficult to identify, since it is confused with the classic hospitality of the families and communities of the place. This relationship leads us to affirm that, if community tourism practices are carried out, tourism entrepreneurs set strong objectives and motivations, which allows establishing community commitments, as identified in the theory of [47].

*5.4. Motivations and Obstacles in Communities*

Continuing with the study, we also inquired about the motivations and obstacles to implementing SR activities in the communities, the question asked was "What is your opinion regarding the motivations you have to apply SR in the communities?

For example, for the informant ET6, "the motivation is our own values, our actions" and he considers them to be the most relevant in any place, given that morals and customs are the driving force to carry out any activity well. For ET4 "it is behaviour". A community that participates, that organises itself, that implements norms is the one that develops [17]. In this case, the opinions expressed correspond to the bibliography consulted on motivation, understanding it as the set of actions that pursue some social good beyond the interests of a group.

With regard to motivations, we can refer to the responses of ET1 and ET2 for those who assume actions that distinguish each community (Table 6). In this sense, knowing that responsible activities are carried out gives them greater security among their members. ET3 commented that "the rules improve our image as a community, tourists recognise this" and for ET4 "the motivations are high as we are more competitive by doing actions that distinguish us". These responses confirmed their motivation to implement a set of customs and norms as they consider it important for communities starting their tourism activity.

**Table 6.** Motivations to implementing SR activities in the communities.

| Variables | Categories |
|---|---|
| Own values | Personal values (ethics and morals). |
| Behaviour | SR is visible in the community |
| Own actions | SR improves the image and competitiveness of the community in the eyes of tourists. |
| Respect for resources | Pressure to protect resources leads to implementing SR measures |
| | Implementing policies of SR activities in communities |

Source: Own elaboration.

Within the next group of interviewees, for ET7 "the greatest motivation is respect for nature, for the resources that are unique", tourists travel to get to know what is not available in other places and one is motivated to take care of the resources and for ET8 "it is the behaviour of the people who live in the community", ET9 said that the motivation should be shared by all, it is not distant or individual, it is of the whole community.

This is how we arrive at presenting the respective categories in terms of motivations:

1.  Personal values (ethics and morals).
2.  SR is visible in the community.
3.  SR improves the image and competitiveness of the community in the eyes of tourists.
4.  Pressure to protect resources leads to the implementation of SR measures.
5.  Implementing policies of SR activities in communities.

Then, the last question was asked: In reference to the obstacles to implement responsible actions, tell us your opinion, in relation to your community (Table 7). In general, the answers almost always coincided among the informants, thus ET1 commented that there are no obstacles "when there is organisation from the grassroots", when the community is not organised, nothing is possible. The obstacle encountered by ET7 and ET10 is the attitude, the predisposition to want to do something. People are not always willing. They say that they lack confidence because sometimes there is no information and they need to communicate about the responsible actions that need to be taken.

**Table 7.** Obstacles to implementing SR activities in the communities.

| Variables | Categories |
|---|---|
| Community organisation | Residents are not convinced about community-based tourism |
| Attitude | No support from everyone in the community |
| Predisposition | Residents expect full support from central government and do not seek their own means. |
| Responsible actions | Lack of knowledge of capacity building projects |
| Decision-making | |

Source: Own elaboration.

The group of small entrepreneurs say: "the biggest obstacle is in oneself, not wanting to be fair, to be honest" (ET1), in the daily activities because that is what SR is all about, for ET2 "the obstacles are also our leaders who do not support", and in many cases only personal interests, so each one is responsible for carrying out actions for personal benefit that are reflected in the development of the community.

When we asked ET8 he detected that "the obstacle is from the decision making" to overcome it, for example there are several training projects that come to the community, but very few people are interested and attend the socialisation, as the duration of the course is considered excessive, so many stop attending, which is an obstacle to achieve it. On other occasions, the subject himself puts the obstacles: "the villagers themselves are not convinced of the CT (ET10), "there is no support from everyone in the community" (ET6) so

that some members only hope to obtain benefits without collaborating and ET7 expresses in this respect: "here they expect total support from the central government and do not look for their own means".

ET12 completes this argument with the following:

> We want everything to be given to us... and we blame the government, but if we realise it is we ourselves who are the obstacles, by not looking for a way to start a responsible activity to undertake to get ahead for the family. (ET12).

All of these contributions helped to categorise the obstacles into:

1.  Residents are not convinced about community-based tourism.
2.  There is no support from everyone in the community.
3.  Residents expect full support from central government and do not seek their own means.
4.  Lack of knowledge of capacity building projects.

Consequently, it can be concluded from the interviews that the SR actions performed (voluntary actions, actions performed and personal obligations), as well as the dimensions of SR (economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic) that are exercised in the communities are visible. The subjects practice them on a daily basis in their context and present a close relationship with the actions they carry out in the practice of CT, which makes it possible to identify the activities linked to SR.

In relation to these aspects, the participation of SR activities in the CT was found to be binding. Contrasting the answers with the literature review, it is determined that social responsibility activities are commitments supported in behaviour through their actions, becoming a necessity for society in tourism today. Thus, as a conclusion of this empirical stage of indicator identification, these are the unpublished findings: namely the indicators identified in the words of the Community Tourism entrepreneurs themselves. Although SR theory deals with dimensions, there are no indicators in the literature that would shape such dimensions in Community-Based Tourism. This is unprecedented considering that the management of a traditional business, small or large, is not equivalent to community management. Hence the importance of these findings, because so far there are no documents that show indicators to measure SR in Community Tourism. Again, the aforementioned confusion between active options of social responsibility, and traditional forms of care and joint activities with guests can make it difficult to conceptualize SR if a qualitative analysis method is not used, very close to the protagonists of the touristic offer. In this sense, coinciding with the teachings of [44], the actions of the individual contribute to the development of society and according to [48], it was understood that the objectives and motivations are those that should be given importance in the company.

## 6. Final Considerations

As main conclusions of this work, two aspects can be highlighted: firstly, that the social responsibility actions carried out arise from the concern about the ethical consequences of one's own actions, which may affect the interests of the community assumed as commitments in the local communities that generate the desired social welfare. With the purpose of increasing their income, using their natural and cultural resources of the localities, as well as participating in the design of their own SR activities.

The voluntary activities carried out by residents and small entrepreneurs in the communities demonstrate the inclusion of social and environmental concerns in the execution of tourism ventures and their relationship with stakeholders, in terms of the sustainability levels of the ventures. So is the attitude of small tourism entrepreneurs towards their stakeholders such as workers, customers, society at large and even future generations.

Secondly, communities have yet to set clear objectives and motivations to which they should attach the respective importance in each community, through organisation with social norms, values, and performance expectations. So that the communities studied here have the capacity to turn a social problem into an economic opportunity and the economic benefit into productive capacity, human competence, well-paid jobs and well-being for all.

Thus, it is the obligation of each community to use its resources in a way that is beneficial to society, both through the participation of residents and small tourism entrepreneurs as committed members of the community, and through ethical practices generated in the communities for the training of individuals.

The populations that carry out community-based tourism are aware of the lack of specific, participatory actions of social responsibility for their local and sustainable development, also concluding that all voluntary actions are considered beneficial for the practice of community-based tourism, given that in this way participation is reflected.

Based on the analysis of the interviews, residents should promote their tourism offer by taking advantage of the natural and cultural resources they possess, which belong to them and deserve to be known responsibly. Good practices are also required from everyone when they are in the rural communities of the canton of Santa Elena and promote them adequately. Therefore, in this group it is necessary to carry out actions to create awareness of socially responsible practices that allow for local and sustainable development.

In addition to all that has been mentioned above about SR and CT, residents and small entrepreneurs become relevant actors in this research. The reason lies in the fact that the information, actions, obligations, attitudes, commitments they will convey to those who request or require assistance will be beneficial for the local communities. Consequently, it will have a positive impact on the SR practices perceived by the subjects. Finally, when talking about the future intentions of SR in the CT, the evidence found explains the predisposition of the residents, small entrepreneurs to practice and promote local communities.

It can also be concluded that social responsibility maintains a close relationship with the experiences of CT implying evidence of local development. This fact may be related to the various actions that individuals carry out daily in their destinations, due to the fact that they are linked to tourism. In this case, this relationship, according to [49], is given by the idea that business and society, rather than being distinct entities, owe each other, therefore, society has certain expectations regarding the appropriate behaviour and results of businesses. In addition, in relation to social responsibility in Ecuador, there is an interest in implementing it through the Ecuadorian Consortium for Social Responsibility (CERES). Thus, applying a set of business practices that contribute to global sustainability. For [50], this is part of business management, which comprises a set of responsible practices adapted to the business and economic context. As has been pointed out in different forums, the development of careful activities, linked to the community and the territory, can be presented as a natural form of sustainability or sustainable development.

Another conclusion, referring to the reason why CT and SR come together in the communities, is that the individuals want their localities and their resources to be sustainable, at the same time that they implement practices of internal democratization among the associated individuals. Thus, the CT has the characteristic of involving segments of the population that are normally less favored, such as the case of the elderly, women and young people. In fact, the CT opens spaces [51] so that these people are linked to tourist activity and feel useful in the face of an economic system that does not consider them.

In general terms, it can be concluded that CT in Ecuador is socially responsible, by the fact that it has achieved legal recognition to promote sustainable tourism in the communities that practise it. It involves public and private representatives, community residents, stakeholders and visitors in its development. Influenced by a high level of organisation of the communities through a social management model, with the aim of generating positive impacts and distributing them among all members of the community, which inevitably leads to full local development. However, these correct public policies on a national scale would have little interest if responsible local communities did not intervene, far from the decision centers, which naturally practice SR.

While the first interviews conducted may not have been conducted as expected for research of this magnitude, their results were analysed and validated by the theory that addresses the studied segment. As a future line of research, it is possible to recommend the application of the indicators identified here in quantitative studies in Community

Tourism Centres, so that the findings can be contrasted, and the results of the research can be generalised. Furthermore, given that the profile of this tourism segment is precisely a community-based tourism entrepreneur, a sample of national tourism entrepreneurs could be used in future lines of research, given that this information has not yet been compiled in the literature, always much more general in its conclusions.

## Appendix A

Interview script: Points from the semi-structured interview script for small entrepreneurs living in rural communities in the province of Santa Elena

I PART. Actions in general carried out by

1. Social Responsibility
   What general activities do you carry out in the community?
   What responsible activities do you carry out within the community?
   (Level of importance that these activities represent).
   II PART. Dimensions of Social Responsibility (commitments)
2. Economic dimension.
   Most profitable tourism activities carried out by tourism entrepreneurs in the community.
3. Legal dimension (complying with the law)
   Legal activities that are carried out within the legal framework established in Ecuador.
   What legal activities must be complied with in tourism activities within a community?
4. Ethical dimension (being ethical)
   What ethical activities do you carry out in the community to generate tourism development?
5. Philanthropic dimension (being a good citizen):
   List below the philanthropic activities that your community/you voluntarily perform in roles (or activities) that meet social norms.
   III PART. Social Responsibility participation in the TC
   Economic activities
6. What is the status of implementation of SR economic activities in the communities?
   Social activities
7. What is the status of implementation of the CT's SR social activities?
   Environmental activities
8. What is the status of your community's SR environmental activities?
   Motivations
9. Views on their motivations for applying SR in communities
   Obstacles
10. What are the obstacles to implementing SR in the Community?

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