Assessing the Sustainability of the Tourism Initiative in the Rural Parish of Sayausí, Ecuador

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IMPULSANDO MOVIMIENTOS RURALES

ASSESSING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE TOURISM INITIATIVE IN THE RURAL PARISH OF SAYAUSÍ, ECUADOR.

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Abstract

By utilizing the Sustainable Livelihood model, our team assessed the sustainability of tourism in the rural parish of Sayausí, located near Cuenca, Ecuador. In collaboration with our sponsor organization, Turismo Rural Sayausí, we evaluated the feasibility of their tourism initiative by conducting a series of interviews and surveys with organization members and tourists in Cuenca. Our findings indicate that while the organization has access to an excess of natural resources and a solid infrastructure, a lack of formal training and poor financial management limits their potential. Based on this assessment, our team was then able to provide feedback and recommendations to enhance their tourism efforts and improve their sustainability.
Resumen

Utilizando el método de medios de vida sostenibles, nuestro equipo evaluó el sustentabilidad de turismo en la parroquia rural de Sayausí situada cerca de Cuenca, Ecuador. En colaboración con nuestra organización patrocinadora, Turismo Rural Sayausí, evaluamos la viabilidad de su iniciativa turística mediante la realización de una serie de entrevistas y unas encuestas con miembros de la organización y turistas en Cuenca. Nuestros resultados indican que mientras la organización tiene acceso a un exceso de recursos naturales y una infraestructura sólida, la falta de entrenamientos formales y la mala gestión financiera limita su potencial. Basándose en esta evaluación, nuestro equipo fue capaz de dar algunas retroalimentaciones y recomendaciones para mejorar sus esfuerzos turísticos y abordar su sustentabilidad.
Acknowledgements

Our team would like to express our gratitude to our sponsor, Turismo Rural Sayausí, and Marisol Peñaloza for the opportunity to work on this unique project. The knowledge and lessons that we have gained from the experience goes beyond academic expectations. In addition, we would like to thank our professor, Courtney Kurlanska, for her dedication and efforts in helping us reach our greatest potential. Lastly, our team wishes to acknowledge Worcester Polytechnic Institute and the Global Projects Program for the valuable opportunity to complete our Interactive Qualifying Project in Cuenca, Ecuador.
As many local economies shift from service to experience based products, rural communities have the opportunity to capitalize on this shift through tourism initiatives. Often, the sustainability of these rural tourism efforts depends on their community’s resources. The main goal of our research was to assess the feasibility of a successful tourism initiative in the Sayausí Parish, located in Southern Ecuador. We utilized the Sustainable Livelihood Model, developed by DFID and expounded upon by UNDP, as a framework to assess the sustainability for the tourism organization: Turismo Rural Sayausí (UNDP, 2017).

Tourismo Rural Sayausí is a group of about 20 families who showcase rural Sayausí through tour packages that include hiking, gastronomy, and cultural experiences. The community is located just outside of Cuenca and attracts a modest number of tourists, but would like to expand upon these numbers to grow its economy. Through interactions with our sponsor organization during weekly meetings and interviews with its members, we evaluated their existing promotional materials, current resources, and existing tourist activities. In addition, interviews with other local businesses were conducted to examine the resources that the overall community had to offer to tourists. The team then surveyed tourists in Cuenca to gain information regarding tourist trends in consideration of external factors that affect the organization.

Key Strengths

**Strong personnel:** Each member of the Rural Tourism Sayusí has a unique set of skills that they bring to the organization. Members with different practices, such as gastronomy and handcrafts, have been doing it for years, and therefore provide authentic and exemplary service.

**Abundance of natural resources:** As powerful marketing tool, the organization emphasizes its natural landscapes and water sources and the fact that a part of the Parque Nacional Cajas is in Sayausí.

**Strong inter-personal social network:** Turismo Rural Sayausí is filled with personal connections throughout their own and the surrounding communities, given that their preferred method of communication and promotion is through word of mouth. It is through this method of spreading awareness that they have been able to attract tourists to Sayausí.
Key Weaknesses

**Social media presence:** Currently, the organization has a Facebook page and an Instagram account which lacks information and engagement. Given the influence of social media on the tourism industry today, this is viewed as a necessity for improvement.

**Professional inter-organizational relationships:** While the organization currently receives some assistance from the Cuencan Government, a support network of tourism companies would provide a safety net in times of need as well as create a mutual exchange of information that could promote growth.

**Financial Practices:** Currently, Turismo Rural Sayausí does not receive any outside funding, aside from the prize money that they won in a contest, and they do not keep track of any earnings coming in or any expenditure going out. One crucial finding that our team recognized about their monetary condition is that they do not have a group bank account, therefore all participating members split commission after a tour. Furthermore, any organizational expenses must be paid out of pocket by its members which greatly limits the avenues for expansion.

Recommendations & Conclusion

Based on our UNDP sustainability analysis of Turismo Rural Sayausí, we found the organization to be sustainable. This means abundant natural resources and member’s skills help the organization generate consistent business. However, their lack of financial savings and inter-organizational support leaves them vulnerable to economic crises. For this reason, one of our project deliverables was a list of recommendations to alleviate these issues and methods of fulfilling each one.

- **Enhance and establish internal organization structure**
  - Develop and maintain a strong organization structure through the establishment of positions
  - Enhance online presence by utilizing social media platforms and their website more frequently and effectively
  - Implement training classes and/or programs to learn marketing and leadership skills

- **Develop and maintain an organization network**
  - Connect with larger travel organizations, such as TripAdvisor, to spread the word of things to do and see in the community
  - Work together with organizations around Cuenca to advertise the available tours and packages

- **Advocate for positive change that will impact the organization**
  - Advocate for the preservation of natural resources
  - Advocate for government support of tourism initiatives through public relations and/or funding
By implementing these recommendations, we believe they can effectively maintain their strengths while improving on their weaknesses in order to achieve progressive sustainability. Altogether, Turismo Rural Sayausí possesses the potential and the will to improve and grow as an organization. From the day our team started working with them, they were eager to learn and appreciatively accepted constructive criticism. After leaving them with new knowledge, we only hope that each member of the organization truly embraces these recommendations as a small step in a much bigger journey.

Figure 1. Team Impulsando Movimientos Rurales (IMR) with their sponsor
Con las transformaciones de economías locales de servicios a los productos basado en las experiencias, las comunidades rurales tienen la oportunidad para tomar ventaja de esta transformación de iniciativas turísticas. Frequentemente, la sostenibilidad de los esfuerzos de turismo rural depende de los recursos de la comunidad. La principal meta de nuestra investigación es evaluar la viabilidad de una iniciativa del turismo exitosa en la parroquia Sayausí, ubicada en el sur de Ecuador. Utilizamos el modelo de Medios de Vida sostenibles desarrollado por el Departamento para el Desarrollo Internacional y expuesto por la organización Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD), como un marco de referencia para evaluar la sostenibilidad de la organización turística: Turismo Rural Sayausí (UNDP, 2017).

Esta organización es un grupo de 20 familias que ofrecen recorridos por la parroquia rural Sayausí donde podemos observar algunos senderismos, la gastronomía del lugar, y las experiencias culturales. La comunidad ubicada a 30 minutos de Cuenca atrae a los turistas, pero quiere aumentar sus números para crecer la económica de turismo. A través de interacciones con nuestra organización patrocinadora durante las reuniones semanales y entrevistas con sus miembros, evaluamos sus materiales promocionales existentes, recursos actuales, y las actividades turísticas existentes. Además, entrevistas con algunas empresas locales fueron conducidos para examinar los recursos de toda la comunidad que puede ofrecer a las turistas. Después, nuestro grupo hicimos encuestas con turistas de Cuenca para ganar información sobre las tendencias turísticas en consideración con los factores externos que afectan la organización. Según nuestra investigación, nos identificamos algunas fortalezas y debilidades principales de la organización, además hicimos algunas recomendaciones para remediar sus fallos.

**Fortalezas Principales**

**Personal fuerte:** Cada miembro de Turismo Rural Sayausí tiene unas habilidades únicas que usa en la organización. Los miembros de diferentes prácticas, como la gastronomía y la artesanía, lo han estado haciendo durante años, y por eso pueden proveer servicios auténticos y ejemplares.

**Abundancia de recursos naturales:** Como una poderosa herramienta de marketing, la organización enfatiza sus paisajes naturales, fuentes de agua y que un parte del Parque Nacional el Cajas está ubicada en Sayausí.

**Fuerte red social interpersonal:** Turismo Rural Sayausí está lleno de conexiones personales en todas las comunidades propias y en sus alrededores, dado que su método preferido de comunicación y promoción es a través del boca a boca. Usando este método de difusión de la conciencia que han sido capaces de atraer turistas a Sayausí.
Debilidades Principales

**Presencia en redes sociales:** Actualmente, la organización tiene una página de Facebook y una cuenta de Instagram que no tiene mucho información ni participación. Dada la influencia de los medios sociales en la industria turística de hoy, esto se considera una necesidad de mejora.

**Relaciones interorganizacionales profesionales:** Aunque la organización recibe alguna asistencia del Gobierno de Cuenca, una red de apoyo de empresas de turismo proporcionaría una red de seguridad en momentos de necesidad y crearía un intercambio mutuo de información que podría promover el crecimiento de la organización.

**Prácticas financieras:** Turismo Rural Sayausí no recibe ningún financiamiento externo, aparte del dinero del premio que ganó en un concurso, y no realiza un seguimiento de las ganancias que ingresa ni de los gastos que sale. Un hallazgo crucial que nuestro equipo reconoció sobre su condición monetaria es que no tiene una cuenta bancaria grupal, por lo tanto, todos los miembros participantes dividen la comisión después de un recorrido. Además, los gastos de organización deben ser pagado por los miembros y esto limita en gran medida las vías de expansión.

Recomendaciones y Conclusión

Basado en nuestro análisis de sostenible de Turismo Rural Sayausí, el equipo concluyó que la organización es sostenible. Los recursos naturales abundantes y habilidades de los miembros ayudan a la organización a generar negocios constantes. Sin embargo, su falta de ahorro financiero y apoyo interorganizacional estos hacen que la organización sea vulnerable a las crisis económicas. Uno de los resultados de nuestro proyecto fue una lista de recomendaciones para aliviar estos problemas.

- **Mejore y establezca una estructura interna de la organización**
  - Desarrollar y mantener una estructura fuerte de la organización por el establecimiento de posiciones de la organización
  - Establecer la presencia en línea por la utilización de las plataformas de las redes sociales y el sitio web más frecuentemente y efectivamente
  - Implementar cursos de entrenamiento y/o programas para aprender el marketing y habilidades de liderazgo

- **Desarrolle y mantenga una red de la organización**
  - Conectar con empresas de viajes más grande, como Trip Advisor, para compartir las cosas para hacer y ver la comunidad
  - Trabajar con otras organizaciones alrededor de Cuenca para anunciar los recorridos y paquetes

- **Abogue por un cambio positivo que impacte a la organización**
  - Abogar por la preservación de los recursos naturales
  - Abogar por el apoyo del gobierno de las iniciativas turísticas por las relaciones públicos y/o fondos
Al implementar estas recomendaciones, creemos que pueden mantener sus fortalezas al tiempo que mejorar sus debilidades para lograr la sostenibilidad progresiva. En conjunto, Turismo Rural Sayausí posee el potencial y voluntad de mejorar y crecer como una organización. Desde el día en que nuestro grupo comenzó a trabajar con ellos, estaban ansiosos por aprender y aceptaron crítica constructiva. Después de dejarlos con nuevos conocimientos, solo esperamos que cada miembro de la organización realmente acepte estas recomendaciones como un pequeño paso en un viaje mucho más grande.

Figure 2. Team Impulsando Movimientos Rurales (IMR) con su patrocinador
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In order to survive in today’s global world, a community must evolve. Across the planet, rural communities have struggled to adjust to the new global economy. Families that once thrived with small farms struggle to pay school fees and buy supplies. Rural communities see their populations in decline as people migrate out to look for work. Traditional practices are lost as no one is left to carry them on. In an effort to prevent this, some communities turn these practices into initiatives that drive their economies while preserving tradition. These initiatives center on the growing global industry of tourism.

The benefits of tourism do not come without cost. It is expensive, difficult, and time consuming to establish and maintain a successful tourism initiative and not all communities have the resources. Viability also relies heavily on external factors such as tourism trends, economic stability, and sustainable environmental conditions. In community-based tourism specifically, strong communal support is required for success, and accountability and professionalism constitute consistency. In many ways, the sustainability of tourism mirrors that of its community. Because of this, tools such as the Sustainable Livelihood Model, developed by DFID and adapted by the UNDP, may be used to assess the capacity of a community to support prosperous tourism. In this paper, we assessed the feasibility of a successful tourism initiative in the Sayausí Parish of Southern Ecuador. Using the Sustainable Livelihood model, we evaluated the assets and potential for growth of the Sayausí tourism organization: Turismo Rural Sayausí. Based on this research, we identified key weaknesses in the organization and made recommendations to remedy these issues. With these goals in mind, we provided constructive feedback to members of the organization on how best to benefit and develop tourism in their community.
Tourism in Ecuador

With its vast mountain ranges, expansive views, and rich culture, it is no wonder that the number of tourists visiting Ecuador has increased exponentially in the last twenty years. In 2017 alone, over 1.6 million people from all over the world chose this country as a tourist destination (World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2019). Much of the country benefits from some degree of tourism, and rural communities often use it to alleviate economic difficulties (Croes, R. & Rivera, M., 2015). Within these rural communities, geographical barriers and limited resources restrict the influence of local businesses. Tourism is often used as a tool to counteract these limitations by providing a constant stream of visitors to said areas. Many of these tourists come with the intention of partaking in authentic cultural experiences. In that case, many existing models for rural tourism offer these types of excursions, but their effectiveness depends on assets and characteristics of the specific community. Such characteristics often stem from the community’s culture, and the history behind its status. Furthermore, tourism is a fragile industry that is affected by government policies, terrorism, and health complications (Esmail, 2016; Burgess, Jones, Novelli & Ritchie, 2018). Following terrorist attacks and consequent political instability, Egypt experienced a drop in tourism revenue of 50% (Esmail, 2016). Africa also experienced a tourist arrival drop of 7% over two years during the Ebola outbreak (Burgess, Jones, Novelli & Ritchie, 2018). While these regions differ from Ecuador in culture and geographic location, the negative impacts of health crises and disaster affect all types of tourism industries. Despite the fragility of the tourism industry, it’s commonly used as a tool to boost economies of all varieties. For these reasons, it is fundamental to recognize the aspects of tourism in Ecuador and the impact that it has on rural communities.

Figure 3. A map showing the location of Ecuador and the different provinces
Within Ecuador, there are many opportunities for tourism from gastronomic experiences to adventurous tours to historical sites. The diverse ecology of the country makes for a distinct tourist destination. In 2016, around 800,000 tourists visited the Azuay Province, where Cuenca is located (Pérez Gálvez et al., 2017). Of these tourists, around 35% of them were from the United States. Additionally, most of these individuals were between the ages of 15 and 35 and stayed for an average of four to five days (Fundación Municipal Turismo para Cuenca-GIER, 2016; Pérez Gálvez et al., 2017). Traditional Cuenca tourists are backpackers who seek cheap stays and cultural experiences, as well as experiential travelers who are looking to learn about history, ancestral techniques, and local foods (Chaglla, Espinoza-Figueroa, Andrade Tenesaca, & Villafuerte Pucha, 2019). Those looking for adventure benefit from the fact that many of its natural springs, waterfalls, and distinctive ecosystems remain protected and are occupied by some indigenous communities and tourists (Rhoades, 2006). For travelers in search of an adventurous experience, the Cajas and Cotopaxi National Parks offer several activities such as hiking, climbing, and mountain biking (Crowder, 2009).

Moreover, Ecuador also has options for its not-so-daring visitors. Experience-driven tourists can choose to immerse themselves in the culture by listening to musical groups perform distinct styles of Ecuadorian music, such as the “sanjuanito,” or engage in a community food tradition called a *pampamesa* (Carvache-Franco, Carvache-Franco, Borja Morán, & Contreras Mosco, 2018). For the slightly older crowd (between the ages of 35 and 55) that tend to prefer cultural experiences, the country also offers numerous community-based and ethnological excursions (Pérez Gálvez et al., 2017). After all, Ecuador is the third most culturally diverse country in Latin America with a majority mestizo population, several indigenous cultures that make up a quarter of the population, and citizens of European and African descent (World Trade Press [WTP], 2010). Despite these high levels of diversity, many Ecuadorians share similar customs and beliefs, the importance of family, and their love for traditional celebrations. These sentiments are prominent throughout the entire country and often works to overcome racial differences (Handelsman, 2000). Ecuador also experienced decades of colonial oppression, however many indigenous peoples and individuals of indigenous descent have managed to preserve their heritage in surrounding rural regions. As discussed in the side bar, lmost 80% of these individuals currently live in the rural areas of the six provinces of the Central-North mountains, where they still engage in many traditional practices (Sistema Integrado de Indicadores Sociales del Ecuador [SIISE], 2015).

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**Historical Context**

For many decades, colonial rule influenced racism and placed indigenous citizens at the bottom of the social and economic hierarchy (Roitman, 2009). Due to negative perceptions behind the darker tone of their skin and their nature-based values, they were often viewed as lesser (Beck, Mijeski, & Stark, 2011). Since the colonial period, white elites in Ecuador have tried to exclude indigenous bodies from urban markets and streets through government policies that systematically remove street vendors (Heron, Heynen, Swanson & Wright, 2010). Ultimately, this movement displaced indigenous communities to more rural regions, restricting their access to modern resources and their means of earning a living.

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*pampamesa: sharing of traditional food*
Despite this potential to promote cultural tourism, few marketing skills and access to additional resources has made it difficult for rural families to grow their businesses (Pontón, 2008). In addition, recent efforts to formalize street vending in larger Ecuadorian cities, such as Cuenca, has made it unfavorable for individuals living in the surrounding parishes to continue with this approach. To secure a place legally in any of the markets, individuals must register with the municipality, pay a fee to use a specific space, and comply with the city’s restrictions (Ferragut & Gómez, 2013). Although several established vendors have battled through this process, many who have not been in the business for as long do not have the financial condition to comply with these restrictions. One possible method of addressing this issue is by promoting tourism to nearby parishes, or the regions in which many vendors call home, bringing the buyer to the seller may have a positive effect on their livelihood.

Economic Development

If methods of overcoming these obstacles are established, tourism can have a positive financial impact on rural communities. Croes and Rivera (2015) applied a social accounting matrix (SAM) in Ecuador to determine whether tourism can reduce income inequality. By using this model, they could analyze trends to understand if households were benefiting financially from the improve in tourism. Through their findings, tourism development can boost the economy of rural areas by increasing income levels and decreasing the overall levels of poverty (Croes & Rivera, 2015). As previously mentioned, many tourists that come to cities like Cuenca are backpackers. Backpacker tourism is an industry that can also lead to economic development in rural areas due to the travelers’ increased length of stay, in comparison to conventional tourists (Hampton, 2013). Their expenditure is highly significant for these communities, due to their likeliness to buy local goods and services (Hampton, 2013). Although backpacker tourists plan and budget their expenditures, they typically spend more money on leisure activities and experiences, which is key in rural areas (Hampton, 2013). Through the direct economic link of their spending benefiting the poor, it is apparent that tourists can boost these rural economies (Hampton, 2013). In 2016 alone, around 8.8 million of the total foreign currency in Ecuador came from visitors from the United States who had an interest in gastronomy (Pérez Gálvez, Granda, López-Guzmán, & Coronel, 2017). This shows the importance of understanding tourism trends and marketability for the overall economic health of the community.

Figure 4. Tour group in Sayausí
Marketing Tourism in Rural Areas

Since Cuenca is a UNESCO World Heritage site, it is a popular destination for many tourists. However, many do not have enough knowledge on the surrounding parishes and often seek leisure activities only within the city of Cuenca (Pérez Gálvez et al., 2017). The marketing of tourism can positively affect the success of tourism efforts in rural communities by designing a unique image or experience for the tourist. According to the OECD (2012), tourism has the potential to boost economic development when shifting the focus of marketing and promotion to “the three Ss of tourism economic development”: stop, spend, and stay longer. This focus can be broken down into short, medium, and long-term strategies to maximize the outcome of marketing tourism (OECD, 2012). By promoting the “richness of a tourist destination (in terms of scenery, history, and cultural resources),” travelers can create their own vision which differentiates a given community from other possible destinations (Chin et al., 2016). One strategy for creating this unique viewpoint is through arguably the most popular and effective method: food tourism (Tsai & Wang, 2017). Promoting local and authentic food can create an attraction that cultivates an enjoyable and memorable experience for tourists. For this to occur, it is important that consumers first connect to the local brand and develop relationships with the business owners. Tourists must also have a variety of activities, places to stay, and means of transportation available to them in order to want to stay for long periods, make recommendations to others, and possibly come back. The OECD’s research (2012) suggests that through the collaboration of local businesses, such as restaurants, craft or textile merchants, and hostels, tourism can thrive to benefit all stakeholders involved.

It is crucial that all aspects of tourism are advertised cohesively to achieve great success. An effective method of doing so is through the previously mentioned use of online resources. Some argue that online marketing is “the most important avenue to reach potential responsible travelers” (Self, Self, & Bell-Haynes, 2010). Social media, especially, has been a significant endorser of tourism. With the help of social networking and media-sharing services, such as ideas and products expand their market by reaching a wider audience. Through services such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, tourists can share and discuss images, videos, feelings, and experiences with the click of a button. For this reason, social media platforms can significantly influence the perception of sites (Jansson, 2018). Destination images, for instance, play a “considerable role in tourists’ decision-making process for destination selection” (Kim, Lee, Shin, & Yang, 2017). According to research done by MDG Advertising, a substantial number of travelers turn to social media to find trip inspiration. In addition, about 74% of travelers use social media networks to gain more information while on vacation.
Whether it is during or after their trip, about 60% of overall tourists and 97% of Millennials post photos on their social networking pages to showcase their experience abroad (Del Gigante, 2018). Based on this information, it is evident that social media is a dominating influence in the tourism industry. Therefore, it is necessary for a lesser-known destination, such as rural areas new to tourism, to market their assets online using images and videos.

In 2016, the University of Cuenca conducted a study to determine tourist demands within the city. In terms of acquiring information about the destination before visiting, the data collected showed that almost half of the travelers that visited Cuenca seemed to gather insight from family and friends, while about 30% said that they preferred to use online resources. Amongst these online resources, the use of Google and TripAdvisor surpassed all other online sites by over 80% (Fundación Municipal Turismo para Cuenca-GIER, 2016). This highlights the importance of online resources when attempting to advertise for tourism in a less-known area. Given that 90.2% of foreign tourists claim that they prefer to organize their own trips, it is crucial for an area that is new to tourism to provide more details and advertisements about what they have to offer online and to the proper audience (Fundación Municipal Turismo para Cuenca-GIER, 2016).

Sustainable Tourism

Tourism is a double-edged sword with respect to sustainability. Depending on its implementation, it has the potential to promote cultural awareness and environmental protection, or to counteract their efforts. Sustainable tourism seeks to develop communities while maintaining their environmental, economic, and social integrity (McAreavey & McDonagh, 2011). This form of tourism aims primarily to benefit the host community using benefits that tourists recognize and appreciate. In a survey of tourists’ opinions of sustainability in Saint Lucia, 99% agreed on the importance of environmental protection, 92% felt it was important to support the local economy, and 88% agreed it is important to meet and interact with locals (Nicholas & Thapa, 2010). Consequently, sustainable tourism may act as both a conservation practice and an appeal to consumers.

Tourism Models

Models of sustainable tourism often involve some form of connection between the host and consumer to develop a mutual respect for each other’s wellbeing. The goal of these models is to both financially and socially develop the host community and environment while simultaneously providing a meaningful experience for the consumer. While a variety of effective models exist, we found the following to be most applicable to rural communities in Ecuador.
Community Based Tourism

Community based tourism is a sustainable tourism model in which local populations have complete control over tourism revenue. The model allows the communities interested in promoting local tourism to form organizations that self-operate in order to ensure socio-ecological benefits. This type of tourism is often combined with production activities and local services provided by members of the community (Anghel, Juganaru & Juganaru, 2008). The effects of this model and its implications on communities are beneficial, such as in the case of the rural Ecuadorian community of Aguas Blanca (Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011). This community is located near the coast of Ecuador and consists of approximately 260 members. In order to generate revenue, the community highlights its cultural artifacts and practices to attract tourists from all areas of the country. Local part time guides organize and run tours in the community, which provides the backbone for sustainability within this industry. The guides possess a degree of economic resilience through their involvement in dual occupations. Due to reliable incomes separate from tours, such as working in a hardware store, changes in tourism trends do not drastically hinder their finances. Tour guide education and practice also play a role in the preservation of culture. Tour guides regularly update and improve their cultural knowledge through conversations with members of the community; this enacts a memory exercise for the community with the constant circulation of cultural information. This flow of information ensures preservation of historical practices and beliefs (Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011). In accordance with self-organization aspects of community-based tourism, the model allows for autonomous tour operations with reflexive benefits to cultural preservation.

The Experience Economy

The experience economy model identifies the development of the modern economy from service to experience based. The model highlights the importance of selling experiences rather than goods in order to better appeal to customers (Pine and Gilmore, 2011). This model is especially relevant in rural communities where local heritage and activities unique to the area are the center of tourism (Loureiro, 2014). Co-production is a common aspect of experience economies that increases the value of goods by including the consumer in their creation. Activities such as cooking and making handcrafts create an experience around the product that may develop into a meaningful memory (Maria, 2015). Effective implementation of the experience economy involves emphasis on factors such as entertainment, education, esthetics, and escapism. Entertainment involves passive observation of activities or festivals, while education involves participation in order to obtain knowledge. Esthetics refers to the physical beauty of an area, and escapism emphasizes a departure from one’s normal environment (Loureiro, 2014). In consideration of these factors, the experience economy model may be consulted to better develop a rural tourism experience.
Evaluating Tourism Initiatives

Sustainable livelihood frameworks exist to assess the stability of communities and formulate action plans to alleviate their difficulties. Currently, there are three prominent models that were created by three different development organizations: United Nations Development Program (UNDP), CARE, and the Department for International Development (Krantz, 2001). Of these three models, UNDP’s is most applicable for our purposes due to its emphasis on the environmental preservation and its focus on program implementation. By understanding a community based on these aspects, one may then develop a plan to address their needs.

The UNDP model was originally developed by the Department for International Development in 1999 and expanded upon by UNDP in 2017. This model evaluates a community’s assets based on five core capitals: human, social, physical, natural, and financial (UNDP, 2017). These capitals are the basis for a community’s internal structure and have a direct effect on the capabilities of that community. The definitions of these capitals can be found below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human</td>
<td>- Abilities &amp; experience of members&lt;br&gt;- Available personnel&lt;br&gt;- Developed through implementation of training programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>- Amount of natural resources&lt;br&gt;- Accessibility of natural resources&lt;br&gt;- Developed through improved accessibility&lt;br&gt;- Maintained through environmental preservation efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>- Available savings &amp; non-liquid assets&lt;br&gt;- Reliable inflows of money&lt;br&gt;- Can be easily transformed into other forms of capitals&lt;br&gt;- Developed through consistent financial discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>- General infrastructure of the community&lt;br&gt;- Access to clean water and energy&lt;br&gt;- Access to information (especially via internet)&lt;br&gt;- Developed through improved infrastructure by the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>- Networks and connections within the community&lt;br&gt;- Official intercommunity relationships&lt;br&gt;- Developed through improved corporate structure or expanded social networks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Explanation of the five capitals from the UNDP’s model (UNDP, 2017)
Rural Tourism and Development

Tourism’s positive effects on communities has made it a prime strategy for rural development (Chin, Lo, & Ramayah, 2016). Specifically, touristic benefits are a product of abundance in capitals that allows for tourism structures that in turn results in polished tourism experiences. Natural and financial capital provide resources for tourism programs and activities. Human and physical capitals result in tourism centers and tourism employee training to improve the consumer experience. However, the relationships in UNDP’s livelihood model allows for dynamic relationships in which an increase in capital products can increase their respective capital (UNDP, 2017). The model is also flexible enough to be applied organizations as well as communities. The sustainability of an organization may then be assessed based on its resources, and factors that affect its trade. Specifically, we applied UNDP’s sustainable livelihood model to a rural tourism initiative in Ecuador. While the organization is technically separate from its community, it still draws much of its resources from its location and community infrastructure.

Limits to Physical Capital in Rural Communities

Fundamentally, rural tourism already has some disadvantages when it comes to tourism initiatives, with a significant one being restricted physical capital. In assessing the physical assets of a community in relation to tourism, two key areas to look at are transportation and internet access (UNDP, 2017). Limited access to transportation creates social inequalities and restricts economic development in most rural communities (Keeling, 2008). In addition, it can discourage tourists from venturing outside of their comfort zone and visiting other, less-popular areas. Many families in rural regions of Ecuador suffer from inadequate transportation within the region as well as to surrounding cities, such as Cuenca (AZD, 2019). This is an issue, given that the most feasible way to travel to these areas is by bus or taxi from larger cities. According to a study done by the University of Cuenca, the Municipal Government of Cuenca does not “include its [transportation] planning in the rural sector” even though about 120,000 rural inhabitants migrate daily to the city (Flores, García, Chica, & Mora, 2017). According to the sustainable livelihoods model, this issue stems from a lack of physical capital that tourism may improve. Infrastructure improvements in response to increased tourism would benefit the community’s overall stability. This is an example of the reciprocal nature of capitals discussed above.

In addition, reliable access to the internet is crucial in the management and promotional aspects of introducing tourism to a new region (Self, Self, & Bell-Haynes, 2010). In many rural sectors of the Azuay province, the only reliable and free internet is within city parks or at one of the 51 infocenters located in Cuenca. However, due to the transportation issue, access to these resources is not always attainable in rural communities (Gobierno de la Republica del Ecuador, n.d.). This hinders the rural people’s reach to tourists and the tourist’s knowledge of these communities (Gobierno de la Republica del Ecuador, n.d.).
Turismo Rural Sayausí

In effort to improve the lives of rural community members, the community-based tourism initiative, Turismo Rural Sayausí was created. This organization, in partnership with EDEC and the Tourism Foundation for Cuenca, has worked to develop three different tours of Sayausí that are available to the public: Sabores de mi Saya (Flavors of Sayausí), Saya Natural (Natural Sayausí), and Ruta de los Arrieros (Route of the Muleteers) (El Tiempo Diario de Cuenca, 2018). These tours include methods of getting to know the local customs of the region and opportunities to interact with the community (Empresa Publica Municipal De Desarrollo Economico de Cuenca, 2018). It is not the benefit of specific members of the community, but rather on bringing people to Sayausí.

Figure 6. Turismo Rural Sayausí at a tourism competition
Determined and mapped the network of tourism resources in the community of Sayausí.

Evaluated the offerings promoted by Turismo Rural Sayausí and their appeal.

Consulted tourists around Cuenca to identify tourist trends and what activities in the Sayausí Parish were of interest to them.

Figure 7. Team IMR with members of the community in Sayausí
Objective 1: Determined and Mapped the Network of Tourism Resources

In order to determine what tourism resources were available within the Sayausí Parish, we first engaged in participant observation through weekly community visits. This first step helped us to gain knowledge about the people while learning more about their trade of choice without us infringing on their work (De Munck, 1998). During participant observation, we took notes in accordance with memorable aspects of the experience. We consulted field notes to recall both positive and negative aspects that affected our perception of the experience (De Munck, 1998).

We conducted ten semi-structured interviews with members of the community, including a bank employee, taxi driver, and many other business owners, to gain information about the resources in Sayausí available to tourists. The information collected was regarding the background of their business, methods of running the business and of acquiring resources, along with their current participation in the tourist organization. Other information we asked was regarding the community and current tourist attractions in the area. These semi-structured interviews allowed for slight deviation from the topic and questions were adjusted to match the needs and careers of the people being interviewed. Examples of the interview questions are in English in Appendix B and the Spanish translations in Appendix C. All team members were present during this interview, but only one or two group members talked during the interview as to not overwhelm the interviewee (Beebe, 2014). The team held these interviews based on the availability of the participants, which lasted about 15 to 20 minutes each. We recorded and then translated the interviews with the interviewee’s permission.

Data collected regarding tourism resources was compiled and organized based on the capitals of the Sustainable Livelihood model. The group mapped the compiled information to determine the networks available in Sayausí and which capital categories were prevalent and lacking. This information was placed into the respective categories of the model to better understand Sayausí as a whole community in relation to the offerings.
Objective 2: Evaluated Turismo Rural Sayausí’s Offerings

The second step that the team took to achieve our overarching goal was to evaluate Turismo Rural Sayausí’s offerings and its appeal to tourists. The main purpose of this objective was to better understand the resources of the organization in order to evaluate its capitals. (UNDP, 2017). To accomplish this, we used observations and interviews to gather data on the tourist attractions. We attended the organization’s weekly meetings over a series of seven weeks to observe and improve our understanding of the organization. Throughout these meetings, we had the chance to plan visits to the community. Throughout these community visits, we did a variety of activities including participating in tours, visiting members of the organization, and conducting interviews. The interviews were recorded with permission, had no time limit, and were casual to allow for slight deviations and expansion (Berg, 2012). Interview questions inquired about the experience and training of tour personnel, as well as the extent of collaboration between the community members. The strongest Spanish speakers of the team then translated the responses to the interviews. The specific questions from the interviews are in English in Appendix D and translated into Spanish in Appendix E. We organized the collected information based on how they contribute to the five capitals of the Sustainable Livelihoods Model.

Data analysis happened during the interview period, once necessary data was collected. Based on the analysis of the interviews, we were able to give the people constructive feedback and advice to enhance their marketability to tourists. This feedback was provided at the next Turismo Rural Sayausí meeting, if all members agreed upon it. This process was not one-sided, as Turismo Rural Sayausí members’ responses and considerations were used to adjust feedback as necessary. The goal of the analysis and feedback was not to change their practice, but rather to adjust the experience to highlight engaging aspects.

The group formed categories based on aspects of the organization that contributed to specific capitals. The coded information for each capital was identified as a strength or weakness of these categories and then factored into a score. For each capital, the total score amounted to 20 to represent their equal weight. Categories were usually scored out of five with the exception of interorganizational relationships which was weighted as twice as important as the other categories in social capital. This information was ultimately used to calculate the internal stability of Turismo Rural Sayausí. We also evaluated Turismo Rural Sayausí’s online resources and presence. We executed a social media audit by reviewing their online platforms to gather data regarding their social media engagement, success of posts, follower demographics, traffic sources, etc. We also evaluated their online presence by searching the internet for any information released by the organization or mentioned about the organization. The team then interpreted and organized this data into quantitative and qualitative data, which allowed us to provide the organization with helpful tools to boost their online presence and enhance their marketing tactics.
Objective 3: Consulted Tourists

Once the group gained an understanding of the assets of Turismo Rural Sayausí and the resources of Sayausí, data was collected from tourists in Cuenca concerning the appeal and importance of said resources. A survey was constructed using the Survey Monkey software application and translated into Spanish for Spanish-speaking tourists. The surveys asked eight noninvasive questions about the tourists’ tourism preferences and their method of obtaining travel information. These questions allowed the group to gauge the appeal of Turismo Rural Sayausí’s attractions as well as how to better market to tourists in Cuenca. Examples of questions asked for the survey can be found in English in Appendix F and in Spanish in Appendix G. The survey was distributed to tourists in and around Cuenca, especially near popular attractions. The group interviewed 59 tourists using convenience sampling with a variety of backgrounds and reasons for visiting Cuenca. This allowed for ease of population selection and using who was available to us at any time of the day (LeCompte & Schensul, 2013).

Data was collected and stored by the survey software and manually exported into Microsoft Excel. The questions were then categorized with respect to the capital categories that were prevalent in Turismo Rural Sayausí’s network. Questions regarding tour preferences were used to develop recommendations in order to improve tourist experiences. Using this information, tourism trends in Cuenca were assessed as well as how they align with Turismo Rural Sayausí’s offerings.

Surveys were also distributed to the WPI students and professor who participated in Sayausí tours during the data collection period. These surveys asked basic questions about the difficulty, authenticity, and enjoyment of the tours. Examples of questions asked are in Appendix H. This data served to identify weak points and highlights of the tour, which were reformatted into suggestions for improvement. During analysis, it was acknowledged that the limited number of tours and responses could not be effectively used to evaluate consistency in quality. This information was therefore used primarily as initial feedback based on individual experiences.
Between Cuenca and El Cajas lies the tranquil community of Sayausí: The Fountain of Life. Its mountainous landscape accounts for its natural beauty, which is highly cherished by its people. It is within this community that a group of individuals decided to display their “Pachamama”* and all that it has to offer, by creating a tourism organization called Turismo Rural Sayausí. This association began three years, in an effort to share the wonders that Sayausí has to offer. To achieve this goal, the organization provides tour packages to visitors, which often include a hiking route, along with cultural and gastronomic experiences. In order to get a better understanding of the organization, what they do, and what they have to offer, our team embarked on a journey and tried out one of their tours.

The day before our tour of Sayausí, our tour guide advised us to wear hiking gear and warned that we would be walking on water. We headed to the bus stop early the next morning, in hiking gear with the expectation of getting wet. Soft clouds blanketed the sky, but enough sun shone through to reveal the gorgeous mountainside. Our tour guide asked if we were ready, “Están listos?”, and we began our hike in hopes to see several waterfalls and great landscapes along the way. Our first stop was to view a hundred-year-old tree. Its rugged trunk, whose perimeter was large enough to be embraced by twelve students, did in fact depict the Arbol Longevo’s old age. Our group, however, did not seem to find this experience as exciting as the tour guide did, although we did have a great laugh and took several funny pictures. We then continued to walk up narrow and wet pathways filled with rocks and plants. The sound of the water streaming through the trails brought a sense of calmness and made some of us forget that we were covered in sweat and mud. Fresh rain had transformed the ground into a thick paste of dirt, and one person sunk knee-deep into the mud. We all stopped for a great laugh and then continued on our way, in hopes of finding waterfalls. The route seemed to extend forever, and many of us hoped to find rest stop, bathroom, or at somewhere to take a break. Thankfully, we were regularly distracted by vast landscapes covered in unpolished greenery and waterfalls whose crashing waters could be heard from distances away. During our tour, the tour guide also told the story of the muleteers of Azuay. The muleteers were alcohol smugglers during Ecuador’s prohibition and used to use the very path we walked on. Getting to know more about the history of the place brought a personal touch to our hike, which at this point had been ongoing for about three hours. Once we were nearly at our final stop, we reached the bottom of massive hill that seemed to rise forever. While looking up the steeply sloped landscape, our group unanimously decided to decline the challenge and head back down the mountain for lunch. Hungry and relieved to be stepping on more solid ground, we were guided to Julia’s house, where she and the rest of the organization’s gastronomy members served us a traditional Ecuadorian meal. The savory aromas of soup, cilantro, and an open-fire roast filled the room and reminded us how long it’d been since our last meal. We sat down at a long dining table and enjoyed an appetizer soup, freshly squeezed mora juice, and a plate full of rice, salad, and their most treasured source of protein: guinea pig meat.

*Pachamama: Mother Earth
Once our stomachs were full, we took a few minutes to rest and try to digest the massive meal we just consumed. It was about two in the afternoon and the sun had come out from behind the clouds when members of the organization summoned us to a field located directly in front of Julia’s house. Before we walked out into the grass-filled area, other members of the organization had laid out items for a traditional Andean ritual called the Chakana. Sayausí members encouraged us to partake in this compelling tradition and concluded our adventure-filled day with a lively game of soccer. Although this experience was enjoyable, it was also a learning experience for us, who worked in collaboration with Turismo Rural Sayausí. While we did acquire many findings through interviews conducted with the members of the organization, it was in our best interest to have a personal understanding of how they operate. This allowed us to highlight important findings, make more accurate assertions, and provide applicable recommendations for the future.
Findings

Findings were organized into internal and external factors of the Sustainable Livelihood model that affect the sustainability of the organization. In our evaluation, we consider the internal factors, the five capitals, and rank each one on a 0-20 scale as described below. External factors however are not related to the five capitals but are variables such as tourism trends and interests over which the organization has no control, but that nonetheless influence the sustainability of the initiative. We found that while Turismo Rural Sayausí benefits from abundant natural and human capital, its sustainability is limited by unsustainable financial capital and weak social capital due to a lack of relationships with other organizations. Furthermore, Cuencan tourism trends currently align with the organization’s strengths, and environmental preservation efforts limit environmental shocks or damage.

Figure 14. Turismo Rural Sayausí’s tour offerings

Figure 15. Turismo Rural Sayausí
Internal factors consisted of the five core capitals, which were evaluated individually with similar scales. Each capital was broken down into categories that contributed to its overall evaluation. These categories were specific to their capital and the overall score indicated its degree of sustainability. Scores from 0 to 3 were indicative of unsustainability, 4 to 7 indicated limited sustainability, 8 to 11 indicated sustainability, 12 to 15 indicated progressive sustainability, and 16 to 20 indicated abundant capital. The group decided upon these evaluations based on data from the interviews with organization and community members.

![Capital Pentagon](image)

*Figure 16. The capital pentagon shows the resources of the organization*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital</th>
<th>Human</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Financial</th>
<th>Natural</th>
<th>Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Score for each capital*

Internal factors consisted of the five core capitals, which were evaluated individually with similar scales. Each capital was broken down into categories that contributed to its overall evaluation. These categories were specific to their capital and the overall score indicated its degree of sustainability. Scores from 0 to 3 were indicative of unsustainability, 4 to 7 indicated limited sustainability, 8 to 11 indicated sustainability, 12 to 15 indicated progressive sustainability, and 16 to 20 indicated abundant capital. The group decided upon these evaluations based on data from the interviews with organization and community members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$0 \leq Sc &lt; 4$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$4 \leq Sc &lt; 8$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$8 \leq Sc &lt; 12$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$12 \leq Sc &lt; 16$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$16 \leq Sc \leq 20$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3. Sustainability Levels based on capital scores*

This chart indicates the different levels of sustainability for each capital. The scores for each capital were calculated and assigned to one of these levels.
Assessment

Table 4. Human capital score breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Employee Skill</th>
<th>Skill Variety</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Investment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turismo Rural Sayausí’s human capital benefits from members with a diverse set of skills; however, its development is limited by a lack of training programs, and dual occupation lifestyles. Evaluation of the organization’s human capital was separated into four categories: employee skill, skill variety, available personnel, and personal investment. Each category was evaluated on a scale of 0 to 5 with 5 indicating an abundance of capital, and 0 representing none. The organization received a score of 4 for employee skill due to members’ proficiency in their respective trades, but relatively little tourism experience. Skill variety received a score of 4 as well due to a variety of skillsets displayed by members, but a noticeable lack of administrative and marketing experts. Available personnel also received a score of 4 because of Turismo Rural Sayausí’s adequate but not abundant number of members. For personnel investment, the organization received a score of 2. This is because almost all members do not rely on the organization as a primary source of income, and therefore must prioritize other occupations. This results in a total evaluation of 14 for Turismo Rural Sayausí’s human capital, which indicates progressive sustainability. However, in order to develop this capital, the organization must improve and emphasize training programs. This development is not currently necessary to achieve sustainability but may be required in accordance with shocks from external factors.
Human Capital

Details

The organization consists of 22 active members with varying skills and responsibilities. These member’s names, responsibilities and years involved in the organization can be found in the sunburst chart.

![Sunburst Chart of Turismo Rural Sayausí Personnel](image)

This information retrieved during the interview with the president of Turismo Rural Sayausí, and confirmed through interviews with other members. Of the 22 members, 16 have been involved since the organization formed three years ago; five have been involved for two years, and one for one year. With the exceptions of photography, first aid, and traditional ancestral ceremonies, more than one member shares all responsibilities.

Amongst the ten categories, responsibilities include food related services, product production, and musical entertainment. Of the seven members that we interviewed, all of them learned their trade as children and developed their craft over time. However, most of the members have jobs outside of their involvement in tourism and prioritize their careers over their involvement in the organization.
Over the past six months, two implemented training programs designed to better the members’ tourism marketing skills had very little success. One program was started and lead by one of the leaders of Turismo Rural Sayausí. This program was meant to teach members of the organization computing skills in order to help improve their online presence and marketability. The president of the organization established another training program that was run by a Gap-Year student from the U.S. This program consisted of free, weekly English classes open to all members of the organization. Currently, no members of the organization can speak conversational English, and these classes were meant to remedy this. However, both programs were ended soon after beginning due to a lack of attendance. Interviewed members of the organization mainly attributed these failures to a lack of emphasis by the organization, and other engagements.

Despite members having little tourism experience and training, some members recently participated in a training program hosted by the University of Cuenca. These classes specified in management of ecological and community tourism, which members participated in over the course of three months. However, there is still lack of training regarding leadership, which will be important for the future success of the organization. Without effective leadership skills, the organization will lack consistency and motivation to continue to work toward their goals.

In terms of their web usage, the organization currently has a very poor online presence. They do not utilize their Facebook and Instagram pages frequently or consistently, with their last posts being in October of 2019. It is also important to note the lack of posts between March and August of 2019, leaving a large gap of online engagement. This inconsistency results in only 543 Facebook pages likes and 155 Instagram followers, after being an organization for three years, with little to no engagement in posts. Tourists participating in their tours rarely post about the tours, therefore they have very few tagged posts and Facebook recommendations. When using common search engines, such as Google, it is very difficult to find any information about the parish and the organization because of their inadequate SEO*. This poor use of social media and absence of an online presence is due to the lack of knowledge and training. The organization is unsure of how to use their social media platforms effectively due to the lack of awareness of the importance of social media. This also relates to their lack of understanding the significance of having an organization website. In February of 2020, they had a Gap-Year student from the U.S. create a website using a free platform, Wix. However, the website lacks information and searchability. Despite its unfinished state, no other member of Turismo Rural Sayausí is currently working to remedy this problem, due to the lack of knowledge and training in this regard.

*SEO: search engine optimization
Natural Capital

Assessment

Turismo Rural Sayausi benefits from an abundance of natural capital due to its proximity to El Cajas National Park. This capital was analyzed based on evaluation of four aspects of Turismo Rural Sayausi’s natural resources: tourism use, community use, accessibility, and conservation. These categories were based on a scale of 0 to 5 with 5 indicating an abundance of capital, and 0 representing none. Because the organization effectively bases almost all of its tours on nature walks and hikes, it received a score of 5 for tourism use. Community use also received a score of 5 because of the community’s agriculturally based economy that makes avid use of the landscape. The score for accessibility of the natural capital was determined to be 3, due to generally unrestricted access with the exception of some private property, government regulated preservation areas, and its poorly maintained hiking trails. Conservation of Sayausi’s natural resources is generally good due to its location in a National Park, however farming and general land use has a negative impact on the area. Because of these factors, conservation received a score of 4. This amounts to an evaluation of 17 for natural capital, which qualifies as abundant.

Table 5. Natural capital score breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Tourism Use</th>
<th>Community Use</th>
<th>Accessibility</th>
<th>Conservation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 19. One of the many waterfalls of Sayausi
El Cajas National Park has an area of 70,000 acres and is located to the North-West of Cuenca. The park consists entirely of mountains, that reach altitudes of 4,500 meters, and isolated lakes and rivers scattered throughout this area. The range provides a multitude of official and unofficial hiking paths well known to locals. Turismo Rural Sayausí extensively uses these paths in all their hiking tour packages. Many of the paths have a history of use dating back to Incan rule and colonialization. Trails include extensive rivers, isolated waterfalls, and hikes up and through mountains bordering the edges of Cuenca and Sayausí. These trails often have different routes to account for various skillsets, and many of them may also be accessed by horse if necessary. Most trails are not consistently maintained, but members of the community or the organization remedy any severe damage to the trail. Turismo Rural Sayausí tours also display its natural resources through all-natural gastronomic practices. Meals provided during tours are usually traditional dishes made using ingredients from Sayausí such as Trucha and Cuy. Furthermore, tourists are often taken through different fruit and vegetable gardens in the community and allowed to try various locally grown products.

This rural landscape also provides plentiful opportunity for agricultural practices by community members. Farms and gardens flourish through the rural area, and as a result, local restaurants use domestic ingredients almost exclusively. Due to the popularity of agriculture, a farmer’s market is held every Sunday where locally grown and produced products may be purchased. Since the Cajas environment supports the agricultural background of Sayausí, numerous environmental organizations make preservation efforts. Sayausí benefits from standard protected area status due to its location in a national park, and its location outside of Cuenca limits pollution in the area. In addition, the government organization ETAPA sections off areas of the park for preservation and water filtration purposes. However, even with the existence of private properties scattered throughout the region, these restricted areas do not have drastic negative impacts on the area’s accessibility.
Financial Capital

Assessment

Based on interviews with Turismo Rural Sayausí members and Sayausí Government officials, it was determined that the organization effectively has little to no financial capital. Financial capital was organized into four categories which were ranked on a scale of 0 to 5 in accordance with the other capitals. The categories were financial savings, regular financial support, financial recordkeeping, and non-liquid assets. Financial savings referred to any savings of the organization, as well as efforts to maintain and grow them. Turismo Rural Sayausí recently won a rural tourism contest with a monetary prize and therefore received a score of 2 for this category. The organization received a score of 0 for regular financial support because they do not receive any consistent funding from the Sayausí Government or other institutions. Turismo Rural Sayausí doesn’t keep any permanent financial records of expenses or income and received a score of 0 for this category as well. Finally, any non-liquid assets used by Turismo Rural Sayausí belong to individual members and not the organization. As a result, the organizations non-liquid assets were evaluated as a 0. The total score of 2 for Turismo Rural Sayausí’s financial capital is an indication of unsustainability. However, there is potential for development through government funding and organizational funds that the association is currently trying to obtain.

Table 6. Financial capital score breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Current Savings</th>
<th>Regular Support</th>
<th>Liquid Assets</th>
<th>Financial Records</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 21. Turismo Rural Sayausí received second place at a tourism competition
Financial Capital

Details

Currently, Turismo Rural Sayausí has no organizational savings account, or any source of consistent funding. Money received from tours is distributed evenly among participants and none is saved as part of organizational funds. Consequently, tour revenue is the only flow of money into the business. This creates a legitimate issue where any expenses that can be conducted to benefit the organization must be paid out of pocket by its members. Furthermore, no financial records are kept of income and expenses for each tour as well as who participated in said tour. Because of this, the organization has no more than a rough approximation of yearly income. This lack of financial records also means expenses are not recorded and if additional resources are required for tours, exact pricing is difficult to determine. Therefore, financial details are usually decided upon at organizational meetings the week of the tour, and no minutes or records of pricing discussion are kept. These prices are consistently within the $15-$25 range but vary based on the type of the tour and number of participants. This lack of record-keeping also makes it difficult to identify and react to tourism trends for the community. Acknowledging these trends can help to distinguish areas for improvement to increase resistance to external shocks. Another contribution to this resistance would be non-liquid assets that Turismo Rural Sayausí has at its disposal. Accumulation of these assets would provide a source of funding if necessary. However, all non-liquid assets utilized by the organization belong to individual members rather than Turismo Rural Sayausí. This creates a similar situation to the one above in which emergency funds needed for the organization must be paid by its members either in cash, or through liquidation of their personal assets.

While Turismo Rural Sayausí possesses limited current forms of financial capital, they are taking steps to remedy this. One solution is through the Bank of Ecuador that provides some tourism organizations with credit loans depending on their popularity. Tourism organizations have the opportunity to apply for these loans, and the amount given depends largely on the reputation of the organization, and its apparent appeal to tourists. For example, Trout Farms are very popular in Ecuador and consequently receive a large portion of Bank of Ecuador’s tourism loan budget. Since Turismo Rural Sayausí recently received funding from placing in a tourism competition in which organizations compete by showcasing different aspects of their tours. Turismo Rural Sayausí plans to utilize to improve their lodging options and reform or create new bathrooms along some of their longest hiking routes. These options provide avenues for temporarily improved financial capital for the organization.
Assessment

The physical capital of Turismo Rural Sayausí is based almost entirely on the infrastructure of Sayausí. To assess this, physical capital was broken into four categories and assessed on the same 0 through 5 scale as the other capitals. Its categories were transportation, buildings, access to energy and clean water, and access to information. Transportation was evaluated as a 4 due to ease and variety of public transportation in and out of Sayausí, despite some restrictions by poor road quality. Buildings referred to available commercial space of the organization and was evaluated as a 1. This is due to a lack of any commercial space for Turismo Rural Sayausí, however, members are comfortable using their private property for company operations. Due to its proximity to Cuenca, Sayausí has ample access to clean water and energy which resulted in an evaluation of 5 for that category. Approximately 60% of Turismo Rural Sayausí members have access to internet, however, the internet is often unreliable. This limited access justified an evaluation of two for the organization’s access to information. This evaluation amounts to a total of 12 which barely qualifies as progressively sustainable for Turismo Rural Sayausí.

Table 7. Physical capital score breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Transportation</th>
<th>Buildings</th>
<th>Energy &amp; Water Access</th>
<th>Accessibility of Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The physical capital of Turismo Rural Sayausí is based almost entirely on the infrastructure of Sayausí. To assess this, physical capital was broken into four categories and assessed on the same 0 through 5 scale as the other capitals. Its categories were transportation, buildings, access to energy and clean water, and access to information. Transportation was evaluated as a 4 due to ease and variety of public transportation in and out of Sayausí, despite some restrictions by poor road quality. Buildings referred to available commercial space of the organization and was evaluated as a 1. This is due to a lack of any commercial space for Turismo Rural Sayausí, however, members are comfortable using their private property for company operations. Due to its proximity to Cuenca, Sayausí has ample access to clean water and energy which resulted in an evaluation of 5 for that category. Approximately 60% of Turismo Rural Sayausí members have access to internet, however, the internet is often unreliable. This limited access justified an evaluation of two for the organization’s access to information. This evaluation amounts to a total of 12 which barely qualifies as progressively sustainable for Turismo Rural Sayausí.

Figure 22. One of Sayausí’s camionetas available as a transportation option
Details

The majority of Turismo Rural Sayausí’s physical capital benefits from the Sayausí community infrastructure. There are three forms of public transportation in and out of Sayausí, and they vary proportionally with convenience and price. Bus line 3 is the only line that runs in and out of Sayausí from 6:00 AM to 7:00 PM. A one-way bus ride costs 30 cents and takes approximately 30 minutes each way. Line 3 has stops conveniently located around Cuenca’s center and stops at few locations throughout Sayausí. Taxis are another popular form of travel between Cuenca and Sayausí, and are available Monday through Friday from 5:30 AM to 11:00 PM. Taxis are also available throughout the day on weekends, but availability varies at night. To get from Cuenca’s center to Sayausí in a taxi it costs approximately five dollars, but fares are increased in response to poor roads. Camionetas are another option of travel in which a driver may pick you up at a specified location, upon request, and bring you to Sayausí. One specific camioneta company, Transervidirect C.A., is prominent in Sayausí and it consists of five cars and drivers. The price of a camioneta is the same as a taxi, and poor road quality will also increase the fare.

Avenue Ordóñez Lasso is the main road that runs through Sayausí center and is kept in good condition due to its frequent use and connection to Cuenca. However, paths branching off this main road almost immediately become unkempt dirt roads. These roads extend throughout the majority of Sayausí to both residential areas and businesses. These roads aren’t impassible, but they do make travel difficult and expensive. Turismo Rural Sayausí consistently requests for allocation of funds and labor to improve the roads, but it is a slow process.

As for commercial space, Turismo Rural Sayausí does not have a dedicated building for the organization. They used to use a local infocenter as a workspace and meeting place, however for governmental reasons, they no longer use it. Instead, the organization meets at various members’ houses as well as any available space such as open rooms in the Town Hall. The inconsistency of location can sometimes lead to confusion and members are consistently late to weekly meetings. Access to information is not as restrictive, however, as approximately 60% of members have access to WIFI in their homes. While the WIFI in Sayausí is not as reliable as in the city, this has not caused any major issues for the tourism group.
Assessment

The social capital of Turismo Rural Sayausí is particularly strong within the organization, but weak in relation to local organizational ties. The evaluation of social capital was divided into three categories: intra-organizational relationships, local organizational relationships, and international organizational relationships. Local organizational relationships and international organizational relationships were weighted on a five-point scale similar to those in other capitals, but intra-organizational relationships were weighted on a ten-point scale to account for the extreme importance of smooth internal operations. Therefore, intra-organizational relationships received an evaluation of 5. Due to the small size of the Sayausí community, many members knew of each other before joining the organization, and they often interact with each other. However, these relationships are not the same for all members of the community and weekly meetings do not always bridge this gap. For local organizational relationships, Turismo Rural Sayausí was evaluated as a 3. Minimal unofficial relationships with local organizations exist, however, help from the Vice Mayor of Cuenca, and word-of-mouth marketing benefits the organization to a minimal degree. Turismo Rural Sayausí received a score of 1 for international organizational relationships because despite an effort to partner with TripAdvisor, Turismo Rural Sayausí only has indirect support from university’s in the United States. The cumulative evaluation of Turismo Rural Sayausí’s social capital is therefore 8 which indicates sustainability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Intra Organizational Relationships</th>
<th>Local Organizational Relationships</th>
<th>International Organization Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 8. Social capital score breakdown*

Figure 23. A member of Turismo Rural Sayausí with a member of another tourism organization

Figure 24. Members of Turismo Rural Sayausí with a government official
Social Capital

Details

The relationships between members of Turismo Rural Sayausí often extend into their personal lives. Due to the small size of the community, many members knew of each other before joining the organization, and some were even friends. Specific personal relationships were not inquired upon, but members generally agreed that most relationships were not strictly professional. With respect to the organization, members meet once a week and sometimes more if there is a tour that week, or if important matters need to be discussed. Furthermore, members involved in similar fields such as gastronomy, or tour guides, often collaborate and learn from each other to improve their trade. For example, gastronomy members of the organization often cook together for large tour groups, as well as share recipes, cooking techniques, and ingredients. This growth is often founded on mutual beneficial and healthy relationships. While some members may disagree with others, these sentiments were not common and rarely affected the organization’s operations. However, some relationships within the organization are evidently stronger than others often due to previous friendships or similar fields of work. These issues don’t negatively impact the organization directly but somewhat restrict complete unity. Furthermore, there is no strong hierarchy within the organization, and all members therefore have equal say. While there is a president, he often does not dictate meetings in a direct, organized manner. This allows for democratic operation, but can lead to confusion, and extensive, ineffective deliberation.

Relationships with other organizations are minimal and often restricted by the business’s lack of legal legitimacy. Turismo Rural Sayausí is not affiliated with any local Sayausí businesses but will occasionally refer them to tourists by word of mouth. There is a similar relationship with the organization Kallpa Warmi. However, these relationships do not extend beyond occasional references to tourists or potential business partners. Turismo Rural Sayausí will also receive occasional help from the Sayausí government, but this does not extend beyond the passing of information. Other relationships exist only as personal connections with members of the organization. For example, the president of Turismo Rural Sayausí is friends with some tour guides within Cuenca who recommend Sayausí during their tours. He is also the brother of the Vice Mayor of Cuenca, Marisol Peñaloza, who used to be president of the organization. Because of this connection, Mrs. Peñaloza occasionally uses her resources to provide the organization with resources or personnel. Internationally, the organization is currently trying to partner with TripAdvisor but has not met the organizational requirements to become affiliated. These requirements were not explicitly disclosed. Additionally, the organization occasionally receives help from university students from the United States. However, the role of these students is relatively undefined and the organization could make better use of this resource. International relationships are especially important to Turismo Rural Sayausí due to its proximity to the popular tourist destination of Cuenca and the unmatched popularity of TripAdvisor (Fundación Municipal Turismo para Cuenca-CIER, 2016). If the organization had help with international marketing, it may greatly expand its reachable market, and therefore its revenue.
External factors were evaluated based on tourist surveys and additional research about the area. Data from both English and Spanish surveys were combined, and relevant questions were pulled to evaluate tourist interest and marketability. Research was also conducted about the environmental preservation of El Cajas National Park, in order to determine its state of environmental stability. These assessments and data are available below.

Figure 25. Fuel subsidies protest in Ecuador (Voz de América, 2019)

Figure 26. El Cajas National Park
Tourism Interests

Assessment

Currently, the interests of tourists that visit Cuenca align very closely with Turismo Rural Sayausí’s strongest offerings. Specific information was gathered from these tourists in order to evaluate what types of tourism they were most interested in as well as what specific activities they found appealing. Even though tourists weren’t very interested in rural tourism, Turismo Rural Sayausí is able to overcome this through a strong emphasis on culture. Furthermore, trying new food, hiking, and cultural experiences were rated as the top activities tourists would be interested in. Similarly, our group also found that these activities are the centerpieces of almost every Turismo Rural Sayausí tour.

Details

A survey was distributed to 59 different tourists in Cuenca from a variety of countries and with a wide age range. The above data provides information about their preferred types of tourism, as well as activities they’re most interested in. Tourists were allowed to select more than one option in order to express all their interests. Culture tourism was found to be the most appealing form of tours followed by adventure tourism. This aligns with Turismo Rural Sayausí’s offerings as both hiking and cultural experiences are emphases of their tours. While Rural and Food Tourism were found to be the least interesting to the tourists surveyed, Sayausí tours still exhibit enough aspects of popular tourism types to generate interest. When asked to rank specific activities available in Sayausí, tourists were most interested in trying new food, hiking, and cultural experiences respectively. Most Turismo Rural Sayausí tours center around these three activities with additional, supplemental activities if necessary. This data is indicative of a tourism market that is very interested in the activities Sayausí has to offer.
Assessment

Turismo Rural Sayausí currently places the majority of its marketing focus where it will be most effective. Among Cuenca tourists surveyed, it was determined that the vast majority learned about the city through their family or friends. In this way, Turismo Rural Sayausí effectively markets to Cuenca tourists through their word-of-mouth relationships with local organizations. However, a large portion of tourists used online resources such as search engines, social media, and travel websites as well. Turismo Rural Sayausí currently lacks a significant online presence despite having both a website and social media accounts. In order to reach a wider tourist market, they must better utilize and develop these resources.

Details

Of the tourists surveyed, approximately 70% referred to friends and family in order to learn more about Cuenca. Among the same group, 42% used online resources with online search engines (18%) being the most popular, followed by social media (13%) and travel websites (8%). Turismo Rural Sayausí was found to cater to this data by utilizing word-of-mouth marketing through partner organizations and personal connections. These relationships were explored further in discussion of social capital, and this data supports the continuation of this practice. However, the organization could still benefit from improvements in other areas.

Figure 29. Data collected from tourists regarding how they learn about Cuenca
Environmental Impacts

Assessment

Turismo Rural Sayausí is in no immediate danger of environmental fluctuation barring a natural disaster. The greatest environmental threat to the organization would be damage to the El Cajas National Park, however steps have been taken to avoid this. ETAPA’s maintenance of the park’s watershed and general preservation of the area ensures a safe future for these resources. While farming and dry seasons may temporarily deplete some of the available resources of the park, the damage is never drastic enough to cause concern.

Details

In March 2000, ETAPA was granted protective responsibility over El Cajas National Park. Prior to assuming this responsibility, ETAPA had cordoned off several areas within the park in order to protect watersheds vital to the lives and industries of both Cuenca and Sayausí (Nyce, 2001). Since obtaining this role, ETAPA is responsible for formulating a protective plan for the El Cajas National Park with the assistance of both Cuenca and the Ecuadorian Ministry of the Environment, as well as reassessing and updating this plan annually (Nyce, 2001). Throughout this period, the park has not experienced any drastic threats to its conservation, and environmental fluctuation is in sync with the seasons. However, this fluctuation in seasons can have negative impacts on Turismo Rural Sayausí’s tours. Some of Sayausí’s tours center around waterfalls, rivers or other bodies of water that do experience a degree of regression in the dry season. Farming practices such as excessive irrigation may also affect some of these bodies of water even during the wet season. While assessing one of the organization’s hiking paths, the group came across what should have been a powerful waterfall but was instead a trickle of water down a rock wall. The lack of water was attributed to an unusual lack of rain in the previous week as well as a resulting excess in irrigation practices by nearby farmers. Although this information was shared by members of Turismo Rural Sayausí, our team is not certain of the true cause for this occurrence. Whether it truly is due to farming or even climate change, the community does not have any control over the matter or when it occurs. Though this issue is rare and temporary, it must still be monitored in order to maintain quality of such hiking tours.

Figures 30. Culebrillas River in Sayausí
In accordance with the UNDP model, we found Turismo Rural Sayausí to be sustainable at this point in time. Cumulatively, the evaluation of each of the organization’s five capitals as well as external factors allow for the construction of a Sustainable Livelihoods Model specific to Turismo Rural Sayausí. A total score of 10.8 was determined based on the average of the organization’s capitals and this score indicated the sustainability of Turismo Rural Sayausí. Consideration of structures and outcomes were also used to complete the sustainable livelihood model for the organization. Adapted from the DFID framework (1999), this model centers around these capitals as means for the production and improvement of structures that benefits organization members’ livelihoods.

Table 9. Levels of Sustainability of Turismo Rural Sayausí based on Average Capital Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Sustainability</th>
<th>ACS* Range</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Unsustainable           | 0 ≤ ACS < 4| • Little to no assets and resources  
                          |            | • External stress or crisis overwhelms organization  
                          |            | • Not sustainable in the present, no development |
| Limited sustainability   | 4 ≤ ACS < 8| • Minimal assets and resources  
                          |            | • External stress or crisis has a high chance of overwhelming the organization  
                          |            | • Not sustainable in the present, no development |
| Sustainable              | 8 ≤ ACS < 12| • Adequate assets and resources  
                          |            | • Some vulnerability to external stress or crisis  
                          |            | • Moderately affected by shocks, negative trends, etc.  
                          |            | • Sustainable in the present, minimal development |
| Progressively Sustainable| 12 ≤ ACS < 16| • Strong assets and resources  
                          |            | • External stress or crisis minimally affect the organization  
                          |            | • Sustainable in the present, adequate development |
| Permanently Sustainable   | 16 ≤ ACS ≤ 20| • Abundant assets and resources  
                          |            | • Little to no vulnerability to external factors  
                          |            | • Sustainable is present, strong development |

*ACS: Average of Capital Scores
These structures may also affect vulnerabilities of the organization that may be affected by external shocks. These shocks may be drastic changes in tourism trends, marketing trends, changes in government and support, or environmental impacts which have the potential to affect each of the capitals. Structures also can produce outcomes which are generally positive and help to limit vulnerability. A full diagram of Turismo Rural Sayausí’s Sustainable Livelihood Model may be seen above.

Key Strengths

Turismo Rural Sayausí’s strengths, specifically in natural and human capital, are responsible for the majority of the organization’s stability. The impressive skill of members with respect to their trades as well as the abundant natural resources of El Cajas National Park create a solid foundation on which the organization may grow. These strengths directly benefit tour offering of the organization which allows for improved tourism experiences and increased revenue. Turismo Rural Sayausí offers a variety of experiences, from outdoor adventures to gastronomy and cultural traditions, drawing on the strengths of their members. Furthermore, the status of the Cajas as a national park ensures its protection by both Cuenca’s government and ETAPA. This support is crucial for the organization, which relies heavily on its natural resources for their tours. Due to the versatility and stability of these capitals, Turismo Rural Sayausí rightly uses them as the foundation for their organization. This foundation results in quality tour offerings that should translate into increased revenue (UNDP, 2017). Increased business for Turismo Rural Sayausí generates an increase in visitors to the community. This inevitably leads to an increase in consumers in the area which benefits local business. As a result, the organization’s effective use of its personnel and natural resources may benefit Sayausí by reducing poverty and increasing economic growth (Croes & Rivera, 2015).

In addition, the reliability of Sayausí’s infrastructure differs from most rural communities and provides Sayausí with a distinct advantage (AZD, 2019). Even though some undeveloped roads limit the extent of transportation within the community, these restrictions rarely hinder the organization. Ecuador’s current tourism environment also aligns well with the organization’s strengths. Our research confirmed that typical tourists in Cuenca often seek adventurous and cultural experiences (Chaglla, Espinoza-Figueroa, Andrade Tenesaca, & Villafuerte Pucha, 2019). Given that Turismo Rural Sayausí’s strongest attributes are its hiking routes and cultural services, this finding greatly contributes to the organization’s potential for success and even result in increased income. However, should opinions shift, Turismo Rural Sayausí offers enough variety in resources to adapt to different markets. The organization also takes excellent advantage of the growing prominence of the experience economy. By engaging tourists with personal details about their professions and promoting their involvement in traditional ceremonies, they create an intimacy between consumer and producer that mirrors co-production (Maria, 2015). This generates meaningful memories for the tourist which emphasize their experience.

Turismo Rural Sayausí not only possesses strengths within natural and physical capital, but also makes efforts to maintain and grow them. The organization’s members are motivated to achieve progressive sustainability and take necessary steps, such as participating in college tourism courses and tourism competitions. Member
involvement in tourism management courses at the University of Cuenca indicates their recognition of avenues for improvement. While organization-run training programs have failed in the past, completion of this course is a good sign that Turismo Rural Sayausí is willing to invest in its members to cover deficiencies, such as its lack of leadership training. The organization’s success in the Cuenca tourism competition is also indicative that Turismo Rural Sayausí actively searches for and tries to obtain new resources. The prize money and government assistance help to address weaknesses and grow the organization by obtaining assets it previously lacked. This partnership will also allow Turismo Rural Sayausí to stress the importance of rural tourism to Cuenca’s government and help expand the industry as a whole. Ultimately, these efforts are signs of Turismo Rural Sayausí’s ability to recognize and account for its weaknesses that must be addressed to achieve progressive sustainability.

**Key Weaknesses**

The organization’s financial and social practices don’t induce explicitly negative consequences, but greatly restrict its stability and growth. Internally, Turismo Rural Sayausí’s lack of corporate structure generates disorganization in many of their operations. Because no hierarchy exists within the organization besides the president, all operations are placed under his direct responsibility. This is too much responsibility for one person and greatly limits efficiency. Response times to crises are consequently slowed and it is therefore difficult to effectively mitigate damage from shocks. Established roles such as secretary and treasurer may help to allay disorganization within Turismo Rural Sayausí as well as improve some of their lacking capitals. Financially, the organization lacks an established savings account, which would give it the opportunity to invest in improvements to its tour packages, such as better hiking trails, bathrooms, company equipment, such as computers, or even a permanent headquarters.

Additionally, should Turismo Rural Sayausí experience economic downturn, it doesn’t have any organizational funds to recover on its own. Therefore, while the organization’s financial practices allow it to operate in its current state, it is especially susceptible to financial shocks or disasters (UNDP, 2017). Furthermore, the organization’s lack of financial records greatly limits their knowledge of profitable practices. Because of this, it is difficult for Turismo Rural Sayausí to analyze financial records to identify profitable practices. Such practices could greatly contribute to the organization’s savings and financial capital. Overall, an increase in financial capital is particularly important because it may be converted into other forms of capital that are currently lacking.

Turismo Rural Sayausí also experiences instability due to its lack of an official network of tourism organizations. Such a network would greatly improve the organization’s resistance to shocks by providing a support network in times of need (Kurlanska, 2020). Organizations could also mutually benefit by sharing tourism information and strategies, especially online. Since social media and online resources are great influencers of tourism, the organization is missing out on professional connections and potential marketing opportunities (Jansson, 2018). The absence of this network leaves Turismo Rural Sayausí vulnerable to external crises, like seasonal changes, that the organization could not handle on its own. While this does not pose an immediate issue
for Turismo Rural Sayausí, it generates instability with respect to a fragile tourism industry. This vulnerability also requires many members to rely on careers outside of the organization in order to ensure their own sustainability. While this practice provides members with fixed income and protection from an unstable tourism industry, balance between professions is necessary for the organization to grow (Esmail, 2016; Burgess, Jones, Novelli & Ritchie, 2018). Improper prioritization creates a cycle in which members prioritize their primary job which, in turn, often results in subpar commitment from some members. Improvements in these areas would not only increase the organization’s resistance to crises, but also allow Turismo Rural Sayausí to enhance its tourism experiences and increase its market growth.

The organization could also benefit from expanding their knowledge of tourism trends and demographics in and around the community. Currently, the organization does not analyze their neighboring organizations or seek more knowledge of present tourism trends. This means that they are not made fully aware of possible changes that can significantly improve their services. In addition, the organization does not have access to specific tourism information, such as tourist demographics and travel preferences, which provides important insight on the tourism industry (Fundación Municipal Turismo para Cuenca-GIER, 2016; Pérez Gálvez et al., 2017). The lack of this specific degree of information leads to poor marketing techniques and an unknown target audience. Proper social media management and an established website may help this effort, but Turismo Rural Sayausí’s lacks these important skills and resources (Self, Self, & Bell-Haynes, 2010). The organization could improve upon this through computational training programs for its members, but these programs must be emphasized more than previous efforts. While our group was unable to collect sufficient data to form definitive conclusions of the types of tourists travelling to Cuenca through our tourist surveys, the data mirrored recent research of the same tourist trends (Chaglla, Espinoza-Figueroa, Andrade Tenesaca, & Villafuerte Pucha, 2019).

**Degree of Sustainability**

Ultimately, Turismo Rural Sayausí maintains a degree of sustainability vulnerable to external shocks, due to heavily relying on its most abundant capitals. The organization has a wide variety of experiences to offer due to its natural resources and talented personnel and therefore, rarely requires outside assistance or large expenses. However, this degree of sustainability is granted partially by tourism, economic, and natural conditions that cater to the current state of the organization. Shocks in any of these three categories may change Turismo Rural Sayausí’s environment to the point at which their natural and human resources are not enough to recover. Therefore, it is necessary to grow socially and financially while continuing to improve their current practices. In this way, the organization may develop its reputation, market, and tour offerings which will in turn increase their revenue. Turismo Rural Sayausí is sustainable and may achieve progressive sustainability by recognizing and addressing its weaknesses.
Research Limitations

The most prominent limitation to our research was organizational issues and difficulties with coordination and communication. Due to conflicting schedules of some members of our sponsor organization, it was difficult for our team to establish a concrete work schedule every week. Time and again, members would cancel plans and our team would in turn be required to move things around in attempt to reschedule. This was also difficult in the sense that we had specific tasks to complete by certain dates, and people would seldom show up on time. In addition to this, miscommunications with members of the organization limited the amount of time that we had to conduct interviews and participant observation. Due to the insufficiency of technology and internet access in certain areas, we were often waiting to gather with members for long periods of time and frequently getting lost around Sayausí.

The two-month time limit that we had to conduct research, analyze data, and draw conclusions also contributed to the difficulties faced with this project. This greatly restricted the extent of information that could be collected about Turismo Rural Sayausí, since scheduling was an issue. During data collection, the organization only conducted two tours, and though the group was able to observe the first tour, it was not a large enough data sample to evaluate any inconsistencies in tour quality. The scheduling conflicts also prevented the group from interviewing all members of Turismo Rural Sayausí, due to busy schedules of both the team and members of the organization. However, data collected from these interviews yielded consistent answers from different members. In addition, the two-month time limit prevented the group from observing significant change in the organization’s practices or tourism trends. Data was collected from tourists in Cuenca at the time of the study, but this data collection period was all during the same time of the year, therefore the team could not account for seasonal changes. This means that we could not base our analysis on seasonality. Moreover, since the combination of scheduling difficulties, time limits, and poor communication resulted in several inconvenient changes to our agenda, the number of tourists that could be surveyed was limited to under 100. This data pool is not large enough to draw conclusions about all tourists in Cuenca, however, our findings aligned with previous research about tourists in the area. Therefore, preferences were taken to be a relatively significant indication of tourist interest for the purposes of evaluating Turismo Rural Sayausí’s marketability to Cuenca tourists.
Based on our findings, we determined that Turismo Rural Sayausí is currently sustainable. While the organization has the necessary foundation for a successful tourism business, it is limited by its need for financial discipline and lack of growth in the form of local organizational relationships and personnel training. Turismo Rural Sayausí benefits from an incredible amount of natural resources and skilled members that act as a foundation for its tourism industry. The current state of the organization allows them to survive off their abundance and sustainability. The areas that they thrive in, such as natural, human, and physical capitals, will push them forward as a successful tourism organization. However, it is important to note the longevity of this sustainability is open to question, due to the necessary areas of improvement.

Internal Organizational Structure

While members of the organization are skilled in their respective fields, they do not emphasize the development of important skills, such as computational literacy or leadership. The organization must grow in these respects in order to increase their marketable audience and enhance their current structure. To grow in this respect, we recommended the following to them:

- **Develop and maintain a strong organization structure**
  - Assigning roles to active members such as secretary, treasurer, public relations chair, etc. will improve their structure
- **Implement or attend training classes and/or programs to learn marketing skills and leadership skills**
  - Teaching the members how to use social media and maintain a strong presence with the organization so the success is not dependent on only a few members
  - Teaching leadership skills will enhance their organization and communication overall
- **Enhance their online presence by posting more frequently on their social media platforms and utilizing their website**
  - Maintaining a strong online presence will spread awareness about what Sayausí has to offer to tourists

Having no commercial space and limited access to information also hinders Turismo Rural Sayausí. By improving these resources, the organization will be able to improve their presence greatly and create a more stable organization structure. To improve in this regard, we recommended the following:

- **Develop a permanent, central meeting place for weekly meetings**
  - Improving attendance and participation
  - Establishing a phone number for the organization, so one person is not responsible for all communication with the organization
  - Having WiFi present in this meeting place as it is important for the accessibility of information
However, the area in which Turismo Rural Sayausí suffers most is its financial discipline. The organization’s lack of a savings account, financial records, and systematic pricing for tours indicates a degree of unprofessionalism and puts them at risk of collapse during recession periods. In order to improve their financial well-being as an organization, we recommended the following:

- **Establish an organization savings account**
  - Allowing for a greater degree of stability and resistance to environmental and social shocks to the tourism industry
  - Allowing for a pool of funds that can be used to benefit the organization
  - Allocating a percentage of each tour to deposit into these savings

- **Maintain financial records for all transactions made in relation to the organization’s tours and day to day activities for upkeep**
  - Keeping receipts of purchases made for food, rentals, transportation, which are all regarding tours

- **Determine pricing for the tours that are consistent**
  - Allowing for slight deviations of the tour plans so accommodations and adjustments can be made

**Networking**

Turismo Rural Sayausí must expand its local and international relationships to establish a reliable support system. Such a support system may benefit the organization by providing additional marketing, business advice, as well as human or financial support. A lack of these relationships puts Turismo Rural Sayausí at great risk for collapse in a period of economic downturn, or periods of minimal tourism. To enhance these relationships, we recommended the following:

- **Work together with organizations around Cuenca to advertise the available tours and packages**
  - Developing mutual relationships for marketing purposes
  - Partnering with other rural tourism companies to learn from their tours and develop a support network

- **Connect with larger travel organizations, such as TripAdvisor, to spread the word of things to do and see in the community**
  - Using international travel organizations to advertise their services outside of Ecuador

**Advocacy**

Overall, the natural accessibility within Sayausí is extremely abundant. It is important to ensure that Turismo Rural Sayausí continues to maintain a healthy and beautiful landscape in the area as it is one of the main attractants for the parish. While natural disasters, as well as the destruction from farming in the region, are mild threats to El Cajas National Park, preservation efforts by ETAPA keep them in check. In order to assist in the maintenance of abundant natural resources, we recommended the following:

- **Enhance their online presence by posting more frequently on their social media platforms and utilizing their website Advocate for the preservation of natural resources**
  - Advertising the importance of environmental preservation to tourists to spread awareness
  - Continuing to support local environmental protection organizations
Due to the little support from the government, it is important that rural tourism initiatives have a voice in their local and city governments. Changes in government also affect this level of support, therefore in order to improve these relations, we recommended the following:

- **Advocate for government support of tourism initiatives through public relations and/or funding**

In accordance with these recommendations, the team created and shared deliverables with the organization to aid in the aforementioned suggestions. The team developed promotional materials, such as a tourism pamphlet and travel video, to be used to advertise the Sayausí Parish and the organization of Turismo Rural Sayausí. The tourism pamphlet contains information regarding the sights, food, culture, etc. of Sayausí and information on each of the tour packages offered by the organization. The travel video was created with the basis of showcasing the unique aspects of Sayausí, which they can share on their online platforms to utilize as a marketing tool. The team also provided Turismo Rural Sayausí with compiled feedback regarding several aspects of their organization. This compiled feedback will improve the organization’s communication and methods of operation. The team also provided the organization with social media tools. These suggestions will aid in improving their online presence and use of social media. Access to all of these deliverables can be found in Appendix I.

By implementing these recommendations and utilizing the deliverables, Turismo Rural Sayausí may take a step towards improved sustainability. However, these recommendations are not solutions to their weaknesses, but rather a path towards advancement to adapt to a dynamic Ecuadorian tourism industry. Using the Sustainable Livelihoods model presented in this paper, Turismo Rural Sayausí may establish itself as a reliably beneficial contribution to its members, and the community of Sayausí.
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Gobierno de la Republica del Ecuador. (n.d.). Proyectos infocentros Ecuador [Ecuador infocenter projects].


People who have turned Parque Calderon into their home (2019, September 18), El Tiempo- Diario De Cuenca. Retrieved from https://www.eltiempo.com.ec/noticias/cuenca/2/people-who-have-turned-parque-calderon-into-their-home


This calendar of events provides a close representation of a timeline for our team's methodology.

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Highlighted dates indicate the team’s remote workdays to analyze data, write sections of final report, develop deliverables, etc.
Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews with Members of Turismo Rural Sayausí

Your participation is voluntary in interviews conducted by the team of WPI students. The goal of this interview is to gather information about your business. You will be one of approximately 10 to 20 business owners being interviewed for this research. Your participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time. If at any time you feel uncomfortable answering a question you may decline to answer or end the interview. Interviews will last approximately an hour and notes will be taken. With your permission, the interviews will be recorded, photographs will be taken, and we may film part of the interaction. You will be identified by name and the information you give to us will only be disclosed with your consent. This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at WPI. If you have any questions you may ask them now. By continuing you are agreeing that you understand and are voluntarily agreeing to participate in our study.

For questions or concerns please contact:

Our Email: gr-imrC20@wpi.edu
Advisor’s Email: cbkurlanska@wpi.edu
WPI IRB Email: irb@wpi.edu

Goal: Determine attractions and experiences that Sayausí currently has to offer to tourists.

Interview Questions:

1. What is your name?
2. How long have you been doing this profession?
3. How did you learn this profession?
4. Can you tell us a little bit about the history of this business?
5. Where do you acquire resources for your trade?
6. What are the main demographics of your customers?
7. Are you or your business affiliated with any tourist organizations?
8. What is unique about what you do?

Video Questions:

1. What is special about what you do?
2. What do you love about Sayausí?
3. Why do you love what you do?
4. What do you want people to know about Sayausí?
5. How would you describe the community?
Appendix C

Preguntas para entrevistas semiestructuradas con miembros de Turismo Rural Sayausí

Su participación es voluntaria en entrevistas realizadas por el equipo de estudiantes de WPI. El objetivo de esta entrevista es recopilar información sobre su empresa. Será una de aproximadamente 10 a 20 personas entrevistadas para esta investigación. Su participación es voluntaria y puede detenerse en cualquier momento. Si en algún momento se siente incómodo respondiendo una pregunta, puede negarse a responder o finalizar la entrevista. Las entrevistas durarán aproximadamente una hora y se tomarán notas. Con su permiso, se grabarán las entrevistas, tomáramos fotografías y videos. Se lo identificará por su nombre y la información que nos brinde solo se divulgará con su consentimiento. Este proyecto de investigación ha sido revisado y aprobado por la Junta de Revisión Institucional de WPI. Si tiene alguna pregunta, puede hacerla ahora. Al continuar, acepta que comprende y acepta voluntariamente participar en nuestro estudio.

Para las preguntas y preocupaciones póngase en contacto:

- El correo electrónico del grupo: gr-imrC20@wpi.edu
- El correo electrónico de nuestra consejera: cbkurlanska@wpi.edu
- El correo electrónico de WPI IRB: irb@wpi.edu

El objetivo: Determinar atracciones y experiencias que Sayausí ya tiene para ofrecer a las turistas.

Preguntas de Entrevista:

1. ¿Cómo se llama?
2. ¿Por cuánto tiempo ha hecho su profesión?
3. ¿Cómo aprende sus habilidades para su profesión?
4. ¿Puede decir más sobre la historia de su empresa?
5. ¿Dónde consigue sus recursos por su empresa?
6. ¿Cuáles son los demográficos de sus clientes?
7. ¿Tiene su empresa una afiliación con alguna organización turística?
8. ¿Por qué las personas querrían venir a su empresa?

Preguntas en Video:

1. ¿Qué piensa es especial sobre lo que hace por su trabajo?
2. ¿Qué le encanta de Sayausí?
3. ¿Por qué lo ama que usted hace?
4. ¿Qué usted quiere que la gente sepa sobre Sayausí?
5. ¿Cómo es la comunidad en Sayausí?
Questions for Semi-Structured Interview with the Director of Turismo Rural Sayausí

Your participation is voluntary in this interview conducted by the team of WPI students. The goal of this interview is to gather information about Turismo Rural Sayausí. Your participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time. If at any time you feel uncomfortable answering a question you may decline to answer or end the interview. Interview will last approximately an hour and notes will be taken. With your permission, the interviews will be recorded. You will be identified by name and the information you give to us will only be disclosed with your consent. This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at WPI. If you have any questions you may ask them now. By continuing you are agreeing that you understand and are voluntarily agreeing to participate in our study.

For questions or concerns please contact:

Our Email: gr-imrC20@wpi.edu
Advisor’s Email: cbkurlanska@wpi.edu
WPI IRB Email: irb@wpi.edu

Goal: To learn more about Turismo Rural Sayausí as an organization and how they currently operate.

1. How long have you been working with Turismo Rural Sayausí?
2. Is there an office or center?
3. How many hours per week do employees of Turismo Rural Sayausí work?
   a. Are there any paid employees of Turismo Rural Sayausí?
      i. If not: How many volunteers work for Turismo Rural Sayausí?
4. Do you have a list of employees and volunteers?
   a. Do you have a list of affiliated businesses?
5. Does this organization have reliable access to the internet during business hours?
6. Does your team have regular access to a computer during business hours?
   a. What programs are available on the computer?
7. How do you currently manage your Facebook page?
   a. How often do you post?
   b. What do you usually post about?
   c. Does everyone in the organization have access to it?
      i. Do most of your members know how to use it?
8. Does the organization have any other social media pages?
9. Have you ever attempted to get in contact with larger online travel organizations, such as TripAdvisor, Booking.com, AirBnB, etc?
10. How do you currently promote your tours?
   a. Do you speak about it with family and friends? What about strangers that you meet?
   b. Does the entire team partake in the sharing of posts?
   c. Are prices always included in your posts?
   d. Do you provide information about how to get to Sayausí from Cuenca?
11. As of now, what information are you planning to include in your website?
   a. Are you using the same logo and colors as your other social media pages?
Appendix E

Preguntas para una entrevista semiestructurada con el Director de Turismo Rural Sayausí

Su participación es voluntaria en entrevistas realizadas por el equipo de estudiantes de WPI. El objetivo de esta entrevista es recopilar información sobre Turismo Rural Sayausí. Será una de aproximadamente dos o tres personas entrevistadas para esta investigación. Su participación es voluntaria y puede detenerse en cualquier momento. Si en algún momento se siente incómodo respondiendo una pregunta, puede negarse a responder o finalizar la entrevista. Las entrevistas durarán aproximadamente una hora y se tomarán notas. Con su permiso, se grabarán las entrevistas. Se lo identificará por su nombre y la información que nos brinde solo se divulgará con su consentimiento. Este proyecto de investigación ha sido revisado y aprobado por la Junta de Revisión Institucional de WPI. Si tiene alguna pregunta, puede hacerla ahora. Al continuar, acepta que comprende y acepta voluntariamente participar en nuestro estudio.

Para las preguntas y preocupaciones póngase en contacto:

El correo electrónico del grupo: gr-imrC20@wpi.edu

El correo electrónico de nuestra consejera: cbkurlanska@wpi.edu

El correo electrónico de WPI IRB: irb@wpi.edu

El objetivo: Determinar atracciones y experiencias que Sayausí ya tiene para ofrecer a las turistas.

1. ¿Por cuánto tiempo ha trabajado con Turismo Rural Sayausí?
2. ¿Hay una oficina o centro?
3. ¿Cuántos horas trabajan los empleados cada semana?
   a. ¿Hay empleados que trabajan sin pago?
   i. ¿Cuántos voluntarios trabajan en la organización?
4. ¿Tiene una lista de empleados y voluntarios?
   a. ¿Tiene una lista de empresas afiliadas?
   b. ¿Qué conexiones tiene con organizaciones externas?
5. ¿Tiene una conexión segura de wifi durante las horas de trabajo?
6. ¿Tiene acceso a una computadora durante las horas de trabajo?
   a. ¿Qué programas tiene en la computadora?
7. ¿Cómo mantiene la página de Facebook?
   a. ¿Con qué frecuencia publica en la página?
   b. ¿Qué es el tema de las publicaciones?
   c. ¿Quién tiene acceso de la página?
   i. ¿Quién sabe cómo usar la página?
8. ¿Hay otras formas de redes sociales para la organización?
9. ¿Ha tratado de conectar con algunas organizaciones de viajar más grande, como TripAdvisor, Booking.com, AirBnB?

10. ¿Qué tipo de promociones usa la organización?
   a. ¿Con quién habla de la organización? ¿Amigos? ¿Familia? ¿Los desconocidos?
   b. ¿Quién publica en Facebook?
   c. ¿Los precios son incluidos en sus publicaciones?
   d. ¿Las publicaciones contiene información sobre el transporte?

11. ¿Qué tipo de información quiere incluir en el sitio web?
   a. ¿Son los imagines, las colores, y las temas los mismos que sus redes sociales?
Appendix F

Questions for Survey with Tourists Around Cuenca

- You will be one of approximately 20 to 30 people being questioned for this research.
- Your participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time or decline to answer.
- Questions will last approximately 10-15 minutes.
- You will not be identified by name and the information you give to us will only be disclosed with your consent.
- This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at WPI.

If you have any questions you may ask them now. By continuing you are agreeing that you understand and are voluntarily agreeing to participate in our study.

For questions or concerns please contact:

Our Email: gr-imrC20@wpi.edu

Advisor’s Email: cbkurlanska@wpi.edu

WPI IRB Email: irb@wpi.edu

Goal: Gather information about general tourist perspectives, tourists interests and tourism in Sayausí.

1. What country do you currently live in?
2. What age group are you in?
   a. 8-24
   b. 25-34
   c. 35-44
   d. 45-54
   e. 55-64
   f. 65+
3. What is your reason for visiting Cuenca? (Choose all that apply.)
   a. Work/ business
   b. Leisure/ Vacation/ Recreation
   c. Visiting Family/ Friends
   d. Other (Please Specify)
4. What type of tourism do you prefer to experience? (Choose all that apply.)
   a. Adventure Tourism
   b. Cultural/ Historical Tourism
   c. Food Tourism
   d. Rural Tourism
   e. Leisure Travel
5. Where did you learn about Cuenca? (Choose all that apply.)
   a. Family and/ or friend
   b. Social Media
   c. Online Search Engine
   d. Travel Website
   e. Other (Please specify)
6. Please rank what is most important to you when booking travel experiences with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least:
   a. Affordability
   b. Convenience
   c. Authenticity
   d. Community-Based
   e. Environmentally Friendly
7. How likely would you be to participate in a tour that is only offered in Spanish?
   a. (1-not likely, 3- moderately likely, 5- very likely)
8. What do you know about the Sayausí Parish?
   a. Never visited and know little to nothing about it
   b. Never visited and know some about it
   c. Visited and know little to nothing about it
   d. Visited and know a lot about it
9. Please rank the following activities based on interest with 1 being the most interesting to you and 7 being the least:
   a. Horseback riding
   b. Hiking
   c. Trying new food
   d. Cultural experiences
   e. Fruits and vegetable market
   f. Touring a farm
   g. Artisan tour
Appendix G

Preguntas para encuestas con turistas alrededor de Cuenca

- Será una de las aproximadamente 20 a 30 personas que serán interrogadas para esta investigación.
- Su participación es voluntaria y puede detenerse en cualquier momento o puede negarse a responder.
- Las preguntas durarán aproximadamente 10-15 minutos.
- No se lo identificará por su nombre y la información que nos brinde solo se divulgará con su consentimiento.
- Este proyecto de investigación ha sido revisado y aprobado por la Junta de Revisión Institucional de WPI.

Si tiene alguna pregunta, puede hacerla ahora. Al continuar, acepta que comprende y acepta voluntariamente participar en nuestro estudio.

Para las preguntas y preocupaciones póngase en contacto:

- El correo electrónico del grupo: gr-imrC20@wpi.edu
- El correo electrónico de nuestra consejera: cbkurlanska@wpi.edu
- El correo electrónico de WPI IRB: irb@wpi.edu

El objetivo: Reunir información sobre perspectivas turísticas generales, intereses de los turistas y turismo en Sayausí.

1. ¿En qué país vive?
2. ¿Cuál es su grupo de edad?
   a. 18-24
   b. 25-34
   c. 35-44
   d. 45-54
   e. 55-64
   f. 65+
3. ¿Cuál es su razón para visitar Cuenca? (Elege todo lo que corresponda)
   a. Trabajo/ Negocio
   b. Ocio/ vacaciones/ recreación
   c. Visitando familia /amigos
   d. Otra (Explica)
4. ¿Cuál(es) tipo(s) de turismo prefiere? (Elege todo lo que corresponda)
   a. Turismo de aventura
   b. Turismo cultural / turismo histórico
   c. Turismo gastronómico
   d. Turismo rural
   e. Viaje de placer
5. Cómo se enteró de Cuenca? (Elege todo lo que corresponda)
   a. Amigos/ Familia
   b. Redes sociales
   c. Búsqueda en línea
   d. Un sitio de viaje
   e. Otro (especifique)
6. Por favor, clasifique lo que es importante al reservar experiencias de viajes siendo 1 la más interesante para usted y 5 la menos.
   a. Asequibilidad
   b. La Conveniencia
   c. La Autenticidad
   d. Comunidad centrada
   e. Respetuoso con el medio ambiente
7. ¿Qué sabe de Sayausí?
   a. Nunca he visitado y no sé nada de Sayausí
   b. Nunca he visitado y sé algo de Sayausí
   c. He visitado y no sé nada de Sayausí
   d. He visitado y sé mucho de Sayausí
8. Por favor, clasifique estas actividades según su interés siendo 1 la más interesante para usted y 7 la menos.
   a. Cabalgar
   b. Caminar
   c. Probar nueva comida
   d. Experiencias culturales
   e. Mercado de frutas y verduras
   f. Una visita por una granja
   g. Un tour de artesanal
Appendix H

Survey Questions for Individuals who Participated in the Sayausí Tour

Your participation is voluntary in this survey conducted by the team of WPI students. The goal of this survey is to gain information about your trip to Sayausí. You will be one of approximately 10 individuals being interviewed for this research. Your participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time. If at any time you feel uncomfortable answering a question you may decline to answer or end the survey. With your permission, photographs will be taken, and we may film part of the interaction. You will not be identified by name and the information you give to us will only be disclosed with your consent. This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at WPI.

If you have any questions you may ask them now. By continuing you are agreeing that you understand and are voluntarily agreeing to participate in our study.

For questions or concerns please contact:

Our Email: gr-imrC20@wpi.edu

Advisor’s Email: cbkurlanska@wpi.edu

WPI IRB Email: irb@wpi.edu

Goal: The goal of the survey questions is to gather feedback about different aspects, such as organization, level of enjoyability, professionalism, etc., of the conducted tour.

Tour Overall – Participants were asked to give answers to these questions through a rating system of one to five, with one being the least (worst) and five being the most (best).

1. Was the tour guide knowledgeable about relevant topics?
2. How did you feel about the organization of the tour?
3. How did you feel about the price of the tour?
4. How did you feel about the duration of the tour?
5. How well did the tour accommodate physical restrictions?
6. How well did the tour accommodate dietary restrictions?
7. How important is Spanish language knowledge to understand the tour?

For each of these stops/attractions: El Arbol Longevo, Watering Hole, Waterfall, & Rio Sarakamchi, participants were asked to rate these factors on a scale of one to five, with one being the least (worst) and five being the most (best).

1. Difficulty arriving
2. Enjoyability
3. Duration
Almuerzo Communitario – Participants were asked to rate these factors on a scale of one to five, with one being the least (worst) and five being the most (best).
1. Food quantity
2. Food quality
3. Visual appeal of dishes
4. Level of cleanliness of almuerzo setting
5. Duration

Ceremony – Participants were asked to rate these factors on a scale of one to five, with one being the least (worst) and five being the most (best).
1. Level of understanding
2. Enjoyability
3. Duration
4. Did the ceremony feel authentic? Yes or no.

Juegos Tradicionales – Participants were asked to rate these factors on a scale of one to five, with one being the least (worst) and five being the most (best).
1. Enjoyability
2. How difficult was it to understand the rules?
3. Duration

General Questions & Feedback – Participants were asked to answer these open-ended questions with a few sentences, except for questions three, where they were asked to rank their favorite activities from one (most favorite) to six (least favorite).
1. Would you visit Sayausí again? Why/ Why not?
2. Would you recommend a trip to Sayausí? Why/ Why not?
3. Please rank the experiences from your favorite (1) to least favorite (6).
   a. El Arbol Longevo
   b. Watering Hole
   c. Waterfall
   d. River Hike
   e. Almuerzo Communitario
   f. Juegos Tradicionales
4. Any questions, comments, concerns, or general feedback?
Appendix I

Pamphlet:

![QR Code for Pamphlet]

Video:

![QR Code for Video]