

Sustainable Tourism and Public Policies in San Martín de las Pirámides: Strategies for Economic Growth and Community Development

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Abstract: *This article examines how public policy development can leverage tourism to stimulate sustainable economic growth in San Martín de las Pirámides, a municipality closely linked to the Teotihuacán archaeological site in Mexico. The study highlights tourism's role in generating local employment and tax revenue, particularly within the informal sector, and proposes structured policy interventions. It analyzes the need for formal employment, improved infrastructure, and sustainable tourism practices that align with community well-being and cultural preservation. Drawing on regional economic data and development planning frameworks, the article outlines a multi-phased policy approach that emphasizes stakeholder engagement, governance, and public accountability.*

Keywords: Tourism Development, Public Policies, Informal Employment, Sustainable Tourism, Local Economy

1. Introduction

Tourism has positioned itself as one of the sectors generating the largest economic impact in the world. In 2024, Mexico was the sixth largest recipient of tourists and the sixteenth largest recipient of foreign currency derived from tourism, according to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) barometer [1]. Therefore, it is highly relevant to obtain estimates of Mexico's GDP based on tourism activities.

The tourism sector has established itself as the main economic activity in San Martín de las Pirámides, which has had a significant impact on the economy. The material benefits that tourism brings are varied and touch various aspects of collective development and the well-being of its members. The creation of local jobs is one of the direct impacts of tourism. Tourists arriving in San Martín de las Pirámides have led to the opening of new services such as hotels, fast food, craft shops, tour guides, and more. The operation of these businesses also relies heavily on the local workforce.

Tourist demand has changed the motivation for their trips, as they seek new experiences that satisfy their needs through new tourism products distinct from mass tourism [2]. Therefore, San Martín de las Pirámides should be a catalyst for cultural, adventure, or leisure tourism that allows for economic growth in the Teotihuacán Valley tourism corridor. This study is important to show how local governments in culturally rich but economically dependent regions can use tourism revenues to build sustainable public policies and reduce dependence on the informal sector.

By creating new jobs and increasing the region's essential financial security, new forms of employment and training can be generated that equip people with skills for future prosperity. According to the San Martín de las Pirámides Municipal Development Plan 2025-2027 (San Martín de las Pirámides City Council, 2025), archaeological tourism is one of the main informal sources of employment in the

municipality. This situation draws attention to the need to generate formal jobs and revalue the tax revenue obtained by the municipality, which should be invested in job creation and improving visitor conditions. However, this situation highlights a critical reality: the urgent need to generate formal jobs that not only optimize the economy of San Martín de las Pirámides, but also contribute to the social and sustainable development of the Teotihuacán Valley Tourism Corridor.

Tax revenue from tourism in San Martín de las Pirámides largely comes from informal employment. Establishing public policies that allow for increased tax collection will help improve the infrastructure and services provided to both tourists and residents. It is important to recognize archaeological tourism, but it is also necessary to establish public policies that generate other sources of economic impact for tourism. Furthermore, formal employment will provide job security for tourism workers and ensure that the benefits remain in the municipality for the development of its community.

By creating public policies for tax collection, municipal authorities will use these resources in strategies that improve infrastructure and employment conditions. Programs implemented by the authorities to generate new skills, aligned with the demands of the modern labor market, will allow citizens to adapt and excel in various sectors, not just tourism. In this regard, UNICEF states that "education is a fundamental human right and a decisive tool for the development of individuals and societies" [3].

The establishment of public policies will allow for planning that considers the municipality's long-term sustainability. This will not only attract more tourists but also improve the living conditions of its residents. Through proper tax management, it is possible to strengthen the foundations for economic development while promoting local culture and identity, thus balancing the interests of visitors and the community.

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This article aims to explore how public policy initiatives can enhance the sustainable economic development of San Martín de las Pirámides through tourism, with a focus on formalizing employment, improving tax collection, and promoting benefits for the entire community.

2. Economic Impacts of Tourism

As visitors arrive in the city, so do local taxes: lodging taxes, sales taxes, and tourist service fees. This money pays for essential jobs and services, such as road repairs and providing a decent quality of life for town residents. The community benefits from the increased tax revenue generated by tourism, boosting the presence of public services such as schools, hospitals, and public safety.

To better understand how these contributions will inform public policy, it is essential to adopt a mixed methodology. Using qualitative and quantitative methods will help provide a more complete picture of the impact of tourism on a community. Through surveys and interviews with residents, business owners, and visitors, we can gather valuable information on the perception of tourism and its impact on the community. These tools allow us to gather data on satisfaction levels, the challenges faced by local businesses, and how residents perceive tourism growth. Furthermore, analyzing economic figures, such as local GDP growth, employment rates, and tourism-generated revenue, provides quantitative context for the impact of tourism.

The table shows the regional comparison of the employed population in formal and informal employment in the Municipality of San Martín de las Pirámides, where informal employment accounts for 66.14% and formal employment 33.85%. Tourism has had a considerable impact on the community of San Martín de las Pirámides, particularly through its local economic growth. Therefore, it is essential to conduct a comprehensive economic analysis of tourism in this area, addressing not only the challenges it faces but also areas of opportunity to strengthen trade and resolve the problems arising from this activity.

Regional comparative scenario

	EMPLOYED POPULATION		
	Total	Informal	Formal
Estado de México	7 727 293	4 339 180	3 388 113
Zona II	2 174 515	1 164 487	1 010 029
Región 5	769 833	416 041	353 792
Ecatepec de Morelos	769 833	416 041	180 004
Región 6	254 773	131 837	122 936
Tecamac	254 773	131 837	122 936
Acolman	88 687	56 536	30 150
Axapusco	13 061	9 178	3 882
Nopaltepec	4 710	2 814	1 896
Otumba	16 777	11 774	5 003
San Martín de las Pirámides	13 595	8 992	4 603
Temascalapa	19 436	14 647	4 790

Source: COPLADEM, based on IGECEM (2023).

According to the Municipal Development Planning Committee, the Municipality of San Martín de las Pirámides accounted for 54.65% of tourism, which shows that tourism

is a source of income for the Municipality of San Martín de las Pirámides.

Contribution of the tourism sector to the state GDP broken down by municipality Zone II

	Municipal Tourism GDP 2020 (D)	Participation in % of Tourism in the municipality (C/D)
Region 5		
Ecatepec de Morelos	9 997 831 271	6.42%
Region 6		
Tecamac	76 822 396	0.39%
Acolman	23 225 376	0.29%
Axapusco	168 999 652	48.67%
Nopaltepec	148 885 850	59.63%
Otumba	313 246 538	35.16%
San Martín de las Pirámides	473 016 699	54.65%
Temascalapa	56 067 014	12.93%
Teotihuacán	926 106 419	35.21%

Source: COPLADEM, based on IGECEM (2023).

The economy of San Martín de las Pirámides, as well as that of the Teotihuacán Valley Tourist Corridor, has developed thanks to tourism, which is often the main source of extraordinary income for municipalities in Mexico. This document seeks to examine the income generated by tourism in the area and how this income can be used for sustainable community development.

The economic benefits that San Martín de las Pirámides receives from tourism not only come from local commerce and tourist spending, but also from increased revenue for the municipal government. This revenue should support infrastructure and public services, translating into tangible benefits for the local population, tourism, and the government. Tourists who come to San Martín de las Pirámides generate a stream of income, which leads to various economic and social opportunities in the region.

On the other hand, the transportation and communication infrastructure also needs to be modernized and expanded to facilitate access and improve the traveler experience. The implementation of an efficient public transportation system connecting major points of interest, along with a bilingual signage strategy, could make mobility throughout the area more fluid and accessible, encouraging more tourists to explore new places within the municipality.

Based on the boost to tax revenue, tourism activity can be classified into three categories [4]. First, there is the economic impact, related to the costs and benefits generated, the creation and distribution of wealth, as well as the labor employed, whether local or foreign. Second, there is the physical or environmental impact, derived from the potential damage caused to the natural environment. Finally, the social and cultural impact refers to changes in the lifestyles of the local population living in tourist destinations.

By developing a balanced strategy that considers community engagement and responsible management, San Martín de las Pirámides can become a destination for visitors and residents alike, enabling sustainable and more equitable local development for all.

Tourism infrastructure is a key factor in attracting San Martín de las Pirámides as a tourist destination. Good infrastructure not only provides a great experience for visitors, but also benefits that accrue and are felt in the form of economic development and the overall health of the community.

Tourism drives investment in infrastructure. Road, transportation, water, and electricity infrastructure, as well as recreational facilities for visitors, need to be improved to better serve tourists. This creates mutual benefits for both tourists and local residents. Improved infrastructure in San Martín de las Pirámides will attract more tourists and promote new small businesses, and will also position the town as an attractive and accessible option for tourists.

The economic benefit for the municipality of San Martín de las Pirámides consists of employment, increased tax revenue, and the installation of infrastructure. These factors are key to the growth and progress of the area and to a better quality of life.

There are some disadvantages to tourism growth that can hinder growth and development. Increased visitor numbers can inevitably result in increased needs for public services, as well as increased levels of pollution, litter, and overall environmental damage, particularly around the pyramids and other tourist sites. Tourism infrastructure can also be affected, as can local ecosystems and biodiversity. Therefore, responsible tourism is required to protect the environment from degradation and conserve natural resources.

According to Fayos-Solá and the Spanish Ministry of Trade and Tourism, we must accept that we live in the New Era of Tourism (NET), in which outdoor activities will be driven by the relationship between man and the environment [5,6]. Quality will be another element that will be used as a standard in the evaluation of tourism products, and it is arguable that, consequently, the objective of sustainability will become not only a series of favorable consequences at an environmental and socioeconomic level, but will also be, at least in rural areas, a critical factor that improves the viability of tourism as an economic activity.

The absence of regulations that facilitate municipal tax collection, thus creating jobs and improving infrastructure, is due to the lack of public policies that position San Martín de las Pirámides as a competitive destination nationally and internationally. Furthermore, the scarcity of attractive, varied, and accessible tourist destinations for all ages, along with a lack of marketing strategies and a solid sales pitch, means that visitors are limited to being solely archaeological tourists. This represents a lost opportunity for other economic sectors that could benefit from tourism.

“Public policies represent collectively agreed-upon objectives implemented by institutions to address societal challenges.” [7] These objectives are achieved through actions managed, at least in part, by institutions or governments, with the purpose of guiding the behavior of individuals or groups to improve a situation perceived as problematic or unsatisfactory. Based on this definition, three

important elements for building a public policy observatory stand out.

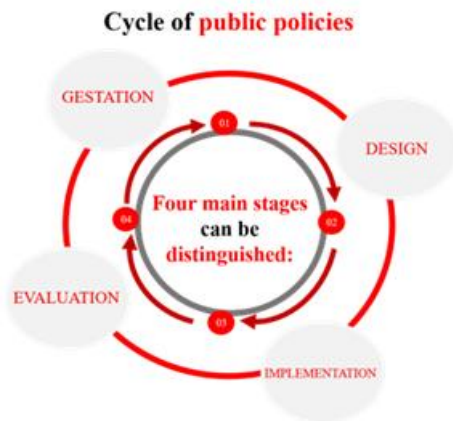
- a. Collective objectives: It is important to define common goals that respond to the needs of society, which requires governance practices that involve different actors.
- b. Behavioral Guidance: Policies should guide people's behavior, so it is essential to clearly identify the problems to be solved.
- c. Idea of change: The results of public policies must be continuously analyzed and evaluated to verify whether they are actually generating the desired changes.

To create a policy, there are phases that must be carried out, ranging from conception, design, implementation, and evaluation, which is why this research is done.

- a. Gestation: One of the basic attributes of public policy is that it must be applied to a specific, explicit problem. This must be achieved through an analysis of the problem, a review of the development plan, and a feasibility analysis, since government intervention without an adequate diagnosis is not public policy; it is a government action.
- b. Design: This phase becomes a critical stage in which the participation of key stakeholders is imperative. These stakeholders include: the municipal government, restaurant owners, small merchants, informal businesses, and national and transnational companies. This stage requires an analysis of the problem from its various angles, as well as an analysis of the legal, economic, and social feasibility of the public policy to be implemented, as well as the involvement of each stakeholder in the different realities. This phase is a collaborative and multidimensional exercise that, if carried out effectively, can result in innovative and practical solutions that benefit the entire community.
- c. Implementation: This stage goes beyond simply introducing concepts and laws; it encompasses a comprehensive set of coordinated actions that ensure the policy is effective and sustainable in its application. The program is legally formalized, a key step that provides the structure and guidelines necessary for the policy's operation. This formalization not only establishes the regulatory foundation but also contributes to gaining the support of the institutions and stakeholders involved, thus facilitating its social acceptance. It includes training for the team responsible for implementing the policy. Adequate staff training ensures efficient implementation and the long-term sustainability of the program. This entails developing a robust training plan that covers technical, ethical, and communication aspects, ensuring that all team members have the tools required to address challenges and improve results. Open communication channels must be established between different departments and teams, as well as with citizens. Citizen participation in this process not only promotes transparency but also fosters a culture of accountability and cooperation.
- d. Evaluation plays a fundamental role in facilitating a detailed analysis of the outcomes derived from its design and implementation. This evaluation not only quantifies the success of the policy in relation to the objectives achieved, but also examines the extent to which the public

problems that led to its creation have been addressed or mitigated.

The establishment of public policies aimed at revenue collection and sustainability will translate into new ways of regulating sustainable tourism, preserving the region's cultural and natural heritage through guidelines that allow for a harmonious relationship between man and nature.



Source: Own creation.

This article focuses on the first three stages: Administration, Design and Implementation;

- a. Management: Within the diagnostic and community participation stage of San Martín de las Pirámides, a territorial analysis is needed to identify stakeholders who can participate, as well as the natural and cultural assets that San Martín de las Pirámides has, through open municipal forums to gather opinions, as well as specialists, to evaluate the fiscal and environmental impact, in addition to avoiding overexploitation of the tourist resource.
- b. Design: At this stage, regulatory work is a fundamental basis for the protection of the different actors, as well as the establishment of taxes for the generation of tourism infrastructure and the protection of communication routes to work harmoniously with tourism, environmental education, public institutions and public services. At this stage, training of the different officials, as well as tourist guides and the general population, is essential for compliance with the different regulatory bodies.
- c. Implementation: After the management and design are completed, it is important to measure the economic, political, and social impact of the public policy. At this stage, budgeting will be an important part of establishing or improving the infrastructure to be used for the public policy for San Martín de las Pirámides. At this stage, the implementation of each of the participating stakeholders will be essential to achieving results and providing the opportunity to adjust through citizen participation.

3. Conclusions

The Municipality of San Martín de las Pirámides has significant potential for economic development through the establishment of public policies that allow for the participation of various stakeholders. However, this can only be achieved through an appropriate framework for

recognizing tourism as a revenue generator. Analyzing the contributions of the tourism sector, it is clear that it not only generates employment and income, but also promotes local culture and improves infrastructure.

In the process of developing strategies and policies to stimulate tourism, it is essential to implement a robust study methodology that allows for impact assessment and necessary adjustments. The growth of San Martín de las Pirámides clearly illustrates how tourism can be a powerful tool for economic development, provided it is managed responsibly and sustainably.

Future research and implementation should prioritize community engagement mechanisms, measurable performance indicators, and long-term monitoring of tourism's socioeconomic impacts.

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