

## Desarrollo local a través de rutas culturales: el caso de San José de Chiquitos (Bolivia)

### Local Development through Cultural Routes: The Case of San José de Chiquitos (Bolivia)

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**Resumen:** Las rutas patrimoniales se han convertido en un importante reclamo desde los orígenes del turismo, siendo altamente consideradas más recientemente como una herramienta privilegiada para la planificación del desarrollo local integral. En esta ocasión, se profundizará en las rutas patrimoniales, desde una perspectiva socioeconómica y los factores que las configuran como agentes de desarrollo; así como, en el marco conceptual del desarrollo territorial sostenible, delimitando conceptos clave de los nuevos paradigmas público, circular y regenerativo y otros .

Finalmente, se contrastará el alcance de este modelo de desarrollo integral en el caso de la famosa Ruta de las Misiones Jesuíticas de la Chiquitania, muy apreciada en América Latina. Verificando los datos de pobladores y turistas consideran que las infraestructuras son de mediana calidad y los datos de turistas y pobladores consideran que la ruta ha logrado la mejora del patrimonio cultural y natural, aunque no ha contribuido a complementar o potenciar las actividades tradicionales (minería y agricultura).

Por tanto, se puede considerar, siguiendo las premisas del modelo de desarrollo integral indicado que, las rutas patrimoniales pueden activar la revalorización y cuidado del patrimonio cultural y natural, la mejora de las condiciones socioeconómicas de las poblaciones rurales. Su desarrollo como producto turístico de calidad dependerá de la inversión en infraestructuras y comunicaciones.

**Palabras clave:** Patrimonio, turismo, desarrollo local, Misiones jesuíticas, Chiquitania

**Abstract:** Heritage routes have become an important claim since the origins of tourism, being highly considered more recently as a privileged tool for planning integral local development. On this occasion, Heritage routes will be studied in depth, from a socioeconomic perspective and the factors that make them up as agents of development; as well as, in the conceptual framework of sustainable territorial development, delimiting key concepts of the new public, circular and regenerative paradigms and others. Finally, the scope of this integral development model will be contrasted in the case of the famous Jesuit Missions Route of Chiquitania, highly appreciated in Latin America. Verifying the data of denizen and tourists consider that the infrastructures are of medium quality and the data of tourists and townsmen consider the route has achieved the improvement of the cultural and natural heritage, although it has not contributed to complementing or promoting traditional activities (mining and agriculture).

Therefore, it can be considered, following the premises of the integral development model indicated that, heritage routes can activate the revaluation and care of cultural and natural heritage, the improvement of the socioeconomic conditions of rural populations. Its development as a quality tourism product will depend on investment in infrastructures and communications.

**Keywords:** Heritage, Tourism, Local Development, Jesuit's Missions, Chiquitania.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been considered a local development factor due to Its multiplier effect on other economic activities and, in turn, due to its contribution to national economies due to its impact on GDP, the balance of payments and employment. Tourism also encourages the recovery and restoration of monumental and intangible cultural heritage, but tourist overload can make tourism a threat, both for heritage and for the quality of life of the resident population.

The cultural routes (CR), have been the origin of current tourism with the Grand Tour to the European continent from the seventeenth century, destined to the formation of the young British aristocracy. In particular, routes based on heritage have been a claim of the travel industry, especially those destined to tourism with a higher purchasing power and a higher cultural level.

Cultural routes are part of the cultural heritage (et al, 2019), above all because of the role they play for certain people and their communities; in particular, the routes based on popular heritage that have been a birdcall of the tourist industry. The development of mass tourism has achieved that the trips have affordable prices for the different social strata and these have energized the tourist routes, generating an increase in participation, extending the cultural attraction beyond the monumental and artistic heritage, towards other immaterial aspects: folklore, literature, historical spaces, fairs, events, legends, sanctuaries, and so on.

As a result of the interest aroused by this tourism, many countries saw in their historical heritage an instrument to make the country known, increase the number of visitors and therefore obtain higher income. Undoubtedly due to economic

collaboration and intercultural communication, many countries chose to expand their cultural offer, recovering and rehabilitating heritage assets and creating thematic routes. These constitute one of the tourist modalities with the greatest projection, strength and diffusion on an international scale. These have been promoted by organizations such as the European Union, UNESCO, OAS, and so on. Originating a great proliferation of them. they put in value their characteristics and presumably unique values to attract visitors.

Each destination has specific tourist attractions, and depending on the territorial wealth, the historical-cultural heritage, the natural heritage (canyons, gorges, ancient forests, etc.) and others, new tourist routes based on a neo-heritage will be created, such as gastronomic, wine, literary routes, etc. When there is availability to generate this tourism, it helps the commitment of the community (urban or rural) to create employment and increase income.

With greater intensity and under the auspices of international organizations for local development, America and Europe have stood out in restoring old routes, or creating new ones. In Europe, supported by the European Union and Unesco, the following stand out: Camino de Santiago, La Rotta dei Fenici, Tuta de los Vikingos, Cluniac Sites, Route de los Caminos de San Olav, European Route of Jewish heritage, Via Charlemagne, the route of Mozart, among others. And in America others like, the Trans-Canadian route, the Route 66 of the old leaders towards the American West, the Mohawk Trail of Indian tracks in Massachusetts, the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu, the lost city in Colombia, the Aztec legacy in Mexico, Mayan ruins Guatemala, or the routes of the Jesuit missions of Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil or Bolivia among others.

In other words, in addition to cultural interest, these are routes that constitute a global phenomenon that materializes locally within the framework of territorial strategies to boost economic activity and position itself in the international tourism market. However, in its diversity, heritage can be decontextualized, disarticulation of the territories where they are embedded and the construction of territorial images that do not fully correspond to the social and cultural realities of the host societies.

However, to achieve the objectives, the involvement and effort of the population, the context and the specific characteristics of the environment are needed. In this reality they will enter based on elements such as a circular or linear participatory economy model, a growth strategy focused on an exogenous or endogenous, local or community development model, and choosing a tourist route or a cultural heritage route.

The article is divided into five sections: The first approach the theoretical framework on cultural routes. the second, analyzes the impact of the routes on local development. Third, material and methods. After that, the results of the research fieldwork are presented. Finally, the Discussion and conclusions of the investigation of the studied Route. With the aim that it can help to apply this tourism modality in countries of emerging economies.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL DELIMITATION OF MAIN FACTORS IN THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

It is necessary to differentiate between various aspects when analyzing the economic development and the social, cultural and economic sustainability of a region, since different factors intervene, as well as the choice of resources to take into account and use in planning for the development of the region route and the villages, towns or cities through which it runs.

In the first place, the differentiation of the tourist route and cultural heritage. In the European context there are great conceptual controversies. But here we take the one made by Campesino (2006) -at that time, Vice-president of ICOMOS-Spain. According to this perspective, cultural heritage cannot be confused with tourist-cultural routes, because the former respond to historical criteria of authenticity, continuity and contrasting exchanges between cultures. Meanwhile, the tourist routes are tourist inventions of convenience, promoted by public or private agents, that weave networks of more or less homogeneous and linked heritage resources to offer an imagined and virtual commercial product; sometimes themed and self-constructed with no scientific basis, as the Council of Europe itself promotes with the slogan: create your own cultural heritage route.

From an international dimension, both terms converge in the same sociological thought and fact, tourist route (tourist-cultural routes) and cultural route (cultural heritage). One of the problems in defining the subject with precision is in the confusion generated between tourist routes, especially those of cultural interest and cultural routes.

Therefore, it is necessary to clarify that there is a profound difference between the two concepts. A cultural route *stricto sensu*, it is not invented or designed: it is discovered.

According to the text of Campesino (2006), the cultural heritage routes refer to a physical route of historical importance. Unlike these, tourist routes can be designed according to the interests of clients, geographical distances and access facilities, places of interest and many other factors that, logically, lack a scientific basis.

The second question to analyze is the differentiation between linear economy and circular economy. Important issue in the context of heritage. It is important to know what type of economy, circular or linear, you want to apply on the cultural heritage route, because in some cases it will be necessary to create it and in others to make it more dynamic. When it is spoken in these terms, it refers to two phases: one, the circular or linear economy in the strict sense. Process the product, consume and later dispose of it (linear economy), or recycle the processed raw materials that instead of discarding them, reuse them (circular economy). The objective of the CE is to manage and recycle materials efficiently and only use renewable energy, without

having negative impacts on human life or ecosystems (Rodríguez et al., 2020). In other words, close the process. The EC benefits the sustainability of the environment, since it is more profitable and less harmless to the environment, leading to sustainable economic growth, increased competitiveness and the creation of new jobs.

The second phase is the circularity or linearity of the cultural heritage route (CHR) of its conceptualization as economic promotion in local life. That is, if it is understood only as a cultural tourist offer (linearity), or as an integrating project where, together with the tangible and intangible heritage activities, which are an important part of the route, other economic activities of the local community participate (circularity). The latter encourages the CHR to promote economic, social and cultural activity and, in addition, protect heritage. It cannot be ignored that, to make it possible to link the linear / circular economy with CHR/TR, joint efforts of entrepreneurs, researchers, companies, users, local, regional and national government and civil society are needed. Especially, three things need to come together: innovation, creativity and involvement. These ingredients can promote a change in the local and regional space, if people learn to think in an innovative way.

Another element to keep in mind lies in knowing whether local communities prefer to resort to local development or community development. Similar questions, but really different. Local development seeks to transform the local economy and society, through a process aimed at overcoming existing difficulties and challenges. That is, to improve the living conditions of the local population through concerted actions between the different local, social, public and private agents, towards an efficient and sustainable use of existing endogenous resources (Pierskalla, et al, 2017, Segovia Hidalgo, et al, 2019, Dawson, et al., 2021, Nilsen, et al., 2022 & Han, et al., 2024). Community development implies other types of actions and interventions among the villagers. The United Nations defines community development as a process in which community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. Bhattacharyya (2004) establishes community development as the promotion of solidarity and agency. Green (2016) states that community development processes and interactions involve efforts to combine and build resources to improve quality and well-being.

Therefore, community development involves changing the relationships between people and administrations, so that everyone can participate in solving the problems that affect their lives. Pooling a large amount of knowledge and experiences in a creative way, this can promote collective action and achieve the objectives desired by the communities.

Finally, under which program the CHR will be modeled, sustainable, restorative or regenerative. The best known is sustainable cultural tourism. A concept that, as say Fernández and Sánchez (2009), has a wide number of definitions, and is due to its multidimensional nature. Given this reality, we take the definition of WTO (1993), which defines it as a model that meets the needs of tourists and the regions that receive them, and protects and increases opportunities for the future.

Sustainable tourism products are in harmony with the environment, the community and local cultures, so that the recipients of visitors become the beneficiaries and not the victims of tourism development. Tourism sustainability describing a tourism which meets the needs of tourists and the host destination, managing all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled (Aramburu, et al., 2016 & Akbart, et al, 2022). But not only meet the needs, but establish a balance between the three dimensions to ensure its long-term sustainability.

A trend that has been on the rise in the last decade is regenerative tourism. It tries to go beyond sustainable and restorative tourism, it implies focusing on giving back and contributing to the proactive regeneration of communities, cultures, heritage, places, landscapes, etc. As Duxbury, Bakas, Vinagre de Castro & Silva (2021) say, the focus is not on the sustainability of tourism per se but on the ways in which tourism can be a tool for local well-being, revitalization, and sustainability. It aligns with integrated local development approaches while focusing on micro-scale regeneration initiatives rather than large-scale regeneration plans. Some research conceives regenerative tourism as a solution to the crisis, especially caused by the search for sustainable and ecological tourism (Paddison & Hall, 2024). On the other hand, the sustainable and regenerative economies need a conceptual change, regarding the conceptualization of the use of resources of economic growth (Kircherr, et al., 2023). It is also necessary to ask whether the economy, in all its dimensions, is sustainable or this can be sustainable (Horodecka, 2024)

The challenge in tourism lies in its modeling around a concept of such an activity, which has generated economic growth and is moving upwards and it is difficult to change. As Cave and Dredge (2020) point out, the threat in tourism, however, is that seven decades of growth have thwarted any appetite to imagine new and alternative economic models in tourism (Zaenuri, 2023).

A third trend is restorative tourism. Its aim is to reverse the environmental damage generated, which is just one example of a new approach to tourism that benefits rather than harms the environment. Ultimately, it seeks to restore the capacity of social and ecological systems. It is a way of traveling, where the tourist in addition to seeing and enjoying the environment, participates in its restoration. The individual stops being a passive object to be an active subject in the sustainability of the territory. The restorative concept, depending on the area or discipline, acquires one meaning or another (Morsetto, 2020). One of the instructors of the concept in the tourism introduction resides in Hawken (1993), who used the concept of restorative economics to describe an economy that combines commercial activities with (restorative) environmental practices. Later, Hofstra and Huisingh (2014) attributed to the regenerative concept the virtues of restoring, renewing, revitalizing and ensuring the rebirth of energy sources and materials, taking into account the future needs, desires and desires of society and nature.

Regeneration represents a form of improvement from restoration. If restoration means to do something well again, regeneration, for some authors, means

to do it better, beyond a (supposed) condition of origin. Proponents of regeneration approaches in the 1990s tended to focus on a conceptualization, which may have reflected an optimistic view of prevailing social change during that period (see Ferguson, 2002; Park, Conca, and Finger, 2008 & Mang and Reed 2012) demonstrated that there is "a tendency to blur or confuse regenerative approaches with the range of other design systems that emerged in the pursuit of ecological sustainability in the 1990s." In short, the multiplicity of definitions of the concept of regeneration echoed the cacophony of frames that surrounded the idea.

### **3. THE ROUTE OF JESUIT MISSIONS OF CHIQUITANIA AS A LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PRODUCT**

In 1990, The missions of Chiquitania (Santa Cruz, Bolivia) were declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO. It is a territory that is located on a much more extensive route, which was carried out by the Jesuits in the seventeenth century on behalf of the Spanish Crown to evangelize the territory of South America. Such was the importance that this space between Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay was called the Jesuit Empire (Lugones, 2020). This broad route began with the first mission (or reduction) in San Ignacio Guazú (Paraguay) in 1609. This was followed by others, creating between 1691 and 1760 ten reductions in eastern Bolivia, in "Chiquitanas" lands. The success of the first missions was with the aim of evangelizing and Christianizing the indigenous people (Fernández and Guzman, 2013), launched the missionary adventure through Bolivian lands.

Under the characteristic socio-political-religious system of the Jesuits, new missions were created: San Xavier, Concepción, San Miguel, San Rafael, Santa Ana, San José, San Ignacio, Sagrado Corazón, Santiago, San Juan until the completion of the Jesuit mission in Bolivia. .

The cultural heritage route of the Great Chiquitania (JMR) is made up of three provinces of the Department of Santa Cruz that make up the territory of Chiquitania (Ñuflo de Chávez, Velasco and Chiquitos), and seven localities: Concepción, San Xavier, San Ignacio de Velasco, Santa Ana, San Miguel, San Rafael and San José de Chiquitos. These were structured under the same pattern. It goes without saying that, in this long journey through the lands of South America, the Jesuits sought for a way to concentrate nomadic indigenous groups in communities called *reducciones*. The missionaries were entrusted with the task of instructing the indigenous people about civil, religious and musical life. In a very short time, the natives, skilled in manual arts, became excellent artisans (carpenters, sculptors, potters, weavers, painters, etc.), as in each of the Missions it is observed. Highlight a characteristic of the Bolivian Jesuit missions that did not occur in other missionary routes in South America, music. The Jesuits of Chiquitania used music as a means of evangelization, which made the indigenous people become exceptional musical artists, not only singers and performers, but also composers. The Chiquitano style

began to develop its own traces in the works, probably composed by the autochthonous inhabitants who were being trained by the Jesuit masters, becoming a heritage value [...] and that the indigenous people will preserve as a sacred heritage for more than 250 years (Feria, 2018).

The influence exerted on the indigenous population and the territory fell into oblivion when the reign of Carlos III expelled the Jesuits from Spain and therefore dispossessed them of their management in the overseas territories. This isolation made it possible to keep their culture and idiosyncrasies alive, as well as their cultural heritage. This interest was corroborated by the declaration of the World Heritage Site. This meant support for the development of the area, leading the region and the country to keep this route in mind as an identity element of Bolivia and Latin American society (Molina, 2019).

Likewise, the support received by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) in 2010 (cooperation program 1998) to promote a pilot project in Santa Ana de Velasco, gave rise to the creation in 2001 of the Technical Office of the Misiones Plan. The TOMP was supported for The Municipal Governments of the Jesuit Missions, the Diocese of Velasco, the Vicariate of Ñufllo de Chávez, the Autonomous Departmental Government of Santa Cruz, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and AECID. This was the beginning of a tourist development plan, in which the Jesuit temples and civil spaces were restored. A cultural and commercial structure was generated around the Cultural Heritage Route of the region.

La Chiquitania was not a tourist territory such as La Paz, Lake Titicaca, Salar de Uyuni (the most visited place in Bolivia), the Licancabur Volcano or the Castillo de la Glorieta among others. It was territory with a subsistence production system and of little cultural interest. With the declaration of a World Heritage Site, the panorama changed, and various public, private, national and international actors began a reconstruction of the heritage. After a few years, the areas were strengthened, especially towards tourism. The rehabilitation generated the creation of the Route of Jesuit Missions of the Great Chiquitani. This new productive activity has created services for tourists, and has increased the number of tourists, so much to enjoy the tangible and intangible heritage, as well as other leisure activities.

As Rubens Barbery (president of CEPAD) points out, in the last 15 years the territory of the Jesuit Missions of Chiquitos, located in Bolivia, has advanced considerably from the point of view of its tourism development [...] becoming the second busiest destination in the country (after the Salar de Uyuni).





Figure 1. Circuit of Jesuit Missions in Bolivia. Source: FAM Bolivia

The JMR is circular, although visitors do not always make the complete circuit, for reasons of time, price and conditions of the territory. It begins in the capital of the province, in Santa Cruz de la Sierra and from there, you can choose to start the route through San José or San Xavier. It is a wide and multi-day route. Different tour operators offer multiple itineraries, depending on the number of missions to visit, time available, money, etc. Some agencies include in their tourist packages Santiago de Chiquito (Roboré, province of chiquitos) and San Antonio de Lomerio (province of Ñuflo de Chávez), towns that are not declared a World Heritage Site, but of great cultural and natural beauty.

#### 4. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Many social investigations for decades have used a triangular methodology, that is, combining different sources of data, investigations, theories or methods. So that the methods and techniques of an exploratory nature are verified with those (generally quantitative) of a descriptive nature. That is, applying both deductive and hypothetical inductive inference. This type of methodological approach to triangulation of the results is significant, as well as the precision and transparency of the analysis (Quaranta et al., 2016). In our case, this mixed methodological design has been chosen, integrating qualitative and quantitative information (Tashakkori y Creswell 2007; Li et al., 2016), with interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, review and analysis of empirical and statistical secondary sources; applied to case studies. In

this way, it allows us to observe how relationships change over time, because they are intrinsically linked to the context in which they develop.

This methodology was used, in order to know if a CHR can stimulate integral local development, and specifically in a region of high ecological value, also to determine the perception and satisfaction of visitors and residents with the CHR, as well as the verification of working hypotheses from a holistic perspective. To address our hypotheses, the study has followed four phases: a first of documentary analysis, where information from the JMR has been collected, a second of analysis of secondary data related to JRM; thirdly, the realization of two random surveys, one, to visitors to the missions (421 survey), where the perception of mission resources, sustainability, and social impact is analyzed, and another to residents (131 survey), the quality of life, its perception, on changes in local production, if the cultural and natural heritage was preserved. A script was used for the interviews. The questions were oriented to answer our main hypothesis: we have observed that many cultural heritage routes, in this case, the JMR, can activate local development; thus, we posed questions to help us but from two different perspectives, one referring to the visitor and the other to the denizen: What itinerary have you done?, Does the JMR have enough services? Is it a route sustainability? What attractions does it have? Does it help with local development? Has well-being of residents improved? and others more.

In the questions, Likert scales were used to treat questions about perceptions and attitudes. Finally, seven interviews with residents, five with visitors, and one with the president of the Center for Participation and Human Development (CEPAD)[22] were conducted, in order to gain an in-depth understanding of issues not reflected in the surveys, and to help understand all aspects of the CHR, both for the town and tourists.

## **5. RESULTS**

The promotion of the Jesuit Mission Route has increased the arrival of visitors to Gran Chiquitania. However, tourism development has behaved irregularly, since in some localities it has had more influx than in others. Since 2006, after a strong promotion, the flow of visitors increased

This fact has led us to study the relationship between the Jesuit Mission Route and the socioeconomic development of the villages along the route to determine if there has been an integral development in the community, complying with the indicators of socio-cultural, economic and environmental sustainability, or if it has only stimulated tourism.

### **5.1. Opinions about the route of visitors**

Tourists and visitors were surveyed about the route. Most of the visitors do the route to see the missionary temples and the richness of the indigenous culture. Most do not complete the entire route, but choose some of the routes offered by tour operators according to their purchasing power.

Based on the results of the survey opinions, five itineraries were created. Itinerary 5 (express from San José de Chiquitos and Sureste) is the most preferred by tourists. A total of 29.6% have taken it. Of this route, only San José is within the Jesuit Mission Route. The southeast is an offer to observe the natural heritage of the province and the mission of Santiago. San José de Chiquitos has the best communications with Santa Cruz de la Sierra, good roads, trains, many tourist services and an airfield. This makes many choose this itinerary. The second, most popular, is itinerary 1 (San Javier and Concepción). Of those surveyed, 24.10% have done this route. The communications between Santa Cruz de la Sierra, San Javier and Concepción are good, and in addition, Concepción has good tourist services. This itinerary, without the need to spend the night in Concepción, allows travelers to see two towns in one day. Route 3 (San Javier, Concepción, San Ignacio, Santa Ana, San Rafael and San Miguel) was done by 18.5% of those surveyed. There was only one town left and they would have completed the circuit, but they decided not to continue. The distance and the poor conditions of the road to San José de Chiquitos are a handicap to completing the tourist circuit.

Itinerary 2 (San Javier, Concepción, San Ignacio and Santa Ana) was chosen by 16.6%. The difficulty of distances and infrastructure must be taken into account. Some choose Santa Ana, for two reasons, it is relatively close to San Ignacio and Concepción, and they can return to either site the same day to stay (there is no accommodation in Santa Ana). A second option is the mission that has had less external influence, and also, the strong tourism promotion of the village by different Bolivian organizations.

Itinerary 4 (complete route) only 11.4% of the tourists consulted went to all the villages of the missions, and visited the natural and cultural spaces that missionary environments offer. As one of the interviewees said, there are many inconveniences to complete the route such as the poor state of the roads, the difficulties of staying in missions such as San Rafael or Santa Ana, the high cost of hiring transportation services to follow the route or the hassles of buses to travel from one mission to another. In addition, the opinions of the people of Santa Cruz on the peculiarity of the heritage, saying that seeing one mission you have seen all. This conditions the visitors, as they move forward they choose to continue or return.

A total of 49.5% have moderate opinions about the infrastructures. According to previous opinions, the route has tourist possibilities, if one takes into account that in some missions the communications and roads are bad, and they do not have accommodation. The interviewees point out that the roads and accommodation were not good, and they also commented that in many areas the Wi-Fi was very bad or non-existent. The three places that meet suitable conditions for tourism are

Concepción, San Ignacio and San José de Chiquitos. The latter has the best infrastructures, which makes it optimal. These statements draw attention to other types of cultural and religious routes, such as the Camino de Santiago, where including non-believers, appreciate setback as part of the route, and the most rudimentary accommodation sector (in shelters without Wi-Fi) and overcrowded an attraction for the walker.

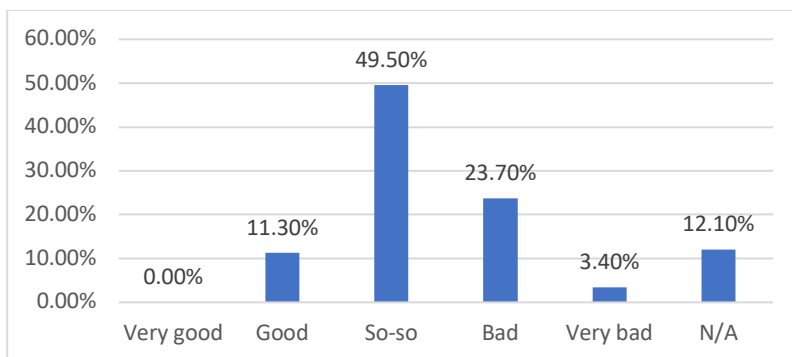


Figure 2. Opinion on the tourist infrastructures of the Jesuit Mission Route.

Despite having a religious content, it is not a religious or spiritual route (see Valero-Matas 2019) as such, unlike walkers who make the Camino de Santiago accepting discomfort as 'part of the road', and the more rudimentary lodging (hostels without wifi) and overcrowded as attractive. While visitors to the Jesuit Route who claim to take the route to learn about indigenous culture and heritage, they do so without giving up the comforts.

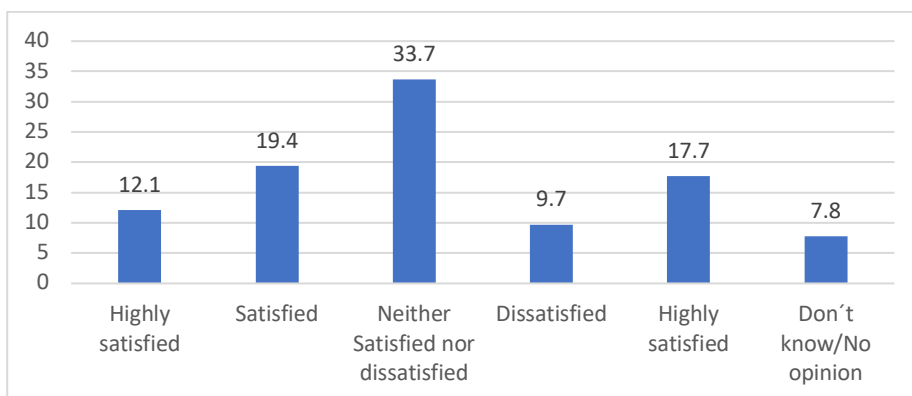


Figure 3. Degree of satisfaction of tourists with the accommodations

These assessments only refer to the accommodations in Concepción, San Ignacio and San José, because the rest of Misiones lack accommodations. In this regard, it should be stated, in the opinion of some of the interviewees, that satisfaction (Quite satisfied + Satisfied) rises to 49.7% in the accommodations in San José. This municipality has 5-star hotels (there are none of that category in San Ignacio and Concepción) and they have managed to combine accommodation with the environment. The accommodation infrastructure is insufficient for the route.

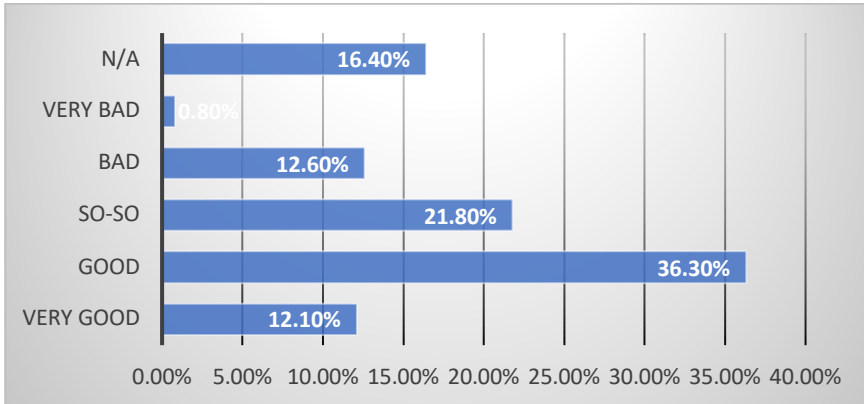


Figure 4. The Jesuit Mission Route protects the cultural and natural heritage.

An overall 31.4% of the visitors rate the Jesuit Route as fair. Those who rate it as bad, 16.20%, and good, 16.10%, practically coincide. However, 16.4% had no opinion. This has its logic, after what was said in the previous questions, there is a lack and differences in the provision of services. Otherwise, the interviewees manifest deprivation in the communications and services provided. The handicraft services, the museums, the churches, that is, the heritage, is very good, and they preserve it. However, the rest of the services, such as communications between towns are deficient. In some places accommodation and restaurants are scarce, and in others there are none. This makes the development of the Jesuit Route difficult.

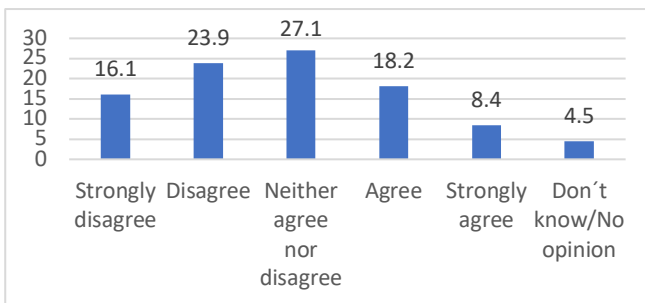


Figure 5. The route makes good use of cultural and natural resources

Quite a few visitors (41%) believe that the route does not adequately take advantage of its cultural and natural potential. Another 27% say that the route is used to a medium extent. In the opinion of the visitors consulted, the route is underutilized and limits its tourist capacity, which could be better used for tourism and to boost local development and the local economy. Several tourists consulted expressed that the route has "beautiful" natural and cultural landscapes. Some are within the route offered by tour operators and others are not.

To visit other "beautiful" places not included in "the tourist package" you have to hire an additional service. This is difficult to obtain or too expensive, due to the difficulties mentioned above. The route has a lot of potential, however it is reduced to a minimum tour. If the offer were expanded, the costs would be reduced and a greater tourist and economic benefit would be achieved. The same is true for culture, which is reduced to the Jesuit music that is present in all the missions, some handicrafts and the architectural complex of the mission.

The possibility of taking advantage of the richness of the natural and cultural assets of the missions for tourism, thanks to the data and interviews, is enormous. And therefore, also a development of the local economic activity.

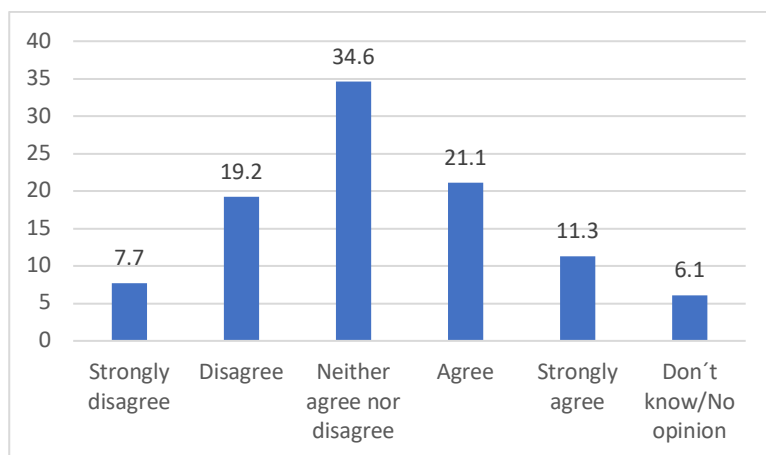


Figure 6. The consumption of energy, water and waste control complies with the principles of sustainability.

According to the data, the route complies with the UN's sustainability principles. A total of 32.4% agree that it complies with responsible consumption of energy, water and waste control. Another 34.6% consider that efforts are regular and 26.9% disagree.

The route has a very different socioeconomic behavior, since the tourist structure and its development is quite uneven. Consequently, in the study of the tourist sustainability of the route, it is necessary to analyze two issues. On the one

hand, tourists/visitors rate it well overall. However, places such as Santa Ana, San Miguel or San Rafael are not very well rated, since they do not have adequate tourist infrastructure. On the other hand, the route is poorly developed, with a practically self-consumption economy and little economic projection abroad.

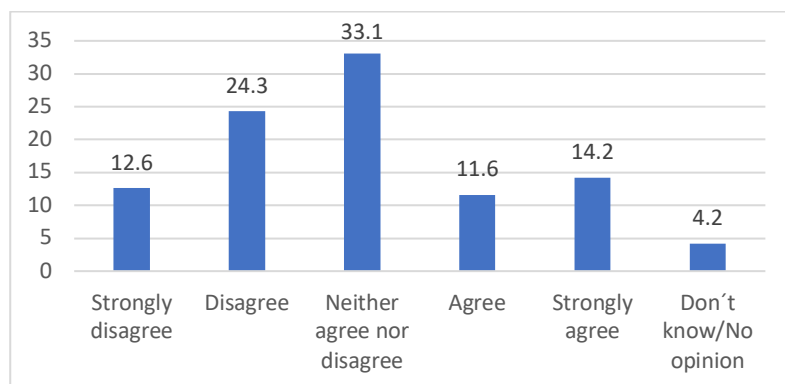


Figure 7. Can it be considered a sustainable route

About the fulfillment of the sustainability criteria, 32% of the interviewees do not know or do not answer. However, 28% agree that the route is sustainable. Against 16% who declare otherwise. The data are not categorical in the compliance of the route with the criteria of sustainable tourism. One of the tourists interviewed who had completed the journey, indicated that the route in some places such as San Ignacio, Concepción and San José are prepared for sustainable tourism, they take care of the environment, water resources, etc., but it is also true that they must improve them. When the tourist travels to other missions, the panorama changes substantially, since the conservation and protection measures of the main cities are not in place.

## 5.2. How the Jesuit Mission Route has influenced the Daily Life the Indigenous Population

The opinion of the visitors is important, but it is necessary to know the perception of the residents about the development of the route and its effects on the economy of the locals. This helps to know if the Jesuit Route has helped and improved local development.

Most of the inhabitants of the Jesuit Route think that their living conditions have improved, although less than expected. The Jesuit Route has helped to improve the localities and increase the number of tourists to visit the cultural and natural heritage. 40.9% of those consulted have a moderate opinion about the improvement or not of their living conditions. This leads to think that their living conditions are the same. In other words, the route has neither improved nor worsened their living conditions. On the other hand, 32.6% affirm that their life has improved considerably. This group

mainly includes people who work in activities related to tourism, employees of accommodation, restaurants, crafts, etc. This is very interesting, because it shows that people who did not have a job or who worked in the primary sector have improved their living conditions by working on activities on the route. This has an important consequence in local development, the multiplying value of tourism, through employment, consumption, investment, etc.

For 3.30%, their living conditions have not improved at all. As there has been uneven investment, the improvement is also uneven. These differences generate problems between the towns, but also these differences are a blockage for the tourist development of the route. One interviewee announced that the largest towns have grown at the expense of the smallest. While large towns have improved a lot, more employment, community services, etc., better infrastructure; small towns have not. In the main towns, having better roads and more population, they have provided them with better transport, accommodation and restaurants. This favors tourism and local productive activity, while the villages have not received any financing to improve services. With few tourist and productive resources it is difficult to improve. In the mission of San José de Chiquitos, the opinion of the people is different. For them, their well-being has improved considerably, the nursing home and the hospital have been improved. In addition, accommodation and restaurants have increased, and in short, a lot of employment has been created.

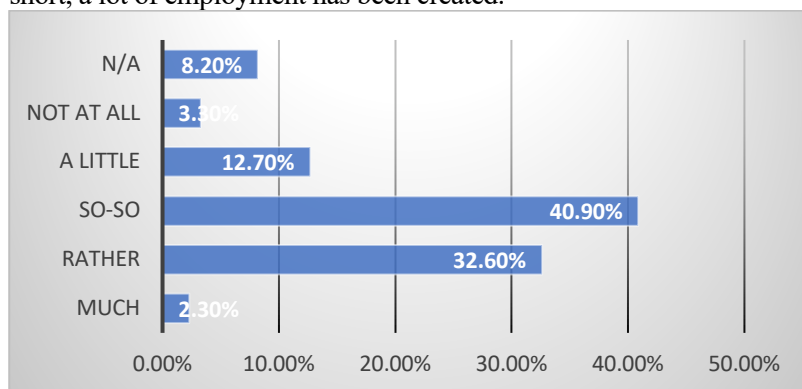


Figure 8. The Jesuit Mission Route has improved your living conditions

To deepen the study, it was asked if the Jesuit Route cared about cultural and natural heritage (included in the SDGs). The route, in the opinion of those consulted (41.30%), maintains the heritage, in addition, they believe that governments and people care more about the landscape, resources and indigenous heritage in general. Baroque music, churches, dances, etc. stand out.

The legacy of the route is probably quite unknown, although it must be said that the different administrations have come together to spread the Jesuit Baroque music of Chiquitania. Currently in the missions the International Festival of American Baroque and Renaissance Music is celebrated, in addition to concerts and minor



festivals in each mission. It cannot be ignored, despite the foregoing, that 21.80% consider heritage conservation regulated.

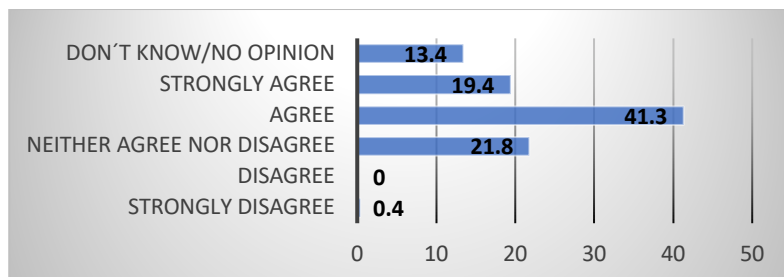


Figure 9. The Jesuit Mission Route contributes to the conservation of cultural and natural heritage

Respondents were asked whether governments had helped project and increase local production to national, regional and international markets. In doing so, we sought to determine whether there was a link between Ruta and local development. In the opinion of those consulted, the authorities have not made sufficient efforts to promote and increase local production, and have maintained a policy of continuity in existing production, to which they have added tourism. There has been no investment in training and resources, nor has there been innovation, so there has been no growth of existing local resources.

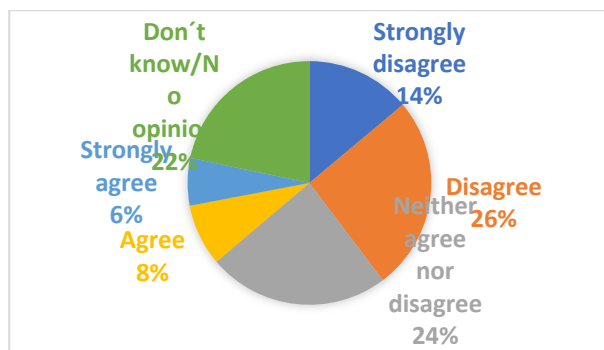


Figure 10. There has been an increase in cooperativism in the missions

Another researched and important issue in local and sustainable development is cooperation between the different agents and members of the community. Cooperation is complicated, especially when working in communities that are unwilling to change and cooperate. This is usually due to a lack of education, training, awareness, dynamization, etc. As shown in Figure XX, 40% of those consulted show little increase in cooperation among the residents of the missions.

People consulted from different missions stated that many of the productive activities, such as the logging industry, mining, Creole cheese production and some lodging businesses, are controlled by large companies. Others mentioned that, in San José de Chiquitos, some of the individual entrepreneurs are foreigners who have settled in the territory.

There is no tendency to generate economic cooperativism, each one has its productive plot, cattle, goats, sheep, pigs or its land for coffee, beans, etc. There have been associative reactions, mainly from cattle ranchers against the development of tourism as an economic activity because they perceived it as a threat to their economic-productive interests.

The lack of initiative and training towards cooperation prevents economic development of the territorial communities. All activities are closely linked and can generate a small productive network that encompasses all of them, and therefore, favors the economic growth of the region. At the same time, it reduces the rejection of some productive sectors.

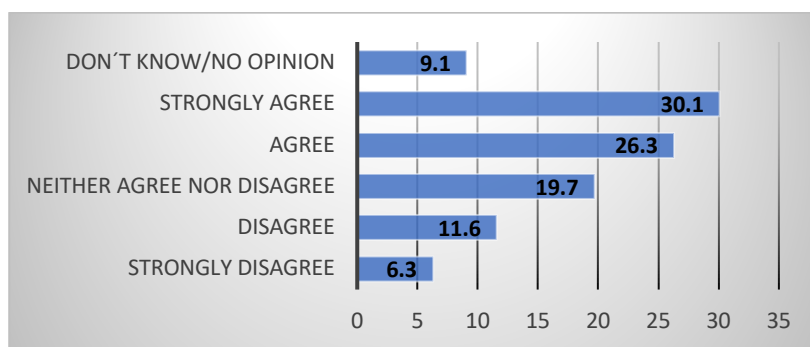


Figure 11. The Administrstrtions have taken measures to develop sustainable tourism on the Route.

Residents of the route 56.4% agree that the administrations have tried to adopt measures to adapt tourism to sustainability. Neighbors of some missions, such as San Miguel, valued the involvement of governments very negatively. He stated that one of the keys to sustainable tourism is having adequate infrastructures, and in this town, the roads are bad and the "cell phone" coverage is not good. In some areas of the mission, there is no coverage. Opinion varies depending on the mission; some have been greatly benefited by tourism while others have not reached a "Missionary Marshall Plan".

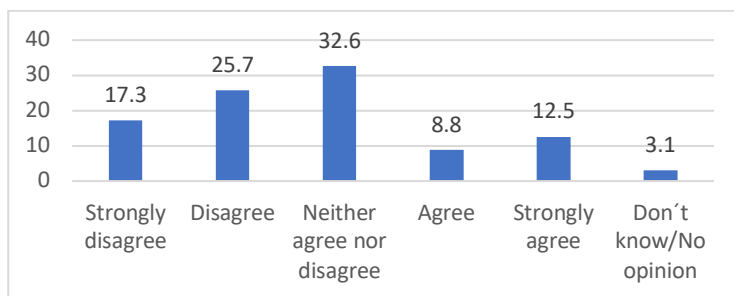


Figure 12. The route has boosted the economy of the towns

A significant number of residents said that the production (32.6%) of goods and products of the land had changed little, and that it was still practically for self-consumption. In the in-depth interviews, a slight increase in the production of raw materials was mentioned in some municipalities, especially forestry and mining. Crafts have been one of the greatest beneficiaries of the Jesuit Route. This lack of dynamism and information on tourist activity in most of the missions has not aroused interest in tourism. In addition, it was heard in the interviews that a significant number of neighbors dedicated to livestock and agriculture did not perceive that their living conditions and production were going to improve; rather, they interpreted it as detrimental to their interests.

Finally, we asked whether the route had boosted the region's economy, especially in the towns along the route. As can be seen in Figure 15, in general terms, a large group of respondents (43%) do not see a boost to the economy, while 21% do. When all the opinions on the economy of the localities along the route are related, three issues emerge. First, the differentiation of investment in the missions, which has not been fair. Secondly, in the missions where tourism activity has grown, the residents see tourism as an economic dynamizer, new lodging and restaurant businesses have been created, handicrafts have been promoted and, to a lesser extent, local production.

In the localities where there has not been this tourist expansion, this economic change has not been perceived. Third, the increase in the local economy has been very slight, especially in activities such as forestry, mining and coffee production due to international demand, and the sheep and goat sector due to regional demand.

## 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 6.1. Discussion

As Loulamski (2006) points out, heritage is no longer divorced from the social and the human, so that heritage assets are increasingly used as resources for a wide

variety of modern purposes. They contribute to economic prosperity, social cohesion and cultural diversity.

But it is necessary to integrate the different elements that converge in local development, such as citizens, administrations, private investors, heritage, the environment and the local traditional economy.

The idea of integrating various heritage elements in the form of a route is becoming a very interesting strategy for heritage management. Its development contributes to improving the understanding of the territory and reinforcing the links between heritage assets, strengthening cultural identity (Navalón 2014) and the local economy. Heritage routes as a tourism element and development agent cannot be detached from the SDGs therefore, it must be known if the route favors local development in accordance with the SDGs. According to the World Tourism Organization, emerging economies will receive about 60% of world tourists in 2030 (UNWTO 2020).

This implies that tourism is a great opportunity for progress. The economic and sustainable development of tourism plays and will play an important role in achieving some sustainable development goals (Ramadhani & Prihantoro, 2023). The research shows that the heritage route has helped in the local development of the region, although it has been uneven. Some missions have been developed and others have not. The conservation of cultural and natural heritage, in addition to being one of the SDGs, is above all, as Katelieva, Muhar, & Penker (2020) say, an element of cultural identity and economic development.

As some of the residents think, their quality of life has improved and they have jobs. The development of the route has favored a defense of the cultural and natural heritage, by both parties, visitors and residents. This has not only strengthened the identity of the natives, but has also promoted socioeconomic activities derived from heritage (Faganel & Trnavcevic 2012; Liburd & Becken 2017; Galmarini 2018; Parga Dans & Alonso González 2019).

The tourist activity has generated some economic resources, it has opened a new business possibility. Women and young people have found new forms of employment. Although, it has been insufficient and there has not been cohesion with the existing local development. With respect to some of the SDGs, 12, 15, 11, progress has been made in compliance without reaching the targets set by the UN. SDGs 16 and 17, which affect the different administrations, are far from the minimum compliance with the UN requirements.

They demand greater involvement and awareness of the route, in order to undertake actions to improve infrastructure, citizen participation, economic development, cooperation, etc., which are crucial for local economic progress.

## **6.2. Conclusions: Improvement Contributions**

The route of the Jesuit missions can and must become an important factor in the economic growth of their communities. As has been pointed out throughout the work, there are many problems that must be resolved. First and foremost is the design of a local development plan to encourage and promote tourism in the Jesuit Route Missional and to boost the local productive economy in a uniform and coherent manner.

Each municipality, depending on its assets, undertakes one or the other tourism/economic actions. Despite having cultural and natural attractions, they do not have the capacity to make a broader offer, as they do not have the necessary instruments. For example, San José de Chiquitos created its own slogan: “San José de Chiquitos, imposible de olvidar” (CEPAL 2018), and the municipality is the one who has promoted tourism. Another example is the International Festival of Renaissance and Baroque Music of America, internationally consolidated, and the impetus comes from associations supported by the municipalities. The latter, however, has had no impact on the local productive sector. These are one-time activities with a very short economic route.

Secondly, to make equitable investments in infrastructures and communications. Not only for tourism, but also for the promotion and sale of local agricultural, meat, mining and forestry products. This is because the most important municipalities are the beneficiaries of these investments, to the detriment of other missions.

A third element is to motivate cooperation among the inhabitants of the municipalities along the route. They will be the true agents of the development and promotion of economic activity. Through cooperativism, local development is dynamized, and as Sili, Sanguinetti, & Meiller, (2014: 160) say, it fulfills functions that go beyond the strictly economic, since their forms of management contribute to greater integration and social cohesion. The capacity of agricultural cooperatives to cushion (mitigate) the impacts caused by fluctuations in international prices of agricultural products and, above all, the effects of the environment on production (droughts, for example) could also be pointed out.

In some missions there is associationism, which is not the same as cooperativism, in some places, cattlemen and farmers maintain a cohesion in the defense of their interests, in front of the rest of the commercial activities. As some of those consulted say, these groups maintain a union in the face of tourist activity. Through cooperativism it is possible to de-escalate these frictions between them, and to demonstrate that the interaction of the different groups is in favor of local development.

A fourth aspect is that the tourist economic activity will demand qualified professionals, so that the municipalities must anticipate the tourist economic growth, training and instructing the inhabitants to carry out work in tourist activities. Otherwise, they will not be able to join jobs offered by companies in the sector and will be relegated to subsidiary tasks of the Jesuit Route.

A fifth point would be to retake the council, the main traditional institution recognized by the Chiquitano people as a functional administrative apparatus that was created during the Jesuit period. The functions of the council would be to maintain the cultural identity, develop the local economy and the interaction between the towns along the route. It would contribute to keep the idiosyncrasy of the towns alive, preserving their culture around the local economy and the comprehensive development of the Jesuit routes of Gran Chiquitania.

Substantial changes are needed in the Jesuit Route by the actors involved. If a comprehensive plan is designed bearing in mind the aforementioned triangulation and development hexagon, a greater socioeconomic impact can be achieved, without altering the cultural and natural environment. Otherwise, the local economy will remain linear, it will not grow, it will tend to decline, and it will only increase activities related to tourism such as artisanal activities.

As a final observation, the Jesuit Mission Route can be a tourist attraction and a factor for local growth, but currently La Chiquitania is perceived as a tourist / cultural attraction but not as an agent of economic and productive development. It is necessary to provide the adequate structure and give identity to the route all the way and introduce it as one more arm of the local economy. Otherwise, it will not achieve the objectives as a route nor will it be a channel for local development.

All this enumeration of tourist actions to address sustainable tourism may be very attractive for theorists and not very practical for a sustainable tourism reality. And possibly not very effective for local development. Perhaps as some scholars announce, the best is in the reduction of tourism (Dwyer, 2023) . This may imply a better development of the local economy based on native products and not as a second economy. That is, that tourism stops being the first economy, let us remember the words of Cepad in its *Metáfora Magazine*, 2024 that Bolivia can live off tourism, so that it becomes a second economy with local production being the first economy.

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