

# Sustainable Tourism In Traditional Villages, As A Rural Development Strategy

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## Abstract

This article explores an important topic, sustainable tourism, through the analysis of rural tourism supply and demand. Its **objective is to** evaluate the potential viability of agrotourism and the direct links between positive sociocultural, environmental and economic contributions, which are becoming increasingly important, rural tourism and agrotourism are emerging as key strategies for sustainable development.

**Methodology** from a post-positivist paradigm, with a qualitative approach and applying grounded theory, which was approached to experts with expertise through interview;

**Results** characterized elements such as innovation and sustainability are fundamental for the growth and success of rural tourism, since they contribute to the creation of resilient and prosperous communities by generating economic and social benefits, due to the fact that by introducing new technologies, creative activities and unique and traditional experiences, innovation improves the attractiveness of rural destinations and enhances the visitor experience.

**Conclusions** is to implement a strategic transformation towards sustainable management of rural tourism, where it provides different pathways towards sustainable management, strategic transformation and thus reduce some obstacles associated with the complexity of rural tourism management.

**Key words:** Agrotourism, rural development, ecotourism, rural tourism, sustainable.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo explora un tema importante, el turismo sostenible, mediante el análisis de la oferta y la demanda turística rural, cuyo Objetivo evaluar la viabilidad potencial del agroturismo y los vínculos directos entre las contribuciones positivas socioculturales, ambientales y económicas, lo cual cobran cada vez mayor importancia, el turismo rural y el agroturismo se perfilan como estrategias clave para el desarrollo sostenible. Metodología desde un paradigma pospositivista, con enfoque cualitativo y aplicando teoría fundamentada, lo cual se abordó a expertos con experticia a través de entrevista; Resultados caracterizo elementos como la innovación y la sostenibilidad son fundamentales para el crecimiento y el éxito del turismo rural, ya que contribuyen a la creación de comunidades resilientes y prósperas al generar beneficios económicos y sociales, debido que al introducir nuevas tecnologías, actividades creativas y experiencias únicas y tradicionales, la innovación mejora el atractivo de los destinos rurales y mejora la experiencia del visitante. Conclusiones es implementar una transformación estratégica hacia la gestión sostenible del turismo rural, donde proporciona diferentes

vías hacia la gestión sostenible, la transformación estratégica y así reducir algunos obstáculos asociados con la complejidad de la gestión del turismo rural.

**Palabras clave:** Agroturismo, desarrollo rural, ecoturismo, turismo rural, sostenible.

## INTRODUCTION

The agricultural context has undergone several structural changes in recent decades, including the development of different enterprises using agricultural resources. The diversification of a farm to include recreational and leisure activities in agrotourism is increasingly being adopted in Colombia, the opposite of what is occurring in the city of Ocaña; and it is suggested to provide a great deal of economic and intrinsic benefits to farmers, visitors and communities. Agritourism promises the benefits of keeping family farms in business and preserving agricultural heritage, maximizing the productivity of farmland resources through recreational use, and even improving the economic situation of local communities (Kumar et al. 2024).

Accordingly, agritourism is defined as a combination of natural settings and products of agricultural operations combined within a tourism experience. It is becoming a large part of the tourism industry. It is one of the important types of tourism in countries such as the United States, Germany, Austria, Greece, Poland, China, Jamaica and other parts of Europe and America (Sharpley & Vass, 2006). Therefore, global consumption patterns, taste and attitude towards food, leisure tourism activities and human interest in nature and culture and traditional heritage; have opened up new opportunities for rural producers in the form of agritourism (Thapa, 2013). In this regard, agritourism provides an additional source of income and employment opportunity for traditional farmers and rural areas; therefore, it is best viewed as a stabilizing economic force, providing a supplementary income that is optimally combined with active farms. Most likely, the beneficiaries of agritourism are farm owners (especially women farmers), with a small measurable increase in local retail trade (Thorp, 2015).

In this sense, the serenity of the mountain and the richness of its flora and fauna make ecotourism a revitalizing and educational adventure; in this regard, there are many needs that rural areas in Latin America present, among which can be mentioned, fundamentally those that have to do with poverty. This is a historical problem that comes from the colony, due to the inequitable distribution of land, as the vast majority of these territories are concentrated in a few hands, a phenomenon commonly known as latifundism (Magrovejo, et al. 2019). The concentration of these lands forces many rural dwellers to cultivate their lands with the sole motive of obtaining the necessary income for survival.

In this sense Kay (2007) considers:

The main causes of rural poverty are structural and relate to the uneven distribution of land and the inequality of the power system. Access to capital, technology and markets, as well as to knowledge and information systems, has become increasingly important in determining success in an agricultural enterprise (p. 69).

The author points out that there are many reasons for the high concentration of poverty in the countryside, especially the dependence on income from the agricultural industry sector. Thus, the importance of diversification of rural activities should be mentioned with such a thought. "Policies that promote rural non-farm activities can also help reduce rural poverty, but this should not be carried out at the expense of policies that promote agricultural development" (Perez et al. 2019). This means that efforts should be made to develop other types of activities to diversify income in the countryside without neglecting primary agricultural activity, i.e., agropastoral production.

From the above perspective, the municipality of Ocaña is favored in the departmental tourism development plan, its proximity to the northeast of the country, obtaining diversity of fauna and flora,

patrimonial wealth of the province, making it strategic for agrotourism development (Paez, 2022). Therefore, agrotourism is positioned as an alternative for the economic and tourism development of the province to promote the post-conflict zone (Delgado, 2019). In this regard, the process of innovation in agrotourism is a key point to diversify products that provide novel attractions, which are authentic and lasting for visitors; in this sense, regional economies now derive their growth mainly from the tourism industry (Pacheco & Vergel, 2015). Several emerging regions have bet on tourism over the last twenty years in an effort to use it as an engine for economic growth and job creation (Rodriguez, 2022).

Tourism is defined by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as a social, cultural and economic phenomenon that involves the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal, professional or business reasons. These people are called travelers (who can be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) (UNWTO, 2008). It should be noted that with the increase in ecological awareness in recent years due to the global environmental crisis, tourism in the early 1990s saw the emergence of a new modality based on activities in the countryside or rural areas. Based on the diverse natural scenarios, people were looking for a healthy recreation that would provide them with a healthier lifestyle, different from the sun and beach options and in line with the criterion of tourism as an activity that can both report opportunities and generate risks, so it is relevant to apply to this activity the philosophy of sustainable development, as a harmonious concept of development (Simeanu et al. 2024).

In this regard, the tourism sector has been consolidated in recent decades as one of the most influential economic activities for emerging economies, since it promotes the country's competitiveness and boosts the service sector; according to the World Commission on Environment and Development, tourism is a source of income and a generator of employment, which helps to meet present needs without compromising future needs. Also, the development of sustainable tourism stimulates the profitability of local businesses, increases the demand for jobs in the service sector and diversifies activities; in other words, it has a multiplier effect on the local economy (Mogrovejo et al. 2020, p.3).

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), tourism grew faster than any other sector. It had a growth of 3.5%, while the global economy grew by 2.5%. As a result, WTTC projected a record year for travel and tourism in 2024, with the sector's global economic contribution reaching an all-time high of \$11.1 trillion. According to the world tourism body's 2024 Economic Impact Research (EIR), travel and tourism will contribute an additional \$770 billion over its previous record, stamping its authority as a global economic powerhouse, generating one in every \$10 worldwide; as the global sector soars beyond its pre-pandemic prosperity, WTTC expects 142 countries out of 185 analyzed to surpass national records.

Universally, declining rural development opportunities are experienced due to several factors, such as rising production costs, globalization, industrialization and the intrusion of peripheral development. Consequently, agrotourism development in Ocaña-Colombia, faces a steadily declining agricultural sector, for which, nationally, the sector's share of GDP is estimated at only 6 percent (MINCIT, 2023). Agritourism offers multiple economic and non-economic benefits (Barbieri et al, 2015), in reference to the economic aspect, an increase in agricultural income is sought, while becoming a direct support to agricultural activity. Some authors such as Koutsouris et al. (2014) and Schilling et al. (2012) affirm that the diversification of business portfolios in farms dedicated to agritourism increases income and alleviates the economic difficulties of families. For this reason, agrotourism can generate environmental and sociocultural benefits.

The above discussion allows us to see the relevance of the research from practical criteria of the agritourism model, which is corroborated in the ideas of Oppermann (1995) who has argued in his

studies that agritourism at the end of the last century lacked a comprehensive body of knowledge and an adequate theoretical framework due to definitional problems. Likewise, Deegan & Dineen (1997) pointed out that the term was sometimes used interchangeably with rural tourism. In this sense, Page & Getz (1997) noted the absence of sufficient studies related to the growth and development of agritourism and the need to understand the dynamics of this type of enterprise. The demand for tourists who prefer agritourism generates new jobs within the farming family, especially for women, who can become direct beneficiaries of the economic benefits (Veek et al. 2006). The promotion of the family unit for collateral economic returns resizes family ties in rural communities (Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007) and allows for the preservation of the family farming heritage by passing the business from one generation of farmers to the next. Agritourism manages to promote the preservation of intangible heritage, represented in local customs, ancestral practices and rural landscapes (Tew & Barbieri, 2012), which in practice becomes permanent work objectives on which the stability of the agritourism enterprise depends. All of the above stimulates local economies (Di Domenico & Miller, 2012).

In effect, propose the sustainable management of self-sustainable agro-ecotourism farms as a rural development strategy for traditional villages, such as the municipality of Ocaña- Colombia; where a productive model is evaluated for the proper management of ecotourism farms, and include zoning design, i.e. areas such as: trails, signage, areas, services, care and recreation, as well as the parking area. The social, economic and ecological benefits are also determined in order to satisfy the family's food needs and use the surplus for commercialization. In this way, ecological management brings corollaries such as preserving the natural balance of the soil, maintaining soil fertility, reducing erosion and preserving biological populations. Thus, crops are healthier and consumers eat healthier food, as well as social benefits that include job stability, individual and family well-being and self-esteem in the context of greater social and community participation; reduction of poverty and marginalization; preservation of ancestral and cultural values; strengthening of human values; promotion of continuous improvement and farmer creativity; and the flourishing of handicraft activities in the strategic community framework for rural development.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of rural tourism as an element of rural economic diversification, amidst the declining central role of agriculture and forestry, has been successful in many European countries (Saghin et al. 2022) and also in this field. By combining several factors specific to rural areas, including the Bukovina region (small guesthouses and breathtaking landscapes), multiple effects can manifest (Ciolac et al. 2021), potentially bringing changes to the lifestyle of the local population (some beneficial and some negative). Citing Nunkoo & Ramkissoon (2011), the direct and lasting impact of rural tourism development in traditional villages, particularly in the area discussed, can be quantified in the improvement of the overall infrastructure through the establishment of farms, guesthouses and tourist homes as models organizing activities while respecting local architecture and traditions. For tourism to remain sustainable in rural areas, it is essential to respect certain principles: tourism activity must be initiated with the local community's own resources. The community must maintain control over tourism development. Tourism should generate employment for the local population, thus improving their quality of life. It is essential to maintain a balance between existing economic activities in the area and tourism activities, and to develop educational and training programs to improve management for the protection of natural and cultural resources. Therefore, according to Muresan et al. (2016), tourism represents a viable alternative for economic activities in rural areas and improves the quality of life of local communities.

Ocaña is considered a picturesque area of Colombia because it surprises tourists with a mixed landscape composed of hills, subcarpathians and huge mountains. Thus, visitors can discover breathtaking views with varied and unique horizons. Thanks to the beauty of its landscapes, the purity of the air with a sedative effect, the crystalline waters and its invaluable cultural and religious heritage. Ocaña, is a mixture of colonial, republican and modern architecture, it is intertwined with history and its shining role in the events before and after the independence of Colombia. It is a region located in the department of Norte de Santander, in the northeast of the country. It is located within the Western Subregion in the Catatumbo region, colloquially known as the Province of Ocaña. The municipality has an area of 672.27 km<sup>2</sup> and an average altitude of 1202 m above sea level and is crossed by two rivers: the Algodonal (the name given to the Catatumbo River in the municipality) and the Tejo, as well as several streams. It is known in the history of Colombia for the Convention of Ocaña, as well as its gastronomy and the Virgin of Torcoroma.

According to the above, structural changes in the economy are generating serious limitations in rural areas, especially in those with a strong dependence on agriculture. These areas exist in most countries. In these areas, agricultural profitability according to Jiménez et al. (2020) is decreasing, and the increase in unemployment causes an exodus of the productive labor force and, consequently, a demographic imbalance. Local leaders and authorities are looking for innovative measures to solve the problems of these areas and thus contribute to the well-being of the rural population. In the case of Ocaña, the positive aspect is that the area has excellent tourism resources, which offers the possibility of using sustainable tourism activities.

In contemporary society, in increasingly stressful living conditions, attention has shifted towards an alternative way of spending leisure time, giving rise to a form of tourism known as "rural tourism", which harmoniously combines natural resources (geographical situation, relief, climate, hydrology, landscape, hunting and fishing areas, vineyards and orchards) with social resources (historical-cultural objectives, monuments, museums, hospitality, language, mentality, customs and traditions, ethnography and folklore, art and culture, etc.), all of which are present in the rural environment.

In the global tourism economy, rural tourism activities generally involve the use of extraordinary natural resources, which constitute an essential cultural heritage; buildings with local architecture, rural traditions or agricultural products; and the use of specific products that illustrate the unique identity of the rural area, thus meeting the needs of consumers in relation to three elements of tourism products: accommodation, gastronomy and leisure. The aim of rural tourism activities is therefore to ensure sustainable local development, bringing a new modern vision of this form of tourism (Paresishvili et al. 2017).

In this sense, notes Adamov et al. (2020), the capitalization of the specific resources of rural areas can thus support their sustainability over time through the implementation of tourism activities in an environment with unique characteristics, and the interrelation with the local society leads to the development of a special tourist-host relationship and participation in the life of the local community. Through rural tourism activities, the valorization of the "specific rural way of life" and its resources can be understood through the application of specific management that could sustain future benefits for small local communities, thus ensuring sustainability.

In general, rural tourism forms should capitalize on authentic rural households and, by introducing them and other resources into the tourism circuit, should ensure socioeconomic development. However, rural tourism does not always guarantee the sustainability of an area, as destructive actions such as brutal human intervention in the landscape and natural resources, physical pollution, noise, visual pollution, architectural damage, etc., can have negative effects. In our research area, the region of Ocaña (Veredas Carrizal, Ermita, corregimientos agua de la Virgen Buenavista, Pueblo Nuevo) stand out due to the uniqueness of rural tourism, existing conditions, culture and purity of the people;

together with hospitality, interest, motivation and aspiration towards improvement, these areas can establish rural tourism and contribute to sustainable and responsible development and the rural area as a whole (Villanueva-Álvaro et al. 2017). Rural tourism has a long history in this area, where structures such as guest cottages and glamping are the most numerous among the types of tourist reception with accommodation functions. If this type of activity is carried out responsibly, as a well-managed process, it will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the rural area of Ocaña. This potential sustainability could be evaluated through economic and social benefits.

The positive influence of rural tourism in the rural environment according to Anisiewicz (2021), translates into a long-term development perspective for the rural community, with the possibility of becoming a support for new businesses and jobs that boost local development. Thus, it contributes to the economic development of the locality by increasing the income of the population, leading to changes in the structure of spending, a significant increase in investments, the development and improvement of transport and communications, and the expansion of economic activity through the emergence of new sectors complementary to rural tourism activities (Kummitha et al. 2021).

Also, rural tourism citing Lundberg (2017) influences social factors in the rural environment, reducing rural exodus and stabilizing the rural population. This phenomenon occurs by offering decent living opportunities in this environment through occupational diversification for the population, especially for young people, who are usually the most vulnerable in the labor market and the most affected by economic crises and recessions. It should be noted that rural tourism has a positive influence on the rural environment through educational and cultural factors, by establishing knowledge links between those who visit the rural area and the local population. According to Uysal et al. (2016), tourists also benefit from the opportunity to learn about local customs and traditions, history and the authenticity of their respective people. It can be seen that a favorable image of the country is created globally, with rural tourism being the most effective and pacifist ambassador of a country. Ivona et al. (2021) point out, rural tourism can also influence the management system of the respective locality, the local organizational factors, mobilizing them and increasing their concerns for ordering the rural space in terms of infrastructure, indirectly forcing them to seek sources of funding for the achievement of modernization objectives, such as access roads, restoration of tourist objectives, repair of functional buildings, etc.

In this regard, Khan et al. (2020), the rural space creates various possibilities and forms of tourism, such as rural tourism itself; agrotourism, which combines agricultural activities with tourism activities, with the main objective of obtaining additional income; ecotourism, which focuses on natural resources and their use through tourism activities, highlighting the ecological benefits for local communities; and cultural tourism, which establishes a connection and a special relationship between local cultural and tourism heritage, focusing on historical resources and community values.

This table synthesizes the main theoretical references that support the analysis of the emerging categories proposed by the actors investigated in this study, with emphasis on the category of rural-based tourism, understood as a modality that articulates the dynamics of the rural environment - cultural, productive, environmental and social- with tourism activities oriented to territorial development. In this approach, there are three fundamental subcategories. The first, rural tourism management, comprises the analysis of organizational models, planning strategies and the articulation of local actors for the sustainable use of available resources. The second, contemplative tourism, focuses on experiences centered on the appreciation of the landscape, the tranquility of the environment and the connection with nature, key elements in the differentiation of the rural tourism product. The third subcategory, sustainable and sustainable management, is oriented to the study of practices that promote a balance between economic development, environmental conservation and the well-being of traditional peoples. These subcategories allow a comprehensive approach to the

viability of sustainable tourism as a rural territorial development strategy, in that they promote economic diversification, the strengthening of local identities and the sustainability of the territories.

**Table 1 Literature review**

Author and Year	Theory or Conceptual Contribution	Research Perspective
Abreu, L. A. d., Walkowski, M. D. C., Perinotto, A. R. C. and Fonseca, J. F. d. (2024).	Community-based tourism and best practices with the Sustainable Development Goals.	Community-based tourism operates under a paradigm of community self-governance, in which traditional communities assume the role of drivers and protagonists of tourism in their territories.
Grace Octavia Albert, Rosmalina Abdul Rashid and Andy Russel Mojiol (2024)	A review of rural tourism development in the context of the application of social exchange theory.	Rural tourism promotes sustainable development through economic, socio-cultural and environmental means. The research application of Social Exchange Theory (SET), focusing on how attitudes, networking and participation influence community decisions towards rural tourism.
Li, J., Liu, C., Yuan, JJ and Zhang, Z. (2024).	Understanding destination immersion in rural tourism: the effects of destination fascination and resident-tourist interaction.	Person-environment (destination fascination) and interpersonal (resident- tourist interaction) interaction affect immersion in rural tourism and lead to destination attachment and word-of-mouth.
Pato, ML, and Duque, AS (2024).	Mapping innovation and sustainability in rural tourism: a bibliometric approach.	Innovation and sustainability have become dynamic tools to drive rural tourism success.
Turtureanu, A.-G.; Cretu, C.- M.; Pripoae, R.; Marinescu, E.S, ; Sîrbu, C.-G.; Talaghir, L.-G. (2024)	Sustainable development through agrotourism and rural tourism: research trends and future perspectives in the pandemic and post-pandemic period.	In the current global context, where rural sustainability and economic diversification of agricultural regions are becoming increasingly important, rural tourism and agritourism emerge as key strategies for sustainable development

Sangnak D, Poo-Udom A, Tamnanwan P, et al. (2024).	Agro-tourism as a catalyst for sustainable rural development: innovations, challenges and policy perspectives in the post-COVID-19 era.	Findings reveal that agritourism has adapted to changing market demands through diversification, technological integration, and an increased focus on sustainability.
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Own construction (2024)

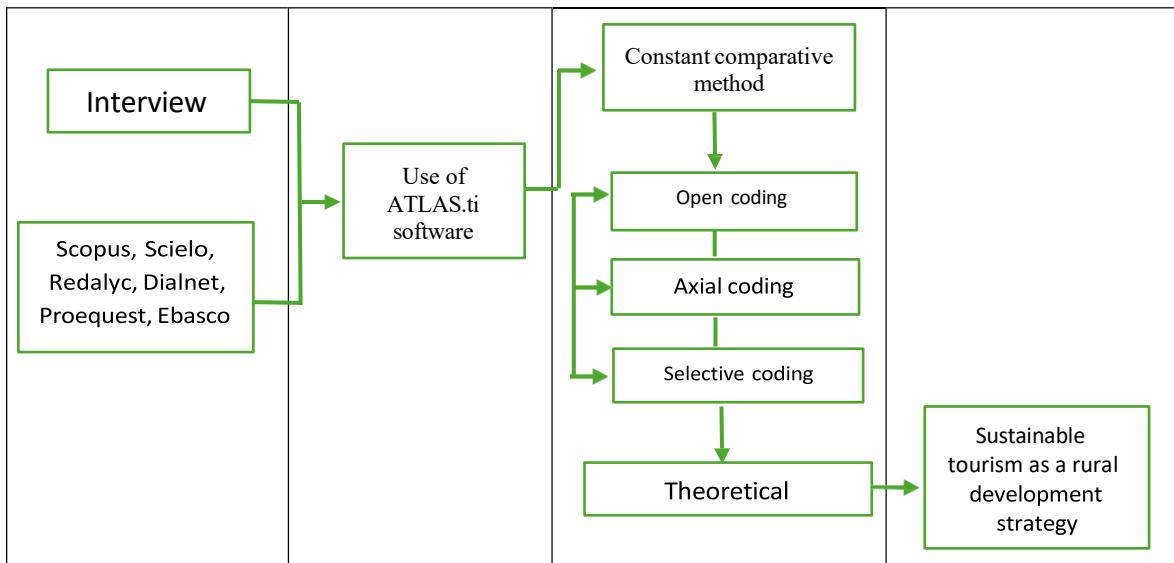
Table N 1. relates of an era marked by the irruption of the transformation of sustainable tourism, where we sought to map the scientific landscape of research dedicated to agritourism and rural tourism, analyzing trends, emerging themes and future lines of research. The results will contribute to understanding how rural tourism and agritourism can become effective tools for the sustainable development of agricultural communities and rural areas. The analysis is based on three fundamental axes:

- Identify determinants for the development of agrotourism.
- Analyze the main determining factors in the potential development of agritourism.
- To establish the critical success factors for agrotourism development.

#### Material and Method

This study aimed to assess the potential viability of agritourism and the direct links between the positive sociocultural, environmental, and economic contributions (i.e., benefits) of agritourism and the SDGs. Following Vargo and Koskela-Huotari (2020), who emphasized the importance of initiating conceptual articles with quality evidence on the existing literature review, we first explored the literature using various keywords (e.g., agritourism, rural tourism, farm or farm vacations) to identify the wide range of benefits offered by agritourism. Subsequently, selected relevant articles addressing the benefits of agritourism. In that order, the study approached from the post-positivist paradigm, involving qualitative methodology, where the experiences, perceptions and behaviors of the participants were collected. In addition, a grounded theory approach was made, since it was inductive and, therefore, oriented to the interactions or social experiences of the key informants; as cited by Scheunpflug et al. (2016), it paves the way for the generation of a theoretical model through the experience of observing a study population and developing a comparative analysis of their speech and behavior; The following figure structures the phases of grounded theory that answered questions, on how and why, about sustainable tourism, and explored and delved into problems of agrotourism in our traditional villages.

Collection of information	Data organization	Analysis of the information obtained	Theory development
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**Source.** Adapted from Vivar et al. (2010).

Based on the scope of each SDG and the individual targets proposed by the United Nations (2024c), we proposed a set of indicators (inventory) to identify the extent to which agritourism's contributions to the SDGs have been investigated in relation to its providers (farmers), surrounding communities and society. During the development of this inventory, ongoing and in-depth peer-to-peer discussion of these targets helped us to identify which could be achieved through agritourism (e.g., increasing cultural awareness) and which could not (e.g., reducing violence). Ongoing peer discussions and multiple reviews of our proposed indicators with existing literature allowed us to ensure their representativeness with respect to the SDG targets, as well as their completeness and validation in light of existing literature.

Our iterative process allowed us to categorize the evidence of agritourism's contributions to the SDGs as "Extensive," "Limited," or "None." Our effort to link agrotourism's stated contributions to each SDG helped us identify existing research gaps that can inform future research. Addressing knowledge gaps can strengthen policy and outreach to support agritourism's contribution to sustainable development. Primarily, our conceptual and research paper serves, in the short term, to guide researchers in investigating unexplored but important indicators for achieving the SDGs through agritourism, rather than perpetuating research on recurring themes (e.g., farmers' profits and heritage preservation). In the long term, broadening the agrotourism research agenda can leverage its practical contributions beyond agricultural facilities, thus driving sustainable development, especially in rural regions. Broadening the agrotourism research agenda may also contribute to its theoretical development, which is still under development (Barbieri, 2020).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the methodology pre-established in the present research, three (3) key informants were interviewed, which were constituted by farm managers with a great trajectory of experience, expertise on rural tourism, ecotourism and agrotourism; which allowed initiating the analysis of the Strategic Evaluation of sustainable tourism and its potential contribution to Rural Territorial Development. Therefore, in the first instance, information was collected through the application of a set of questions that made up the structured interview script according to how the researchers planned to inquire about the categories and subcategories related to the research such as Agrotourism, Ecotourism, Rural Tourism.

Table 1 Emerging Theories Matrix - SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Category	Sub-category	Theory Emerging Theory 1	Theory Emerging Theory 2	Theory Emerging theory 3	Theory Emerging Theory 4
Sustainability and Sustainability	Sustainability and Sustainability Management	Knowledge transfer to sustainability and sustainability management to identify potential best practices in the different business units and functional areas. Be focused on results, take advantage of opportunities, maximize sustainability and sustainability in agritourism: three basic principles, respect, communication and trust, I think those are the three pillars to have a pleasant sustainable environment.	Inclusion, human resource management and attachment to the local idiosyncrasy, as well as ecotourism cultural development as a business option, in that sense, is significant within agrotourism. On the other hand, the competencies of Solutions to healthy living needs are important for farmers.	Sustainability and sustainability in the definitions also show that agritourism includes a wide range of services, including hospitality services (such as bed and breakfasts, food services, farmers' markets, lodging functions such as weddings and parties, and farm overnight stays), farm-based recreational activities (such as horseback riding, recreational self-harvesting, fishing, and fruit or vegetable picking), agricultural education and training workshops with an emphasis on personal field experiences, and a variety of extractive agricultural recreational activities (such as	Addressing sustainability in general and broad context benefits. The model has potential for sustainable development of rural areas by enabling farms to remain productive even when faced with adverse socioeconomic and environmental challenges. Its contribution can be calculated not only in monetary terms, but also in job creation, enhancement and revival of community pride, and encouragement of farmers to adopt new business practices in local economies.

Source: Own elaboration (2024).

Table 2 Matrix of emerging theories SUSTAINABLE TOURISMO

Category	Sub-category	Theory Emerging Theory 1	Theory Emerging Theory 2	Theory Emerging theory 3	Theory Emerging theory 4
Contemplative tourism	Management Contemplative tourism	Social relationships are often inseparable from tourists' experiences and expectations and, as such, social emotions are considered a suitable tool for interpreting how tourists feel, think or behave. In that sense, tourists' emotional solidarity with residents can be a positive precursor to their cognitive and affective images of the destination and their intentions to revisit or recommend it.	In light of this reasoning, the purpose, was to investigate the relationships between (a) potential tourists' anticipated emotional solidarity with each other, (b) cognitive image of the destination, (c) affective image of the destination, and (d) intention to travel. Thus, in practice, the findings provide Agri-tourism practitioners with further implications on the antecedent role of social emotions in contributing to tourists' intention to visit.	Tourist experience can be considered a particular case of customer experience; tourists are specific types of customers who use services, products, and systems related to contemplative tourism. Thus, four dimensions of experiences: entertainment, educational, escapist and aesthetic. Their "4E" model is still used in many studies of the contemplative tourism experience; thus, they argued that the economy has shifted from a service-based to an experience-based approach. Also the need to design "memorable" experiences that would be remembered and recalled after the event takes place.	Agro-tourism offers a great opportunity for rural women to showcase and sell their products, such as handicrafts, and become economically independent; Also, contemplative agro-tourism is one of the rising industries in the village and, in addition to diversifying the economy, it attempts to stop the pressure that the tourism industry has had on natural resources and has significantly depleted the nation's resources; therefore, tourism in a rural setting is seen as a guest, agritourism lodges offer a relatively high level of employment for women in the fields of managing and

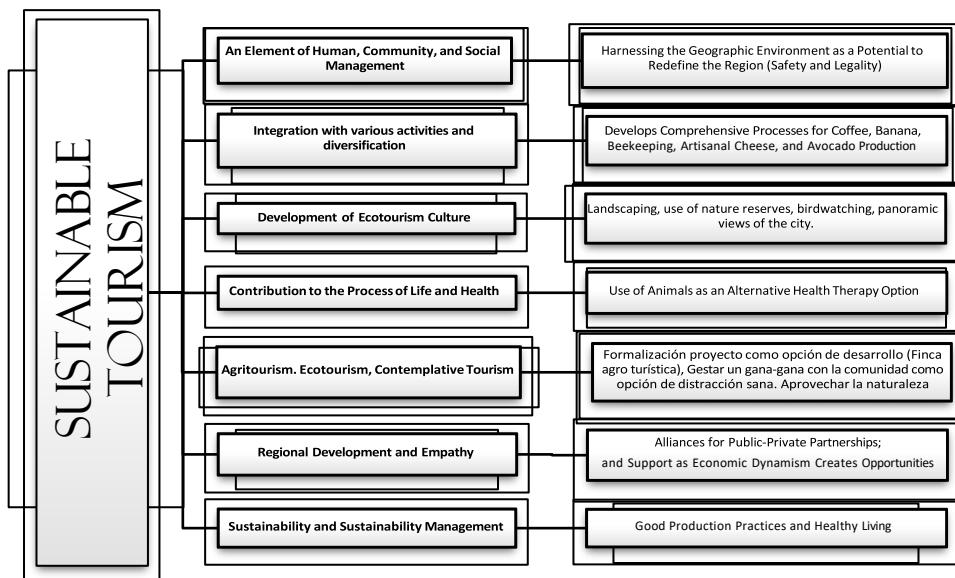
Source: Own elaboration (2024).

Table 3 Emerging theories matrix - SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Category	Sub-category	Theory Emerging Theory 1	Theory Emerging Theory 2	Theory Emerging theory 3	Theory emerging theory 4
Rural-based tourism	Management Rural tourism	Rural tourism has been recognized as a driving force and an important tool for the development of rural areas, likewise, green consumption is the voluntary practice of engaging in environmentally friendly consumption practices, therefore, it is worth considering the effects of rural tourism experience on tourists' green consumption intentions.	Rural tourism and environmental sustainability from the perspective of pre- experience or on-site experience, such as the motivation to maintain landscapes to attract tourists, experience in the rural idyll, in this way, exposure to nature, i.e., the amount of physical contact with nature, contributes to individuals' green attitudes and green behavior later in life.	Rural tourism, rather than nature experience, represents any form of tourism that showcases rural life, art, culture and heritage in rural areas and thus may include complex and multifaceted activities, such as agricultural tourism, educational tours, cultural tourism, food and wine, small town/city visits, themed festivals, art and heritage tourism, etc.	Rural tourism has shown significant growth, thus, experiences that are selectively constructed from tourists' experiences and can be remembered after a trip, i.e. memorable tourism experiences, could influence their behavioral intentions, hence rural tourism is a form of realization of community tourism, which is believed to counteract the negative impacts of mass tourism related to social equality, environmental degradation and saving the culture of the community.

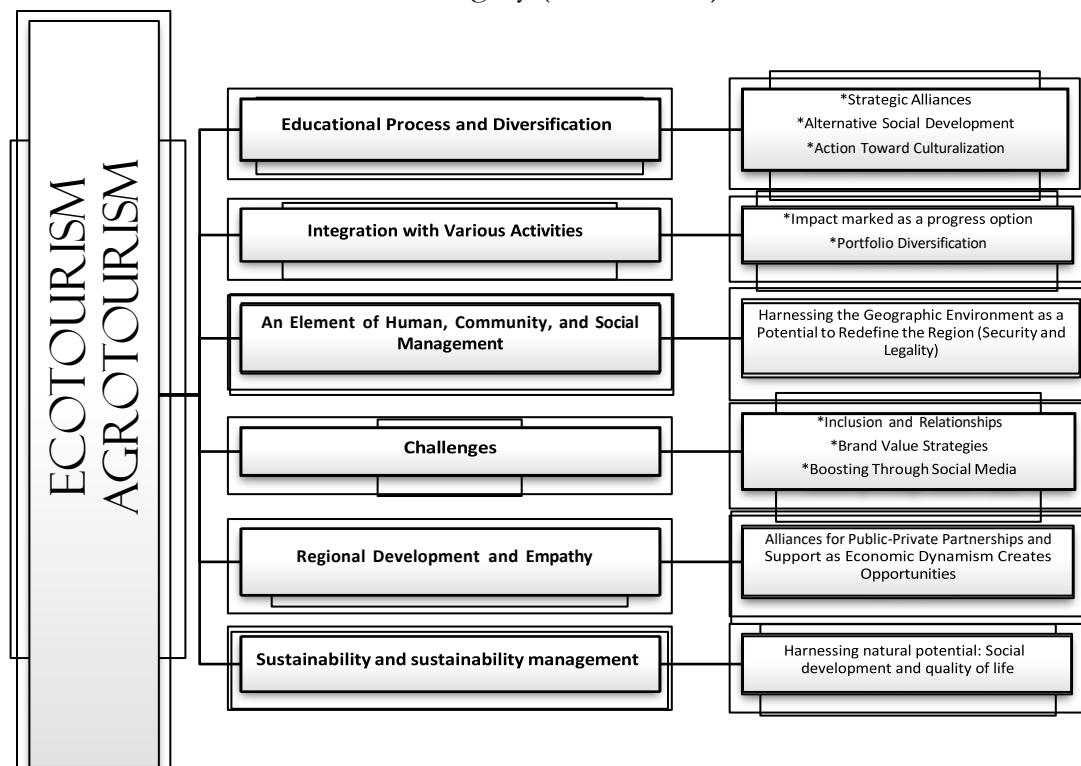
Source: Own elaboration (2024).

Figure 1. Integrator Category Sustainable Tourism (Informant 1)



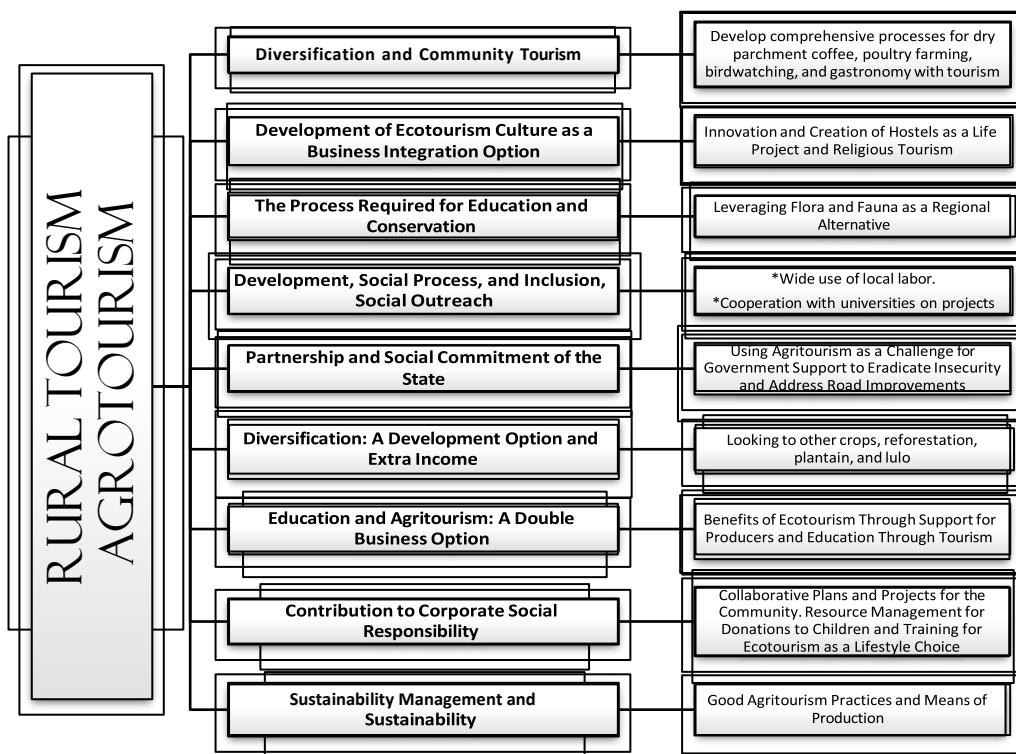
Own elaboration (2024)

Integrator of the Sustainable Tourism Category (Informant 2)



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In order to facilitate the triangulation process in the data analysis, a matrix of categories was used, complemented by matrices of emerging theories and the previously developed theoretical framework. This methodological structure was built from each of the interviews conducted. The analysis began with the identification of the research categories, followed by the subcategories, and then by the units of analysis linked to the input theories. Next, the emerging theories were incorporated and, finally, the researcher's interpretation was integrated based on the information collected and analyzed.

In particular, the category of sustainable tourism was recurrently evidenced in the discourses of most of the participants. This category is aligned with the approaches of Santos (2024). By examining these regional dynamics, we aim to contribute to region-specific strategies that promote sustainable tourism aligned with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Likewise, Many are interested in sustainable tourism and immersive experiences, seeking to connect with the natural environment and local culture (Castanho et al. 2023). These findings emphasize the importance of developing region-specific strategies that foster sustainable tourism practices, improve economic, social and environmental well-being, and align with the UN SDGs.

Regarding the Sustainable and Sustainable Management subcategories, therefore, elements such as innovation and sustainability are fundamental to the growth and success of rural tourism, as they contribute to the creation of resilient and prosperous communities by generating economic and social benefits, while preserving the natural and cultural resources that attract tourists. According to Santos et al (2021), these concepts are important not only in the present, but also in the future; they are undoubtedly considered new triggers and drivers for tourism to position itself competitively in the market.

In that sense, innovation and sustainability are even more important in the context of scarce human and financial resources, typical of rural areas (Rodrigues et al 2023). In fact, Azmi et al. (2023), by

introducing new technologies, creative activities, and unique and traditional experiences, innovation enhances the attractiveness of rural destinations and improves the visitor experience. This may include digital marketing, virtual tours, or eco-friendly and traditional accommodation options, which helps attract a wider range of visitors who want an immersive and different experience in the rural space. In addition, Figueiras et al (2023) cite that innovative approaches help small rural businesses, such as agricultural farms, to grow by creating market niches, improving product offerings and allowing them to diversify their agricultural activity.

As for the last subcategory Rural and contemplative tourism management, it requires knowledge or resources to address the dual impact of tourism on the economy in Colombia, exploring strategies to enhance benefits and mitigate negative effects, seeking sustainable growth while preserving environmental and cultural integrity. However, even in some countries, sustainable development still faces challenges arising from different social, cultural and political values, which require different strategies to address sustainability (Bascopé et al. 2019). In line with sustainable tourism, sustainable development requires the integration of three aspects, social, economic and environmental, to drive sustainability. Many rural dwellers are targeted by the Colombian government to improve the quality of life in terms of the individual family economy and society. Several factors contribute to a negative impact, including a cycle of rural poverty exacerbated by climate-related shocks that affect mobility. In this regard, tourist accommodation structures with lodging functions, representing any building or facility providing lodging and other specific services for tourists in the areas analyzed, predominantly belong to the category of structures with low lodging capacity, namely tourist guesthouses and agritourism; thus, we first adopt a positive approach by focusing on the benefits produced by agritourism, as indicated in the literature. However, sustainability requires balancing those benefits (e.g., economic stimulation) with detriments (e.g., increased cost of living) that may arise. Second, we develop theoretical measurements in isolation from contextual factors that may interact on the ground. For example, the suitability of agritourism to increase farm incomes and create jobs, especially for women and youth, is almost indisputable (Savage et al., 2022; Schmidt et al., 2022), both of which contributions may or may not align with the End of Poverty (SDG 1). If job creation is accompanied by marginal wage and gentrification, then it may not contribute to poverty alleviation. Conversely, if job creation is accompanied by the reversal of youth exodus in depopulated rural areas, then it may reflect poverty alleviation. We caution that our objective was not to develop a comprehensive measurement inventory or to discuss the most appropriate methodological approaches to assess the sustainability of agritourism. Rather, to propose an initial roadmap for strategically assessing the contribution of agritourism. Therefore, future studies should consider adapting or extending our indicators and choosing the most appropriate methodology with the contextual attributes of their sustainable tourism research. This can contribute to the validation of the proposed inventory.

Additionally, there is a high impact of approval of the inhabitants of traditional towns like Ocaña-Colombia in knowing their region better. The fundamentals of the research, i.e. population, industry, location and corresponding infrastructure, are the core factors to be examined first, which also requires a relatively macro or meso perspective by government authorities or local communities should take a step-by-step approach to the introduction of the rural tourism industry and highlight priorities. Before forming the above-mentioned fundamentals, it is important to first seize the opportunity of rural revitalization to form a fundamental support according to one's own endowment, and then develop tourism projects at the right time. Otherwise, haphazard development of rural tourism projects will lead to inadequate allocation of resources for rural revitalization (especially through tangible means), which will eventually bring inestimable consequences for the region.

## CONCLUSIONS

Rural tourism plays a crucial role in rural development, especially in developing countries. Lack of capacity, a complex institutional environment and poor planning can hinder the effectiveness of rural tourism as a lever and catalyst for rural development. One of the strategies that could be implemented is a strategic transformation towards sustainable rural tourism management. By providing different pathways towards sustainable management, strategic transformation could reduce some obstacles associated with the complexity of rural tourism management. These findings are supported by several studies on rural tourism, in which strategic planning of rural tourism could be a catalyst for tourism recovery and an improvement in the resilience of the local economy.

The study also recognizes that the transformation to sustainable rural tourism cannot be achieved without stakeholder participation. The best transformation scenario requires strong stakeholder participation. Such as was experienced in the coffee-growing region during the transformation towards a democratic country. In the case of rural tourism, sustainable transformation should also be done slowly and involve all stakeholders. It is also recognized that the transformation may not go smoothly and adjustments along the way may be necessary once the decision towards sustainable transformation is made.

In that regard, tourism was dramatically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but is now recovering. However, post-pandemic tourism must face new challenges. Overcrowding was identified as a major concern for destination managers. Several authors have pointed to the growing awareness of the need to transition to greener, sustainable, more balanced and "slower" tourism, as well as corporate social responsibility behavior. Virtual tourism, the only option during the pandemic, will not replace, but enhance physical tourism, and technologies can help enhance virtual tourism. Even if COVID-19 is no longer a global emergency, lessons learned during the pandemic can be useful in addressing future challenges and crises. Human-centered design, a fundamental focus on the internal customer story and user experience, was also highlighted as necessary in the design and management of virtual tourism. Tourism experience has been the subject of discussion in numerous studies, but there is still a need for more consensus on its definition, dimensions and evaluation methods. In our view, tourism experience is a particular type of customer experience in which tourists are a specific case of customers interacting with tourism "brands" (organizations, companies). We consider customer experience and tourist experience as extensions of user experience. From the user experience point of view, a tourist is a user of specific tourism-related products, systems or services.

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