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COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM AND DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS: BRIDGING THE GAP

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes a model to measure Community-Based Tourism (CBT). Its starting point is the need to better quantify and explain CBT in emerging countries. The authors build it by drawing a connection between local competitiveness and CBT frameworks, therefore calling the proposed model C-CBT. By grounding this measurement model, the pushers for this type of tourism, as well as its deterrents, are established and grouped. This model is then used as a comparative tool and applied to two territories in Colombia that have suffered from civil unrest in the last decades and have subsequently developed CBT. As for the field work in the two areas, it is based on interviews and participative observation carried out in the context of tourism projects. The outcome is a clearer measurement system for CBT initiatives by connecting these to competitiveness frameworks, with the added interest that the cases presented come from a severely conflict-burdened country.

KEYWORDS

Destination Management; Local Development; Tourism Competitiveness; Colombia.

ECONLIT KEYS

L83, Z32, O15, Q01

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT: THE EMERGENCE OF CBT IN COLOMBIA'S REMOTE AREAS

Community-based tourism (CBT) and destination competitiveness are two related concepts, although sometimes they have been regarded as opposing forces. This paper tries to build a bridge between these two concepts by developing a new CBT model to frame some of the efforts carried out in Colombia in recent years to develop this type of tourism. It does so by concentrating on two Colombian localities that are currently in different stages of development. The present research, of empirical and theoretical nature, tries to explain the findings by modifying extant models about CBT with the final goal of delivering a sound and explanative model. The need for a more refined CBT model will become apparent in the discussion in Section 2. The resulting model, called C-CBT, is built up, justified (Section 3) and applied (Section 6), testing its ability as a comparative tool: the municipalities of La Macarena, in the centre-east of the country and Acandí, a municipality on the Caribbean coast adjacent to the Panamanian border, are compared with the C-CBT model (Figure 1).

As for the context in which this paper is embedded, it serves to note that in recent years, as the long civil conflict plaguing the country has subsided (Bassols 2016, 314-317 for a general overview of the Colombian conflict and its impact on tourism throughout the last decades), CBT initiatives have sprung up in different regions, particularly in the more distant, previously conflict-ridden regions; the two cases which we examine in this paper are examples of such areas. Both destinations were also included in the official initiative "Territories for tourism and peace" a government-sponsored scheme that supported the development of tourism in Colombian 'remote' areas previously inaccessible due to long years of civil unrest (Colombia, 2014). See also Figure 1 and Section 5 for an in-depth contextual presentation of both destinations.

The paper researches into two distant, relatively poor communities. Bringing this social issue to the research forefront is important, as the populations enduring poverty are often overlooked. Generally speaking, poor people are disadvantaged when it comes to study or work and have less possibilities of taking advantage of economic opportunities. The quality of life of distant, small communities is low and their living conditions can be dangerous or inadequate. This affects the society as a whole in the

form of higher health or safety expenses. The present research is partly motivated by these drivers.



2. FRAMEWORKS IN THE LITERATURE: LINKING CBT TO COMPETITIVENESS

As for theoretical bases related to the present work, they may be grouped into two broad areas: those 'grand' theoretical frameworks and models developed to measure CBT, and, on the other hand, those more related to destination competitiveness. The former generally promote a qualitative approach to CBT, while the latter tend to encourage a quantitative one.

An example of a 'grand' theory which has had quite an impact in the development of CBT in South America is the 'sumak kawsay' ('good living' in Quechuan language). This trend has seen some Andean countries rediscover their indigenous ways of life and try to apply them to today's society (Morocho, 2017). These principles emphasize harmony with nature and the importance of communitarian life (Kowii, n. d.). According to them, the visitor is submerged in the daily life of the host community and in doing so, for a limited period, shares the principles and norms of the 'sumak kawsay' (Cabanilla, 2014). Theoretically, the differences among locals and visitors are largely blurred in such a context. This philosophy of life has especially influenced Ecuador's tourism development and also some neighbouring countries.

As for CBT measuring models, one of the first is Pinel (2002). Proceeding as a 'check list', the model outputs a sufficient understanding of the product cycle within the communities and allows for evaluation processes to be set up properly. It is reasonably flexible, having been applied by Pinel (2002) to a coastal community in Vancouver, Canada, as well as by Kline et al. (2015) to the development of equestrian tourism in Virginia, USA.

However, given the different frameworks that have been proposed for CBT, and as the authors would like to compare destinations using more 'objective' means, a well-grounded methodology is required. This methodology could be founded on the destination competitiveness approaches. Over the last two decades or so, a good number of researchers have put forth methodologies to compare and evaluate the competitiveness of tourist destinations: Crouch and Ritchie (1999); Buhalis (2000); Dwyer, Forsyth and Rao (2000); Ritchie and Crouch (2003 and 2010); Dwyer and Kim (2003); Croes (2010); Crouch (2011); Jiménez and Aquino (2012); Goffi (2013); Croes and Kubickova (2013); Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto (2005) or Cvelvar, Dwyer, Koman and Mihalic (2016). They all invariably identify competitiveness as a measure of success. Competitiveness thus has become the main framework for comparing destinations' performances by creating indexes such as the World Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report or the Tourism Competitiveness Report. These were developed by the IMD (Institute for Management Development) and endorsed by the WEF (World Economic Forum, 2015; 2019).

Tourism competitiveness is a complex and multidimensional concept: Dwyer and Kim (2003), Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto (2005), Ritchie and Crouch (2010) as well as Jiménez and Aquino (2012) understood tourism as an open system within a

competitive environment, both micro and macro, with destinations shaped by their inner organization as well as by the dynamics of concurrence.

Generally speaking, a growing competitiveness is marked by attracting a growing number of visitors, as well as increasing average spending per visitor. However, in order to maintain these rates, it is necessary to take into account the tourists' wishes, needs, and preferences, so as to offer them an attractive value proposition that draws them to the site. This is even more important in the case of international tourism. Value must be achieved by simultaneously attaining a balance between maximizing the tourists' benefits and managing positive and negative externalities within the community (Croes 2010).

Others have looked at revenue increase and how the local community benefits from it – a benefit to which all members of the community are equally entitled (Buhalis 2000). One has also considered the relationship among profit margins, tourist arrivals, and expenditure levels, relating them to the levels of post-experience satisfaction, in order to see how these foster improvements and social prosperity (Crouch and Ritchie 1999; Ritchie and Crouch 2003).

Still, other approaches have measured the prices and exchange rates versus the levels of productivity and attraction (Dwyer et.al. 2000); they have considered particular demand conditions and whether these are drivers of the local social and economic prosperity (Dwyer and Kim 2003); they have measured the contribution to GDP by each tourism worker (Cvelvar et.al. 2016), and they have calculated the performance of the local added value and its contribution to the local quality of life (Croes 2010). As for the context of this paper, Croes and Rivera (2016) longitudinally analysed several Latin American destinations for more than 10 years and convincingly demonstrated that, even if tourism always contributes to economic growth, this is not always the case for poverty reduction or human development.

After more than a decade of research into the relationship among tourism development, quality of life and happiness in the Latin American context, a conclusion is that tourism does contribute to economic development. However, for tourism to be able to improve the quality of life and give a push to poverty reduction in a given territory, it must create jobs and business opportunities for the locals (Croes and Rivera, 2016). This is taken into account by our C-CBT model as its foundations include the point “Local Empowerment in the CBT Process”: to the extent that local

communities lead tourism development, the increase in quality of life, prosperity and happiness are assured (Figure 3).

Focusing on 'poverty' is therefore a much larger topic than merely measuring an economic impact (see introductory section). It requires examining the ability of all members of a society to lead a full and rewarding life, i.e., a 'happy' life. 'Happiness', understood as a multi-dimensional factor, is thus an essential cross-dimension in our model, a final goal to be achieved by the communities developing CBT in their territories. The authors hope to measure that correctly with the C-CBT model introduced in Section 3, much as the Calgary Model or the Tourism, Competitiveness and Social Prosperity Model (Crouch and Ritchie 1999) did. However, the C-CBT model developed here takes into account not only the rather developed communities these authors researched, but is also able to measure tourism in less developed communities, thanks to its mixed methodology.

By and large, much competitiveness debate has revolved around the relevance of the proposed measurement frameworks. Authors have come up with different sets of indicators, variables and categories. Most often, measurements have been made about tourism flows, stays, added value or tourist satisfaction as well as infrastructure, transport, services offered, etc. (Croes and Kubickova 2013). Ritchie and Crouch's model (2003) measures 36 attributes with more than 250 variables; Dwyer and Kim's model (2003) displays 83 indicators; Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto's model (2005) shows 54 indicators. The World Economic Forum (2015; 2019) has annually issued the "Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report" since 2007, with one index entailing 4 sub-indexes, 14 pillars and 90 indicators. Out of all these methodologies, only two have been broadly and consistently applied: that of WEF, which has been applied to 141 countries, and Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto's model, applied to 200 countries. The latest efforts from the UNWTO in this direction may be read in UNWTO (2017; 2021).

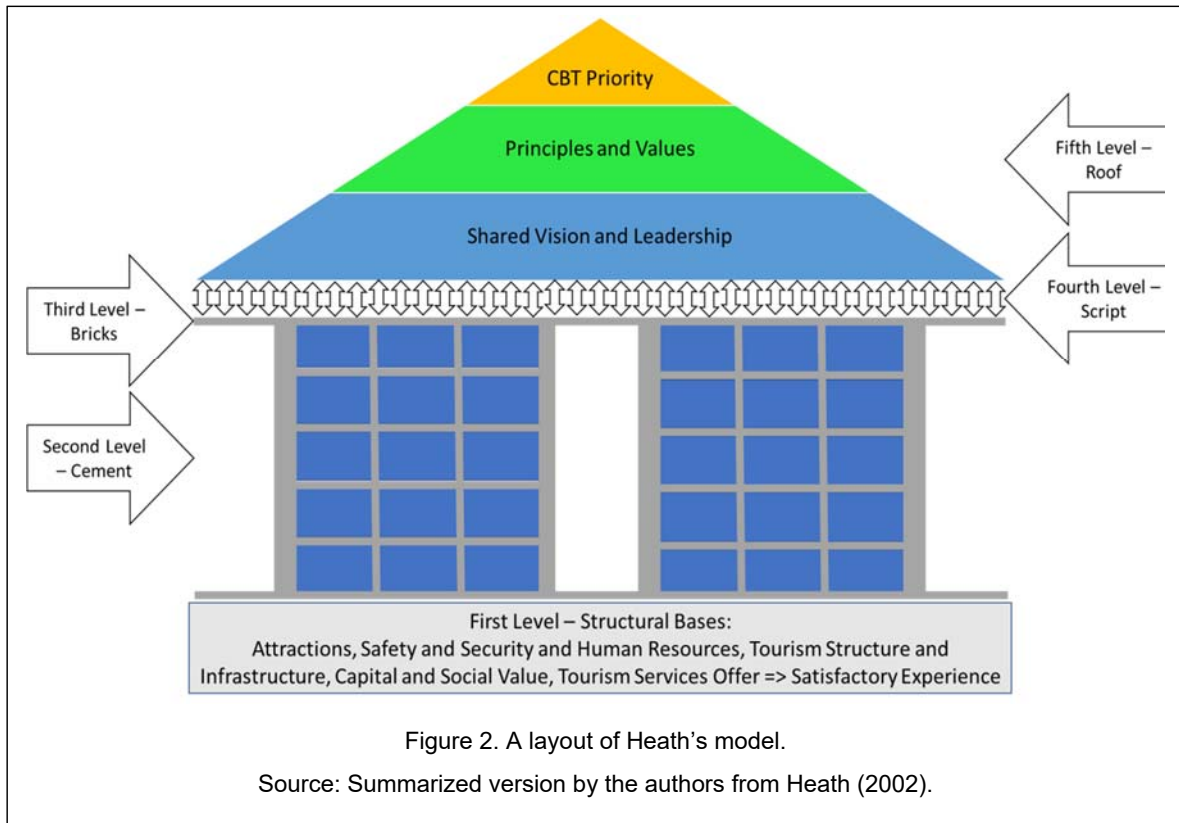
Zielinski et al. (2020) assert that each CBT experience is a particular one with its own features, but commonalities may be found in their processes that favor or deter CBT initiatives. Hence, the best cases or good practices must be put together and highlighted, such as for instance, transforming leaderships or empowering communities (Jamal and Getz, 1999; Wearing and McDonald, 2002; Jones, 2005; Salazar, 2012), consistent and adequate external supports, profits evenly distributed within the community, a supporting legal framework, a good hospitality superstructure, and an understanding of tourism and market issues (Zorn and Farthing, 2007; Harvey,

Koster and Youroukos, 2015; Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2017). These points are important when trying to set up a measuring model and were taken into account when laying out the C-CBT model (see Figure 3).

3. PROPOSING A NEW MODEL: THE COMPETITIVE COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM MODEL, C-CBT

Heath (2002) put forth a tourism competitiveness model for Africa, which he metaphorically described as the building of a house (Figure 2). In this model, the 'foundations' are those factors which make up the basis for competitiveness; the 'cement' represents the elements which drive interactions among the different competitiveness factors, allowing for the building blocks to 'glue'. Further, the 'building blocks' are related to the synergies and balances between development and marketing as well as to implementation issues; then there is the 'script', which is the way actors unite under a shared vision and perform their roles in an optimal way. Finally, the 'roof' stands for the key elements leading to success, such as the role of the community in the competitiveness of the destination, among others.

The present work modifies Heath's proposal both in form and content, while keeping Heath's 5 levels. The first modification concerns the structural basis, the 'Foundations'. These are the essentials without which tourism development would not be possible. We contend that these are on one hand, associativity as a beneficial provider of resources and, on the other, the knowledge and ability of the communities. These input factors cannot be omitted if tourism is to be developed (Mtapuri and Giampiccoli 2016). To ensure associativity, there must be a set of shared principles and values, as well as a vision encompassing the whole community, which result in the decision to favour tourism development in the territory (Figure 3, level 1).



Along the aforementioned lines, a high level of community empowerment is required (Mtapuri and Giampiccoli 2019), which implies a clear and accepted leadership system (Keyim 2018) by all members of the community so that decisions can be made in a quick and efficient way. This also allows for the quick delivery of strategies when it comes to marketing, product improvement, reaching out to institutions, etc. (Figure 3, level 1).

While the community's foundations function under the premises described here above, the second level of the C-CBT model is made up of the columns, representing the structural factors of the industry. They sum up most of Heath's factors responsible for making tourists satisfied. These factors are the local attractions, the access infrastructure, as well as the tourist facilities and the available capacities. Added value must be produced by the community by providing outstanding experiences to visitors, as these are a destination's most important feature to them. All of the factors listed here are shared by all of the different competitiveness models reviewed for the present paper, so they are sufficiently grounded.

The third level consists of the 'bricks' as well as the 'cement'. The bricks stand for overall tourist satisfaction. The cement represents the communication and marketing

areas of destination management. When combining both bricks and cement, it becomes clear that these elements are crucial to filling the voids between columns and to sustaining them by focusing on the 'Foundations' previously established. This partly reflects Buhalis's (2000) assertions on tourism competitiveness. It also implies that the destination needs to welcome tourists, possibly in growing numbers, as destination competitiveness indeed requires that rising numbers of visitors arrive at the destination.

A fourth level concerns the 'waterproofing,' a factor related to the destination's positioning as it 'protects' it from the 'weather conditions,' which could 'penetrate' the house and damage it. The waterproofing in this case refers to the foundations of sustainability applied in a particular destination, as well as the tourist structure that caters for visitors.

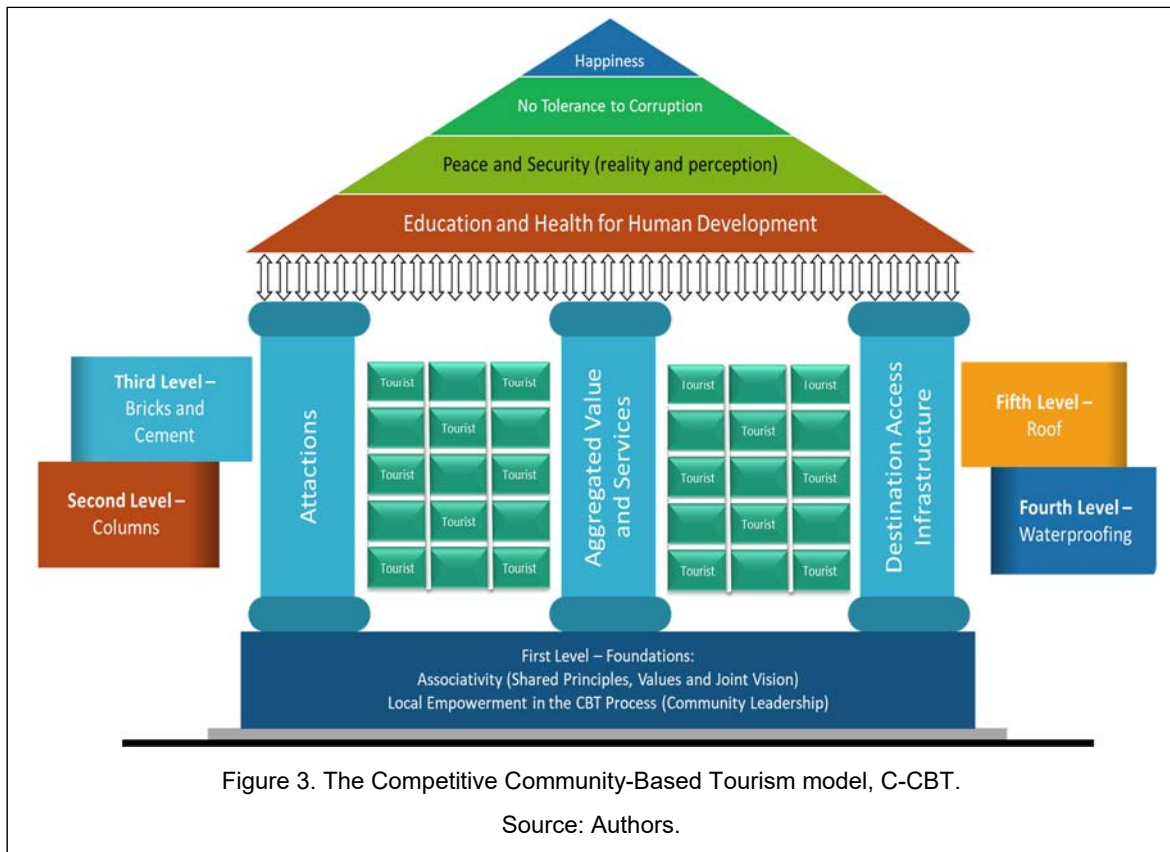
To achieve both of these latter factors in local communities, tourism should facilitate the creation of high-quality jobs and the start-up and management of companies. This is a central CBT goal, and achieving it implies a commitment to improving the skills of the community's members (Durkin et.al. 2017) through good training and decent public health conditions (Sen 1990).

Furthermore, in many emergent destinations, there are concerns about safety and corruption. Safety is therefore a factor influencing tourism demand. As the two studied destinations have had violent pasts, it is important that peace becomes a grounded reality in both territories (D'Amore 2009). Safety and safety perceptions are therefore related to tourism competitiveness as well as corruption is another factor negatively affecting tourism as a poverty reducer and preventing a correct distribution of public funds, which is necessary to improve the sector's competitiveness (Croes and Rivera 2016).

These three factors (security, corruption and a correct distribution of public funds) are friction-points in developing places and, therefore, must be taken into account by the model if it is to be paradigmatic for a vast range of destinations across the globe. That is why these make up the fifth and last level of the proposed model, the 'roof'.

The final goal is Happiness, as explained before, understood as the ability of all members of the community to lead a full and rewarding life, i.e., a 'happy' life.

The final theoretical proposal is illustrated here below (Figure 3):



This way, the C-CBT model reweighs the five levels of Heath’s CBT model. In analysing the effectiveness of CBT, as well as their findings from the ground, the authors concluded that the most important thing is the community – their shared vision, their leadership processes and their decision to work and develop tourism. The importance of these factors results in their greater weight in the overall scoring system, accounting for 30% of the total score. The columns also play an important role in the process; therefore, they are given a weight of 25%. The other three factors were found less important in terms of defining the model, so they carry a weight of 15% each (see Table 1).

Levels	%
First level – foundations	30%
Second level – columns	25%
Third level – bricks and cement	15%
Fourth level – waterproofing	15%
Fifth level – roof	15%
TOTAL	100%

Table 1: Reweighing Heats’ five levels for the C-CBT model.

Source: Authors.

4. THE FIELD WORK

The field research was done as a part of a funded project by the Colombian government and carried out by the Universidad Externado de Colombia, Bogota. The project sought to support both communities in Acandí and La Macarena in their consolidation of tourism development. The possibility of an extended contact with the places and their people, as well as the need to gather rich and detailed data, made the research quite an explorative one and accordingly had the authors deciding for a mixed research frame, combining qualitative and quantitative elements rather than purely quantitative ones (see also Section 6).

As for the field work, a total of 40 in-depth interviews were carried out, accounting for 20 recorded hours. The total number of informants was 25 in La Macarena and 15 in Acandí. The selection of the interviewees was done according to two criteria: either they were community leaders (according to the community itself, and were put forth by the community as their representatives), or they were among the oldest-operating tourism service providers in the area. Ethnographic participative and non-participatory observations were performed as well: as for the former, this took 40 hours in La Macarena and 32 hours in Acandí. For the latter, 16 hours in each destination. The collection of data was completed while working with the communities on CBT-related projects in the year 2016. The results of this field work are presented in Section 6 as a comparison between the two destinations, paralleling the results of both territories according to the C-CBT model.

5. SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT: DEVELOPING TOURISM IN COLOMBIA'S FAR REGIONS

In Colombia, the framework by Crouch and Ritchie (1999) was followed by the first national studies on tourism competitiveness, so officials issued documents such as “Esquema de planificación turística para la competitividad” (“Tourism Planning Scheme for Competitiveness”) or the Tourism Environmental Plan in the 2000s. Both documents underscored the significance of clusters and the positioning of the country in the international market, as well as the importance of taking into consideration the productive inputs available (Toro, Galán, Pico, Roza and Suescún 2015).

As for present-day studies of Colombia related to our research, the two surveys recently published about competitiveness must be mentioned here: CPTUR (2021) as well as Márquez-Rodríguez and Díaz-Solano (2016). In the first of these two studies, which reviews Colombia's tourism competitiveness at a regional level, 105 indicators were established. These covered eight large areas: environment, economy, culture, business and enterprises, marketing, public sector organization, infrastructure and social criteria (CPTUR 2021). On the other hand, Márquez-Rodríguez and Díaz-Solano (2016) studied the Colombian Caribbean region by setting up 7 groups of indicators, comprising a total of 66 items. These models, however, have been conceived to measure regional competitiveness, and proved challenging to apply to local contexts. Therefore, the authors of the present paper turned to a local competitiveness framework to measure local destinations, such as the one proposed by Heath (2002), as it is more adequate to this research's purposes (see further above).

The context is a crucial element to understand not only the researched communities in general, but also their challenges and priorities. The next two Subsections touch on these topics in both Acandí and La Macarena, offering an abridged chronological report of their development as destinations.

5.1) TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ACANDÍ

Acandí is a municipality located in the Darién-Chocó region, on the north-western border of Colombia and Panama and on the shores of the Caribbean Sea (Figure 1). It has 13000+ inhabitants and covers 1500 sq. km. It is part of the Darien sub-region, one of the most biodiverse in Colombia, with a huge potential for ecotourism. The most important tourism sites in this municipality are the beach areas of Capurganá, Sapzurro, and San Francisco. The history of the place goes back to the 19th century, as hunters arrived seeking the Carey turtle, a highly prized local species. The hunters prospered in the area and began to settle there.

By 1970, tourism had been started by a local resident and visionary, Mrs. Narcisa Navas, who set up a landing strip to bring in the first groups of airborne tourists. Over time, several houses in the town were converted into lodgings for visitors, and by 1980, the landing strip was improved allowing larger planes to land. However, the natives

had little money to invest to transform the area into a 'destination', so investments were made mainly by people from Colombia's inland regions.

In conjunction with these early tourism developments, members of FARC, Colombia's largest guerrilla organization, began to settle in Acandí, and they were relatively free to operate in the area from ca. 1970 to 1990. Because of the deep jungle landscape and the sea connection with Central America, the area soon became an important node in the routes for drug business, smuggling, and illegal mining exports, as well as human trafficking. By 1995, paramilitary groups reached the region and a battle for the territory and the illegal businesses began among them and the guerrillas became a nightmare for locals, destroying the tourist economy in its totality. In the middle of the hostilities, FARC attacked Capurganá and took control of the site, displacing public forces for almost two years. During this period, with the area given up to rebel forces, the tourist industry was lost altogether: hotels and restaurants closed down and trade came to a complete halt.

By 1996, something remarkable happened among the locals. Due to the intensity of the living conditions, residents in the region eschewed working or trading alone in favour of forming cooperatives and organizing themselves within the community. In a spontaneous way, cooperation and solidarity became fundamental pillars of the community. In fact, until this transition, tourism had never been thought of as a local initiative; therefore, as the community started rebuilding itself, agriculture became their economic cornerstone. Community members found that agriculture was a much better option for survival and for preparing future economic opportunities. When the nation's government decided to retake the territory in 1997, tourism again became an opportunity for natives and other locals who had arrived in the years of violence. This marked the beginning of yet another tourism development era in Acandí, which has lasted ever since.

5.2) TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN LA MACARENA

La Macarena is a municipality in the Meta region, in the centre-east of Colombia, with 10000 inhabitants and covering some 11200 sq. km, see Figure 1. The first settlers in the area were farmers escaping from the violence that broke out in other regions in the 1950s. Years later, tourism would be seen as an interesting activity as the pilot Tommy Thompson landed in this area and 'discovered' the Caño Cristales

stream, the most important attraction in the region and one of Colombia's most iconic natural sites. The FARC guerrillas held this territory as one of their strongholds from the mid-sixties, but violence first erupted as they attacked a police station in 1975, according to some local interviewees. As the area was a difficult place to reach, tourism flows were very small, preventing the region from becoming a destination until the 1990s, as tourism started to grow steadily and became a prominent economic activity for locals. As this development took place, the National Government declared the area a "no-tensions zone," i.e., an area chosen to advance peace initiatives and dialogue.

As the "no-tensions zones" initiative collapsed in 2002, the FARC became the sole governors of the region, building up a parallel state with their own system of rules. One policy the FARC leaders maintained was to forbid strangers from entering the zone, thus eliminating the possibility of tourists visiting La Macarena. When the national military was ordered later on to retake the area, the most violent months in La Macarena's history ensued. With the weakening of the narco-trafficking business, the area's economic isolation became evident. Violence escalated, particularly kidnappings. However, locals showed an extremely high resilience, so as violence ebbed by 2003, tourism activities started again. Thanks to the support of several institutions like the local environmental authority Cormacarena and the Colombian National Parks Service, a group of 33 local tour guides were trained. This initiative resulted in the arrival of 217 tourists in 2003, 17 of them foreigners. However, the national park was closed down in 2004 after it transpired that the municipality had been unlawfully collecting entrance fees.

In 2007, the park reopened with its first management plan and since then it has stayed in business without any disruptions. The communitarian process became stronger and in the year 2010, there were already 60 families involved in hospitality, a figure that exponentially climbed to 522 families in 2015. The community witnessed a 465% growth in tourist arrivals in these five years, escalating from 2300 to 13000 visits. Tourism has brought hope, pride and a sense of belonging to the population in La Macarena. Furthermore, this community-based process grew naturally due to an existing culture based on co-operation. For example, since a banking system was not locally accessible, it was not uncommon for local tour operators to lend money to residents in order for them to transform their homes into hostels while paying back the

debt with room nights, rather than with money. The same happened with restaurants, transportation vehicles, etc.

Every individual or business involved in the tourism development process at La Macarena has helped others to get into the industry, so tourism has had a growing positive impact over an ever-increasing share of the population. Emigration is no longer the unavoidable fate of local young people, as it used to be. This community-based tourism process has become a widely-known success story with huge implications for the whole country.

6. TWO COLOMBIAN CBT CASES COMPARED: LA MACARENA VS ACANDÍ

In this section, the C-CBT measuring model is applied to La Macarena and Acandí as a means of comparing them and showing the usefulness of the model, and of gaining a deeper insight into some CBT processes.

For this research, qualitative data and statistics were taken into account from the official figures for Acandí and La Macarena, compiled by the Colombian National Planning Department (Colombia National Planning Department, 2018a and 2018b). While Heath's 5 factors (which we call 'Levels') are equally balanced in his work, the present modified model introduces different weightings as discussed further above (Table 1). This rebalancing reflects the changes in importance for each factor proposed by the authors, which allows for a better descriptive accuracy.

Thanks to the information gathered from primary literature and the field work, the various model components may be given scores. These range from 0 to 5, where zero represents the lowest performance in scoring a criterion and 5 is the highest performance.

Supplementary to the quantitative scoring, we decided also for a more qualitative scoring system, i.e., the 'traffic light' marking which, to our purposes, is exact enough, allowing for some flexibility and interpretation as well. So, the following 'light marks' were accorded to each Level, after Table 1 and the traffic lights system:

- First Level: weighed up at 30%, scores between 0 – 1.5. If score 0.0 – 0.5 RED, if score 0.5 – 1.0 YELLOW, if score 1.0 -1.5 GREEN.
- Second Level: weighed up at 25%, scores between 0.0 – 1.25. If score 0.0 – 0.413 RED, if score 0.413 – 0.826 YELLOW, if score 0.826 – 1.25 GREEN.

- Third, Fourth and Fifth Levels: weighed up at 15% each, scores between 0.0 – 0.75. If score 0.0 – 0.25 RED, if score 0.25 – 0.50 YELLOW, if score 0.50 – 0.75 GREEN.
- TOTAL SCORE: from 0 to 5. If score 0 – 1.666 RED, if score 1.666 – 3.333 YELLOW, if score 3.333 - 5 GREEN.

The resulting partial and total scores are given on Table 2 below. These are discussed in the rest of this section but are summed up here below for the benefit of the reader:

LEVELS	Acandí	La Macarena
First level - Foundations	0.60 (YELLOW)	1.40 (GREEN)
Second level - Columns	0.92 (GREEN)	1.08 (GREEN)
Third Level - Bricks and Cement	0.45 (YELLOW)	0.68 (GREEN)
Fourth level - Waterproofing	0.30 (YELLOW)	0.75 (GREEN)
Fifth level - Roof	0.51 (GREEN)	0.51 (GREEN)
TOTAL	2.77 (YELLOW)	4.42 (GREEN)

Table 2. Overall scores of La Macarena and Acandí under the application the C-CBT model.

Source: Authors.

By comparing the analysis for the two destinations, the authors anticipate that La Macarena stands out as a much more developed tourist destination which, in spite of the problems it is still facing, has a lot to teach to other emerging destinations like Acandí. As an overall score, La Macarena scored 4.42 (GREEN) against 2.77 for Acandí (YELLOW) out of a possible top score of 5.0 (GREEN).

6.1) FIRST LEVEL: FOUNDATIONS

La Macarena established a clear interest in communitarian issues by placing these above other developmental matters. Since the beginning, associative work has been at the core of the development process, focusing on the capabilities, desires and expectations of individuals and families. This associative culture has generated various benefits for the community such as collective learning, the application of

certain national mandatory norms, negotiating collective insurance policies, access to social security, etc. The locals' belief is that the only way to shield the tourist development process from illegal armed groups or from other interests is to have a strong community-based process.

As for Acandí, however, the community-based process is in its nascent phase, and to date is under certain pressures. Drug trafficking, illegal mining, and immigrant trafficking are still major issues, and even tourism has had illicit economic activities emerging, such as money-laundering. Furthermore, land disputes over properties sold by natives to newcomers are a problem that has recently evolved into a racial and social conflict. All this remains as possible threats to tourism development.

The key difference between Acandí and La Macarena is how local communities have been involved in the development of tourism. In Acandí there is no common shared vision among the stakeholders involved. There, unfortunately, each person, group, or investor acts in their own interest. As stated further above, there is a certain degree of cooperation, but common initiatives are not strong enough. In Capurganá, tourism development is still precarious, and communities are somehow naive, even if this might be a good starting point for a journey towards a shared vision (Table 3).

Level 1 (Foundations)		
Factors Analysed	Acandí	La Macarena
Associativity	3	5
Principles, Values, and Joint Vision	1	4
Local Empowerment in the CBT Process	2	5
Average Scoring Level 1	2.00	4.67
Weight in the Model	30%	
Weighed Score Level 1	0.60	1.40

Table 3: Comparing the 'Foundations' in the two destinations.

Source: Authors.

Under this heading, Acandí scored 0.60 (YELLOW) while La Macarena got a 1.40 (GREEN), with this difference pointing to a huge gap in this level between the two destinations.

6.2) SECOND LEVEL: COLUMNS

6.2.1) TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

La Macarena's highly unique but sole attraction is Caño Cristales, because of its magnificence, and also because it has the potential to create unique experiences for tourists (see Supplemental Materials to this article). Caño Cristales is labelled "the most beautiful river in the world" and "the river of the seven colours" and it is considered one of Colombia's most impressive natural wonders (Lonely Planet 2022).

This small river flows through volcanic rocks, with no sedimentation in the process, so water is completely transparent, allowing to see the underwater red-coloured alga «*Macarenia Clavijera*», giving the sensation of being in a fantasy river, full of colour contrasts, with waterfalls cascading and the jungle framing the stream. In recent years, people from over 70 countries have visited this attraction, with 16000 visitors arriving in 2016 according to local estimates.

Notwithstanding this magnificent, but sole attraction, in La Macarena they have worked at improving the basic CBT experience. Cooperation among all actors has grown significantly by working together in order to create new ways to improve visitor satisfaction. For instance, they have set up a performance called "Parrando Llanero" in which they represent their culture through a typical dance, local live music and a traditional specialty.

The history of the conflict in La Macarena could be of added value to tourists if it became part of the guides' discourse. The area has become an icon in the struggle against what used to be the longest-lasting guerrilla army in the Americas. However, in general terms, there are not many value-adding factors in La Macarena, and it is still an underdeveloped destination in several ways. In spite of this challenge, a positive evolution can be seen on the ground day by day: improved tourism superstructure, the creation of tourism experiences, enhanced food quality, better human resources, etc.

Acandí's main attractions are the beaches in Capurganá and Sapzurro. These beaches are flanked by the forest, so they allow visitors to hear the birds singing. Visitors are also drawn by the prospect of turtle-watching. The area is described as "jungle-covered mountains, washed by deep blue waters" (Lonely Planet 2017b). Gastronomy is another attraction, as is the closeness to Panama, the area being an overstay place for tourists travelling along the coastal line of both countries (see also Supplemental Materials).

As happens in La Macarena, in Acandí there are few value-added products, and these are still in the early stages. For example, in the San Francisco area, local “raizales” (Afro-Colombians) recently started showing their culture to visitors. Also, another experience in Acandí is night turtle watching, especially during the turtles’ spawning season (Acosta, 2005). The development of these experiences, however, is still in their initial phases compared with those on offer in La Macarena.

Acandí’s local culture has been constantly shifting because of the permanent colonization by newcomers. Adding to these transcultural questions (or perhaps explaining them partly), the displacement of ethnic groups has been a permanent trend in the area: first, indigenous communities were pushed away by the Afro-Colombians, and in present day, Afro-Colombians are being displaced by people from inland regions who settle there to invest in the tourism industry. This has resulted in some racial tensions that have slowed down tourism development, particularly concerning the development of the “raizal” Afro-Colombian culture into an attraction.

6.2.2) AGGREGATED VALUE AND SERVICES

As far as tourist structure is concerned, La Macarena lacks an adequate one. The first lodgings for visitors were tents. Cooking food for them in proximity to the Caño Cristales damaged the environment and threatened the purity of the site. However, progress has been made by adapting local houses and turning them into hostels and restaurants. There are no upscale or luxury offers; instead, locals offer the best service they can provide with the means they have, and they are learning in the process day by day.

Acandí has two different, competing scenarios. One is the offer by the “raizal” communities, which tends to be more basic, as this community has meagre resources. Conversely, the “new locals” inject capital to produce a higher standard lodging and dining offer for tourists. However, as the present research is chiefly interested in underscoring community-based initiatives and not so much offer diversification, La Macarena scores higher here.

6.2.3) DESTINATION ACCESS INFRASTRUCTURE

La Macarena’s local leader, Henry Quevedo, had a dream, as once happened to Thomas Cook (Thomas Cook 2022), and it was a dream about using massive means of transportation to get tourists to La Macarena. The obvious difference is that Cook used railroads and trains while Quevedo had to use landing strips and planes. Since the beginnings, airborne traffic has been a crucial factor to La Macarena’s tourism development. Even today, there is no other transport option for tourists to get there. This also is a factor to reckon with as far as food supplies are concerned: because agriculture is underdeveloped in the region, most of the food must be brought from outside by plane.

Acandí also heavily relies on air transport. It has two landing strips, one in the urban centre and the other one in Capurganá. As detailed in Section 5, tourism arrivals became important after the building of the first runway in Capurganá. The area is also reachable by sea, but tides can affect the efficacy of this transportation method. Tides can also disrupt transport connections among the different beach areas, which are served by boats on a regular basis (Table 4).

Level 2 (Columns)		
Factors Analysed	Acandí	La Macarena
Tourist attractions	4	5
Aggregated value and services	4	4
Destination access infrastructure	3	4
Average Scoring Level 2	3.67	4.33
Weight in the Model	25%	
Weighed Score Level 2	0.92	1.08

Table 4: the ‘Columns’ level in both destinations.

Source: Authors.

Final scores for this section are: Acandí 0.92 (GREEN) and La Macarena 1.08 (GREEN).

6.3) THIRD LEVEL: BRICKS AND CEMENT

First of all, if we set tourism arrivals as a proxy variable for tourism satisfaction, it must be noted that La Macarena has succeeded in attracting more tourists than Acandí.

With respect to the cement, joint work between community tourism organizations in La Macarena has allowed for different ideas and projects to come to successful fruition. A Tourism Regional Roundtable to discuss matters was set up. The municipality has a permanent representative in the Tourism, Peace and Coexistence Committee at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism. The municipality is also working on several new projects, such as a destination sustainability certification.

Acandí also has a representative in the aforementioned committee, and they have three community bodies named Cocomasur, Cocomacentro and Cocomanorte, which oversee the development of projects. They are working to improve the local community potential in order to set up a consistent tourism offer to attract new and more sophisticated markets.

Since La Macarena is organized around a community-based process, a novel model of destination marketing and management has emerged. This new model will be 'protected' by a new local body that is in the course of being set up.

In Acandí, business owners have also tried to establish systems for collecting feedback from visitors; however, disparate systems have emerged and the information cannot be easily centralized. Clearly, they are not accustomed to working together as a destination, and their co-operation is fairly opportunistic (Table 5).

Level 3 (Bricks and Cement)		
Factors Analysed	Acandí	La Macarena
Tourist Satisfaction	3	5
Number of tourists	3	4
Average Scoring Level 3	3	4.5
Weight in the Model	15%	
Weighed Score Level 3	0.45	0.68

Table 5: Level 3 examined in both destinations.

Source: Authors.

For this section, Acandí scored 0.45 (YELLOW) while La Macarena scored 0.68 (GREEN).

6.4)FOURTH LEVEL: WATERPROOFING

La Macarena has followed a path to develop tourism in an environmentally-protected area thanks to a set of mandatory rules established by Cormacarena (the

local environment authority) and the National Parks Authority. Every incoming tourist must attend a talk where basic requirements are outlined for tourists accessing Caño Cristales. In their early school years, local pupils learn about tourism issues as well as environmental aspects of tourism development. Sustainability has become a culture for local tourism entrepreneurs, as well as for the institutions present in the area.

Acandí, on the other hand, serves as an example of the negative externalities caused by a lack of planning. Since tourism development has been organic and decentralized, environmental issues have never been held up as a priority (Roldan, 2012). However, an opportunity was identified by locals with the help of NGOs such as Fundación Darién: the Carey Turtle «*Dermochelys Conacea*», a species in danger of extinction. The turtles travel every year to Acandí to spawn. Authorities such as the Ministry of Environment, the Municipality and the National Parks Office, among others, have been working to make locals and tourists aware of the commitment needed to protect these animals (Acosta 2005), see Table 6.

Level 4 (Waterproofing)		
Factors Analysed	Acandí	La Macarena
Overall waterproofing	2	5
Average Scoring Level 4	2	5
Weight in the Model	15%	
Weighed Score Level 4	0.30	0.75

Table 6: the 'Waterproofing' of both destinations.

Source: Authors.

In this subsection, La Macarena emerges as a much more compact, 'waterproofed' destination while Acandí is much more fragile in the face of any event. That is why Acandí gets a much lower score of 0.3 (YELLOW) and La Macarena gets 0.75 (GREEN).

6.5) FIFTH LEVEL: ROOF

Without a military presence guaranteeing security for locals and tourists, La Macarena would have never developed into a tourist destination after the "non-tensions zone" era (see previous Section). Over time, confidence returned and the current security level is very high in the zone, with zero negative reports from the tourists' side since the new tourism process began back in 2007. However, education

and healthcare are two pressing problems in the municipality. Corruption does not seem to be much of an issue here.

As for Acandí, it was a high-conflict zone over a long period, so the presence of public forces was also crucial to making it into a destination. Nowadays, there are cohesion problems among the different groups making up the local community: indigenous vs newcomers to Acandí from inland regions who have settled in the town to live and work. Sometimes tourists experience that kind of tension, so Acandí does not feel as calm as La Macarena. Moreover, illicit commercial activities still occur in Acandí, and corruption is present within the municipality, and so the community loses the trustworthiness that helps tourists feel secure in a destination. However, according to statistics and data, healthcare and education are better managed in Acandí than in La Macarena.

Notice that, to assess this level, we had much more objective information than for the other levels, thanks to having access to the records of the Colombian National Planning Department (2018a and 2018b). The abundant information had the authors scoring this level with a higher objectivity and precision, see Table 7 here below.

Level 5 (Roof)		
Factors Analyzed	Acandí	La Macarena
Security	4.17	4.61
Education	2.81	1.40
Health	4.36	3.00
Corruption	2.17	4.69
Average Scoring Level 5	3.38	3.43
Weight in the Model	15%	
Weighed Score Level 5	0.51	0.51

Table 7: The 'roof' level (Level 5) in both places.

Source: Authors.

For this level, both destinations got the same score: 0.51 (GREEN).

7. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

After applying the C-CBT model, the two destinations studied here scored quite differently: La Macarena got 4.42 (GREEN) whereas Acandí got a much lower score of 2.77 (YELLOW). Perhaps surprisingly, La Macarena with its humbler Caño Cristales stream got a much better score than Acandí with its superb nature and beaches, so

an explanation here is required. While the ‘roof’ (level 5) in both destinations is the same, the key difference between them is the community’s level of input in organizing tourism activities, undoubtedly much better in La Macarena than in Acandí as has been said repeatedly in the previous section. This has La Macarena scoring much higher in heavily-weighted levels (Level 1) making it the winning destination in this study. In fact, La Macarena has become a ‘best practice’ case at national level in Colombia demonstrating that, for CBT tourism to come to fruition, an organized community is more important than a number of magnificent natural resources. Notice that this speaks for the importance of bottom-up initiatives as better promoters of CBT than top-down ones (see discussion in Section 2); the community’s strength in La Mararena equals a solid bottom-up development, which may subsequently be supported top-down by external sources. In Acandí, things do not fit into this pattern.

The field work to this paper has revealed that united communities keep statistics of visitors, both qualitative and quantitative, which are the basis of product improvement and marketing. Assertions from critics about the non-market nature of CBT can be partly dismissed by what is reported in Section 6. The same goes for the access to finance or infrastructural development; investments in recent years by the national Colombian government in La Macarena’s development may be seen in this context.

It is the community’s strength, upon which the destination’s development rests, which also makes for innovative, sustainable, adequate tourism products and their subsequent marketing. This is the key difference between the two compared destinations and, as La Macarena shows a higher communitarian development after being measured using C-CBT, it is the ‘winning’ destination.

8. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The C-CBT model is an adequate and straightforward tool for establishing development paths for local destinations, better suited to the task than others developed for a subnational scale (CPTUR, 2021 and Márquez-Rodríguez et al., 2016). Since the 1990s, tourism competitiveness in Colombia has been understood in terms of value-chains, clustering processes, or industrial agglomerations (Section 2). This paper’s subversion of these metrics in favour of community-based models to measure competitiveness mounts a challenge to traditional thinking in the field. As it stands, with the C-CBT model, researchers are capable of explaining CBT-related

phenomena in quite a large range of regions and countries around the world, and it offers a way to bridge the gap between CBT and destination competitiveness.

The C-CBT model as it is been laid out reinforces frameworks such as the general tourist competitiveness put forth by Crouch and Ritchie (1999), as well as human development frameworks which claim that tourism development must also be able to fight poverty (Croes and Rivera, 2016) by truly empowering the local community so they can harvest the business opportunities emerging from such a development. The model also retakes and implements the best practices found in the literature and the studied cases as it proposes a reweighing of the importance of the Levels.

Heath's (2002) model is grounded on tourists' satisfaction, while taking into account the local offer and the design of products attractive to the market. In Heath's model, questions related to the engagement of the local community are relegated to the 'roof' position, seemingly downgrading their importance. The C-CBT model, while remaining loyal to the CBT principles, underscores the well-being of local communities much more in terms of human development. This is not to say that market considerations are to be ignored; however, in the C-CBT model, communitarian well-being and empowerment come before tourist satisfaction (See Level 1 versus Levels 3, 4, and 5 on Section 6 and Figure 3).

As stated above, the measuring model is a mixed one, as sometimes not enough quantitative information was available – or different amounts of quantitative information were available for each of the 5 Levels. Out of the need to make the quantitative information uniform and reliable, it was complemented with qualitative measurements based on the criteria of the researchers after observation and interviews. Therefore, some subjective biases to the scoring might have been introduced this way. This is not new: the models applied by Ritchie and Crouch (2010); Dwyer and Kim (2003); Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto (2005), or WEF (2019) – this one the most used nowadays – also rely on both statistics and subjective estimates. By trying to balance and organize these in the C-CBT model, a response is given to the fact that, in most CBT destinations, reliable statistics are hard to come by.

Competitiveness frameworks previously used at a national scale, like the WEF (2015; 2019) indexes, or at a subnational scale, like the Colombian Regional Tourist Competitiveness Index, are, according to our fieldwork, inadequate when applied to CBT, given also the scarce information as stated on the paragraph above. On a local scale, many more “micro-measurements” otherwise considered to be irrelevant on a

larger scale, are required to properly evaluate development efforts. Such indices also fail to take into account the community's central role in supporting CBT. Models for larger areas are therefore difficult to transfer to a local level. How the national/subnational level can relate to the local community level is a question we leave open here for further research and debate, and remains one of the most daunting challenges in this domain and an area for future research.

Another avenue for further research is of course measuring other destinations with the C-CBT model – preferably located in other world regions. This will help to confirm the usefulness of this tool and refine it. Particularly, the authors think that measuring more 'advanced' destinations as Pinel (2002) and Kline et al. (2015) did, versus measuring more 'emerging' destinations with weaker value chains (the case of the present article), is going to put the model to the test and assess our claims to its universality.

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Supplemental Materials

A PDF file with pictures from Acandí and La Macarena, taken by the researchers while working at both places, may be freely downloaded and shared from the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/2p98bzmz>

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