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Case Study: Tourism in Traditional Brazilian Quilombo Communities – From Theory Into Practice

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Abstract

This case study discusses an initiative to aid a traditional Quilombo community in the State of Rio de Janeiro through community-based tourism (CBT). Through the Young Leaders of Americas program, a US Department of State funded initiative, the authors worked together in Brazil and the United States to increase visibility, linkages and awareness of this CBT project. The paper highlights how research in the field influenced what specific steps would be taken in practice to increase the benefits of tourism for the community. CBT as a concept is briefly discussed, and a background of Quilombos in Brazil is given.

Keywords: community-based tourism, Quilombo, sustainability, culture

Introduction

The 17 sustainable development goals of the Agenda 2030 of the United Nations were signed by 193-member states at the 2015 summit. These goals are a stark reminder to create a sustainable, fair and just future addressing the many global issues we now face. With a steady growth in international travel, the risk of overtourism and tourism's potential to do more harm than good becomes ever so apparent. As more and more destinations open up to receive tourists, the industry has grown from 25 million international travelers in the 1950's, to over one billion and is on track to reach 1.8 billion by 2030, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2018).

Already, many negatives are seen from this amount of growth and there are heavy protests in destinations such as Venice, Barcelona and Amsterdam (Seraphim, Sheeran & Pilato, 2018). To accommodate this steady increase in international travel, the industry needs to find ways to balance cultural and environmental preservation with growth. As such, sustainable tourism has been seen as a solution to enhance positive impacts of tourism and decrease the potential of negative impacts on society, culture, environment and economy.

Tukamushaba and Okech (2011) argue that when a community is involved in tourism planning and activity, the social and natural heritage are protected. In that sense, CBT is a mechanism for sustainable tourism and gives locals a voice and power to determine tourism development. On the

opposite spectrum of overtourism, sustainably developed tourism can be a means to preserve natural and cultural resources and help sustain local livelihoods. And yet, despite established CBT projects, many communities are not able to attract the tourists needed, as they fail to be adequately linked to the tourism distribution system. Tourism directly contributed 3 % of Brazil's GDP in 2017, equating to 56 billion USD in direct income (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2018). International visitors accounted for only 6% of these tourism receipts, highlighting Brazil's reliance on domestic tourism (WTTC, 2018).

This case study examines community-based tourism (CBT) as a way to sustain traditional community culture in Brazil. The country boasts the highest number of Afro descendants in the Americas. The African legacy lies in every aspect of Rio's culture until the present day. Historically defined as communities of fugitive slaves, Quilombos represented areas of resistance and freedom for Afro-descendent Brazilians. Under the 1988 constitution, following calls from black activists for recognition, descendants of Quilombos gained the rights to the land they had historically occupied. Today there are more than 3000 Quilombo communities in Brazil, some of which still do not have land titles, and yet nevertheless boast their own culture. Many Quilombo communities lack basic necessities such as medical care, running water or electricity. Between the years of 2004-2008 more than 20,000 Quilombo homes received electricity at last. Traditionally, these Quilombo communities served as refuges for slaves, and equally as important, created safe sanctuaries where traditional African religious music and dance could be practiced freely.

CBT is characterized by community participation in the development phase of tourism, contributes to the enhancement of local identity and preservation of the territory. It is an alternative to the traditional tourism model, which focuses mainly on economic growth, often excluding the local culture. Historically, there has been a lack of research on CBT as it pertains to traditional communities. And yet, if developed properly, CBT can be a means of income generation and hence a way to help preserve local lands and culture. Furthermore, CBT in Quilombo communities highlights new facets of Brazilian cultural diversity, enhancing the touristic potential for international visitors as well as domestic travelers.

As such, the objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. Present a case study of CBT in the Quilombo do Gratao community.
2. Describe the Young Leaders of America Project
3. Explain steps to bring visibility to the community and link it to the tourism market.

Review of the Literature

In his well-known work, Jafar Jafari (1990) argued that international tourism development can be understood through several platforms. After a decade of viewing mass tourism as mainly a positive phenomenon (advocacy platform), the many negative impacts of tourism became obvious in the cautionary platform. In the 1980's the industry hence sought to develop new alternative forms of tourism in the adaptancy platform. As such, Murphy (1985) first discussed the concept of CBT, arguing for the need of local residents to be involved in the planning, development and operation of tourism. In that sense, CBT poses a stark opposition to the usual top-down approach of large-scale mass tourism development. CBT is a bottom up approach to tourism development, in which

the host community actively participates in all stages of development and more importantly benefits from it. It is a way to generate income for host communities, increasing quality of life. It simultaneously allows visitors to experience the music, dance, history, art and food of the local culture.

Since Murphy's (1985) conceptualization of CBT, many definitions of community tourism have emerged, all sharing the notion of community participation. Previous studies pointed to the need of local residents to be able to decide on the level of involvement in tourism, as well as how many tourists they would like to receive (Nyaupane, Morais, & Dowler, 2006). Due to threats of staging authenticity, loss of local culture and decreasing the quality of natural resources, many authors have argued for a carrying capacity in CBT projects. Fewer tourists mean the community cannot be dependent on tourism as a sole economic activity; instead CBT should be viewed as a way to subsidize income and increase quality of life. The concept has been widely implemented in developing countries to combat cultural alienation and loss of control (Brohman, 1996). However, many studies have also shown that the vast majority of CBT projects in these destinations fail (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009; Salazar, 2012). Consequently, Mitchell and Muckosy (2008) argued that failures can be attributed to three main areas: market access, governance, and financial viability.

Quilombo

Slavery was abolished in Brazil in 1888, ending official repression of the more than four million African slaves shipped to the Portuguese colony between the 17th and 19th century. Some of these slaves escaped, forming small communities in rural areas. These *quilombolos* served as places of refuge, areas where traditional culture and religion could be practiced. Quilombo communities created the now popular art form of Capoeira, which is part of the multi-ethnic Brazilian culture. In 1988, the constitution granted land right to the descendants of these first Quilombo inhabitants of fugitive slaves. Only around 9% of the more than 5000 Quilombo communities received their land rights as the law was opposed by many wealthy farmers and land owners. As such, only five of 44 Quilombo communities in the State of Rio de Janeiro have land rights: Campinho da Independência (Paraty), Preto Forro (Cabo Frio), Santana (Quatis), São José da Serra (Valença) and Marambaia (Mangaratiba).

Case Study of CBT in Quilombo do Gratao

While Bahia is known for its African culture, Rio de Janeiro State actually received a vast amount of African cultural influence. The Quilombo community Campinho da Independencia, located in Paraty, was the first community in the state of Rio de Janeiro to be entitled to their lands. The community Quilombo do Grotão, located in Niterói at the border of the Serra da Tiririca State Park was established in 1920 and consists of 15 houses. The community maintains its cultural traditions such as samba, feijoada and Afro-Brazilian memories. The community was recognized as Quilombo in 2016, however it might never officially own its land right due to its location in the State Park. Out of the 73 residents, 23 directly work with arts and crafts and the traditional feijoada. Each Sunday, the community offers a different roda de samba, a traditional samba gathering, for interested visitors. These rodas include samba de raiz (roots samba), faith samba which happens every first Sunday of the month and honors your orixa (your protector or saint), and most recently

women's samba, in which only women sing and play. The experience is well organized and includes entry to the traditional feijoada, cooked and presented on wood-burning stoves by community members. This feast includes rice, Brazilian collard greens, a rich bean stew, pork grind and beverages. Hand- made arts and crafts such as jewelry and cloth dolls are sold in the adjacent store. After the meal, musicians seated around a table, start playing samba and everyone is welcome to sing and dance along. Other experiences can be scheduled with the community upon demand and include Capoeira and the history of samba among others.

With only 73 inhabitants, the development and execution of the project has been uniquely in the hands of the community. Governance, contrary to so many CBT projects around the world, is working well for the Quilombo do Gratao so far. Many CBT projects are known to fail when the NGO which started and supported them pulls out (Salazar, 2012), or when there are differences within the community (Belsky, 1999). Governance is one of the main factors contributing to failure of CBT projects. Communities are generally not homogenous, but rather show differences in beliefs, status and political views amongst residents, leading to challenges in making unanimous decisions. For the Quilombo do Gratao, the fact that almost 30 % of the residents are directly involved and benefit from the project could be a reason why they have been successful. Financially, the feijoada and samba bring in enough income to sustain residents. Until now, residents have been able to keep their daily routines and lifestyle, as tourists only visit once a week and the activities take place in a specially built structure away from normal residential areas. The issue of market access seems to only matter should the community wish to attract more international visitors, as mainly locals from Rio de Janeiro attend the weekly ceremony. Through a Young Leaders of America project grant from the US Department of State, the authors were able to spend two months working jointly and collaborating with the US consulate in Rio de Janeiro to establish linkages to the industry.

The Project and Steps

Connectando Territorios is a regional tourist operator specializing in small-scale sustainable tourism projects that help to show local culture and history. In this role, the founder applied for a Young Leaders of America Fellowship (YLAI) funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. YLAI empowers young entrepreneurs from the Caribbean and Latin America to "contribute to social and economic development in their communities" (YLAI, 2018, p. 1). Each year 250 young leaders receive YLAI fellowships to spend five weeks in the US to learn and train with local business and expand their "leadership and entrepreneurial skills" (YLAI, 2018, p. 1). She was partnered with an outbound tour operator in Miami Florida and spent her weeks in the US learning about tourism marketing, the outbound tourism market and the needs of international tourists. Through a follow up reverse exchange several months later, the host and fellow worked together in Rio de Janeiro to market and connect the community to the tourism distribution system. The duo engaged in outreach education programs in collaboration with the US consulate in Rio. A video showcasing the community was produced in Portuguese and English versions to educate travelers about the feijoada and samba Sundays. Furthermore, the team reached out to inbound tour operators in Rio, sending a proposal for consideration of including the Quilombo do Gratao project in the portfolio for their clients. As mentioned earlier, lack of market access is a significant threat to many communities, and as such importance was given to link the

Quilombo do Gratao project to the tourism distribution chain, as well as increase visibility directly to tourists, especially international tourists. In that respect, the project was highlighted on TripAdvisor through reviews and is included in the Lonely Planet guide (Freelon, 2018). Connectando Territorios was connected and linked to inbound operators in Rio, as well as directly to American outbound operators.

Conclusions and Implications

Revisiting Mitchell and Muckosy (2008) study, the authors concluded that the Quilombo do Gratao community seemed to perform well in terms of governance, since most of the community is directly involved and benefitting from the feijoada and samba. Financially, the project is allowing the community to sustain, and hence is financially viable. The authors focused on market access to enhance financial viability and sustainability of the program.

Located in Niteroi, the community is not easily accessible to international visitors and community residents who reside in the more touristy areas of Rio de Janeiro and would have to take a roughly 45-minute taxi ride across the bridge to Niteroi. The Quilombo residents also do not speak English, potentially creating a language barrier. The distance, language, lack of transportation all poses challenges of access to international travelers. The use of a guide or tour company is therefore highly recommended as a tool.

Theoretical implications included validating the use of Jafari's platforms and Murphy's (1985) definitions of CBT. Furthermore, this study built on Mitchell and Muckosy's (2008) work by further investigating these specific barriers. Future studies could examine the factors that make CBT projects thrive by investigating communities that are successful. Qualitative studies would be useful in truly understanding residents' perceptions of CBT. Furthermore, longitudinal studies might be useful to understand long term impacts of these initiatives.

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