Abstract

Tourism is one of the sources of employment and generation of income worldwide. In Mexico, this sector is one of the strategic axes that has become one of the main levers of economic growth; Therefore, it is considered one of the most important sub-sectors of sector services. However, this previously was handled by a scheme of capital accumulation as the rest of the economic activities without considering the effect that can have within the socio-economic and cultural development of the regions, especially with regard to the degradation of the environment, social structures and culture of indigenous peoples mainly.

Since 1970 the world have noticed the negative effects of conventional forms of tourism, due to the large flow of people attending these places.

That's when managers and investors interested in this sector begin to worry about not losing the natural and cultural resources that these centers are surrounded.

New tourism concepts arise from the global discussion about the concept of sustainable development. It is from this conjunctural point when the market starts to get segmented and their products start to get diversified so they could take a new kind of services known as ecotourism, which focuses on a range of ecological services that follow the principles of sustainable development. Within this context, Sonora has a great potential in the so-called alternative tourism more specifically mostly due to the geographic and cultural characteristics of the region.

The State has a significant number of protected natural areas as it is the case of the Biosphere Reserve El Pinacate and greater Altar, biosphere reserve upper Gulf of California and Colorado River Delta, narrow the Infiernillo, desert island San Jorge, among others, considered strong areas of opportunity for this sector.

Therefore, this research aims to carry out an analysis of the potential that exists in the State of Sonora on ecotourism, which is a form of alternative tourism. To achieve this, the classification and concept proposed by the Secretariat of Tourism (SECTUR) on "eco-tourism" that is viewed as part of the alternative tourism will be used. An analysis of the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats facing this activity, as well as a spatial analysis of the major areas with ecotourism potential in the State of Sonora is also carried out.

Keywords: Alternative tourism, sustainability and environment.

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