

Categorization of Cancun Host Community as a New Model to Build Cultural Identity

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Abstract

This qualitative research studies Cancun as a tourist destination and its community, assuming that the tourist identity is formed by its host. Cancun has struggled with migration since its founding, as people came to seek new work opportunities; such migration led to the generation of cultural diversity, and the absence of a perceptible cultural identity. In addition, this study aims to identify the cultural identity of the host community in Cancun as well as who integrates it. This study developed a theoretical framework of concepts for the community, with heterogeneous groups divided by 1) host community, 2) natives, 3) migrants, and 4) residents, which aligned with the factors of time of residence, occupation, and origin, resulted in the structure of the Cancun community. The categorization of the community will allow an analysis and proposal of the host's knowledge in a second phase. The outcome will allow a cultural identity model, contributing to the internal branding of the destination.

Keywords

Host Community, Cultural Identity, Destination, Migration, Sustainability, and Categorization

1. Introduction

Some studies state that developing the tourism sector can facilitate foreign exchange inflows and investments from the business sector that generate employment, income, and better living standards for locals and residents, whereas other authors highlight that environmental, social, and cultural factors could be affected by such development (Lin, Chen, & Filieri, 2017). During the 1960s and 1970s, the study of tourism's "impact" upon host societies, served to consolidate the notion of the "community" as an entity under threat from external forces of

change (Bianchi, 2003).

On the other hand, sustainability emphasizes the involvement of communities in accordance with local features (Valencia & Zavala, 2014), as locals are crucial for destination planning and development, as well as for showing visitors hospitality and goodwill, and co-creating value with tourists (Lin, Chen, & Filieri, 2017). The perception and actions of the locals are crucial to the visitors' experience (Choo, Park, & Petrick, 2011).

As a result, tourism scholars and destination marketers should be able to attain more desirable marketing outcomes for residents by understanding their role in destination marketing and branding. Furthermore, residents' goodwill and cooperation can influence tourism success (Choo, Park, & Petrick, 2011), pointing out the importance of the host communities in every destination, for instance, Cancun.

In the 70s, an economic crisis in the country turns the government's gaze towards tourism (Espinosa-Coria, 2013). The national tourism development fund, FONATUR (*Fondo Nacional de Fomento al Turismo*) was established to plan and develop new tourist regions (Gormsen, 1982), and one of them was Cancun city. The promise of better-paying jobs in Cancun favoured national and international migration to this destination (Moguel & Montalvo, 2020), resulting in the formation of a host community in which different cultures and individuals, and local values and identities interact and interface with the development of global cultural demands (Urosevic, 2012), with exponential increases in internal mobility (Moguel & Montalvo, 2020).

Tourism authenticity is a process by which tourism systems of representation and experience define and contextualize the concepts and manifestations of local culture and heritage, and supports the previous information about internal branding processes among residents in Cancun (Gotham, 2007).

The research began by stating that the host community was the key to achieving sustainable tourism development (Lundberg, 2017). Its objective is to propose a definition of the host community of Cancun city by creating a categorization of its inhabitants. In order to achieve this goal, the concepts of category, subcategory, host community, native people, migrants, and residents are defined; hence tourism migrant categories are created.

As shown in the image, this case study was conducted in the host community of Cancun. The destination is in the municipality of Benito Juárez, in the Mexican state of Quintana Roo (Figure 1). The municipality has a land area of 929.8425 km² (Municipio de Benito Juárez, 2013), and a coastline of 22 km.

Cancun, as a tourist destination, must develop a cultural identity as part of a host community because "cultural and place identity lend support the notion of intangibility, a dominant feature of culture" as George and Reid (2005: p. 92) state. Cancun, therefore could involve internal branding and focus on the recognition of intangible cultural heritage with pride in the richness of the community and its area. However, strategies focused on the host community of Cancun

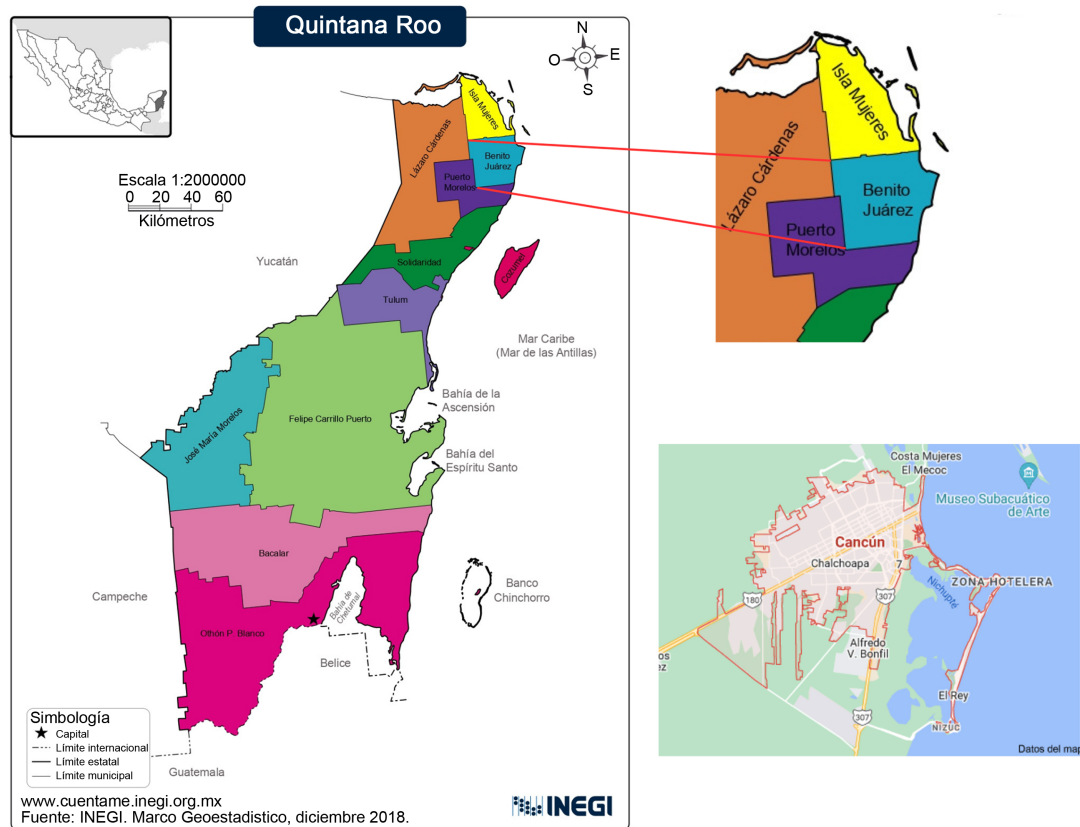


Figure 1. Maps of the state of Quintana Roo, municipality of Benito Juárez, and Cancun city demarcation. Source: Adapted from *Imágenes Totales* (2020). (SECTUR, 2013).

to strengthen its identity as a beneficial image destination factor do not exist, nor do deeper studies on it, even when sustainable development for tourism destination communities has become an important issue in tourism research (Guo, Zhang, Zhang, & Zheng, 2018).

Although, several studies on the relationship between tourism planning and development, visitor satisfaction, host perception (Manhas et al., 2016), and relevance, have been conducted to create a beneficial destination image, they haven't acknowledged that the creation of the identity of a place involves the participation of the residents of the destination (Zucco et al., 2017). Traditionally, the relationship between tourists and hosts has been studied, and more recent research contemplates the importance of the host community for the planning and integral management of tourism (Monterrubio, 2009, Varisco, 2013). Research, on the other hand, has focused primarily on tourists' perspectives on sustainability, even when "destination image is also linked to cultural practices and heritage that identify residents and, eventually, attract tourists" (Zucco et al., 2017: p. 325), where local involvement is more important (Lundberg, 2017). Few researches addressing the specific case of Cancun as a destination, its people, and the creation of its identity was found; the literature on tourism value co-creation has indeed neglected residents (Lin, Chen, & Filieri, 2017) and its study from the perspective of the destination's residents (Zucco et al., 2017: p. 325). Neverthe-

less, Guo et al. (2018) state that communities have become an important issue in tourism research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Timeline in Cancun

Tourism is one of the world's leading and fastest-growing industries, as well as one of the most important economic sectors (Assefa & Meseret, 2020). It may bring economic growth and prosperity to the local community, but it may also have negative consequences. For example, residents' daily lives may be disrupted by the influx of tourists (Liang & Hui, 2016, in Lin, Chen, & Filieri, 2017), as well as others such as overcrowding, high prices expenses, traffic congestion, noise, litter, crime, and other social costs (Monterrubio, 2016, in Lin, Chen, & Filieri, 2017).

The timeline in Cancun has been influenced by preliminary actions in Mexico. In the 20s, tourism began to be seen as a generator of income. In addition, the cultural character or the charm of the Mexican villages was to be preserved in the development of tourist destinations (Mateos, 2006), like a representation of the intangible cultural heritage (ICH), made up of all the immaterial manifestations of culture (Lenzerini, 2011 in Hsiao & Chuang, 2015).

According to Mateos (2006), the importance of Mexico's traditions stems from its people. However, the strategy's approach was more focused on cultural tourism than on ensuring the participation of residents, although the fact that the tourism industry relies on it (Blackstock, 2005). Rather than incorporating the host community's participation, Hsiao & Chuang (2015) state that safeguarding the ICH cannot be achieved unless the local people are recognized.

Tourism declined significantly during World War II, but by the end of the war, Mexico offered its beaches to meet the massive demand for tourists. Without taking into account the negative effects of mass tourism (Milano, Novelli, & Cheer, 2019), Acapulco was the primary beach destination promoted (Mateos, 2006). The responses generated among academics, practitioners, and social movements concerned with the detrimental use of urban, rural, and coastal spaces for tourism purposes, among others, in the rapid unfolding of unsustainable over-tourism practices (Milano, Novelli, & Cheer, 2019).

In the 40s, studies considered tourism as an engine for development in the country, useful for raising the income of the inhabitants, stimulating other economic activities, and reviving productive regions, (Castillo, 2015), but not focused on the host community.

According to Espinosa-Coria (2013), the development of the Cancun project was largely motivated by the regional crisis caused by the lack of a rational forestry plan for the production of wood, gum, and henequen. Because of this crisis, they shifted their focus to tourism.

Cancun had consolidated itself as the main tourist destination in Mexico and it was considered an experiential basis for success in the 1980s (Castillo, 2015).

Nevertheless, even though the citizens of Cancun constitute a community (Malek & Costa, 2014), the lack of attachment and cultural pride is noticeable.

As Scholtz and Slabbert (2015) point out, social impacts such as economic improvement may demonstrate the lucrative interest of those involved in the tourist offer, leading to a loss of appreciation for the destination and its people's cultural richness. The fact that domestic and international migration occurs in Cancun due to the pursuit of new opportunities originates from a phenomenon of cultural identity that impacts a destination because of its lucrative interests (Truly, 2002; Wekke, 2006).

Overcrowding in areas where residents suffer the consequences of temporary and seasonal tourism peaks has caused permanent changes to their lifestyles, denied access to amenities, and harmed their general well-being (Milano, Novelli, & Cheer, 2019), as well as created a non-defined multicultural identity (Mateos, 2006).

Although, some studies about Cancun as a host community and its identity as a beneficial factor in its image have been carried out, few of them study residents' attitudes (Monterrubio et al., 2015; Balbuena Vázquez & López López, 2020) and migration of nearby specific communities (Cruz, 2003; Be Ramírez et al., 2017); others still focus on tourism as a development factor (Gormsen, 1982).

It is a fact, the role of residents has rarely been explored, and the creation of unique experiences is the reason for the existence of studies focused on residents. As a result, it is necessary to work on the search for elements that allow the construction of sustainable municipalities within the tourism framework (Choo, Park, & Petrick, 2011).

In addition, intangible factors such as community pride and the development of respect and understanding between diverse cultures (cross-cultural understanding) would produce a more tourist-friendly destination, a medullary factor, because its cooperation can influence the success of tourism in the destination (Choo et al., 2011).

2.2. The Impacts of Tourism

The hotel district in Cancun, one of the new tourist areas in Mexico, needed to be constructed, therefore cheap labour was needed (Gormsen, 1982; Cruz, 2003).

Along with tourism, a rising society has emerged in Cancun as a result of continuous migration and various development projects (Be Ramírez et al., 2017). As a created destination, the migration of people from different parts of Mexico and abroad has been significant, causing, as Be Ramírez suggests, an absence of self-identity in Cancun, attributed to the absence of local costumes and traditions.

The demand for skilled labour (for the construction industry mainly) generated the first migratory flows from Mexico City, attracting thousands of peasants and indigenous people from the states of Quintana Roo, Yucatan, (Castellanos and Paris, 2001 in Oehmichen, 2010), and Chiapas. The phenomena previously described can increase awareness and popularity, alter the nature of a destina-

tion, and sometimes result in the eventual decline of the destination if steps are not taken to mitigate the impacts of that popularity (Truly, 2002).

According to Frías-Jamilena et al. (2018), cultural intelligence (CQ) gives a person the capability to function effectively and adapt to intercultural environments. Since the service providers and consumers come from different cultures of origin, the Cancun host community requires a CQ considering the constant flow of people with very diverse cultural backgrounds, which accentuates the lack of identity. Therefore, the impact of tourism development on host communities is one of the most traditional and foundational areas of tourism research (Gössling et al., 2020).

Cancun, as a destination, may lose its appeal among visitors and then struggle to reinvent itself as a destination (Truly, 2002), and because it is primarily made up of migrants (INEGI—Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2020), it may consider drawing urgent attention to the host community (Milano, Marinai, & Cheer, 2019). Migration originates from different mechanisms, which include a new lifestyle, a massive influx of migrant workers with different positions in the economic structure, multiculturalism, and in - outgoing movements of the destination for seasonal, temporary or permanent jobs (Sun, Ling, & Huang, 2020), meaning loss or the opportunity for a new cultural identity. Moreover, residents' attitudes towards tourism may vary from euphoria, apathy, and irritation to antagonism (Lin, Chen, & Filieri, 2017), and in many cases, adjustment to another culture has often been too much for many migrants (Truly, 2002).

Cancun has the highest population density in Quintana Roo, according to migration statistics (INEGI, 2020). It concentrated on 49% of residents in the state (INEGI, 2020).

Cancun is regarded as an international tourist mecca (Cruz, 2003), but preference for the location has decreased in opposition to travelers who want to engage in genuine human interactions and experience authentic city life (Delgado 2008, in Milano, Marinai, & Cheer, 2019), which entails more educational, emotional, social, and participatory interaction with the location, its living culture, and the host community (Urosevic, 2012).

Moreover, the lack of cultural identity in the region is a result of the flow of migrants, and it has impacted in various directions, such as the care of natural resources, cultural resources, and human resources (Cruz, 2003).

Therefore, the importance of the internal branding processes among the host community should be understood and incorporated into the destination branding strategy (Choo, Park, & Petrick, 2011). Residents' goodwill and cooperation can influence the destination's tourism success (Choo, Park, & Petrick, 2011).

2.3. Marketing and Sustainable Perspective in Tourism

According to Aarseth et al. (2017), governments in many countries are more and more aware of their responsibility to ensure sustainability, at least locally. Furthermore, there is a growing need for confirmation of local cultural identities;

tourists' search for identity could thus be seen as a response to cultural trends' globalization (Urosevic, 2012).

Research trends are searching for an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient sector for people and the planet. As Gössling et al. (2020) refer to, the governance of tourism that takes into account the reputation of the destination, the well-being of citizens, and the interests of overall local livelihoods would imply fewer sectors and more coherent city and town planning processes and better public-private collaboration. The UN Global Compact (2017) promotes companies to avoid negative damage to people, society, and the environment, which indicates that the creation of value not only refers to business, but also the host communities. Hence, the involvement of the host community in planning and maintaining tourism development to create a more sustainable industry is paramount (Blackstock, 2005).

Therefore, every destination can be competitive, considering what the UNWTO—World Tourism Organization (2020) exposes as the ability of the destination to use its natural, cultural, human, man-made, and capital resources efficiently to develop and deliver quality, innovative, ethical, and attractive tourism products and services to achieve sustainable growth.

It is also important to generate favourable perceptions focused on the addition of value and marketing of different opportunities, such as small-scale products and services, such as local businesses (Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017). Within the general vision of the destinations and the strategic objectives, the value of the tourism sector must be increased, and the components of the market must be improved and diversified to optimize its attractiveness and generate benefits for visitors and the host community from a sustainable perspective (UNWTO, 2020).

Thus, as part of marketing development, further studies should consider that each destination has its own reflected image where the local identity figures out a relevant role (Gössling et al., 2020) and brings positive changes to the communities, thereby increasing the sustainability of the destination (Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017). The pillar of social equity is a pillar of sustainable marketing; this approach frequently considers tourism impacts on the host community, which favours socially responsible actions (Jamrozy, 2007). A study published by Gotham (2007) found that New Orleans adopted advertising efforts aimed at the host community to build an urban consciousness around the buying and selling of "local" items. The marketing, on the other hand, mirrored efforts to educate people to help them develop the cognitive ability to see the city as a collection of tourist attractions and stunning sights. Tourist servers in Cancun are known for their warmth toward visitors. However, there is a lack of knowledge and development of the host community, of its identity through their various roles (Blackstock, 2005), and of the strategies aimed at strengthening such identity as a positive image destination factor, even though they are required.

As a result of “places being rich in terms of experiential and affective attributes, and the role of affective response is even greater,” every tourist destination must consider the destination’s local hosts as a key element of their sustainability and involved identity (Otto & Ritchie, 1996, in Liu, Hultman, Eisingerich, & Wei, 2020).

3. Method

In order to locate who are the hosts who serve tourists in Benito Juarez, it was decided to categorize the community. For this research, it is necessary to conceptualize what a category is, what categorization is, and what the categorization process consists of.

Likewise, a proposed methodology for categorization focused on qualitative information through observation, which is a technique for observing and recording categorical (nominal) judgments that are manifested when subjects perform a series of manipulations of classification of a given set of stimuli (Miller et al., 1986: p. 138). In this case, the classification of people with specific characteristics who arrived in, or were born in Cancun allows for latent partition analysis for data summary (Miller et al., 1986: p. 138).

The proposal of identifying and categorizing a niche market in a destination served as the foundation for qualitative and exploratory research (Mannetti et al., 2019). To begin, it considered various terms used to address the community (Monterrubio, 2009). The terms used in this study were then homologated to develop a categorization process (Hong et al., 2006), within parameters or attributes (Mannetti et al., 2019). The methodology employed in this study follows a specific sequence. The proposal arose from a theoretical framework that forms the basis and is based on important principles. In order to organize and classify the various population of Benito Juarez, the concept of classification is essential. Then, it became crucial to identify the different stakeholders. The next step was to divide the host community into subcategories. Based on their places of origin and their functions in the community, the population was divided into groups. After that, we carried out an identification procedure for immigrants who work in the tourism sector, differentiating them based on how long they had lived in the destination and how long they had worked in the sector. Finally, the roles played by the host community were determined by variables including place of origin, length of stay, and 1) host community, 2) indigenous, 3) migrants, and 4) residents, according to their origin, occupation, time of residence, and the time of return from the stay. These variables allowed the mapping and proposing the structure of the Cancun community by niche.

4. Analysis & Results

The standardization of the concept and definition of the above terms shown in **Table 1** allows the design of the research instrument to be appropriate for those involved in the development, application, and responses, as well as in the analysis of results.

Table 1. Description of the key terms for this study. Source: Own elaboration, based on the authors named on **Table 1**.

Term	Description
Categorization	A strategy process that includes an easing of cognitive processes through the reduction of the information collected, allowing reason classification from data collection, which is a technique of observation and recording of categorical (nominal) judgments (Hong et al., 2006; Liberman et al., 2017; Cisterna, 2005; Miller et al., 1986; Romero, 2005).
Category	Concepts grouping and communicating specific qualitative information by denoting a topic in itself, creating the origin of the information collected for a specific aim of the research (Hong et al., 2006; Liberman et al., 2017; Miller et al., 1986; Romero 2005; Cisterna, 2005).
Subcategory	Concepts derived and related from categories that group and communicate specific qualitative information, detailing with deeper specialization information collected for a specific aim of the research (Hong et al., 2006; Liberman et al., 2017; Miller et al., 1986; Romero 2005; Cisterna, 2005).
Host community	Native or migrant individuals residing permanent or temporary in a tourist destination, who are heterogeneous and complementary, with different cultures, identities, and local values interacting and playing a central and influential role in the development and atmosphere perceived in that destination (Lundberg, 2017; Truly, 2002; Urosevic, 2012; Monterrubio, 2009; Torres & Momsen, 2005; Be Ramírez, 2019; Blackstock, 2005; Choo, Park, & Petrick, 2011; Mitsche et al., 2013).
Native people	Those who originally inhabited the place, even before it was considered as a new tourist project, and who were born in it (Lundberg, 2017; Truly, 2002; Urosevic, 2012; Monterrubio, 2009; Torres & Momsen, 2005; Be Ramírez, 2019; Blackstock, 2005; Choo, Park, & Petrick, 2011; Mitsche et al., 2013).
Migrants	Those who were born in a different place from the destination and moved to reside in it, and who reside permanently or temporarily in the destination (Lundberg, 2017; Truly, 2002; Urosevic, 2012; Monterrubio, 2009; Torres & Momsen, 2005; Be Ramírez, 2019; Blackstock, 2005; Choo, Park, & Petrick, 2011; Mitsche et al., 2013; SEGOB, 2020, Carte et al., 2010).
Residents	Those natives or migrants who live in a destination with the intention of becoming a member of the host community rather than a tourist; they may reside permanently or temporarily in their destination (Lundberg, 2017; Truly, 2002; Urosevic, 2012; Monterrubio, 2009; Torres & Momsen, 2005; Be Ramírez, 2019; Blackstock, 2005; Choo, Park, & Petrick, 2011; Mitsche et al., 2013; SEGOB, 2020; Carte et al., 2010).

4.1. Migration and Host Community

Tourism movements are not only about people from one place visiting another place but often the tourist industry “imports” guest workers (Tarlow, 2016).

Illés & Michalkó state that “tourism and migration are two of the principal elements of human mobility” (Illés & Michalkó, 2008: p. 98); in addition, Tarlow mentions that “People from other lands provide needed services and also often give a sense of exoticness or internationalization to their host centers of employment” (Tarlow, 2016, para 2); making tourism employment “cosmopolitan in nature” (Salazar, 2022: p. 4).

As a result of immigrant flows, cultural unrest (further referred to as CU) is defined as “the context where two cultures live together, but at a level of acceptance that has developed from a state of euphoria, apathy, to annoyance, or even antagonism; it occurs due to constant adjustment to a new cultural environment” (Moufakkir, 2013: p. 326).

When traveling to a tourist destination to work directly in the industry, migrant workers for the tourism industry cross jurisdictional boundaries and live there permanently or semi-permanently (Sun et al., 2020).

Cancun's destination is shaped by the movement of immigrants, which suggests that as the resort cycle progresses, not only will the destination change but so will the patrons' motivations and behaviours (Truly, 2002).

This destination may consider different suggested categories in the migration movements, having in mind that it has been created as neither a unique nor a static and durable host community (Be Ramírez, 2019), also cosmopolitan (Salazar, 2022), with a noticeable impact upon both the cultural landscape and on the socio-cultural integrity of the area (Truly, 2002); where different cultures and individuals, local values and identities interact and interface with the development of global cultural demands (Urosevic, 2012: p. 70); in which most of them are migrants (INEGI, 2020), not natives. This is a destination with exponential increases in internal mobility (Moguel & Montalvo, 2020).

Considering the contribution of various authors, **Table 2** shows the categories of migrant tourism workers:

The categories shown in **Table 2** are defined by the time of residence of the workers in the destination as well as by the time dedicated to working in tourism. They also considered workers who arrive to work during high seasons, and others, who permanently reside in the destination, but work only during certain seasons.

Table 2. Tourism migrant categories. Source: Own elaboration, based on the authors named on **Table 2**.

Reference	Tourism migrant categories
Carson et al. (2014, p. 359), in Salazar (2022)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Migrant tourist workers: who have mostly lifestyle-related motivations and repetitively travel between places and jobs; 2) Practiced seasonal workers: who combine seasonal tourism work with jobs during off-season elsewhere and have relatively predictable cyclical patterns of mobility 3) Working-holiday tourist: who chase temporary work opportunities to earn income while traveling the world 4) Temporary seasonal workers: who have more random work patterns and may engage in seasonal tourism work as a one-off opportunity, usually for economic reasons; 5) Hobbyist: who works in tourism to satisfy personal leisure interests; 6) Place-attached seasonal workers: who live in the seasonal workplace or have prior connections to the place through family ties or previous tourist experience.
O'Reilly 1995, in Illés & Michalkó, 2008	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Expatriates. 2) Residents. 3) Seasonal visitors. 4) Returners and tourists.
Sun et al., 2020	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Tourism migrant workers who reside permanently in the destination. 2) Tourism migrant workers who reside semi-permanently in the destination.
Espinosa-Coria, 2013	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Permanent migrants 2) Temporary migrants

Cancun arose from a project that required labour in various areas (Be Ramírez et al., 2017), so the host community is primarily comprised of migrants (INEGI, 2020), owing to the high mobility of this tourist region (Moguel & Montalvo, 2020: p. 159).

This destination and its subsequent growth have attracted large numbers of permanent or temporary immigrants who have worked in the construction, hotel, and restaurant industries, as well as in support or complementary services such as travel agencies or transportation (Espinosa-Coria, 2013). In fact, according to the Mexico Minister of Governance (SEGOB, 2020), Quintana Roo received 8.8 percent of international arrivals in 2020.

4.2. Host Communities in New Tourist Regions

Actors involved in tourism include tourists, tourism service providers, locals, and other stakeholders; the engagement platform at the destination level is the place where the tourists visit, and the residents lead their daily lives (Lin, Chen, & Filieri, 2017). Then, visitors to tourist destinations may view residents as a credible and important source for products and services (Choo, Park, & Petrick, 2011).

They are a relevant and medullary factor in the tourism sector. According to Hiriart (2010), current trends indicate that culture and interest in host communities today have become a factor in attracting more stable markets and focusing on developing countries, contributing to the fight against poverty, environmental protection, and the mutual price of cultures.

In the context of tourism, local communities can identify themselves with the place they reside in by considering themselves members of the place. They feel belonging to the place, and/or like the influence of the place on their sense of value (Choo, Park, & Petrick, 2011). This is not the case for Cancun, since this destination originated as a national project, and developed as a new tourist region (Gormsen, 1982), creating opportunities in the business sector, and making this place a destination for migrants.

The study by Torres and Momsen (2005) pointed out the perspectives of transnationalism as the potential for understanding the cultural meanings of tourist flows. The municipality of Benito Juarez, where Cancun city is located, with its migratory phenomena, generates issues for individuals with identities from multiple destinations, such as concepts of “home”, of construction, and networks in the context of trips to second homes and returns of emigrants to their places of origin.

Torres (2002: p. 104), on the other hand, noted that tourism in Cancun has evolved, “with more diversity, consumer choice, flexibility, and niche market segmentation as a result of so-called neo-Fordism”. Although this tourist diversification gives the potential for the area to expand nature-based and ethnic tourism, locals and residents require knowledge and programs about the zone resources to participate in this new environment.

The study of Cancun geographic space reveals a “remarkable population growth of 441 people, as recorded in the 1970 population census, to a greater population increase of 404.1 percent between 1980 and 1990, a figure that significantly exceeds the entity’s 118.28 percent” (Pérez Villegas & Carrascal, 2000: p. 165). The first migration flows from the Distrito Federal were triggered by a desire for qualified work. Thousands of peasants and indigenous people from the states of Quintana Roo and Yucatán, as well as new rural migrants from Mexico’s most marginalized regions, were drawn to the construction business (Oehmichen, 2010). These migrants are mostly indigenous farmers from places like Chiapas (Carte et al., 2010). As a result of this mass migration, Torres and Momsen (2005: p. 318) describe how Quintana Roo has evolved from the production space of Mayan peasant subsistence farmers into a transnational consumer space for millions of visitors from all over the world, as well as a production space for hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers.

Furthermore, Carte et al. (2010: p. 707) state that “Cancun migrants in many ways demonstrate resilience to adapt to agricultural decline and neoliberal economic restructuring, and they confront their everyday lives” since the financial gains come at the cost of social and cultural losses that erode family and community bonds, as well as rootedness in place.

4.3. Cancun Host Community Structure and Categorization

The municipality of Benito Juárez, which has 911, 503 inhabitants according to the 2020 report (INEGI, 2020), has been influenced by the flow of internal migration and interregional migration, which comprise people’s movements within and between states. Because of its accessibility and proximity among the states, the Yucatan Peninsula, comprised of Quintana Roo, Campeche, and Yucatan has seen increased movement. However, it is the Yucatecan case that propels them to the top of the list. As a result, some studies by Be Ramírez et al. (2017: p. 156) affirm that the migratory movement of the Yucatecans recreates the destination in cultural aspects, validating their Yucatecan identity in the face of the onslaught of modernity they experience when arriving at the new place.

The varied use of concepts that are used as synonyms for locals, residents, natives, and common hosts, increases the difficulty of defining what the host community is and is not. It is part of an ethnic-demographic heterogeneity that characterizes frequently visited tourist destinations that suffer from a high migration rate (Monterrubio, 2009: p. 109), such as Cancun. The terms require clarification to identify the roles of actors; moreover, the lack of identification with the host denominative tends to be more notable among those whose benefit from tourism is minimal or zero.

They have been called host community (Monterrubio, 2009; Presenza et al., 2013), residents (Lundberg, 2017; Zucco et al., 2017; Lin, Chen, & Filieri, 2017; Choo et al., 2011), destination’s people (Scholtz & Slabbert, 2015), community (Scholtz & Slabbert, 2015; Guo et al., 2018, Anglin, 2015; George & Reid, 2005;

Guo et al., 2018), local officials and residents or locals and residents (Truly, 2002; Torres, 2002), general local population (Choo et al., 2011), local people or local community (Frías-Jamilena et al., 2018; Gotham, 2007; Urosevic, 2012), native and community resident (Moufakkir, 2013), destination's local hosts (Liu et al., 2020).

Sharma et al. (2021), states that stakeholders must consider the local community. Thus, Cancun should strengthen the identity of its host community through the design of strategies that contribute to sustainability and the creation of a beneficial destination image.

These objectives must begin with a deeper understanding of the host community and the formulation of categorization of it, taking into account the migration phenomenon in the destination, as described by Be Ramírez (2019), as a relevant touristic pole that attracts migrants as labor for tourism. The emergence of a complex community as a result of the migratory phenomenon occurred at the social, communal, political, and ecological levels, resulting in neither a unique nor a static and long-lasting host community.

Then, the trend of the Cancun model must be oriented to a reconfiguration of social equity and regional identity processes (Moguel & Montalvo, 2020), beginning with deeper studies of the host community categorization. The present study aims to propose a definition of the host community of Cancun city by categorizing its inhabitants. Cancun's high population density must be structured according to the roles of locals and residents with a categorization method. The categorization method is used as a simplification strategy and the benefits of developing categorization processes include an easing of cognitive processes such as communication, perception, planning of actions, and memory storage (Hong et al., 2006: p. 754). On the other hand, forming conceptually rich social categories helps people to be part of the complex social world in a place by allowing them to reason about the likely thoughts, beliefs, actions, and interactions of others (Lieberman et al., 2017: p. 557). According to Cisterna (2005), categories denote a topic, and the subcategories detail said topic in micro aspects.

Likewise, the variables that are applied to frame each category are described in **Table 3**.

These parameters are the variables considered for the categorization of the host community of Cancun's origin. Recognizing this aspect allowed the recognition of the culture, heritage, and factors that can influence the behaviour and attitudes of tourist hosts. The period of residence provides information that reflects the destination's esteem, identity, and love. Finally, frequency of return and length of stay are the variables that permitted the identification how many times a year migrant tourist workers return to work and for how long, which impacts their degree of identity with the destination and their role as hosts.

4.4. Categorization of the Host Community of Cancun

Despite possible approaches to their definition, categorize in tourism is difficult

Table 3. Parameters to categorize the host community of Cancun (2022). Source: Own elaboration, based on the authors named on **Table 3**.

Variable	Description	Categorization
Origin	Cancun's origin, as a 50-year-old destination, was used to categorize its host community. Those who lived there originally, those who were born there (first and second-generation), and, of course, those who migrated have all contributed to the community (Gormsen, 1982; Be Ramírez et al., 2017; Espinosa-Coria, 2013, Gössling et al., 2020).	Local Migrant
Time of residence	To develop subcategories, migrants to Cancun were considered, ranging from the first people who moved to this destination (pioneers) to those who have been living in the destination for more than a year (Be Ramírez et al. 2017; Be Ramírez, 2019; Espinosa-Coria, 2013). (INEGI, 2020).	Migrant (Mayan, national, international)
Labor occupation	To create subcategories, it was decided to group people from the Cancun host community who are economically dependent on the tourism industry, either as entrepreneurs or as tourism service providers, as well as those who are not economically dependent on the tourism industry, such as cab drivers, pharmacy employees, traffic agents, gas station attendants, and so on (Be Ramírez et al., 2017). People preparing to work in the tourism industry (tourism undergraduate students) are also considered in the categorization.	Work in the tourism sector Work in sectors other than tourism Tourism undergraduate student
Frequency of return and length of stay	To create subcategories, it was decided to group people from Cancun's host community who are migrant workers who visit the destination only seasonally, taking into account the length and frequency of their visits. Devoted to tourism activities, either as a business owner or as a provider of tourism services. In addition, it is observed the amount of contact the subject has with the tourist despite not being an entrepreneur or tourism service provider. For example, a cab driver, a pharmacy employee, a traffic agent, a gas station attendant, and so on (Be Ramírez et al., 2017; Be Ramírez, 2019; Espinosa-Coria, 2013; Salazar, 2022; Illés & Michalkó, 2008).	Temporary Permanent

because the boundaries of the social, cultural, environmental, and economic dimensions of local communities are difficult to distinguish precisely (Cornejo-Ortega et al., 2018).

However, the analysis was carried out by integrating the community's own statistical data. The total population of Quintana Roo is 1,857,985 people of which 911,503 reside in the municipality of Benito Juárez, and 696,831 are migrants (INEGI, 2020). The proposal for the categorization of the Cancun host community will have town main categories and three subcategories.

The main categorization of the host community will be based on the origin of its residents: Locals (native residents) and migrant residents, which in turn are made up of international (20,255), national (891,241) (INEGI, 2020), and National Mayan. As Zucco et al., 2017 state, the residents of the destination are involved in the creation of the identity of a place.

The subcategories of the host community were based on the division of the main category and then subdivided into labour occupation of the locals and frequency of return and length of stay, labour occupation, and time of residence of

migrant residents. The idea of uniqueness, a key component of culture, is supported by cultural identity and place identity (George & Reid, 2005), where after analyzing the information the statement is as follows:

- Locals are categorized: Locals working in the tourism industry, locals working in sectors other than tourism, and local tourism undergraduate students.
- Migrants are divided into temporary and permanent: Temporary migrants are firstly categorized by origin (Mayan, national and international). Each category is then subdivided according to their labour occupation: temporary migrants working in tourism, working in sectors other than tourism, and undergraduate students.
- Permanent migrants are categorized by origin and then by labour: Permanent Mayan migrants, permanent national migrants, and permanent international migrants. Each is then subcategorized as permanent migrants working in tourism, working in sectors other than tourism, undergraduate students. Subcategories (labour occupation, frequency or return, and length and time of residence of the host community of Cancun).

Then, Cancun is a host community that was established as part of the new tourist destinations. It is neither unique nor static nor long-lasting. It is cosmopolitan, heterogeneous, and consists of natives, but primarily migrants due to its exponential mobility, where different cultures and individuals, local values and identities interact and play a central and influential role in the development and atmosphere of the destination (Be Ramírez, 2019; Salazar, 2022; Urosevic, 2012; INEGI, 2020; Moguel & Montalvo, 2020).

This research resulted in a content analysis of preliminary studies about the host community (Monterrubbio, 2009; Presenza et al., 2013, Lundberg, 2017; Zucco et al., 2017; Lin et al., 2017; Choo et al., 2011, Scholtz & Slabbert, 2015; Guo et al., 2018; Anglin, 2015; George & Reid, 2005; Guo et al., 2018; Truly, 2002; Torres, 2002; Hsiao & Chuang, 2015; Frías-Jamilena et al., 2018; Gotham, 2007; Urosevic, 2012; Liu et al., 2020). It also examined migration-to-destination studies (Salazar, 2022; Sun et al., 2020; Espinosa-Coria, 2013) to propose how to categorize Cancun's host community, taking into account that a community is comprised of diverse groups of people (Lundberg, 2017).

In order to further analyze the host community of Cancun, a pilot study is recommended to research the host community, migration, and sustainability.

5. Discussion & Conclusion

There is a social approach to tourist destination management that is based on a sustainable model and focuses on the search for equity between the host community and the visitor. However, the rapid growth of tourist destinations has prevented efforts to focus on the human development of the locals, and it is an undeniable fact that there is a constant need for labour at all levels, resulting in a constant flow of migrants in search of growth opportunities who have no prior knowledge of the place to reside. Cancun is no exception. Since its inception in

the 1970s, it has undergone erratic expansion, quickly turning the local people into a minority. As a result of this, a lack of cultural richness among the migrants has resulted in a growing lack of cultural identification, love, and pride for their adopted home.

The host community is the main element that has direct contact with visitors due to the various roles they play, communicating directly with the visitor about their intangible heritage, such as traditions, beliefs, and intangible riches of the local culture. It is true that absence neither transmits nor transcends. The current qualitative analysis allowed the categorization and subcategorization of heterogeneous groups divided by: 1) host community, 2) natives, 3) migrants, and 4) residents based on their origin, occupation, time of residence, and time of the return of stay, allowing mapping and proposing the structure of the Cancun community by niche.

The categorization and subcategorization of the community will enable us to analyze and propose the identification of needs and knowledge of the locality required by the host in a second phase. Furthermore, it will strengthen the community's pride and attachment to its cultural identity by taking into account the profile of each category and subcategory to build a cultural model promoting a tourism marketing tool known as internal branding of the destination.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix

The local community of Benito Juárez, which is a tourist destination in the Mexican Caribbean, has experienced a phenomenon of human movement in various dimensions, from natives, temporary and non-temporary migrants, to residents.

Due to this dynamic of displacement that has originated, there are, in the first instance, people who seek to enter the labor market in search of opportunities, others in search of a place to live, and many others in search of experiences. However, such a diverse movement leads to growing multiculturalism since people from different places present heterogeneous customs, beliefs, and lifestyles far from a homogeneous identity, promoting diversity in the tourist hosts, who are the main contact with visitors.

As a result of the need to “categorize” the local community, the present research resorts to variables that include: origin (native local migrants), time of residence (constituted by national and international migrants), labor occupancy (workers in the sector and future tourist service providers), and frequency of return identified by the temporary and permanent population.