

Digitizing Community-Based Rural Tourism in Jipijapa: A Strategy for Social Sustainability in Vulnerable Communities

Organizational Agility and Logistical Sustainability in SMEs: A Case Study in the Distribution of Organic Products

Agilidade organizacional e sustentabilidade logística nas PME: um estudo de caso sobre a distribuição de produtos biológicos

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Abstract

Community-based rural tourism represents a territorial development alternative that integrates natural resources, cultural heritage, community participation, and economic opportunities in rural areas. In recent years, digital transformation has changed the way tourism destinations manage promotion, commercialization, and interaction with visitors; however, technological gaps continue to limit the equitable participation of vulnerable communities in emerging digital ecosystems. This article aims to analyze the role of digitalization in community-based rural tourism in the canton of Jipijapa, Manabí Province, Ecuador, as a strategy to strengthen social sustainability. The research followed a qualitative approach through a documentary review of scientific literature and institutional documents related to community tourism, digital transformation, tourism innovation, and sustainable development. The findings show that digitalization can improve rural destination visibility, strengthen community enterprises, enhance marketing channels, and contribute to social empowerment; nevertheless, its effectiveness depends on connectivity, digital skills, technological infrastructure, and territorial governance. It is concluded that digital transformation in community-based rural tourism represents a strategic opportunity for Jipijapa when implemented through participatory processes integrating technology, community training, and inclusive public policies.

Keywords: community-based rural tourism; digitalization; digital transformation; social sustainability; territorial development; vulnerable communities.

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Resumen

El turismo rural comunitario constituye una alternativa de desarrollo territorial que permite articular recursos naturales, patrimonio cultural, participación comunitaria y generación de oportunidades económicas en territorios rurales. En los últimos años, la transformación digital ha modificado la manera en que los destinos turísticos gestionan sus procesos de promoción, comercialización e interacción con los visitantes; sin embargo, persisten brechas tecnológicas que limitan la incorporación equitativa de comunidades vulnerables a los nuevos ecosistemas digitales. El objetivo de este artículo es analizar el papel de la digitalización del turismo rural comunitario en el cantón Jipijapa, provincia de Manabí, Ecuador, como estrategia orientada al fortalecimiento de la sostenibilidad social. La investigación se desarrolló bajo un enfoque cualitativo, mediante una revisión documental de literatura científica y documentos institucionales relacionados con turismo comunitario, transformación digital, innovación turística y desarrollo sostenible. Los resultados evidencian que la digitalización puede favorecer la visibilidad de los destinos rurales, fortalecer emprendimientos comunitarios, mejorar los canales de comercialización y contribuir al empoderamiento social; no obstante, su efectividad depende de factores como conectividad, competencias digitales, infraestructura tecnológica y gobernanza territorial. Se concluye que la transformación digital del turismo rural comunitario representa una oportunidad estratégica para Jipijapa, siempre que sea implementada mediante procesos participativos que integren tecnología, capacitación comunitaria y políticas orientadas a la inclusión social.

Palabras clave: turismo rural comunitario; digitalización; transformación digital; sostenibilidad social; desarrollo territorial; comunidades vulnerables.

Resumo

O turismo rural comunitário constitui uma alternativa de desenvolvimento territorial que permite articular recursos naturais, patrimônio cultural, participação comunitária e geração de oportunidades econômicas em territórios rurais. Nos últimos anos, a transformação digital alterou a forma como os destinos turísticos gerem os seus processos de promoção, comercialização e interação com os visitantes; no entanto, persistem lacunas tecnológicas que limitam a integração equitativa das comunidades vulneráveis nos novos ecossistemas digitais. O objetivo deste artigo é analisar o papel da digitalização do turismo rural comunitário no cantão de Jipijapa, província de Manabí, no Equador, como estratégia orientada para o

reforço da sustentabilidade social. A investigação foi desenvolvida com uma abordagem qualitativa, através de uma revisão documental da literatura científica e de documentos institucionais relacionados com o turismo comunitário, a transformação digital, a inovação turística e o desenvolvimento sustentável. Os resultados evidenciam que a digitalização pode favorecer a visibilidade dos destinos rurais, fortalecer os empreendimentos comunitários, melhorar os canais de comercialização e contribuir para o empoderamento social; no entanto, a sua eficácia depende de fatores como a conectividade, as competências digitais, a infraestrutura tecnológica e a governação territorial. Conclui-se que a transformação digital do turismo rural comunitário representa uma oportunidade estratégica para Jipijapa, desde que seja implementada através de processos participativos que integrem tecnologia, formação comunitária e políticas orientadas para a inclusão social.

Palavras-chave: turismo rural comunitário; digitalização; transformação digital; sustentabilidade social; desenvolvimento territorial; comunidades vulneráveis.

INTRODUCCIÓN

Tourism has become a strategic activity for the economic and social development of regions due to its ability to generate employment, promote local entrepreneurship, strengthen cultural identities, and revitalize regional economies. Within this context, community-based rural tourism has gained prominence as an alternative model that seeks to move beyond traditional approaches focused solely on economic profitability by incorporating principles related to community participation, heritage conservation, and equitable distribution of benefits (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2021; Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2021).

Community-based rural tourism is grounded in the active participation of local communities as key actors in the planning, management, and utilization of their territorial resources. From this perspective, residents are no longer viewed solely as providers of tourism services but take on a central role in creating experiences rooted in traditional knowledge, cultural identity, and a sustainable relationship with the environment (Cañada, 2021). This vision aligns with contemporary approaches to sustainable development that promote inclusive and territorially responsible economic models (UN World Tourism Organization, 2023).

However, the changes the tourism industry has undergone in recent decades have created new challenges related to innovation and technological adaptation. Digital transformation has altered the way

tourists search for information, select destinations, purchase services, and share experiences. Consequently, tourism destinations need to develop digital capabilities that enable them to actively participate in these new competitive landscapes (Buhalis & Moldavska, 2022).

Digital technologies applied to tourism—such as virtual platforms, social media, intelligent information systems, geolocation tools, and data analysis—offer opportunities to improve the promotion, management, and marketing of rural destinations. These tools make it possible to increase the visibility of areas with lower tourism profiles and to establish more direct relationships between communities and visitors (Baggio & Micera, 2021; Gretzel et al., 2021).

However, the adoption of technology in rural areas faces significant limitations associated with the so-called digital divide. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development notes that inequality in access to connectivity, technological infrastructure, and digital skills constitutes one of the main obstacles preventing rural communities from fully taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the digital economy (OECD, 2021).

In Latin America, this issue takes on particular importance because many rural areas possess cultural and natural resources with tourism potential but face difficulties integrating into digital markets due to structural limitations, a lack of technological training, and weak institutional coordination (ECLAC, 2022). Therefore, the digitalization of community-based rural tourism must be analyzed not only as the adoption of technology but also as a social process aimed at strengthening local capacities.

In Ecuador, community-based tourism is a strategy linked to sustainable territorial development due to the country's cultural, environmental, and productive diversity. Rural communities possess significant resources related to gastronomy, traditional agriculture, cultural heritage, and natural landscapes; however, they need to strengthen processes of innovation, promotion, and management to respond to the new dynamics of global tourism (Ecuadorian Ministry of Tourism, 2022).

In the province of Manabí, particularly in the canton of Jipijapa, there are rural communities with favorable conditions for the development of community-based tourism due to their cultural richness, productive traditions, gastronomy, and natural resources. However, like other rural areas in Latin America, they face challenges related to tourism promotion, digital visibility, training, and coordination among local stakeholders.

This situation highlights the need to analyze how digitalization can contribute to strengthening the social sustainability of rural community-based tourism in Jipijapa. Social sustainability involves ensuring that tourism development processes promote community

participation, inclusion, collective well-being, and the preservation of territorial identity (UNESCO, 2021).

Therefore, this article aims to analyze the digitalization of community-based rural tourism in Jipijapa as a strategy to strengthen social sustainability in vulnerable communities, through a literature review of scientific publications and specialized documents.

The study's contribution lies in integrating three dimensions that are frequently addressed independently: digital transformation, community-based rural tourism, and social sustainability. This integration allows for the proposal of a strategic vision in which technology becomes a tool for strengthening community capacities, improving economic opportunities, and promoting sustainable territorial development.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical Foundation and State of the Art

2.1. Community-Based Rural Tourism as a Strategy for Sustainable Territorial Development

Community-based rural tourism has established itself as an alternative approach within contemporary tourism development due to its ability to link economic activity with the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, social participation, and the strengthening of local economies. Unlike conventional tourism models, this approach positions communities as central actors in tourism planning and management, recognizing their knowledge, cultural practices, and organizational structures as fundamental elements of the tourism product (Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2021).

From the perspective of territorial development, community-based tourism represents a mechanism for mobilizing endogenous resources through the promotion of local heritage. Rural communities can transform their productive practices, cultural expressions, cuisine, and landscapes into distinctive tourism experiences, generating complementary economic opportunities and strengthening processes of collective identity (Cañada, 2021).

The specialized literature indicates that rural community-based tourism contributes to sustainable development when it meets three fundamental conditions: effective community participation, equitable distribution of benefits, and conservation of territorial resources. In this regard, tourism must move beyond an exclusively economic perspective and focus on building social well-being, cultural strengthening, and community resilience (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2021).

Likewise, studies on community-based tourism emphasize that sustainability depends on the organizational capacity of local communities. Communities need to develop administrative skills, innovation capabilities, and mechanisms for coordination with

public, private, and academic institutions to consolidate sustainable tourism initiatives (Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2022).

In Latin America, rural community-based tourism has gained prominence as a strategy for addressing issues associated with territorial inequality, limited economic diversification, and the loss of traditional activities. However, various studies warn that many community-based initiatives face difficulties in accessing tourism markets due to problems related to promotion, marketing, and limited adoption of technological tools (ECLAC, 2022).

In the Ecuadorian context, community-based tourism has unique characteristics due to the territory's cultural and environmental diversity. Indigenous, peasant, and rural communities have developed tourism experiences rooted in their ancestral practices and relationship with nature; however, they need to strengthen innovation processes that allow them to improve their competitiveness without compromising their cultural identity (Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador, 2022).

In the case of Jipijapa, rural community-based tourism represents an opportunity to capitalize on resources associated with Montubio culture, agricultural production, traditional cuisine, and natural heritage. However, consolidating this model requires overcoming limitations related to tourism management, destination promotion, and the adoption of digital strategies to increase its visibility.

2.2. Digital Transformation and Innovation in Rural Tourism

Digital transformation is a process of organizational and social change through which digital technologies are incorporated to improve processes, generate new value models, and respond to changes in the environment. In the tourism sector, this phenomenon has altered the relationships between destinations, businesses, communities, and visitors, giving rise to new forms of tourism planning, promotion, and consumption (Buhalis & Moldavska, 2022).

The digitization of tourism involves the incorporation of technological tools such as digital platforms, social media, mobile apps, geographic information systems, artificial intelligence, and data analytics. These technologies help enhance the visitor experience, optimize management processes, and strengthen the competitiveness of tourist destinations (Gretzel et al., 2021).

In rural destinations, digital transformation takes on special importance because it helps reduce barriers related to geographic distance and limited presence in traditional tourism markets. Through digital strategies, small communities can promote their attractions, establish direct links with visitors, and build a distinct identity for their region (Baggio & Micera, 2021).

However, the scientific literature shows that tourism digitization should not be understood solely as an online presence. True digital

transformation involves developing the capacity to use technology strategically, generating knowledge from available information, and adapting organizational processes to new digital scenarios (Buhalis & Moldavska, 2022).

From this perspective, rural destinations need to move toward models of tourism innovation where technology is integrated with the social and cultural characteristics of the region. The incorporation of technology must respect community dynamics and strengthen local participation, avoiding external models that could lead to dependency or a loss of regional identity.

Approaches related to smart tourism destinations propose that technology must be integrated with sustainability, accessibility, governance, and innovation. A smart destination is not defined by the number of technological tools available, but by its ability to use information and innovation to improve the visitor experience and the quality of life for residents (Gretzel et al., 2021).

2.3. Social Sustainability and Digital Inclusion in Vulnerable Rural Communities

Social sustainability is an essential dimension of sustainable development and relates to the ability to ensure the well-being, equity, participation, and inclusion of communities. In the context of tourism, this approach implies that the benefits generated by tourism must contribute to strengthening the social fabric and improving the living conditions of local populations (UNESCO, 2021).

Vulnerable rural communities face structural challenges associated with limited economic opportunities, youth migration, unequal access to services, and reduced participation in global markets. In this context, community-based tourism can serve as a complementary development strategy, provided it preserves local autonomy and promotes participatory processes (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2021).

Digital inclusion is emerging as a new component of social sustainability, as access to and the proper use of technologies determine communities' participation in the contemporary economy. The digital divide represents not only a disparity in technological access but also an inequality in the ability to generate value through the use of digital information and tools (OECD, 2021).

For this reason, the digitization of rural tourism requires programs aimed at strengthening community digital skills. Technology training enables local stakeholders to manage their own tourism promotion, marketing, and communication processes, thereby increasing their autonomy and decision-making capacity (World Bank, 2021).

From this perspective, technology can become a mechanism for social empowerment when it strengthens community participation and enables rural populations to take the lead in their own development. In the case of Jipijapa, this approach is essential to

ensure that digital transformation truly contributes to social sustainability and not merely to the economic growth of tourism.

2.4. Identified Research Gap

A review of the current state of the art shows that there is extensive research on community-based rural tourism and digital transformation; however, most studies address these phenomena separately. While some studies focus on the economic benefits of community-based tourism, others analyze technology from business or tourism competitiveness perspectives.

There is a research opportunity in integrating these dimensions from a territorial and social perspective, especially in Ecuadorian rural communities where digitization can serve as a tool to strengthen inclusion, cultural identity, and sustainable development.

In this regard, the present study offers an integrative approach by analyzing the digitization of community-based rural tourism in Jipijapa as a process of territorial social innovation, in which technology is linked to community participation, sustainability, and local development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach, through a descriptive-analytical literature review aimed at understanding the relationship between digitalization, community-based rural tourism, and social sustainability in vulnerable rural contexts. This approach allowed for the interpretation of the theoretical and empirical contributions reported in the scientific literature, identifying trends, categories of analysis, and strategic elements applicable to the context of the Jipijapa canton in Ecuador.

Literature review is a systematic process of compiling, analyzing, and interpreting information from scientific and academic sources, enabling the construction of knowledge through a critical review of previously conducted research (Snyder, 2019). In this regard, the study does not aim to measure effects using its own statistical data, but rather to generate a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study based on an analysis of available scientific evidence.

A non-experimental, cross-sectional design was employed, as the analysis was based on existing information without manipulation of variables. The study aimed to identify the main contributions, limitations, and opportunities associated with the incorporation of digital technologies in community-based rural tourism.

The methodological process was organized into three phases:

Phase 1. Literature Review and Selection

In this phase, a search was conducted for scientific literature related to: The sources consulted included scientific articles published in indexed journals, academic books, and institutional reports from national and international organizations.

- community-based rural tourism;
- digital transformation in tourism;
- social sustainability;
- digital inclusion;
- territorial development.

Phase 2. Analysis and Categorization of Information

The information gathered was organized through thematic content analysis, allowing for the identification of categories related to the subject of study.

The categories established were:Phase 3. Interpretation and Development of the Strategic Proposal

- Digitalization and tourism promotion.
- Technological innovation and community-based marketing.
- Digital inclusion and social empowerment.
- Barriers to rural digital transformation.
- Strategies for sustainable tourism digitization.

Finally, the findings were integrated through an interpretive process that enabled the development of a strategic proposal aimed at strengthening the digitization of community-based rural tourism in Jipijapa.

This proposal does not correspond to an implementation carried out in the field, but rather to a model derived from the literature review and grounded in the contributions of the scientific literature examined.

Information Sources and Document Selection Criteria

The literature review considered academic sources and specialized organizations related to tourism, sustainable development, and digital transformation.

The inclusion criteria were: The exclusion criteria were:3.4. Information Analysis Technique

- scientific publications directly related to the study variables;
- documents published preferably between 2019 and 2025;
- research conducted in rural, community, or tourism contexts;
- documents with relevant theoretical or methodological contributions.

- documents with no direct relation to rural tourism or digitalization;
- publications lacking verifiable methodological information;
- non-academic sources or those without institutional backing.

The technique used was qualitative content analysis, involving the identification, classification, and interpretation of recurring concepts present in the selected sources.

This procedure made it possible to establish relationships between theoretical contributions on digital transformation and the specific needs of community-based rural tourism, generating a contextualized interpretation for the Jipijapa region.

RESULTS

The literature review revealed that the digital transformation of community-based rural tourism is a multidimensional process in which technological, economic, social, and territorial factors interact. The scientific evidence reviewed demonstrates that the strategic incorporation of digital technologies can strengthen community-based tourism management; however, its benefits depend on the ability of local communities to develop digital skills, ensure connectivity, and promote mechanisms for local participation. Based on the analysis of the selected literature, five main categories were established:

- Digitization as a mechanism for tourism visibility.
- Digital tools for strengthening community-based enterprises.
- Digital inclusion and social sustainability.
- Barriers to digital transformation in rural communities.
- Strategic model of sustainable digitization for Jipijapa.
- Digitization as a mechanism for tourism visibility and positioning

The studies analyzed show that one of the main contributions of digitization to community-based rural tourism relates to the possibility of increasing the visibility of regions that have traditionally had a limited presence in tourism markets.

Digital platforms enable rural communities to showcase their cultural, natural, and social attributes through audiovisual content, social media, websites, and geolocation tools. This facilitates the development of a distinct tourism identity and fosters direct connections between communities and visitors (Baggio & Micera, 2021; Gretzel et al., 2021).

In this regard, digitalization presents an opportunity for regions such as Jipijapa to strengthen the promotion of their resources related to Montubia culture, traditional cuisine, agricultural production, and natural heritage, thereby generating new forms of interaction with potential tourists.

Digital Tools to Strengthen Community-Based Tourism Ventures

The analysis shows that digital technologies can contribute to the economic strengthening of rural ventures through new promotion and marketing mechanisms. The literature indicates that small community organizations can use digital tools to expand markets, improve communication with customers, and strengthen tourism management processes (Buhalis & Moldavska, 2022).

However, economic benefits do not depend solely on having technological tools available, but rather on the ability of local actors to use them strategically. Therefore, digital training is an indispensable element for transforming technology into a true competitive advantage.

Digitalization and Community Social Inclusion

The results of the literature review show that the digital transformation of rural tourism has a significant social dimension, as it can contribute to strengthening local capacities and expanding the participation of community groups in tourism-related economic activities.

Digital inclusion enables young people, women, and small rural entrepreneurs to participate in tourism promotion, management, and marketing processes, thereby fostering economic diversification and community ownership of territorial development (ECLAC, 2022; World Bank, 2021).

However, the literature shows that technology only generates social benefits when accompanied by educational and organizational processes that enable communities to take ownership of digital tools.

Barriers to the Digital Transformation of Community-Based Rural Tourism

Despite the identified opportunities, the analysis shows that there are limitations that may hinder technology adoption in rural communities. The main barrier is the digital divide, defined as the existing inequality in access to, use of, and benefit derived from digital technologies (OECD, 2021).

In rural areas, this issue is linked to limited connectivity, insufficient technological infrastructure, poor digital skills, and weak institutional coordination.

Strategic Model for the Sustainable Digitalization of Community-Based Rural Tourism in Jipijapa

Based on the findings identified, a strategic model is proposed aimed at strengthening the social sustainability of community-based rural tourism through the integration of technology, human capacities, and territorial governance.

The model is grounded in the idea that digitalization must become a process of social innovation in which communities are the protagonists of technological transformation.

Summary of Results

The results indicate that the digital transformation of community-based rural tourism in Jipijapa represents a strategic opportunity to strengthen social sustainability, provided it is implemented through a comprehensive approach. Technology can support tourism promotion, improve economic opportunities, and strengthen community participation; however, it requires enabling conditions related to training, infrastructure, and governance.

Therefore, the main finding of the study is that the digital transformation of community-based rural tourism should be understood as a process of territorial social innovation and not merely as the incorporation of technological tools.

The results obtained show that the digitization of community-based rural tourism represents a strategic opportunity to strengthen processes of sustainable territorial development; however, its impact depends on the communities' ability to take ownership of digital technologies and use them as tools for social innovation. This perspective aligns with the arguments of Buhalis and Moldavska (2022), who maintain that digital transformation in tourism goes beyond the adoption of isolated technologies and requires changes in management, communication, and value creation models.

From this perspective, the digitization of community-based rural tourism should be understood as a comprehensive process where technology, local knowledge, and community participation converge. The results show that digital tools can improve the visibility of rural destinations, facilitate the promotion of cultural and natural heritage, and generate new opportunities for interaction between communities and visitors. These findings are consistent with those of Baggio and Micera (2021), who highlight that digital technologies enable small tourist destinations to strengthen their positioning through more direct and personalized communication strategies.

In the context of Jipijapa, these findings are particularly relevant because the region possesses cultural and natural resources with tourism potential but needs to strengthen its promotion and marketing

mechanisms. The analyzed evidence suggests that creating a digital territorial identity could help position experiences related to Montubia culture, traditional cuisine, agricultural activities, and rural landscapes—elements that offer unique advantages over conventional tourism models.

Another relevant aspect identified concerns the role of digitalization as a mechanism for strengthening the local economy. The results show that digital platforms can promote the autonomy of small businesses by enabling direct communication with visitors and reducing dependence on traditional intermediaries. This finding aligns with Scheyvens and Biddulph (2021), who argue that community-based tourism generates greater social benefits when communities actively participate in the management and marketing of their own resources.

However, the discussion highlights that the availability of technologies alone does not guarantee successful digital transformation processes. The reviewed literature demonstrates that the key condition for leveraging these tools is the development of digital skills among local stakeholders. In this regard, the OECD (2021) notes that the digital divide is not limited to internet access but also includes the ability to use technology strategically and productively.

This consideration is fundamental for vulnerable rural communities, where valuable tourism resources may coexist with limitations related to connectivity, technological training, and infrastructure availability. Therefore, any tourism digitization strategy implemented in Jipijapa must incorporate ongoing community training processes that enable technology to become a tool for social empowerment.

From the perspective of social sustainability, the findings confirm that digitalization can contribute to community strengthening when it promotes participation, inclusion, and the preservation of cultural identity. Technology can help young people, women, and local entrepreneurs gain greater opportunities for participation in tourism, thereby strengthening the region's social capital (ECLAC, 2022).

However, there is a risk that digitalization will exacerbate inequalities if it is not developed in accordance with principles of territorial equity. The World Bank (2021) warns that communities with limited technological capacity may be excluded from the benefits associated with the digital economy. Consequently, the digital transformation of rural tourism must be accompanied by public policies and institutional actions that guarantee access, training, and technical support.

The results also highlight the importance of collaborative governance. The digital transformation of tourism requires coordination among multiple stakeholders: communities, local

governments, universities, social organizations, and the private sector. This cooperation is necessary to avoid fragmented initiatives and to build sustainable processes of territorial innovation.

In this regard, the strategic proposal put forward for Jipijapa aligns with the approaches of smart tourism destinations, where technology is integrated with sustainability, governance, and improvements in residents' quality of life. According to Gretzel et al. (2021), a smart destination is not defined solely by the incorporation of technology, but by the ability to use it to generate social value and enhance the tourism experience.

From a scientific perspective, the main contribution of this research lies in integrating three dimensions that are generally analyzed independently: tourism digitization, community-based rural tourism, and social sustainability. This integration helps us understand that technology can become an instrument of territorial development when it responds to the specific needs and characteristics of communities.

Unlike approaches focused exclusively on tourism competitiveness, this study argues that digital transformation should be oriented toward building local capacities, cultural strengthening, and community participation. Therefore, the digitalization of community-based rural tourism in Jipijapa should be understood as a process of territorial social innovation, in which technology acts as a facilitator of collective well-being.

The findings allow us to identify several practical implications for community-based tourism development in Jipijapa: Consequently, the digital transformation of community-based rural tourism must be understood as a gradual, participatory, and context-specific process, in which technology contributes to the social strengthening of the region.

The implementation of digital literacy programs is a necessary condition for ensuring community participation in new tourism markets.

The creation of a regional digital strategy can strengthen the promotion of rural attractions and improve their positioning.

Collaboration between universities, communities, and local governments can generate sustainable processes of tourism innovation.

Digitization must preserve cultural identity and avoid external technological models that disregard community dynamics.

CONCLUSIONS

This study analyzed the digitalization of community-based rural tourism in Jipijapa as a potential strategy for strengthening the social sustainability of vulnerable communities. Based on the literature

review conducted, it is evident that digital transformation is a strategic process that can contribute to strengthening rural destinations by improving tourism promotion, generating new economic opportunities, and building community capacity.

The results show that the digitalization of community-based rural tourism should not be understood solely as the incorporation of technological tools, but rather as a comprehensive process of territorial social innovation. Technology gains value when it helps strengthen community participation, preserve cultural identity, improve tourism management, and generate collective benefits for local residents.

It was found that the main opportunities presented by digital transformation are related to increasing the visibility of rural areas, creating new marketing channels, communicating directly with visitors, and strengthening community-based enterprises. In this regard, digital tools can serve as mechanisms to reduce traditional barriers to accessing tourism markets.

However, the analysis shows that digitalization faces significant challenges, primarily associated with the digital divide, limited connectivity, insufficient technological skills, and weak institutional coordination. These conditions may restrict vulnerable communities' access to the benefits of the digital economy if strategies aimed at technological inclusion are not implemented.

In the case of Jipijapa, the study concludes that there is significant potential to strengthen rural community-based tourism through digital strategies linked to the promotion of the region's cultural heritage, cuisine, local production, and natural resources. However, this process requires participatory planning in which communities take the lead in shaping their digital tourism identity.

The study provides a strategic model that integrates five fundamental components: digital capacity building, the construction of a digital territorial identity, tourism marketing through technological tools, collaborative governance, and social impact assessment. This proposal offers an alternative framework for guiding future processes of digital transformation in rural tourism communities.

Finally, it is concluded that digitization can become a factor in the social sustainability of community-based rural tourism when it is developed according to principles of equity, participation, and community ownership. Technology should be viewed as a means to strengthen local capacities and promote more inclusive and sustainable models of territorial development.

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