



## Tourist route in Arandas as a religious and cultural destination: Sustainable approach

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### Abstract

In this document, the creation of a tourist route was proposed as a way to reactivate the tourism industry in the municipality of Arandas, Jalisco Mexico, due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the tourism sector in Mexico, this proposal intends to boost the economic flow, employment of tourist industry.

A documentary investigation of the municipality was carried out based on the revision of texts, articles, bibliographies, videos, films, natural and cultural attractions, mainly concentrating on the last one. The results were interesting since with the consultation of authors and visits to the county it was evidenced that it has great potential that this tourist proposal is a lever for economic development in the county. As a conclusion to the proposal, it was proposed that three actors get involved so that this becomes a reality, the local society, the municipal government, and the entrepreneurs of the tourism sector get involved to make this effective.

### Keywords:

Tourist route;  
local development;  
alternative tourism;  
economic reactivation;  
religious tourism.

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### 1. Introduction

In recent years, much has been debated about the relevance that tourism has acquired worldwide in its different sectors, the economic sector is the most benefited, from the impacts of moving people out of their place of origin to carry out and practice of various unpaid activities. Although the motivation of each individual is different, there are some classifications to name the tourism that takes place in different areas; as it is: social tourism, natural tourism, cultural tourism, esoteric tourism, rural tourism, adventure tourism, sun and beach tourism, gastronomic tourism, religious tourism, among others.

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It is precisely in the latter one of the most controversial because a segment of the population considers that it “profits from faith”, while others see it as an opportunity for development in communities with high religious concentration manifested in their temples, cathedrals, pilgrimages, monuments, among other manifestations of worship relevant to devotees.

### **1.1 Tourism and religion**

Worldwide, religious tourism is capable of moving more than 300 million people each year, leaving an economic spill of more than 18 million dollars (Fernandez, 2016). In this context, Mexico is considered a privileged country at an architectural and religious level due to a large number of churches, cathedrals, convents, ex-convents, sanctuaries, among other manifestations of sacred art, which attract an average of more than 20 million people. people annually according to official figures from the Chamber of Commerce, Services and Tourism in Small of Mexico City (CANACOPE).

Likewise, the National Population and Housing Institute (INEGI) reported in 2010 that 84% of the Mexican population is Catholic, being the second country with the highest number of religious devotees, surpassed only by Brazil. In other words, at the national level, more than 94 million inhabitants belong to some dogma, this information is specified in 2016 by the Ministry of Tourism (SECTUR).

While it is true that Religious Tourism tourism in Mexico is mainly concentrated in the central-western region, which corresponded to those of Mexico and New Galicia of New Spain, they are not the only ones with tourist attraction and religious relevance. (Such is the case of the Los Altos region in Jalisco, headquarters of the Cristiada or Guerra de los Cristeros, a relevant historical and religious event that resulted in the death of priests and those close to the church, as well as many martyrs.

### **1.2 Tourism and Culture**

Culture is closely linked to tourism in an intrinsically way. When a person enters a territory outside their place of origin and makes contact with both the place and the population that resides, the first cultural exchange is made. It is impossible to consider these two elements separately in a tourist destination, however unifying them in oneself gives as origin a new motivation for tourist practices, that is, “Cultural tourism” arises.

According to the Secretary of Tourism (SECTUR), cultural tourism is understood: “as that tourist trip motivated by knowing, understanding and enjoying the set of distinctive, spiritual and material, intellectual and affective features and elements that characterize a society or social group of a specific destination. ” Therefore, the material and immaterial cultural elements are established as the main detonator of this activity in a community or environment (SECTUR, 2015).

In this context, Mexico is a country with a wide cultural wealth distributed in its 1,395 museums reported by the Cultural Information System (SIC), in its archaeological sites belonging to the Mayan, Olmec, Chichimeca, Toltec, Mexica, Aztec cultures, among others. in its historical buildings with colonial architecture, in the folklore of its towns, in the traditions and customs of its people, in its 28 material and 7 immaterial cultural heritages, recognized and protected by UNESCO.

In the words of Juan Ignacio Pulido and Manuel de la Calle: “Culture is an indispensable component in travel, which motivates the movement of visitors and tourists to the sites where tangible and intangible heritage are found, with the interest of learning about other cultures” (Pulido, Calle y Velasco, 2013)

### 1.3 Arandas' county

The territory of Arandas is part of the 125 municipalities that make up the state of Jalisco and is located in the Altos Sur region. It has several hydrological resources derived from its proximity to Lake Chapala, these rivers and streams that make up the hydrological sub-basins of the Turbio River, the Atotonilco River, and the Verde or Grande de Belem River, belonging to the Lerma-Chapala-Santiago hydrological region (IEEG, 2018).

#### 1.3.1 Demography and society

The municipality of Arandas, for its part, belongs to the region of Los Altos in the state of Jalisco, adjoins the municipalities of San Ignacio Cerro Gordo, Atotonilco el Alto, Tepatitlán de Morelos, San Miguel el Alto, San Julián, San Diego de Alejandría, Ayotlán, Jesús María and Rincón, the latter belonging to the state of Guanajuato. Its approximate population in 2015 was 77,116 inhabitants, of which 47.5 percent were men and 52.5 percent, women, distributed over a land area of 1,238 km<sup>2</sup>, which would be equivalent to 62.29 people for each square kilometer. However, the working population registered in the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS) in 2018 was 10,278 people. Although the informal employment that predominates in the entity is not taken into account, it reflects perceived at the labor level (IEEG, 2019).

Likewise and according to the data presented by the IMSS and the IIEG in 2019, the main industry in the municipality of Arandas in the manufacture of rubber and plastic products, followed by the manufacture of food, the manufacture of beverages in third place, the sale of raw materials, materials and auxiliaries, the manufacture of footwear and the leather industry, the sale of food, beverages and tobacco products, livestock, among others. It should be noted that the tourism sector is not mentioned as one of the main sources of employment and generator of economic resources despite its proximity to places with high tourist influx such as Tequila, Chapala, Guanajuato, and the Metropolitan Area of Jalisco.

#### 1.3.2 Historical context

The city of Arandas, like most of the cities that make up the state of Jalisco, has a historical and cultural record that is at least quite interesting if one takes into account that the place was inhabited by pre-Hispanic cultures dating back to

According to the Jalisco Historical Archive and the General Secretariat of the Government, there are vestiges and historical documents that confirm the presence of Tarascans and Chichimecas before the arrival of the Spanish in the region. However, it was inhabited in 1971 by the Spanish families: Arandas, Camarena, Hernández Gamiño, and Hernández Rull, with the name of Santa María Guadalupe de Los Arandas.

The most accepted theory about the toponymy of the name that this place receives, is that it was derived by the families that resided in it at that time, establishing themselves. The territory also came to be known as Puesto de Los Arandas when, by orders of the Royal Audience of Guadalajara, it was ordered that the foundation be made in two settlements.

On the exact foundation of the territory, several aspects arise, among the most outstanding that the date was in 1761 with the arrival of the families to the region, while another affirms that it is until 1772 when in what was the fief of the hacienda of Santa Ana Apacueco, property of the Marquis consort of Altamira, the territory is established and the name is given to it. Even though that various sources do not agree with the date on which these events occurred, what is certain is that they happened during the second half of the 18th century.

### 1.3.3 Economic activities

According to the official page of the Government of Arandas (2020); the main source of income for the municipality is based on the production of tequila. The type of soil in the region is conducive to the cultivation of agave and, as it is an endemic product of worldwide scope, it is highly appreciated in the area, which is why it provides jobs to a considerable number of the population of the area and the surrounding cities.

However, despite being one of the pillars in economic terms of the territory, it is not the only source of work; 21.94% of the inhabitants are dedicated to the primary sector; agriculture, livestock, mining, etc. 36.88% contributes to the secondary sector, highlighting industry and commerce. 38.67% to the tertiary sector of services and transport, the rest is not specified (Arandas, 2020).

Likewise, it is one of the territories that do not depend on remittances and have lower participation in social assistance according to the data provided by a study on Mobility, Internal Migration and Remittances carried out in 2019 by the IEEG. This means that in recent years the town has had significant economic growth among its inhabitants who have increased their economic income through work.

For its part, the tourism sector does not appear when it comes to attracting income, largely due to its seasonality during the holiday period. However, it is somewhat contradictory that most of the attractions of the territory are material and immobile, that is; permanent exposure and yet do not develop their full potential for earning income and generating jobs.

### 1.3.4 Attractions of the county

We call attractive to everything that motivates us or is interesting to us because of the set of qualities presented. According to the definition presented by Datatur, a tourist attraction is considered to be the "existing natural, cultural or site values, which motivate the concurrence of a foreign population susceptible to being specifically arranged and/or conditioned for its acquisition, and/or direct recreational usufruct." In the case of destination attractions, we can consider natural attractions, cultural attractions, mixed attractions and tourist attractions.

Natural attractions, as their name indicates, are all those components created by nature without human intervention, manifested in beaches, forests, mountains, rivers, lakes, biosphere reserves, national parks, among others. While cultural attractions can be created or modified by the actions of people; It is understood as the creation of buildings, monuments, urban settlements, archaeological sites, etc. For their part, the mixed attractions are those that involve natural and cultural elements in equal importance.

Tourist attractions arise from natural, cultural, and mixed attractions, to encourage people to move from their place of origin to know, participate, interact and enjoy all these elements as a whole. In this context, natural landscapes, relevant buildings at a historical and architectural level, some festivals, monuments, have double functionality from the original purpose and the tourist perspective.

It is important to point out that not all attractions are aimed at unleashing tourism. On the contrary, the mismanagement of this activity has led to irreparable damage in some destinations, and extreme cases, their loss; as has been the case of the Marietas Islands in Puerto Vallarta, the mangroves of Puerto Morelos in Quintana Roo, to name a few at the national level.

However, natural destinations are not the only ones that are prone to be affected by mismanagement of this industry, since at a social and cultural level it triggers the trivialization of customs and traditions, gentrification of urban space, loss of identity, acculturation and transculturation, the emergence of belts of misery in the surroundings,

alteration of tranquility, increase in the cost of living, and in extreme cases, “turismophobia”.

Tourism in Arandas reaches its highest degree of concentration during its period of traditional festivals. On these dates,, the local population, as well as nearby communities and the interior of the state, mainly congregate to enjoy cultural and artistic events, as well as music, dance, pyrotechnics, bullfights, roosters, concerts, charreadas, among other attractions that are essentially seasonal (SEPAF, 2015).

The municipality of Arandas does not have natural parks or protected areas, however, it has natural, cultural, religious and historical attractions of great importance. Its neo-Gothic architecture buildings and pink quarry finishes stand out, as well as the archaeological ruins of El Sauz, as well as the importance and significance of its people and strategic places during the period of the Cristero War.

The attractions that the municipality has been diverse and varied, however, the religious and historical resources stand out, placed in the following organizer (Table 1.) with the classification, understood as material if the element is tangible and otherwise intangible, as well as the main reason to visit the attraction.

#### 1.4 Sustainable view

In the last decade the speech of sustainable development has been an important issue in Mexico, since the academy thru the politicians have been taken into account to make aware the importance of this topic, but one sector, the industry, has been struggling to settle in their goals, they consider that the monetary income is the most important rather than the society and the environment.

There have been lots of international conventions to make conscious and establish agreements to reduce the negative impacts to the environment, one of them is the Brundtland Report (1987), but results have not been enough to let the right conditions for future generations as the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) describes sustainable development. "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

**Graph 1. Dimension of sustainable development**



Source: <http://www.un.org/en/sustainability/>

## 2. Research Method

A documentary investigation was applied, books, researches, papers, news, and several visits to the county were used to answer the hypothesis of this county would be a great

proposal to set an alternative tourism route with a sustainable view; during the visits to the location, most of the people interviewed were pleased to make tourism an economic boost.

Table 1. Most important attractions in Arandas county

Attraction's name	Type of attraction	Reason for interest
Santa María de Guadalupe church	Religious-cultural (Material)	Baroque style architecture and historical events
County square	Cultural (Material)	Public presentations and social events.
Sauz Museum	Cultural (Material)	Historical heritage of the city and record of archaeological discoveries
Sauz de Cajigal archaeological ruins	Cultural (Material)	Pyramidal constructions, vestiges of urban settlements belonging to the pre-Hispanic period, and figures.
Agave Landscape	Natural (material)	Acres covered with different types of agave, highlighting the blue agave and tequila that benefit from its product

Source: Own elaboration with data from the Cuban Encyclopedia

### 3. Results and Analysis

In recent years, tourism has taken on an exponential boom that has made it one of the pillars of the economy both nationally and internationally. Each year it manages to transport more than 1.4 billion travelers around the world. It is a source of employment for more than 120 million people around the world and is a recipient of foreign exchange par excellence, contributing 2.7 trillion dollars to the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), for which it has been added to the plan of development of several countries (UNWTO, 2019).

The case of Mexico is no exception. This Latin American country considers the tourism sector as one of its main sources of income along with remittances and revenues derived from oil. According to the results of the Tourism activity, the contribution to the national GDP is 8.7% and employs 6 out of every 100 paid workers, which represents approximately 3 million 336 thousand employees of the 55.6 million people in the occupation registry according to the report provided by INEGI in the fourth quarter of 2019.

However, the "tourist awakening" is not a new concept or exclusive to a particular territory. At every moment the number of destinations that seek to enter the tourist environment grows, mostly due to the amount of economic benefits offered by "the industry without chimneys", offering various attractions that serve as triggers for the activity. The competition is increasing and more specialized so that stagnating in the conventional or a single product is no longer feasible in our era.

In this context, it becomes essential to offer the "exclusivity" factor in a destination. That element that makes you stand out from all the others or that is not found anywhere else. However, it is not an easy task at the time of putting it into practice; that component,

or components, must be identified, studied, justified and promoted effectively in order to take advantage of it properly.

To obtain a greater number of entrepreneurs interested in investing in a destination, as well as tourists willing to visit and invest in a particular territory, it is necessary to create and promote consolidated tourism products that promote the region's attractions. It should start from the variants of conventional tourism and value all the elements that generate a unique experience to market it in a competitive market.

The idea of promoting the historical and religious aspect in a destination, as well as indisputable elements of the culture of the place is something that has been carried out in recent years. Projects such as “Pueblos Mágicos” and “Pueblos con Encanto” are national initiatives that serve as an alternative to mass tourism and seek to attract visitors to a more selective experience motivated by other more enriching values, since they mostly seek endogenous development that mainly benefits the local population.

Sustainability becomes essential in the creation of new products. It is important to carry out preliminary studies to determine and anticipate the short, medium and long-term impacts that may arise as a result of the implementation of new projects, the consequences that it may have in the environmental field, its profitability, as well as the acceptance of them by the host community.

While finding the perfect balance between the foundations of sustainability is not an easy task, mismanagement produces immeasurable damage.

The municipality of Arandas is an example of the destination territories that seeks to attract a greater attraction of tourists throughout the year and not exclusively during the period of religious and patron saint festivals, which each year show greater growth among its members, leaving an economic spill. considerable, but in turn, being stationary, it becomes unviable as a source of income for the population.

Arandas, although it has various tourist attractions, mostly cultural and religious, has not had sufficient development in this area, especially when compared to the neighboring territories whose attraction of tourists

It competes with nearby destinations that overshadow its value, such as Tequila and its agave landscape and its recognition by UNESCO, and in the same way with Arenal in Jalostotitlán, Lagos de Moreno, San Juan de los lagos, Tepatitlán , Teocaltiche, etc., in religious tourism.

#### **4. Conclusion**

A tourist route is the result of a tourism product managed and applied in a specific area or region. It constitutes a road, highway, section destined to carry out a planned route or itinerary in different means of transport, the most common are buses and bicycles, however there are some cases in which, due to the conditions of the territory and / or its symbolism and distance are covered exclusively on foot, as is the case of the Camino de Santiago in Spain.

In May 2010, the Ministry of Tourism of Mexico was in charge of promoting the Program, which is why the creation and application of them gained momentum in several states of Mexico. Only in Jalisco are the Tequila Route and the Agave Landscape, the Cristera Route, the Franciscan Route, the Pilgrim Route, the Mariachi Route, the Bicentennial Route, the Riviera Chapala Route, the Sierra del Tigre and the Wixárika Route. All of them represent an area of important opportunity to develop and implement, due to the attraction of tourists that they attract in a portion of the territory.

Taking into account the aforementioned, it would be important to promote tourism in Arandas starting from the implementation of a consolidated tourism product such as the routes, in order to attract tourism in the municipality beyond the seasonal periods.

Arandas is rich in culture, particularly concentrated on the historical, architectural and religious levels. It has baroque and neo-Gothic temples, with archaeological ruins, natural forests and the “El Tule” dam. In addition, the colonial style in most of the houses and in the

The idea of turning cities and towns into Smart Destinations is not really new. It is something that has been implemented in other countries, being Santander in Spain, Aspern, Austria, Singapore in the Asian continent, which have had the greatest technological advances to achieve this end through the application of sensors in different areas of the city and the data processing through Big Data.

However, its execution requires a strong economic investment and social education for the implementation of new technologies in a particular community, from the labor to the social sector; In other words, the population must be prepared for the change of the system and companies must be trained to make the digital system work. Although, in principle it sounds quite optimistic and relatively simple, in practice it is not usually like that, since it is still a great change from the usual and therefore generates rejection.

The implementation of a smart tourist route in Arandas is an issue that must be handled cautiously, considering religion as an important factor when implementing sensors and antennas that contribute to digitizing the area. Similarly, the issue of sustainability should not be overlooked, because the project should not be invasive either socially or in environmental terms.

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