

Proposal : Spiritual and Cultural Tourism as Enablers for Local Economic Development in Tarapoto-Peru

"Reconnecting with nature and self"

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Introduction

We hereby submit our proposal in response to the call for recommendations regarding the potential of tourism in Tarapoto as a driving force for local economic development . Following a literature review of key themes, select case studies and an analysis of the local context, we have built a framework to steer our recommendations and benefit from Tarapoto's unique assets and provide healthy conditions for inclusive and sustainable local development.

Literature Review

Key Debates in Tourism

Sharpley (2009) describes tourism as a catalyst for economic growth with different types of tourism generating different benefits. Sharpley further states that the extent to which forms of tourism translate into wider economic development depends on a combination of various economic, socio-cultural, political and environmental factors particular to each destination. The impact of tourism on local economic development has become a focus for national and local governments due to the networks and links within the industry, and the spillovers it generates. Thus, increasing the focus on growth strategies that integrate tourism into larger economic development schemes (Stobart and Ball, 1998). Globalization incidentally increased the perception of tourism as a local phenomenon closely linked to its context. The local came to be considered as part of the global, rather than a contrasting notion (Pedrana, 2013).

The literature as well as tourism policy have focused on pro-poor growth in tourism which seeks to redistribute existing resources unlike inclusive growth which is about widening the size of the economy (Bakker & Messerli, 2017). Inclusive tourism refers to tourism practice whereby an array of stakeholders, including marginalised groups, are engaged in the ethical production and consumption of tourism, and sharing of its benefits (Regina Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). Other concerns regarding tourism are related to sustainability and the management of environmental resources. Furthermore, the difficulty of transforming these theories into sets of policies still persists (Sharpley, 2009).

An example of sustainable practice in tourism is route tourism which is used interchangeably with trails, themed routes, and is essentially a progression among a series of elements (Moulin & Boniface, 2001). Route tourism ties-up several attractions which would independently not have the potential to boost time and money spent by visitors (Meyer, 2004). Thus, spreading the benefits of tourism as they encourage increased interaction within the spaces being toured (MacLeod, 2017). Routes offer high potential for local economic development and cultural preservation, particularly in instances where resources are limited (Moulin & Boniface, 2001). They are flexible in themes with low start-up costs and require little infrastructure development (MacLeod, 2016). Furthermore, they can contribute towards conservation efforts by routing visitors away from congested or sensitive areas (Hayes & Macleod, 2008). Brazil has identified 30 strategic routes across 158 municipalities whereas Chile has identified 10 routes prioritised for 2018-2022 (OECD, 2020).

According to an analysis of the Mineral Tramways in Cornwall, UK by (MacLeod, 2016), it was identified that community involvement, selection of appropriate theme, integration and consolidation of heritage offering, links to local businesses, incorporation of sustainability message and support for public transport use as key factors in the success of this trail.

Another key trend in tourism is the growing preference for authenticity. This is leading planners and businesses away from mass tourism towards niche markets, and causing them to rebrand their tourism offerings to reflect more authentic and sustainable forms of tourism such as spiritual tourism. Poon (1994) describes spiritual tourism as a new form of tourism. Spiritual tourism does not fall within a clear area of WTO's classification. It falls under special interest tourism and combines elements from other types - religious, cultural, exploration, ecotourism. Spiritual tourism is not religious tourism like a pilgrimage; it is a wide spectrum of travel forms. Spiritual tourism is categorised as a low volume, high yield form of tourism, which unlike mass tourism can be beneficial to the environment. The positive impact of spiritual tourism pushes residents to maintain their assets and develop them. The motivations for this form of tourism include personal and spiritual development, journeying, emotional healing; interaction with plant and animal energies (Cheer, et al., 2017).

Enablers of spiritual tourism

Developing spiritual tourism relies largely on strengthening broad tourism enablers, such as geography, public and social infrastructure, security and political stability, as well as competitive environments (Cura, Singh and Talaat, 2017). Spiritual tourism, however, requires a more targeted approach, especially in the following fields:

- ❑ A healthy and accessible natural environment: The environment as a whole is the key determinant of whether the region can "produce" the proper experience for spiritual tourism, which is a reconnection with nature and self.
- ❑ Global competitiveness: spiritual tourism must offer a unique experience.
- ❑ Acknowledgment: Conservation and consolidation of spiritual heritage, which composes the foundation of spiritual tourism, can only be sustainable if it is considered an economic asset and is integrated in territorial development strategies.
- ❑ Commercial infrastructure: The experiences or traditions offered by spiritual tourism are reserved and remote; two characteristics that can be considered weaknesses and strengths at the same time. In order to grow this sector, a commercial market must be carefully developed around it, and promoted through specific businesses and campaigns that can raise awareness about this heritage. It also boosts safety and accessibility features around it.

Case Studies

India

India's tourist offering has overlapping themes in cultural, spiritual, wellness and ecotourism.

Actions and Impact

The Blue Yonda initiative located in a village in Central Kerala, was set up by the Nila Foundation in 2004 to promote responsible tourism, traditional art forms and support income generation for the local community (Goodwin, 2007). Creative travels were developed through music trails which showcase the music traditions of local communities along the River Nila as well as a music campus (Wei, 2013). Other themes promoted on the theme of River Nila are the folk expressions, Thoni Cruise and Travellers Forest.

India has focused on enhancing basic service delivery including street lights and sanitation services like public conveniences and taps (Singh, et al., 2019). Similarly, a green awareness campaign was put in motion which provided eco friendly toilets and water filtration systems across various tourist centres (Yasuda, et al., 2018). The government put plans into place to develop a spiritual tourism circuit to promote sustainable development and spiritual tourism (Medhekar & Haq, 2012).

South Africa

South Africa has been successful in promoting route tourism such as the Western Cape Wine routes and Highlands Meander. These route development strategies have been formed through community participation, creation of specific institutions and tourism-related spatial development strategies (Nowers , et al., 2002):(Ferreira & Hunter, 2017). South Africa boasts of well developed wine-route infrastructure and winescapes (Preston-Whyte, 2009). The Stellenbosch wine route was the first wine route developed in South Africa in 1971.

Actions and Impact

As at 2017, the number had grown to 21 with the South African wine industry generating close to 300,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities (Ferreira & Hunter, 2017). The landscape comprises – nodes, networks and wine-tourism regions (Ferreira & Hunter, 2017). This consists of 566 nodes (wine cellars) complemented by hospitality and catering services, 21 official networks (wine routes) offering a range of wine-related activities and experiences operating across 6 wine-tourism regions (wine grape producing regions).

Nowers, et al. (2002) identifies that the close collaboration between public relations of each wine route and local tourism offices in the specific region aided the coordination and promotion of marketing and promotional strategies. Despite the growth of this sector, the majority of these developments have been driven by private investment.

Costa Rica

Costa Rica is a popular destination for eco-tourism and a leading country in conservation efforts. The unofficial motto of Costa Rica is 'Pura Vida' which translates into 'Pure Life' (Laitamaki, et al., 2016).

Actions and Impact

The government has made concerted efforts in developing management capacity in Costa Rica to improve the tourism experience and promote sustainable tourism (Stem , et al., 2003). Since the 1990s, the government has promoted environmental learning - formally and informally- and implemented education policies (Blum, 2008). The ecotourism specialisation is managed by the Ministry of Environment and encompasses five broad subject areas: environmental education, environmental management, ecology, ecotourism, and English. In addition, the Certificate for Tourism Sustainability, a program run by the Costa Rican Tourist Board, is a tool used to improve the use of natural and social resources by businesses in the tourism sector, promotes the participation of local communities and provides support to businesses (OECD, 2020).

Malaysia

Bario is a remote village surrounded by rainforests and located on the island of Borneo. Tourism in this area grew after a house in the village was rebranded into a guesthouse to raise money. This sector has been supported by the growth in highland trekking and has proven to be sustainable due to the preservation of the rainforest highlands.

Action and Impact

The community offers homestays, guided treks, food and transportation to visitors (APEC, 2010). Complementary activities include an art gallery, handicraft shops, jungle survival courses, inter-community walks, paddling and fishing as well as jewelry making classes. Tourism in Bario has created employment opportunities for women and supported local economic development.

A community telecentre was developed in the village with computers, telephones, and the internet to develop the tourism industry (Gnaniah, et al., 2004). The e-Bario project which began in 1998 was coordinated by the University of Malaysia and supported by Canadian and Malaysian institutions. The community also set up a support and management committee under the village council to regulate standards and promote the industry. Since then, the tourism offering has grown to include research and development tourism including the Bario & Kelabit Highlands Food and Cultural Festival and e-Bario Knowledge Fair. In 2006, 21 guides from the Bario area were certified and licensed while a training session was held for homestay owners. This was co-sponsored by the Borneo Tourism Institute of Sabah and the Ministry of Urban Development and Tourism of Sarawak (Hitchner, et al., 2009).

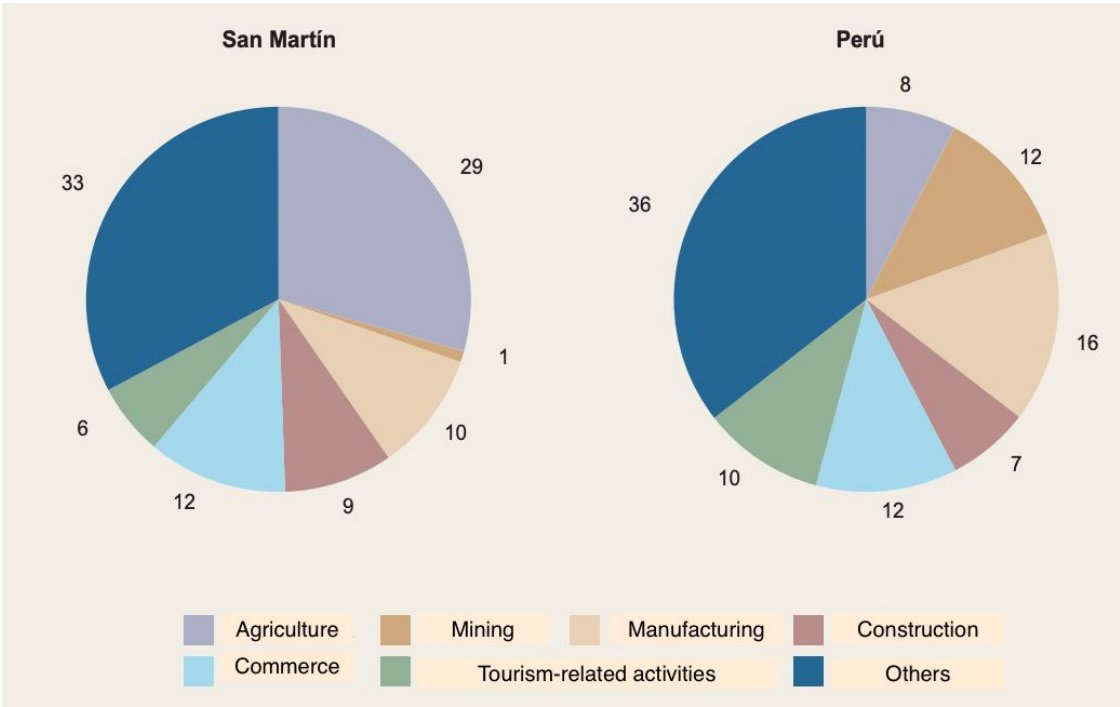
Key factors have been community participation, particularly in shaping the industry and overcoming discomfort about charging for accommodation. Homestays are generally encouraged under a homestay programme by the Malaysian government as alternative accommodation due to their potential to drive tourism and development. The isolation of the community has hindered mass tourism, community cohesion and sustainability (Harris, 2009).

Focus: Tarapoto

San Martín's Industrial Composition

The main industry in San Martín is agriculture, contributing 29% to the region's Gross Value Added (GVA) output. It is followed by commerce and manufacturing (Figure 1). The region experienced a remarkable rate of economic growth in the past decade. From 2007 to 2016, its GVA grew at a yearly average rate of 6.2%, surpassing Perú's National average of 5%. Poverty has been reduced from 48.3% in 2009 to 23.5% in 2016. Despite these achievements, San Martín is still one of the regions in the country with the lowest labour productivity and GVA per capita (Central Bank of Perú, 2017).

Figure 2. Gross Value-Added output by sector, San Martín and Perú.



Source: San Martín Social and Economic Report, Central Bank of Perú (2017)

Regional Tourism Industry

As shown in Figure 1, tourism-related activities account for only 6% of the region's GVA output. Nonetheless, tourism is linked with commerce and other activities, making it an important sector of the regional economy.

The number of visitors that travel to San Martín has grown steadily in recent years, driven entirely by domestic tourists. In 2013, 927,000 Peruvians visited the region, growing to over 1.2 million in 2017. Studies on this segment show a low yield visitor profile: tourists stay for an average of two nights and spend 633 soles (MINCETUR, 2018). The top reason for travel is vacation and relaxing (73%), followed by visiting friends or family (17%) and business (8%) (Promperú, 2017). On the other hand, San Martín is not a well-known destination for international visitors; in 2018, only 0.7% of foreign tourists arriving in Perú travelled to San Martín (MINCETUR, 2018).

DIRCETUR and San Martín Regional Government launched the Regional Strategic Tourism Plan 2019-2030 (PERTUR). It provides a diagnostic of the industry in the region and includes a set guidelines and local plans. It also details the main tourist corridors and attractions in the region, identifying several specific destinations. The largest and most important one is Tarapoto.

Tourism in Tarapoto

Tarapoto is located at the centre of the San Martín region and comprises the provinces of San Martín and Lamas. It features 33 natural sites and 5 cultural attractions including waterfalls, hot springs, forests and is also described as the one with the most representative cultures of the region (PERTUR, 2019).

Figure 3: Map of Tarapoto Tourism Destination



Source: Plan Estratégico Regional de Turismo 2019-2030 San Martín (PERTUR)

Its most well-known attractions are the Ahuashiyacu waterfall, the Laguna Azul in Sauce, and the cities of Lamas and Chazuta. The touristic offer includes a wide variety of activities such as hiking, horseback riding, water sports, museums and cultural sites, as well as an active nightlife. The district of Chazuta is known for its traditional pottery and ceramic art. Exclusively developed by women, the ancestral techniques and art have been declared National Heritage by the Peruvian Ministry of Culture (Andina, 2019).

Spiritual Tourism in Perú and Tarapoto

A growing number of tourists are visiting Perú in search of spiritual or mystic experiences, many of them drawn to the traditional ayahuasca rituals. While most users have a positive experience, serious cases including sexual assault and death have been reported recently (Hill, 2016). This has in turn created negative connotations and myths around the plant, presenting a challenge for developing ayahuasca ceremonies as a responsible and safe activity for tourists.

Spiritual tourism encompasses many other activities, and Perú has grown internationally as a destination for this segment. It has been identified as "Esoteric" tourism, involving holistic spiritual regeneration practices and connection with nature and ancient cultures. One example is Chavín de Huantar in the Ancash region, where visitors walk three days on Andean trails and interact with the community (WTO, 2016).

The involvement of Peruvian tourism authorities in spiritual or mystic tourism is not entirely new, at least at the regional level. In the Ucayali region, DIRCETUR launched the project *Promotion of mystic and experiential tourist circuits in the indigenous communities of Yarinacocha and Nueva Betania*. This included ancestral rituals and ayahuasca ceremonies (Andina, 2011).

In Tarapoto, spiritual tourism is offered on a small scale, drawing on the region's natural resources and rich cultural heritage. Several healing centres and spiritual retreats are operating in the city and its surroundings, offering ayahuasca retreats, Yoga, Vegetarian/Vegan/Raw Diets, plant healing, and community exploration. Takiwasi is one of the largest, offering a variety of plant healing activities and a seven-day spiritual retreat. They also run a research centre and develop products derived from local plants and natural ingredients. Other spiritual centres include The Garden of Peace, Huamanwashi Ashram, and Tambo Ilusión, which manages a private conservation area and is listed in the Regional Tourism Strategy (PERTUR).

While shamanic rituals and healings are listed as tourist activities in MINCETUR's Guide for Developing Tourism Projects, official strategies and campaigns focus mostly on exploring the local cultures. San Martín's Regional Tourism Strategy (PERTUR) includes no mention of spiritual or mystic activities. This absence of recognition is further manifested in Tarapoto's lack of a local tourism strategy or policy guide.

Institutions, Plans and Initiatives

Tarapoto already has an existing urban development plan. There are also various tourism bodies at the national and regional level. However, tourism needs to become a key focus to realise the benefits within this sector. The table below shows a list of relevant stakeholders and local actors, as well as plans and projects which have been identified.

Public Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> MINCETUR - National Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism <input type="checkbox"/> DIRCETUR - Regional Trade and Tourism Office <input type="checkbox"/> Promperú - Government Exports and Tourism Agency <input type="checkbox"/> San Martín Regional Government <input type="checkbox"/> Lamas Province Government <input type="checkbox"/> CGD Tarapoto - Destination Management Committee <input type="checkbox"/> University of San Martín
Private Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> CCPTSM - Chamber of Commerce, Production and Tourism of San Martín <input type="checkbox"/> CARETUR - Regional Chamber of Tourism <input type="checkbox"/> Local Community Representatives and Associations <input type="checkbox"/> Tour Companies and Operators
Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> San Martín Regional Development Plan 2030 <input type="checkbox"/> San Martín Regional Tourism 2019 -2030 Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Tarapoto Urban Development Plan (PDU)
Projects and Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Proyecto Especial Huallaga Central y Bajo Mayo

Framework and approach

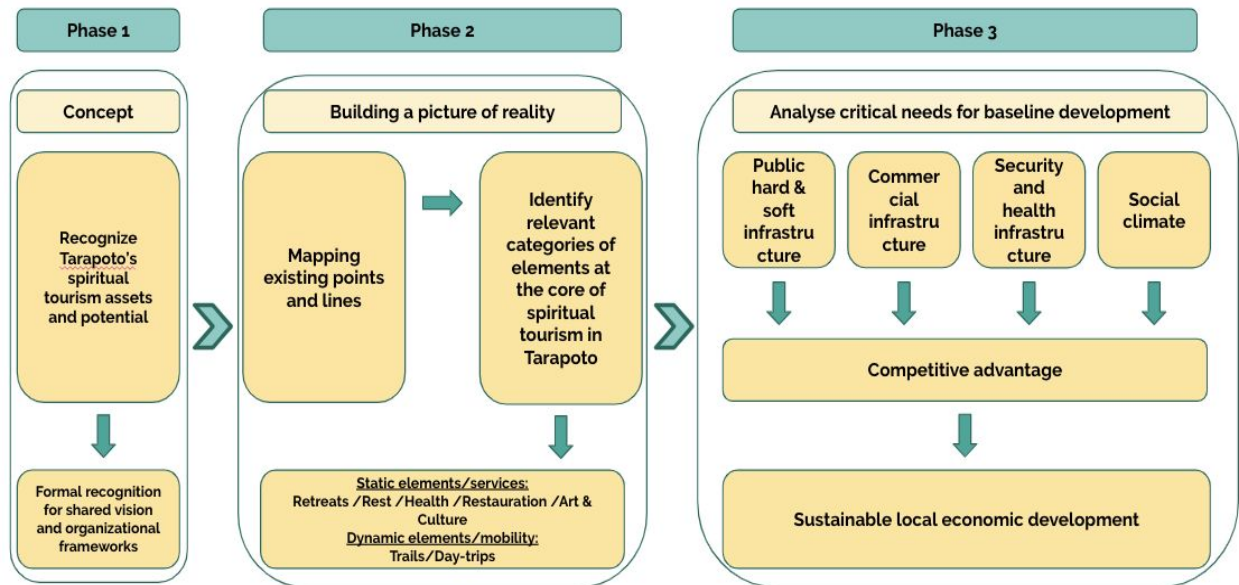
Spiritual tourism offers significant potential as an enabler for sustainable and inclusive local development (Terzidou, Stylidis and Szivas, 2008; Yalghouzaghaj and Shorbolagh, 2013; Yekinni Ojo and Mercy Busayo, 2017). Tarapoto is recognized as a unique destination and possesses some enablers for spiritual tourism. However, there is still untapped potential in terms of local development. Under the right conditions, spiritual tourism can contribute to the city's social development, upgrading of infrastructure, nature conservation, and other sustainable goals.

The approach starts with acknowledging the potential of Tarapoto's spiritual tourism industry as a local development engine. This first step is essential to measure the sector, define its limits and opportunities. Once spiritual tourism in Tarapoto is measured as a socioeconomic agent, and its operators are considered stakeholders and partners, the local government can focus on developing the following essential sub-areas:

1. Public hard and soft infrastructure: These range from roads and transport assets to telecommunication, specific institutional branches, regulatory frameworks, and other processes.
2. Commercial infrastructure: This network would link spiritual tourism to the global tourism market in order to attract foreign visitors and provide a marketing platform. It would also connect it with related industries such as catering, accommodation, and others to benefit from the spillover effect efficiently.
3. Security and health infrastructure: as safety is one of the enablers of tourism, promoting it in relationship to spiritual tourism in Tarapoto is essential to build confidence towards the wider public who might be unfamiliar with the area of its practices.
4. Social climate: aspects of spiritual tourism remain controversial in Tarapoto. Formal recognition followed and integration into tourism strategies as well as community dialogue will create a more receptive social climate. This would translate in practice through a more positive tourist experience, as well as a stronger attachment to assets and enablers of spiritual tourism by the local population as it will be regarded as a generator of growth and employment.

This framework as shown below serves to develop and promote Tarapoto's spiritual tourism sector as a regional competitive advantage served by specialized labor, institutions and other related industrial components.

Figure 1: Framework for local economic development based on spiritual tourism



(Source: Authors)

Project proposal: Mapping Spiritual Tourism in Tarapoto

The aim of this strategy is to project a unified image of the city of Tarapoto and to tie together various themes including spiritual, wellness, cultural, food, eco-tourism and community-based tourism.

Target market: Matching tourist's preferences to the local context is important in tourism management. With regards to spiritual tourism, wellness and spirituality, natural environment, recreation and leisure are key motivations for tourists. These preferences have been factored into the strategy for Tarapoto. As such, the target market are tourists seeking out spiritual and cultural activities and tourists seeking out new activities.

"Reconnecting with nature and self "

Implementing this strategy would require a selection of a designated area, followed by an audit of the product offerings and complementary services within the designated area.

Based on Wall (1997) threefold spatial typology-points, areas and lines-we identified points and activities in Tarapoto that can be combined to promote spiritual and cultural tourism. Areas are described as consisting of several attraction points and serve as nodes in the broader attraction area. The area here is Tarapoto while the broader attraction area is the San Martin region. Points on the other hand are individual heritage or cultural attraction with high concentrations of people in a small place such as the Ahuashiyacu waterfall, while lines are linear resources and corridors, and nodes and points connected along themed corridors.

The trail consists of short or long distance routes along the city combining various points and lines as well as complementary businesses and activities that fall under the theme. The spiritual and wellness centres such as Takiwasi, The Garden of Peace, Huamanwashi Ashram, Tambo Ilusion Retreat Center would serve as the starting points for these trails. Many of these centres are isolated and located in the forest areas, given their distance to the main urban areas, route development serves as a great way to integrate them with other activities. Furthermore, it will encourage the promotion of areas like the jungles which are not well known.

This would then lead on to the route or trail along a possible selection of lines - waterways and rivers - including the Tarapoto-Northeast waterfall and hot spring trail along the IIRSA

Norte road, the road to Lamas to the northwest, the road to Sauce and Chazuta in the south, and trails within Cordillera Escalera conservation area which can be connected to promote the theme of spiritual tourism.

The possible points or nodes on this trail would include the Ahuashiyacu waterfall, Catarata de Pucayaquillo and Cascadas de Pishurayacu. Along this route, complementary activities and services such as galleries and museums would be included, these could support the sales of local handicrafts and a range of new murals for viewing within the area such as the Open Air Mural Gallery in the harbour of Linz which hosts a range of murals and graffiti. Furthermore, supporting experiences or offerings would also be themed. These would include restaurants which offer plant based diets as well as interaction with local communities on the relevant routes to promote the experience of local cultures and living such as the type offered by Raul Ruiz. These could be in the non-accomodational activities in the form of inter-community walks, catering, construction, farming and accommodation activities such as home-stays, bed and breakfast which can be tailored to the presence of individual tourists (Ebadi, 2014). These forms of accommodation are also suitable given the current resource constraints.

These trail networks would be developed away from main access areas which motor taxis ply but will be integrated with existing public transport, and will link villages and attractions, thus, providing safe routes for local residents to utilise (MacLeod, 2016). They would also be marked with appropriate signage to allow for self-guided walks.

Given the current capacity constraints in Tarapoto, the management and development of this strategy should be facilitated by the Municipalities of Tarapoto and Lamas, in partnership with the chambers of tourism and local universities. Additionally, the lack of well developed infrastructure channels and trails, and signage hampers tourist activity. According to Jorge Del Aguila, the current urban development plan includes specific plans which focus on the systems of lagoons, rivers and green areas, as well as efforts to identify paths to promote walking along rivers and water-bodies. The provision and improvement of the relevant infrastructure and coordination with local communities in the provision will aid tourist activity and the successful implementation of this strategy.

Beyond Tarapoto - Development of an “Amazon Route”

Perú has well developed tourist corridors running through Lima, Nazca, Arequipa, and Lake Titicaca. There is also a well-known “Inca Trail”, a four-day journey on foot between Cusco and Machu Picchu. In contrast, the Amazon has no defined trails or corridors. In this sense, Tarapoto could begin developing a greater “Amazon Route”. Taking advantage of the recently improved road to Yurimaguas, a touristic corridor could be implemented between Tarapoto and this city. From this port, passenger boats travel to Iquitos via the Huallaga, Marañón and Amazon rivers, along the Pacaya Samiria Reserve. The journey takes several days and tourists can see river dolphins, sloths, and many other native amazonian water and land wildlife species. Tarapoto could benefit from better integration with the largest city in the Peruvian Amazon, joining both spiritual destinations and attracting tourists who would otherwise only visit Loreto. The airport infrastructure in both Tarapoto and Iquitos could allow for journeys in both directions, giving tourists the option to fly to or from either city. This would require close collaboration with the regional governments of San Martín and Loreto, both regions’s DIRCETUR, as well as PromPerú for marketing and branding.

Objective 1. Develop Tarapoto into a Spiritual Hub

Action	Output	Lead and Supporting Agencies
Develop and promote points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Better information and logistics support for tourists. ❑ Improved visitation with longer stays and higher spending. ❑ More participation from local communities for maximizing benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Municipality of San Martín at Tarapoto ❑ /Municipality of Lamas ❑ CGD Tarapoto ❑ Local Tour Operators and communities
Develop and promote lines:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Creation of clear trails within these areas ❑ Establishment of local “spiritual corridors” ❑ Possible integration within a greater inter-regional circuit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Municipality of San Martín at Tarapoto ❑ CGD Tarapoto ❑ Regional Government of San Martín ❑ Regional Government of Loreto ❑ DIRCETUR ❑ PROMPERU
Develop local plans and protocols to promote other activities: Bird watching, community interaction and home stays, spiritual retreats, ancestral ceremonies, plant healing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Recognition in order to research, develop value added experiences/products, and promote responsibly ❑ Better information and safety for tourists seeking spiritual experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Municipality of San Martín at Tarapoto ❑ CGD Tarapoto ❑ Academic/Research Sector ❑ Local Tour Operators/Healing Centers

Objective 2. Provision of Critical Needs at Points and Lines

ACTION	OUTPUT	LEAD AND SUPPORTING AGENCIES
Infrastructure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Improvement of transportation networks <input type="checkbox"/> Signage at specific designations <input type="checkbox"/> Provision of quality and accessible sanitary areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate movement of people <input type="checkbox"/> Improve access to trails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Municipality of San Martin at Tarapoto <input type="checkbox"/> CGD Tarapoto <input type="checkbox"/> Local Tour Operators and communities <input type="checkbox"/> Proyecto Huallaga Central
Commercial infrastructure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Tour maps and guides <input type="checkbox"/> Information help desks <input type="checkbox"/> Improved marketing strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Improved customer experience <input type="checkbox"/> Increased awareness of authentic and alternative experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Municipality of San Martin at Tarapoto <input type="checkbox"/> Promperú

Comprehensive Recommendations

Below are some recommendations for developing Tarapoto's spiritual tourism strategy.

A. Hygiene, Safety and Security

The aforementioned are crucial factors for improving the tourist experience and in aiding tourist activity. The interviews conducted pointed to a lack of sufficient places to wash up after trekking and the unhygienic state of some food markets. To attract tourists seeking a deeper contact with nature and culture in Tarapoto, it is essential that services promoted adhere to the highest possible safety standards. A robust institutional framework and coordination with stakeholders is necessary to protect the health and well-being of tourists and provide adequate support in case of emergencies. Given the variety of products and experiences within the proposed strategy, the Municipality of Tarapoto should reinforce its licensing system for businesses and monitoring capability. Where possible, sanitary permits should be issued for new or alternative products. Inspections to restaurants, markets and shops must also be upscaled in collaboration with the Regional Health Office of San Martín. Additionally, taps and eco-toilets should be provided at critical points and along trails, as well as street lights, safety information and seating areas.

The Municipality should develop a health and safety protocol for visitors engaging in plant medicine and ayahuasca rituals. The approach should focus on providing clear information and support channels. The official guidance would address the risks and benefits of consuming plants and infusions, medical risk-factors, as well as recommendations for choosing a Shaman or healing centre. The Municipality should develop the policy with guidance from the local universities and the Research Institute of the Peruvian Amazon (IIAP) and design it in collaboration with the healing centres and tour operators who organise the ceremonies.

One of the main barriers in health and safety policies is the Municipality's limited capability for monitoring and enforcing. It may also be complicated to define the scope for intervention; the municipality should develop an adequate regulatory framework without affecting the experience of adventure and ancient practices and cultures.

B. Marketing and promotion - It is necessary to project a unified image of Tarapoto so as to highlight its unique and competitive features which differentiate it from other areas. A marketing campaign with the slogan 'Reconnecting with nature and self' -

which highlights the biodiversity, culture, scenic environment and spirituality in Tarapoto has been developed. Still Bay in South Africa set itself apart from other areas by marketing itself as a 'Bay of Sleeping Beauty', an escape from the city life and towards tranquility. Tarapoto is well positioned to do this by branding and promoting the city as an authentic tourist destination.

Spiritual and cultural tourism involves sensitive points that must be considered carefully when advertising. In this regard, one of the main challenges in promoting spiritual tourism is the marketing of local traditions and cultures. A key point in developing this strategy is to respect the local identity and traditions. This can be done by establishing an open dialogue with the communities and making them key participants in the design of the plan. Another barrier is the lack of a local tourism policy. In order to promote the brand, the municipality should develop its tourism strategy in line with the Regional Plan (PERTUR). Promotion within the region can be deployed in collaboration with the Destination Management Committee (CDG), local chambers of tourism (CARETUR and CCPTSM) and private sector associations. To launch at a national and international scale, coordination with PromPerú is essential.

- C. Management Capacity - The tarapoto tourism sector offers great potential. However, developing human and management capacity in this industry is key to realising this growth. Currently, many local tour operators and guides are not well positioned or informed to successfully carry out these activities. Education - formal and informal - is needed to provide these guides and operators with the necessary skills. This can be done through increased participation with the private sector to promote the co-production of knowledge and upskilling, as well as to reduce costs.

One of the main barriers is the limited scope the Municipality has on education and capacity building. However, it can provide spaces for guiding the labour market and private sector towards a coordinated skill-building plan that includes English and Tourism Management. The Municipality should organise more workshops and classes delivered by San Martín's DIRCETUR and its Tourism Training Institution (CENFOTUR). Closer collaboration is required with the University of San Martín as well as the private academic institutions, to meet the industry's labour demand. The Municipality can also develop an employment office to serve as a link between students seeking work experience and businesses to promote skill development in the sector.

Expected Impact

The strategy and recommendations provided in this report have been developed with a consideration of the SDG 8, 12 and 14. Though further analysis with detailed empirical is a must, we expect our recommendations to have an impact on the following areas:

- ❑ Cross-sectoral development (including employment and government revenue) and empowerment of local communities
- ❑ Potential for linkages with local providers (food, art and craftsmanship, agro-industry) and generation of direct and indirect employment
- ❑ Promotion of local arts through interaction with local communities via walking trails, food and art tours and contribution to local development projects
- ❑ Preservation of ancestral culture and heritage
- ❑ Environment preservation through nature and wildlife conservation
- ❑ Promotion of peacebuilding through shared prosperity and community development

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