

**TOURISM ROUTES AS A TOOL FOR THE SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS**

A case study in Madeira Island

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Dedications

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Abstract

The depopulation of rural areas on the island of Madeira is a notorious reality, particularly when the most developed cities are increasingly crowded with residents and tourists and the peripheral areas uninhabited. To relieve these masses of tourism and residents of large cities, this research focused on the study of tourist routes as a means of sustainable development of the island's rural areas. The objectives focused on understanding whether tourist routes can contribute to the development of rural areas, be rethought and explored so that more routes are created. Other objectives are to provide governments with the community's point of view to facilitate the exchange of information, encourage partnerships to create more jobs, and clarify future needs regarding investment, maintaining cultural and historical preservation so that the potential for growth in rural areas is recognized. To answer the main question of this investigation: Can tourism routes help the sustainable development in rural areas? qualitative research was developed where the responses of the participants were the added value of the study since the centrality of the analysis was their point of view. Hypotheses were developed that are confirmed in the last chapter and the study presents some recommendations for future research.

Key words: Tourism Routes, Sustainable Development, Rural Tourism, Rural Areas.

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Summary

As tourism progresses and expands in the big cities, it turns out to be necessary to evaluate the peripheral areas, as they are rapidly becoming depopulated. Tourism is recognized as an economic driver of global development, is seen as the perfect strategy for developing sustainable plans in rural areas (Reis, 2007, p. 12). The fast growth of tourism is one of the forms of progress most susceptible to development and adaptation in large cities, which leads to address the issue of tourism development in underdeveloped areas. Rural tourism has shown a marked growth in recent years and has been a positive surprise for some countries and islands where the economy depends significantly on visitors. During the Covid-19 pandemic, tourists looked for places less populated that offered peace and relaxation. This search triggered a growth in the selection of rural and cultural areas for holiday choices, particularly for families, but also by individual visitors for work purposes such as nomads. Rural tourism seeks a "...return to origins, traditions, roots, authentic ways of life, the relationship with nature, the rustic nature of the countryside, etc. Rural spaces have been valued and are increasingly sought after by populations tired of urban stress." (Simões & Cristóvão, 2003, p.15).

Taking advantage of the growth in tourism and focusing on rural areas, the development of tourist routes makes it possible to keep peripheral and less populated areas dynamic and alive. Maintaining the culture and history of rural areas has become a priority objective of governments, especially within almost abandoned spaces such as the interior of islands and continents. Accompanying this growing interest in the development of rural areas is sustainable development, since in natural areas it is easier to implement sustainable projects because of the natural resources available. Nowadays, when sustainability is mentioned, it is no longer only about the environment, the concept it refers to everything that is necessary to maintain the future of humanity and to preserve natural resources. Sustainable development in rural areas gain attention when demography presents indicators of depopulation. Develop tourism routes to invert the number of undeveloped zones in Madeira Island has become one of government's priority. Currently, in Madeira Island there are some tourism routes, however, there is still a potential for development in these peripheral and less populated areas that deserves attention and exploration. Focusing this topic, a question has arisen, becoming the focus of this dissertation: Can tourism routes help the sustainable development in rural areas? In the present investigation, it is going to be discussed the existing touristic routes and their importance on developing sustainability on rural areas.

1. Introduction

Tourism has long been widely represented in the economic growth of the world holding 21.7% of GDP, which represented in 2021 worldwide, 5.81 trillion US dollars (Statista, 2023). Tourism plays a significant role, not only in the economy, but when aggregated with the attempt to preserve depopulated areas it is an almost perfect development machine. The tourism product serves as an alternative for the economy (Paiva et al., 2019, p. 30) and provides cultural dissemination and heritage preservation, especially in places needing of development.

Rural tourism has become a factor of significant importance for the development of less populated areas, in particular rural regions, where most of the traditions and cultures of a particular country are assembled. Existing the possibility to create tourist routes, to avoid alienation of forgotten places, has brought opportunities for sustainable development. Rural areas are serving as pioneers for sustainable development and for future projects in large cities. Cultures are being recognized as part of history, where participation and engagement between rural and urban communities is crucial ([UNWTO](#), 2022).

The development of tourism routes for rural areas ensures a promising future by offering some hope to avoid the alienation of the less populated places. Tourism routes bring opportunities for improving rural areas, in addition to facilitate job creation and therefore a better quality of life of small communities, it increases population density and relieve the cities. Development in rural areas help to provide a balance in the country demography.

This research intent to provide results to demonstrate the benefits of tourism routes and their potential for development, therefore, this investigation proposes the following objectives:

- ✓ To understand if tourist routes can contribute to the sustainable development of rural areas and prevent alienation of those areas.
- ✓ To understand if tourism routes can be rethought so their potential can be explored, and more routes created.
- ✓ To provide the governments clarity on community engagement, so when defining strategies related to rural tourism or other community issues, they understand the importance of sharing information and discuss with the population about the future development for these small regions.
- ✓ To support the importance and encourage the development of partnerships to facilitate job creation.

- ✓ To clarify the goals for the future so everyone involved understands the essential needs for maintaining tourism routes alive and recognise all the potential that it presents for development and sustainable growing.

The first two chapters addresses the literature, focusing on the definition of sustainability in rural areas and the definition of tourism route. The SDGs agenda for 2030 presents guiding lines for the future of tourism development, and it is referred in the present paper as a reminder of the sustainable indicators provide by UNWTO. Additionally, along with some literature about sustainable development of rural areas, the paper addresses the current case study and discusses the importance of taking advantage of tourism growth to develop and innovate the routes in Madeira Island.

Chapter three presents the study case of Madeira Island as the sociodemographic and economic characterization of the Island. This section describes a compilation of the data collection for the investigation whose chosen method was qualitative. The qualitative method was the most adequate for the study once the focus point was to collect population point of view on the matter of tourism routes sustainable development and their felling regarding future projects. The research selected three niche markets: residents of rural areas without choosing any places but focusing on depopulated or less densely populated areas; private companies that had some kind of direct or indirect action with rural tourism, namely tourist routes; City councils of cities whose rural areas showed a lower population density, and their main cities indicated a greater dependence on tourism and, therefore, on tourist routes. The questions were carefully formulated and adapted to understand the different points of view from the three selected groups. Aimed at the answers to be as objective as possible, the study defined that the interview method with open questions for data collection would be the adequate. Apart from the municipality of Porto Santo, the ten cities of Madeira Island were contacted. Funchal as Secretary of Tourism with no response and it were obtained four responses, namely the Municipalities of Machico, Ribeira Brava, Porto Moniz and São Vicente.

On the fourth part of the investigation the information collected is analysed and comment. The analysis was separated to isolate the ideas of each group.

The fifth section analyses the responses of each group individually and after a compilation is presented on the discussion. This research chooses to present a SWOT analysis to gather all aspect pointed by the responders.

Finally, on chapter six, there is a conclusion of the study where hypotheses are discussed and the termination of the investigation. The research intents to state the importance of the

objectives pointed above on the present chapter and prove if the main question is responded:
Can tourism routes help the sustainable development in rural areas?

2. Literature Review

Among the existing definitions for tourism, it is found that the one from UNWTO is the more objective. It designates "Tourism as a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes" (UNWTO, 2023). Standing as a mean of leisure for its practitioners, tourism began to have greater importance when it was understood as an economic mechanism that, in addition to boosting the economy, it was also acknowledged as a vehicle for development and social growth (Cunha, 2017, p. xv). However, there was a concern growing a side with tourism development, environment preservation and sustainability. Some of the largest recipients of tourists, such as large cities, historical destinations, or places with exuberant nature, realized that accompanying the economic development, it also, grew the need to preserve the environment, the cultures, and habitats. New policies were developed with that intention, to protect and preserve environments and resources. Travellers began to choose calmer places to visit. The worries with sustainability, and the preference for nature raises along with government's necessity to relieve the crowded big cities, additionally, shareholders view another way of investment Cunha (2017, pp. 160-164). defines sustainability to balance and grow the population using the natural resources and materials available in an organized and thoughtful way. Sustainability is the process of maintaining the balance between population, environment, and economy, as represented in Figure 1.

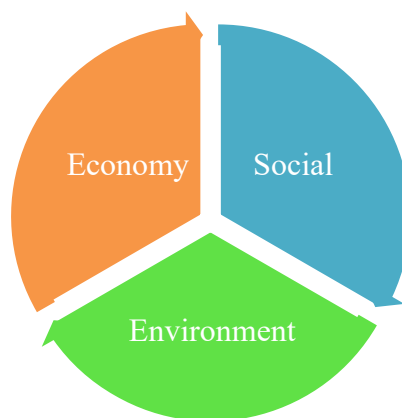


Figure 1 - Sustainability General Representation

Source: Adaptation from Purvis et al. (2019, p. 682)

“In essence, sustainable development is a process of change in which the exploration of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development; and

institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations” (Brundtland Report, 1987, 1- n. °15).

In fact, complying with the natural preservation of the natural places, rural tourism is the ideal form of tourism for those who enjoy nature. According to the study of Putu et al., (2021, pp. 136-137), there is not a specific definition for Rural Tourism stating that “most of the authors define Rural Tourism by describing key tourism activities in rural destinations such as farm-based tourism, nature-based tourism, adventure tourism, wellness tourism, spiritual tourism, nostalgia tourism, heritage tourism, cultural tourism, agritourism, ecotourism, and other related activities in rural areas.” Rural Tourism is not only a touristic product, but also a way of maintaining history, culture, and rural areas alive. "Rural tourism implies the taste for seeking direct contact with the rural environment, of short duration, namely out of season and preferably short distance. One of the main objectives of Rural Tourism, is to provide peace and tranquillity in the rural environment" (Leal, 2001, p. 9). Countryside tourism offers many memorable experiences for the visitors, and it detains an exciting potential to grow and development the less inhabited areas (Chen et al., 2023, pp. 166-177). Rural tourism is growing in the past years and after the Covid-19 pandemic it was acknowledged an increased search for rural regions and the prognosis is to increase the demand. There are economic advantages and social and cultural benefits in rural tourism, especially for small countries and islands (Liu, Y. et al., (2023, pp. 1-2).

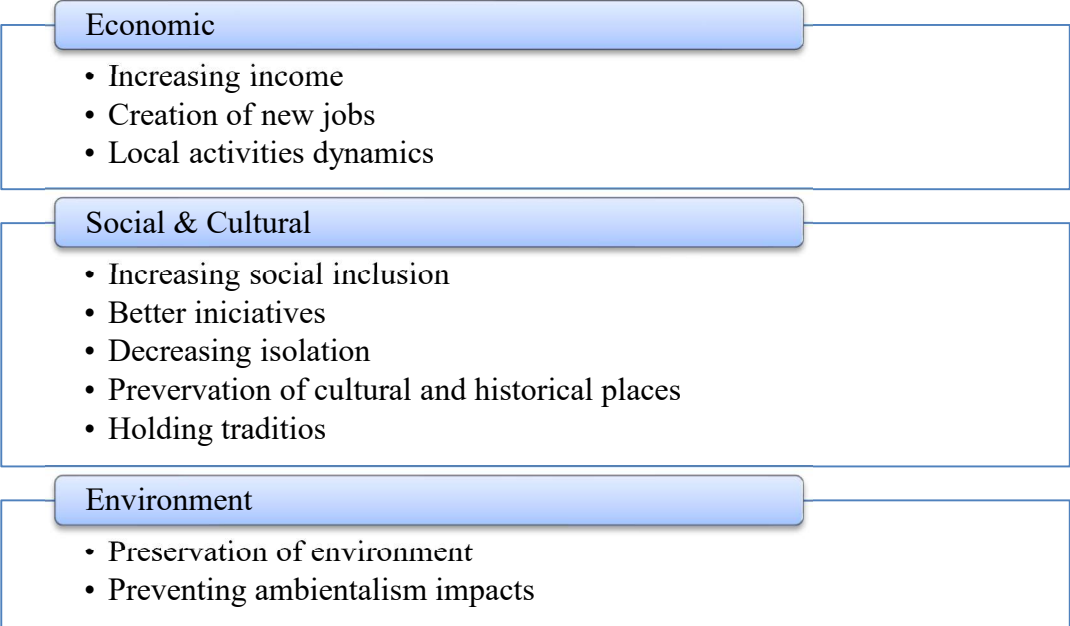


Figure 2 – Main Advantages of the Rural Tourism
Source: Adaptation from Cunha (2017, p. 241)

It became essential that Governments persist on a full commitment with sustainability of the rural areas along with stakeholders and shareholders. The potential for development such as economic progress; social and cultural and environment well-being and environment preservation encourages the development of rural areas (Cunha, 2017, pp. 230-242) as shown on Figure 2.

2.1 Sustainable Tourism Development

Sustainability is a present matter discussed worldwide. The definition of the concept begun with the concerns of environment, specifically the impact of pollution on the planet. However, the sustainable concept rapidly evolved to include and assure the survival and wellbeing of all future generations (Cunha, 2017, pp. 160-164).

Throughout the years of increased tourism progress and development, warnings began to be lifted and concerns raised, particularly on visitor-dependent economies. Massive tourism was destroying landscapes and nature, heritage was being disregarded to make way for accommodation, all of this to provide memorable experiences for tourists. There was an increasing waste production, and some unfortunate decisions were made to meet the need and huge demand of tourism. The economy has grown but, with it, a series of tourism policies were needed to be rethought and some repressed. The impacts of massive tourism on the environment are considerable. Barros (2022, p. 92) specifies the major negative impacts of tourism as “deterioration of the ecosystems, loss of the natural resources, disturb the locals, loss of cultural identities, increase criminal acts, dependency of the outside help and flaws on the local hand-labour” and some measures have been thought to decrease and mitigate that impact. In the other hand, sustainable tourism is the number one thoughtful strategy for development. The use of natural resources in rural areas for the development of rural tourism is countless (Simões & Cristóvão, 2003, p. 116), but “...there is a permanent need to educate local populations to understand the importance of sustained development that preserves the product that, effectively, allows them to survive and prosper.” (Costa & Águas, 2001, p. 49). Although Costa and Águas, (2001, p. 49), defined sustainable tourism as “the development of a product that is in harmony with the local environment is fundamental in terms of sustained tourism”, it is believed to be much more. The need for development to ensure sustainability is no longer a tourist priority, but a need for survival for future generations.

Sustainable tourism development implies a commitment with stakeholder as with shareholders. Communities must be fully involved with sustainability and understand the necessity of tourism development to maintain the economy running, especially in places where “resources are limited” (Mutana & Mukwada, 2018, p. 62). A sustainable tourism is a type of tourism that implies the involvement of everyone and every aspect regarding tourism and communities, it is "a development model and not the type of tourism" where modern cultures and tradition merge, as Figure 3 exemplifies (Simões & Cristóvão, 2003, pp. 57-64).

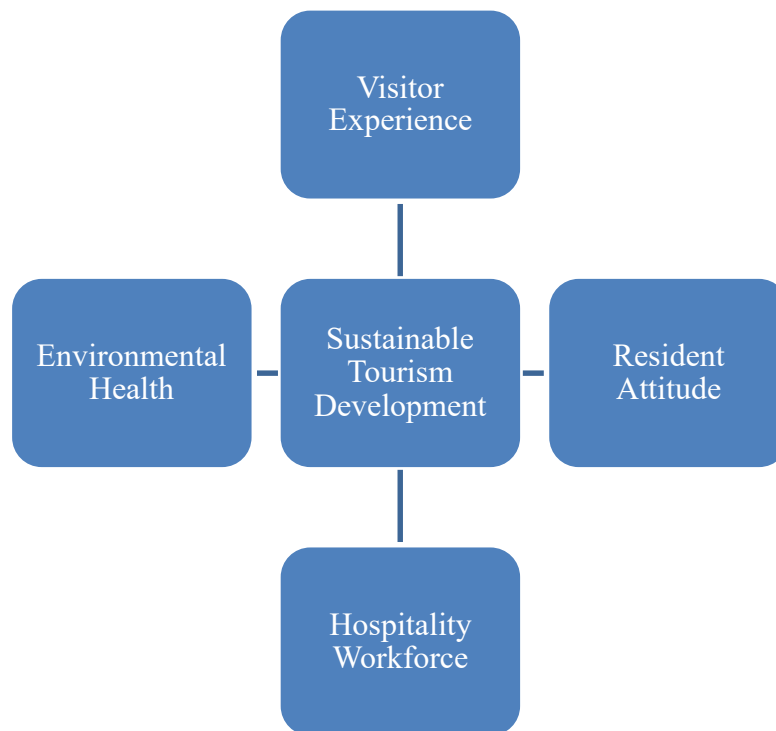


Figure 3 - Indicators for a Sustainable Tourism Development

Source: Adaptation from Crotts et al. (2022, p. 2).

The concept of sustainable tourism, which encompasses this perspective that is central to the knowledge-based platform, is an adaptation of the concept of sustainable development, which is commonly interpreted as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Lew et al., 2004, p. 575).

2.1.1 Sustainable Tourism: the state of art (SDGs & Agenda 2030)

As tourism demonstrates an exceptional growth in recent years, the United Nations (UN, 2015) development a system of monitoring tourism impacts and methods to mitigate those impacts (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023, p. 1).

On 25 September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly approved the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development and with it the Sustainable Development Goals, a framework comprising 17 goals and 169 targets, through which States, civil society, and private sector can guide and measure their contributions to sustainable development towards 2030 ([UNWTO](#), 2015).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are a form of

... controlling the use of natural resources and encouraging conservation efforts, creating employment opportunities for local communities while promoting local culture and products, and using marine resources sustainably so as to increase the economic benefits for small islands developing states and underdeveloped countries (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023, p. 2).

The SDGs shown on Figure 4 has different measurement indicators according to specific segments. For travellers the first goal “No Poverty” suggest the visitors to buy local handicrafts and products, the main message is “Travel with care!” In the other hand, for companies, the importance is given to models and practices as “Competitiveness is the key business driver for sustainability” ([UNWTO](#) & UNDP, 2017). This goal secures the idea of local employment; partnerships to promote training and education.



Figure 4 - SDGs General Representation

Source: ([UNWTO](#), 2015)

The SDGs are only possible with the commitment of governments and policies that are determined to embrace the future, “including all segments of society in building a more sustainable planet for all humanity.” (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023, p. 5) “The increasing recognition of the role of tourism in sustainable development and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda is a landmark breakthrough that provides a unique opportunity for all governments to create a sound and favourable policy foundation” ([UNWTO](#) & UNDP, 2017, p. 21).

2.1.2 The Role of Tourism in the Sustainable Development of Rural Areas

The character of tourism in the development of rural areas aims to prevent an alienation of less populated places, and it helps to mitigate poverty. Tourism is boundless to develop the economy and supports the balance of population density (Okech et al., 2012, pp. 41-42). Leisure

industry became important for developing rural areas by providing means for progress and sustainability in zones where economic growth depends on investment, whether governmental or private. Tourism presents various and important development means:

- ✓ In agriculture and livestock farming.
- ✓ In the exploration of natural zones favourable to the practice of sports.
- ✓ In the exploration of historical zones.
- ✓ In the development of projects to increase and create employment.
- ✓ In cultural education.
- ✓ Expansion and creation of nature related sports.

The shareholders, invest in rural tourism when there is an increased on the demand. Most of the time with government economic support and policy facility that help to develop their businesses. For such, information distribution and marketing strategies are of extreme importance to pursuit investment (Liu, Y. et al., (2023, pp. 1-12). In large cities, tourism indicators are measured by the number of visitors versus income, that is, there is an evaluation between entrances and the monetary value dispensed by tourists during their visit, which in the end counts for the destination's Gross Domestic Product (UNWTO, 2014, p. 12). In rural areas, the indicators are evaluated by the number of visitors and experiences available. For rural tourism, sustainability is the main reason for tourism (Ćurčić et al., 2021. pp. 1-3). Tourism has the potential for sustainable development of rural areas, as its purposes are to improve living circumstances and develop conditions for young people to stay and create a life that offer opportunities for their children. (Okech et al., 2012, pp. 36-54). As “tourism is a known mechanism of population retention, especially for the youngsters (more vulnerable towards migrational phenomenon) due to its capacity to rapidly produce new jobs...” (Ibanescu et al., 2018, p. 2), rural tourism also represents the potential of nature. Tourism in rural areas take advantage of natural resources, as it is “being perceived as a sustainable ‘cure-all’ solution...” (Ibanescu et al., 2018, p. 2). As stated by Simková (2007, p. 265) "It is necessary to react to the changes of consumer behaviour, such as increasing demand habits and orientation to goods and services that are not really necessary."

2.2 Tourism Routes and sustainable development of rural areas

"Sustainable tourism is thus advanced simultaneously by industry and conservation organizations as tourism's response to sustainable development" (Lew et al., 2004, p. 558).

Tourist routes provide knowledge of the space and subsequent dissemination. The upsurge of experiences causes an increase in search and permits the development of existing routes and the creation of new ones. In rural areas the experience relates to nature, culture, and with the history of the place. Rural tourism is allied with the sustainable development of spaces, and tourist routes allow the visitor to be part of the places that are visited (Sardaro et al., 2021, p. 2), Tourists who seek rural routes also seek connection with nature, allowing them to enjoy peace and, in a way, works as an anti-stress. Tourist preference for rural areas over cities has presented a hope for the most problematic rural places, particularly the capital's peripheral areas, depopulated zones, areas with difficult geographical accessibility and islands (Poruțiu et al., 2021. pp. 1-12). The tourist route has the purpose of showing the visitor that there is more to see and to experience than what normally they acquire in travel agencies. Every place and experience from a specific a country can be publicized through tourist routes. According to Mota (2020, pp. 9-10), routes should be studied and defined by agreeing on the following stages:

- ✓ Conceptualization through market research
- ✓ Survey on existing tourism products
- ✓ Analyse the tourism resources of the region.
- ✓ Analyse the existence of suppliers.
- ✓ Creating the brand
- ✓ Create an operation plan.
- ✓ Create a financial plan.

Tourist routes are ways of taking advantage of and avoid the alienation of spaces. They are alternatives to traditional city tourism. Tourism routes are escapes that provide different and unique experiences, by being a specific tourism product for each market niche.

2.2.1 Defining Tourism Routes

A global definition of tourism routes is that are "the activities of travellers who enjoy tourism products that are found along a predetermined course or direction" (Mutana & Mukwada, 2018, p. 59). It is understood that tourism routes are itineraries developed by shareholders for economic growth and somehow impacting stakeholders. Routes can be developed by air, land, or sea (Pedrosa et al., 2022, p. 2). They are defined by agreeing the particularities of the areas and can be identified by approving the model suggested by the World Tourism Organization,

structure, theme, territory, history, and infrastructure available for visitors (Pedrosa et al., 2022, pp. 2-3). Tourism routes are developed according to the viability of supply and demand. Currently, there are tourist routes adapted to the needs and particularities of tourism. Tourist routes can be presented as a complement to the tourist activity or as a main tourist activity:

- ✓ Tourism and the natural environment
- ✓ Tourism in natural environment scenarios.
- ✓ The tradition of springs and streams.
- ✓ Climate and health
- ✓ Concept: tourist-environment-natural
- ✓ Tourism, sustainability, and social theory

The creation of tourist routes in each place provides the economic development and growth of the area, mostly through job creation as "tourist routes are abstract routes based on a theme and a circuit associating natural and cultural characteristics" (Mota, 2020, p. 6). Tourism routes present diversity to the product and/or offer available to the visitor, and at the same time expand the offer by avoiding channelling commerce and attractions into one place. Diversification provides opportunities for development and tourist routes breaks the barriers when visitors seek for differentiation and memorable experiences. It exists numerous tourist routes, however, to be able to distinguish them Mota (2020, pp. 13-51), separates the routes in six major categories.

Those six categories are:

- ✓ Cultural routes
- ✓ Religious routes.
- ✓ Gastronomic routes.
- ✓ Heritage routes.
- ✓ Oenological/Winery routes.
- ✓ Industrial tourism routes.
- ✓ Nature tourism routes.

The tourist routes can, also, be defined when using the existing space whose value is used to develop it. The choice of tourist routes for the development of unique spaces has been growing, and with this development the interest in preserving routes and discovering new ones is expanding. It is a process of providing and discovering new forms of tourism (Liu, Z. et al., 2023, p. 467).

2.2.2 Importance of Tourism Routes for local development

Nowadays, tourist has shown an intention of knowing the destination roots and a concern for the places they visit, particularly, cultural, and historical places. This attitude shown by visitors has been growing, and with it raises the concern to maintain the sustainability of spaces and to maintain the inherent nature and all the surroundings. Tourism routes are an effortless way to maintaining the culture and history, since most of it are in rural areas, but also, the most viable form of development in rural spaces (Paiva et al., 2019, pp. 1-33). Tourism, as a territory development strategy, it is the easiest progress strategies for small island economies (Cavaco, 2008, p. 237) when recognize that can avoid depopulation due to lack of economic conditions and opportunities for better living conditions (Briedenham & Wickens, 2003, pp. 71-79).

Tourism routes as a means for local development increases the awareness of the population and authorities and contribute to avoid the impoverishment of populations once understood as the future of the country since. The understanding of tourist itineraries in local development is not restricted to progress in cities. Taking advantage of natural resources and developing added resources that can be transposed to the cities and providing sustainable growth, is to understand the importance and opportunities that the rural environment has and can develop, as demonstrated in Figure 5. "The urban-rural connection, or the related bridges, symbolic and materialized in new city-countryside flows (of people, goods, services and information) become key elements in the process of structuring a rurality measured and mediated, in good part, by competence centres..." (Cavaco, 2008, p. 337).

In many cases, tourist routes are the lifeline for small communities and economies on the edge of the abyss. Tourist routes disseminate the most remote and less travelled spaces by tourists.

The potential of tourism routes has long been realised in developed countries. In 1964 a Council of Europe working group mooted the idea of a series of European Cultural Routes, with the prime objectives of raising awareness of European culture through travel, setting up networks for cultural tourism, and utilising European cultural heritage as a means of stimulating social, economic, and cultural development, thus improving the quality of life of local people (Briedenham & Wickens, 2004, p. 72).

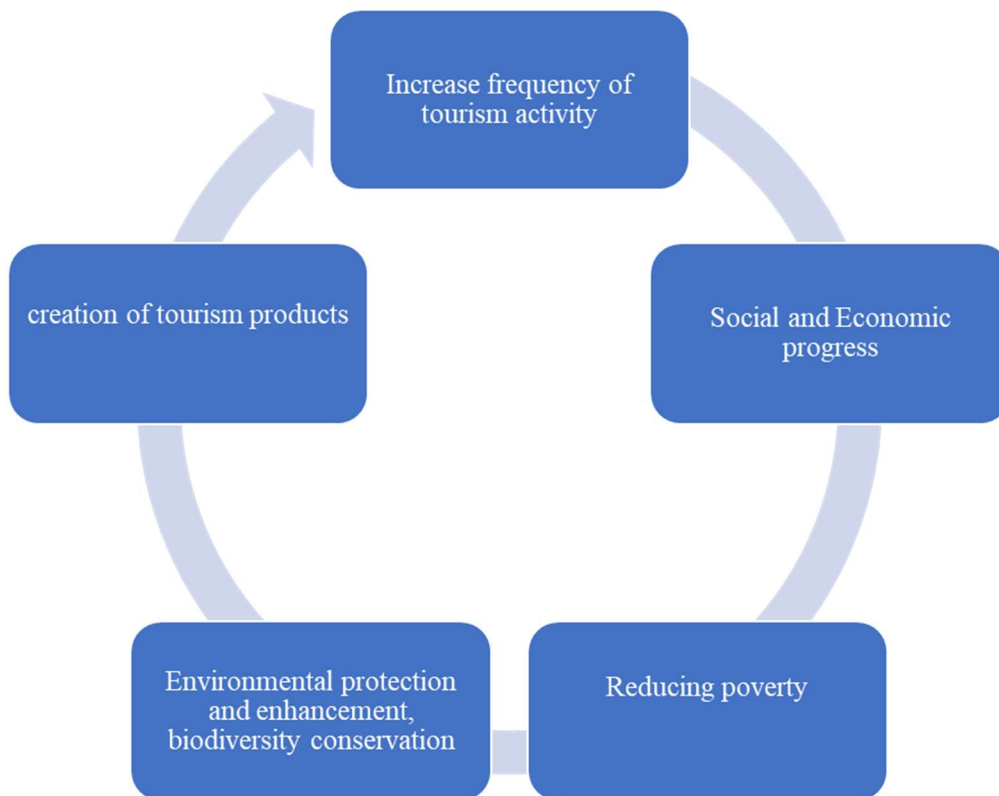


Figure 5 - The Promotion and Offer of Tourism in Rural Areas

Source: Adaptation from Cavaco (2008, p. 237).

It is pointed out by - Mota (2020, pp. 17-19) and transcribed for the present study the document issued by [UNWTO](#) (2014, pp. 1-3) entitled: *The role of Tourism Routes in Fostering Regional Development and Integration*:

1. Tourism routes create opportunities for transboundary cooperation, collaborative destination marketing, product development, public-private partnerships, and safeguarding of natural and cultural heritage.
2. Tourism routes can be developed over large distances, namely crossing more than one country, or over relatively short ones within a same region or country." In common, they will share a theme or activity that drives the interest of tourists as well as complementary services and experiences characterized by elements and values of physical and intangible nature.
3. The development of tourism routes has gained particular relevance in recent years as it responds to the objectives of dispersing demand all year round and throughout the territory

while addressing the new market trends emerging from travellers seeking enriching experiences which entail more flexibility, discovery, learning and contact with local people and their traditions.

4. Routes thus offer important opportunities for sustainable tourism development as they have the potential to:

- (a) spread tourism demand and income all year round and over the territory, thus supporting the regional distribution of wealth, reducing pressure on key attractions, and contributing to addressing seasonality;
- (b) create new and innovative products and add value to existing ones, therefore increasing visitors' satisfaction, length of stay and spending;
- (c) open new destinations and/or revitalize destinations in decline;
- (d) create a pulling factor that attracts new market segments, as well as repeat visitors, particularly special-interest segments, and individual travellers, which often have higher-yield spending;
- (e) foster public-private partnerships and stimulate entrepreneurship.
- (f) promote coordination between local, regional, and national authorities;
- (g) protect and promote natural and cultural heritage, not only tangible but also intangible heritage, by generating income for preservation and providing economic viability to activities which otherwise may be "lost," particularly those related to more traditional sectors such as agriculture or handicraft;
- (h) generate funding and more attractive conditions for private sector investment; and
- (i) develop cultural understanding and strengthening the cultural links between people at the local, regional, national or/and international levels.

5. It is widely recognized that intraregional trade and tourism exchanges play a significant role in accelerating economic growth. "In this regard, tourism routes can also play a fundamental role in promoting regional development and integration as they:

- (a) create networks within a region or linking various regions and/or countries thus maximizing the potential of cooperation as opposed to competition between various players in a region or various regions;
- (b) create opportunities to generate jobs and business opportunities in less favoured regions and thus their socioeconomic regeneration and development;
- (c) fight rural desertification and migration to urban areas by creating job and business opportunities notably for youth; and
- (d) strengthen economic linkages, social cohesion, and cultural understanding.

6. Along with the potential benefits of tourism routes, there are also major challenges that need to be addressed when building a successful tourism route. These include:

- (a) Leadership and the creation of effective coordination mechanisms and governance structures among disperse stakeholders;
- (b) Effective management with a comprehensive and sustainable approach to the conservation of the route;
- (c) Integrated product development approaches and the effective clustering of services and attractions along the value chain taking into account the tangible and intangible values of the route;
- (d) Marketability, including a clear understanding of target segments, and commercial viability;
- (e) Integrated marketing and promotion and the development of a common and truly “shared” brand;
- (f) Infrastructure planning, development, and financing;
- (g) Engagement of local communities in the design, operation and interpretation of routes and the fair and equal distribution of tourism benefits at the local level; and
- "(h) Proper inclusion of tourism cooperation and routes development in regional cooperation agreements and processes."

7. Although a booming phenomenon in recent years, tourism routes are not new. The year 2014 marks the 20th anniversary of the Samarkand Declaration on Silk Road Tourism, a

milestone document subscribed by 19 countries, together with UNWTO and UNESCO, which calls for “a peaceful and fruitful rebirth of these legendary routes as one of the world’s richest cultural tourism destinations”.

8. The establishment within the UNWTO Secretariat of a specialized Silk Road Programme in 2010 reinforced the Organization’s commitment to developing sustainable tourism growth along the Silk Road. This highly collaborative programme focuses on three key areas:

(a) marketing and promotion to stimulate cooperative campaigns and partnerships between public and private sectors;

(b) destination management and capacity building to promote quality experiences, and increase length of stay and yield and;

(c) travel facilitation to promote easier border crossing and visa procedures.

9. UNWTO has gained significant experience in enhancing cooperation among Member States through its Silk Road Programme, as well as through other initiatives such as the collaboration with the European Institute for Cultural Routes and the Amber Route or the preparation of the upcoming UNWTO International Conference of the Spice Route (Kerala, India, July 2014) and the First International Congress on Pilgrimage and Tourism (Santiago de Compostela, Spain, September 2014).

10. There are important regional and national experiences among Member States, which opens a good opportunity for the Organization to work further on the topic of tourism routes for the benefit of all Members. (UNWTO, 2014, pp. 1-3).

2.2.3 Success factors for developing tourism routes (trends?)

Developing tourist routes requires measurement systems indicators for quality and planning. The requirements for implementing and monitoring tourist routes depend on the route to be presented.

Broadly speaking, a tourism route can be seen as a network of tourism stakeholders in a given geographical area with the common goal of increasing the numbers of tourists to a region. The prime objectives of such routes are the marketing of tourism products in the given area, setting up of collaborative networks for tourism, and using tourism as a means of stimulating social, economic, and cultural development, thus contributing to local economic development, and improving the quality of life of local people (Viljoen, 2007, p. 2).

To develop tourist routes, the following steps are required:

- ✓ Strategy & Planning
- ✓ Financing
- ✓ Certifications
- ✓ Branding
- ✓ Marketing
- ✓ Monitoring

Development of tourist routes requires a financing study compatible with European guidelines to defined strategy and planning. Policy system should be developed according to the needs of the areas where the tourist routes are intended. It is essential that governments show accessibility on implementation and dissemination to facilitate the necessary certifications (Viljoen, 2007, pp. 147-150). A key step is to involve local communities to provide experiences both ways, for visitors and locals. Developing tourist routes require the development of a brand to facilitate the promotion of the routes and select all the best the region has to offer. Advance a cross-border marketing plan to publicize the product and, the decisive step, is monitoring visitor numbers, to verify a successful new tourist route (Viljoen, 2007, pp. 147-150).

Trends in tourism usually depend on world changes. Whether it is climate change and bad weathers, modern technologies, development of new sports, political and religious positions, search for new and different experiences that provide personalized services, or healthy and differentiated gastronomy, all these factors have a strong influence on contemporary trends in tourism. Some have a bigger influence on rural tourism due to its proximity to nature. “In tourism, a number of different developments have led to changes in consumer behaviour and business processes, which means that they are responsible for the emergence of new tourism trends” ([Revfine](#), 2023).

According to Dallan, (2022) the latest trends in tourism are:

- ✓ Safety and Cleanliness – less crowded destinations.
- ✓ Social Media – influencing travel.
- ✓ BLeisure Travel – combination of business and leisure travel.
- ✓ Destination Uniqueness – distinctive assets and unique experiences.
- ✓ Transformative Travel – connection and personal transformation.
- ✓ Sustainability and Community Engagement – increasing awareness.

Destination uniqueness, transformative travel and sustainability and community engagement are more related to rural tourism as implies visitors to develop a kind of proximity to nature.

Meanwhile, the Revfine magazine published an article where it mentions the trends in tourism for 2023. According to the magazine, most of the trends are related to advanced technology, where personalization of services and ease of access to services are the priorities. From virtual reality, automations and artificial intelligence, the future of tourism is intrinsically connected to new gadgets and technological progress ([Revfine](#), 2023).

2.3 Current challenges in rural areas

Currently, the island shows a steady growth and projects its impact for the years to come, however some factors are determinant to prevent the decline of tourism development on the island. Specific factors, such as wars and political tensions and health emergencies, are impossible to predict and cause immediate damage. The other factors cause a significant impact, but as they are predictable, they allow margins of manoeuvre for reversing damage. Some topics of current challenges in rural areas refer a few common circumstances that justify the concerns, such as:

Current challenges topics in rural areas	Author
Emerging markets. These markets are a potential threat to the island's tourism growth, as they may decrease demand;	Marujo (2013, pp. 8-9)
Another equally challenging factor is the quality of the offer available. The quality of experiences in rural areas offered to visitors should be monitored;	UNWTO (2023)

Population decline in rural areas is a major challenge to the development of these areas. Labour shortages create barriers to economic development and can be a major impediment to progress;	Cunha (2017, pp. 239-242)
Poor preservation of cultural spaces and historical places in adverse conditions generates discomfort and leads to the choice of other destinations, as well as the lack of sustainable transparency;	Ionela, Constantin, Dogaru (2015, pp. 1050-1059)
The lack of presence of inhabitants in government decisions when projecting infrastructure development aimed at tourism growth can create unease and consequently scare away visitors;	(Liu, Y. et al., 2023, pp. 1-12)
Absence of financial support drives investors away;	Almeida (2017, p. 106; 109)
Deficiency marketing strategies.	Wang & Pizam, (2011, p. 86)

Table 1 - List of Current Challenges in Rural Areas

Source: Authors

The Autonomous Region of Madeira being an island is subject to many factors that influence the economy and consequently the development of the island (Almeida et al, 2021, pp. 1-12). Besides the factors mentioned above, there are also meteorological factors. The Island has an airport and a port. Winds frequently affect the airport and sea disturbances (Belo-Pereira & Santos, 2020, pp. 1-26), although they are minor, can also affect the docking of cruise ships that call at the region.

3. Research Methodology

In this chapter the study presents a brief characterization of the Island regarding its demographic and economic situation and reminds the objectives of the research. The study provides a description about the methodology adopted by the investigation.

3.1 The case study: Madeira Island

Madeira is known as the Atlantic Pearl. The island exists for about six hundred years since its discovery by João Gonçalves Zarco, Bartolomeu Perestrelo and Tristão Vaz Teixeira in 1419.

“Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Madeira flourished for the birth of the tourist sector, quickly becoming a mandatory reference for the European aristocracy that accepted temporary residence here, attracted by the natural therapeutic qualities of the island” (Visit Madeira 2022). Madeira has its tourist boost due to its mild climate to treat respiratory diseases in the 18th and 19th century.

The increasingly assiduous presence of these patients highlighted the need to create more support infrastructure: sanatoriums, lodgings and agents that would serve as intermediaries between outsiders and the owners of such reception spaces. Tourism, as we understand it today, was taking its first steps (Visit Madeira 2022).

Over the years the economy became highly dependent on visitors, the island progress and tourism development were focused on what the region can offer to tourist that will make them what to come back. “Tourism is the main sector that generates wealth in the regional economy, with a transversal and potentially multiplying character” (IDR, 2014, p. 32).

Tourism is the most relevant activity in the region, constituting the main element structuring and catalyst of the regional economy. According to a study on the contribution of the sector in the regional GDP, based on the various business dynamics that it encompasses, tourism may have direct and overall impacts on GDP of the RAM that are between 25% to 30%, being responsible for around 12% to 15% of jobs (IDR, 2014, p. 30).

Whether it is the natural landscapes or the pleasant weather, the island offers a unique experience (Reis, 2007, pp. 14-15) once it is possible to go from sea to the mountains within an hour by car. Accompanying the tourism boost over the years, the main cities were getting crowded and rural places remained undeveloped and almost abandoned. A few years ago, rural hotels outside the main cities, gain some significance to visitors that seek peaceful and nature experiences. During the Covid-19 pandemic, visitors showed an interest for rural areas all over the world, and Madeira was no exception. An increasing demand for the quieter places and away from the busy cities was noted (Pires, 2022). However, visitors’ statistics are still not enough to balance the numbers when comparing total tourism with rural tourism within the period before the pandemic and post pandemic, see Table 1. Rural tourism growth was around 3% while total tourism growth was around 16%.

Year	N. ° Tourist in RAM	Rural Tourism in RAM
2019	1 590 882	42 459
2022	1 858 515	56 510

Table 2 - Tourism Dashboard N. ° Visitants RAM 2019 & 2022

Source: [DREM](#)

The Regional Madeira Program 2030 predicts an intervention on rural areas by defining “six strategic pillars” (Turisver, 2022, p. 6).

The 2022-2027 Tourism Strategy brings together a set of six strategic pillars for the development of the Region, namely: Nature, Active & Sport Tourism; Sea & Nautical Tourism; Health & Wellness; Cultural Heritage; Gastronomy & Wine; Lifestyle, Trendiness & New Trends and Consciousness & Sustainability (Turisver, 2022, p. 6).

To monitoring the implementation of the six pillars it was also defined six guidelines:

Six guiding drivers for the strategy were also defined: strengthening destination management, improving knowledge and monitoring the performance of the Tourism sector; investing in the diversity, differentiation and structuring of the tourism offer; investing in increasing the

notoriety of Madeira as a destination; attracting, qualifying and valuing Human Resources in the Tourism sector; encouraging investment in the Tourism sector and ensuring the sustainability of the destination (environmental, as well as economic and social) (Turisver, 2022, p. 7).

With the preparation of this strategy, it is expected that Madeira Island will distinguish itself as a tourist destination for the entire year. It is, also, estimated that the island it will be appreciated as a differentiated destination, and as such, captivate new markets (Turisver, 2022, p. 152).

In a government publication from November 2022, it was presented the Destiny Madeira Sustainability Action Plan 2022-2030. The plan support and sustains the 2022-2027 Tourism Strategy for Madeira by identifying risks and defining strategies to make sure that the plan is executed with SDGs and UNWTO 2030 agenda (Visit Madeira.com, 2022).

3.1.1 Sociodemographic and economic characterization

The fact that the Autonomous Region of Madeira is an island with limited access to education and lack of employment opportunities, the emigration rate is high. These two aspects are the main factors that characterizes difficulties on the demography and economy of the island. The main problems are the imbalance between births and mortality and ageing. There are not enough births to balance the numbers, and mortality rates increased about 9% in 2021 comparing to 2010 as shown in Figure 6.

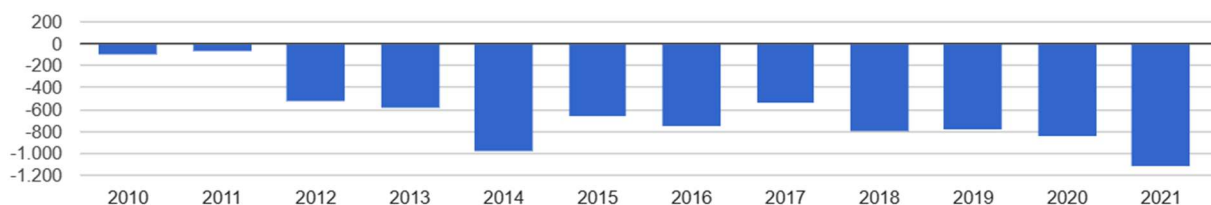


Figure 6 - Natural Balance Between Births and Deaths RAM

Source: [DREM](#)

These factors led to the decrease of the population. By 2021 the island had 251 182 thousand inhabitants (DREM), however, comparing within a period of ten years the island population decrease with a difference of more than 10 000 inhabitants as presented on Figure 7.

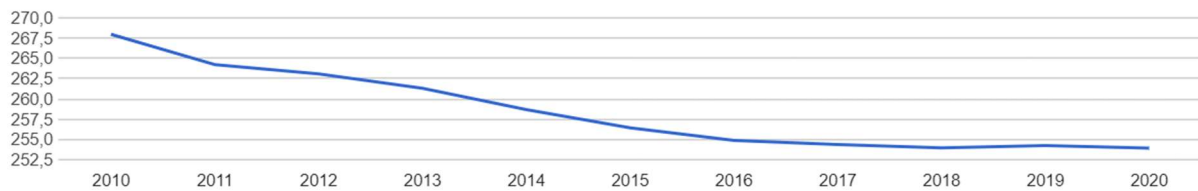


Figure 7 - Residents Statistics RAM in Thousands

Source: [DREM](#)

Madeira has eleven cities and apart from Funchal, Santa Cruz, and Câmara de Lobos, the other eight are showing signs of alienation.

The geographical situation of Madeira Island does not easily allow demographic expansion. The fact that the island has high grounds is a conditioning factor in the construction of housing, causing an excessive population aggregation in the lower areas and near the sea. Additionally, the volcanic origin makes some accesses and road constructions difficult, and the inhabitants' preference is for areas with better access combined with more industrialized areas. These factors aggravate demographic peaks as shown in Table 2. Areas like Santana, Porto Moniz and São Vicente are not known as tourist spots because they are far from the main cities. Although these areas have their own small town, they are known to be less visited by tourists as and the visitor's that go there are through excursions, or routes previously advertised by family and friends or travellers' blogs.

Geographic Area	Total N. °
Funchal	105 828
Santa Cruz	42 626
Câmara de Lobos	32 128
Machico	19 544
Ribeira Brava	12 686

Calheta	10 901
Ponta do Sol	8 398
Santana	6 522
Porto Santo	5 179
São Vicente	4 854
Porto Moniz	2 516

Table 3 - Demographic Situation in RAM until 2021

Source: ([DREM](#) – Madeira em Números 2021)

The demographic numbers in Table 2 are demonstrated in Figure 8 across the island regarding each town. Funchal is the capital, and the airport is on Santa Cruz.

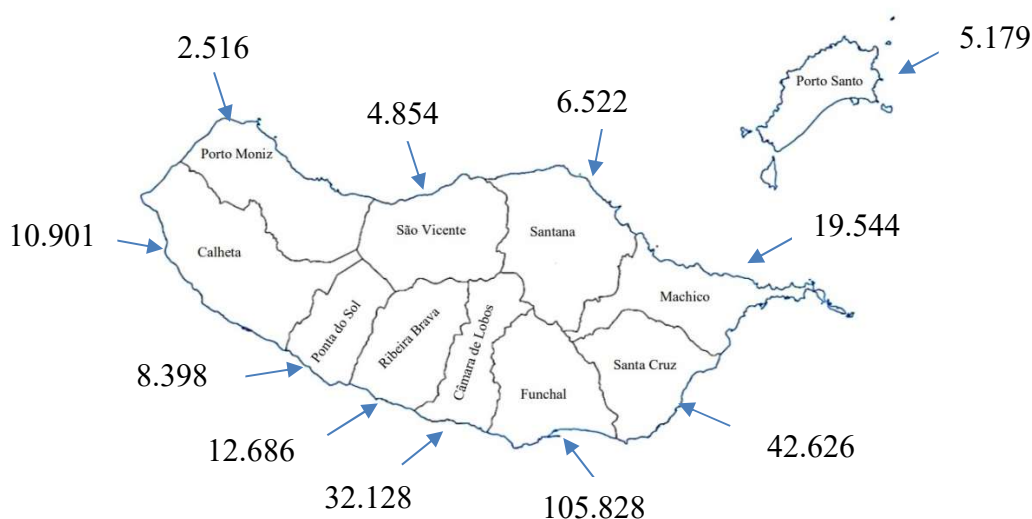


Figure 8 - Demographic Representation in RAM until 2021

Source: (DREM – Madeira em Números 2021)

Regarding tourism revenue, the region showed considerable growth in 2022 compared to 2019. In the general, tourism revenue on the island growth 14%, however, compared to the rural tourism figures the growth was not significant. As reflected in the profits result between the total tourism revenue of the island, in 2019 this represents about 2.5% and in 2022 it rises to 3% relative to the total profit of 2022.

Total Profit - Year	Total Tourism	Rural Tourism
2019	407,5 M€	9,0 M€
2022	488,8 M€	12,1 M€

Table 4 – Tourism Dashboard Total Profit Tourism RAM 2019 & 2022

Source: [DREM](#)

There is an imbalance in revenue when comparing the island's demographic figures. Since the tourist routes provide new forms of development, efforts should be distributed in such a way that the revenue reflects this effort.

3.1.2 Tourism routes in Madeira Island

Autonomous Region of Madeira, as an island, it benefits from the sea and nature to develop experiences for visitors. The island has classified, as primary attractions for the tourist routes, the sea, nature, wellness, culture and heritage, gastronomy, and events. Within these categories, the attractions are selected with emphasis adjacent to each Turisver (2022, pp. 30-39), see Table 5. The existing tourist routes are suitable for families, and people of all ages, and are available on tourists' information points, hotels, travel agencies, and other places related to tourism. Although there is not much information available online, besides bloggers and personal websites. Joining the routes mention in Table 5 there are the nomads, a route that showed a considerable increasing demand on the island, especially during the pandemic. For the Digital Nomads route the island is presented as a place to work remotely, surrounded by breathtaking landscapes and away from metropolis. Digital Nomads have developed a website to promote the island and gather all information needed to book a place. Marketing is throughout experiences and bloggers. Madeira Island has defined Ponta do Sol has the primary Nomad Village in the Region (Digital Nomads Madeira Island, 2023).

Category/Tourism Route	Experiences available
Nature, Sea & Extreme Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Paragliding ✓ Diving & Snorkelling

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Surf, Paddle & Bodyboard ✓ Canyoning ✓ Coasteering ✓ Mountain Bike ✓ Hiking ✓ Trails ✓ Rally ✓ Whale & Dolphin watching ✓ Golf tournaments ✓ Geocaching ✓ Walking ✓ Viewpoints ✓ Bird Watching
Nomads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Digital Nomads
Levada walks & Cultural and Historical footpaths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Walks through ancient creeks and water courses. ✓ Cultural (Small paths inside the mountains; old places where honey and sugar were made; handcrafts factories; farms) ✓ Historic (Royal paths, castles) ✓ Churches routes ✓ Themed Attractions (aquariums; Casinos; Cable Cars; Wicker Basket Carts; Local Markets, between others) ✓ Embroidery ✓ Wicker & Tapestry ✓ Local Costumes ✓ Festivals & Events
Tours & Excursions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Jeep (on extreme roads) ✓ Local Guides (choose your personalized route)

Gastronomy & Wine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Vineyard’s visit, tasting & participate on wine making (grape stomping) ✓ Tour around the Island for tasting cultural and iconic dishes.
Mindfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Meditation ✓ Yoga ✓ Thalassotherapy

Table 5 - Madeira Island Actual Tourism Routes

Source: Turisver (2022, pp. 30-39).

As already mentioned in chapter 2.3.1 of this research, tourism has a strong representation in the Autonomous Region of Madeira, and therefore is an economic engine for the development of the island. It is essential to understand the importance of the tourism economy and how to take advantage of it to develop the rural areas of the island. As Sardaro et al. (2021, p. 2) states “in contrast to the mass tourism industry, sustainable rural tourism can prevent the depopulation of rural areas and safeguard the landscape”. The rural areas in Madeira already have the nature and all surroundings as advantage. Most of the activities described in table 5 are practiced in rural areas, although tourists purchase them online or in sales spots, they are transported to areas outside the cities because the activities were developed in rural spaces.

3.2 Objectives of the study

The leading objective of this study is to understand how tourist routes can contribute to the sustainable development of rural areas and prevent alienation of those areas. Furthermore, this research purposes to understand how tourism routes can be rethought so their potential can be explored, and more routes created. The study aims to provide the opinion of the local communities regarding this theme, as their awareness and understanding on this matter is a reality-life approach. Additionally, another objective of this research is to provide the governments clarity on community engagement, so when defining strategies related to rural tourism or other community issues, they understand the importance of sharing information and discuss with the population about the future development for these small regions. Furthermore, and important is to encourage the development of partnerships to facilitate job creation. Lastly,

it is necessary that everyone involved understands the essential needs for maintaining tourism routes alive and recognise all the potential that it presents for development and sustainable growing.

3.3 Methodology

This study aims to answer the main question of the research: Can tourism routes help the sustainable development in rural areas. To better understand this possibility this investigation chooses to acquire the opinion of the communities.

Over the past three decades, a rich body of research focused on perceptions and attitudes of locals and stakeholders towards tourism introduction in rural areas as a main approach for impact measurement, most of those studies use a methodology based on surveys and interviews. Overall, the results of those studies indicated positive impressions and attitudes, particularly regarding the improvement of village appeal and the better capitalization of local resources (Ibanescu et al. 2018, p. 3).

The methodology for this study is presented as qualitative research.

Qualitative research can be defined as a systematic and subjective approach to describe or understand life experiences and make sense of them. This type of methodology is used for different purposes: to gain an overall understanding of a phenomenon or situation; to study the depth, richness, and complexity of phenomena; to create emergent or data-driven theories inductively; to understand human experiences, processes, or group culture and how these are experienced by the people who shape them (Delgado-Hito & Romero-Garcia, 2021, p. 164).

This analysis was established relying on an semi-structured interviews. Three groups were defined, which were, selected residents in municipalities whose geographic area covers rural areas, private companies, and public entities. As demonstrates in Figure 8 the investigation addresses three social pillars: the population, private companies, and public entities.

Communities of rural areas are the most important group for the study, as they are the ones most impacted by the changes in those areas, whether through alienation or increased development. People in rural areas know their surroundings well, as well as their histories and cultures. According to Almeida (2017, p. 108), local communities should encourage in participating on projects development as they “valorise the tradition, character and culture”.

Private companies and private service providers related to rural tourism services, were invited to participate in this study as they are an important part for this discussion. Most of the investment in tourist routs are from private businesses as “the financial difficulties in preserving the environment and heritage may become unaffordable for most municipalities” (Almeida, 2017, p. 106).

Some representatives of City Councils from municipalities with a wide-ranging rural area were, also contacted, although there were only received four responses. The municipalities perspective is important, not also, to comprehend the offices perspective of the social and cultural environment in the region but, also to understand the developments and future projects for the sustainability of the rural areas and, therefore, the touristic routes.

The study was defined to understand the importance of tourist routes on the Island of Madeira and whether they can be a determining factor for the sustainable development of rural areas.

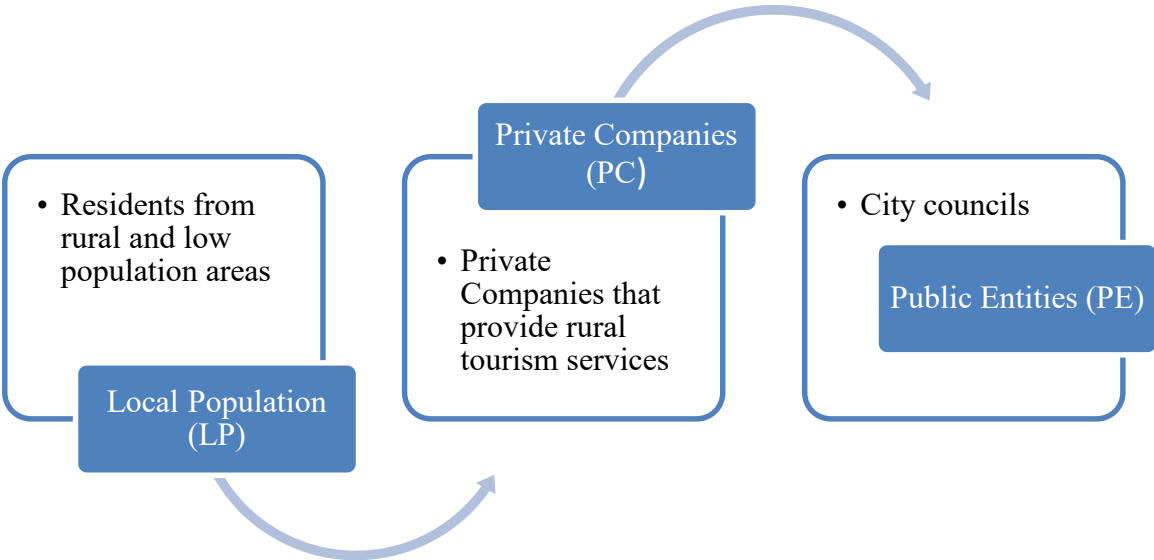


Figure 8 - Representation analysis of the chosen groups

Source: Authors

For this research it was selected a semi-structured interview with open-flexible questions. The groups were invited to participate in the last week of June 2023, and the research received the last response on the first week of August 2023. Because it is the Island high season demand in tourism, the difficulty to obtain responses was extreme. The information obtained was analysed qualitative, individually by response and by group.

Ten residents were selected specifically from rural and less populated areas. Of the residents surveyed, four persons agreed to be interviewed and the rest choose to respond by email, as shown in Table 7 and Figure 9.

For private companies, were chosen between travel agencies, tour operators, hotels representatives, and individual service providers, namely mountain and nature guides. As mentioned above, given the seasonality of the Island, there was a difficulty in approaching these entities, therefore were obtained eight answers, two of which were interviews, see Table 7.

Public government departments were the most difficult to reach and only four responses were obtained, one of which was an interview, confirm in Table 9 and Figure 10.

Additional, to provide a conduct line for interpretation of the indicators, five hypotheses were formulated, as shown in Table 6. The indicators for the analysis are:

- ✓ Respondents' perspective
- ✓ Responsibility and awareness
- ✓ Community and Government collaboration
- ✓ Understanding the essentials
- ✓ Cultural and Historical knowledge

Hypothesis 1: The community has a positive perception of tourism routes and the benefits that it can bring to rural areas. “Studies on impacts of tourism have shown that destination’s population recognizes economic and social benefits and costs of tourism on their community and lives” (Tsundoda & Mendlinger, 2009, p. 61). According to Liu, Y. et al. (2023, p. 2) “understanding the contributions of rural tourism to rural community development is critical for helping government and community planners realize whether rural tourism development is beneficial.” Also, Liu, Y. et al. (2023, p. 7) defends that “when a rural community develops rural tourism, environmental protection awareness is increased, and the responsible utilization of natural resources is promoted.”

Hypothesis 2: The participation of the population is important in public debates on the development for future tourism projects. As Briedenhann e Wickens (2004, pp. 1; 76) support

that communities must participate in the decisions, so their voices are heard and provide inputs to better understand the process.

The design, implementation and evaluation of social policies should have as a guiding principle the improvement of the quality of life of the populations. The quality of life of a community is determined by the level of development and consequently influenced by the priorities and strategies of political action (Barata, 2022, p. 10).

Almeida (2017, p. 106) also establishes that "...support from local residents may be voiced if they are made aware that the environmental and heritage related resources available offer an opportunity of contributing to better standards of living."

The success of tourism development always depends on the good will and the cooperation of the local community. If local community aspirations and capabilities do not match with tourism development and planning, it may destroy the industry's potential. Local community involvement is generally considered as an important issue for the success of tourism projects (Nagarjuna, 2015, p. 17).

Hypothesis 3: Strategy plans and partnerships encourages rural tourism development and empower quality local employment. Partnerships become indispensable when there is a difficulty in hiring workers. For the growth of less populous regions to be possible, especially concerning rural areas, development strategies can only be implemented when there is an execution plan that considers sensitive issues such as the unavailability of hand labour. "The development of regional and local sustainable rural tourism strategy plans to assess an area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, to guide both public and private sector investment, and to assess environmental and community requirements" (Development, 1994, p. 34). Sardaro et al. (2021, p.2) also defends that "public policy can shape the development of tourism by harnessing public-private partnerships, however, further development strategies could also derive from cooperation among private stakeholders...".

Madeira Island has adopted the following sustainable policies:

...an ethical attitude towards employees, suppliers and visitors to the Destination, promoting a safe and participatory environment, where cases of exploitation and breaches of human rights are regularly monitored and employees of businesses in the tourism value chain play an important role in the decision-making process; Encouraging the creation of equitable work opportunities and remuneration, as well as the promotion of health and well-being, equality and continuing education and training;... (Visit Madeira 2022).

As it states Haven-Tang & Jones (2012, p. 33) “partnerships enable cross sectoral activities and provide a public–private–voluntary–community framework through which rural tourism development policies can be addressed through a transformational leadership approach.”

Hypothesis 4: The financial support (local, UE or tourist tax) is significant for future projects development. Small islands that depend exclusively on tourism are the most likely to have difficulties with investment and financial support. However, without funds and investment, the possibilities for development in rural areas are much smaller. All investment is crucial since “in order to develop sustainable rural tourism, financial investments are needed” (Radović et al., 2020, p. 1). Also, Almeida, (2017, p. 106) said that "... financial support for measures and projects that promote a high level of co-operation/coordination between private operators can be welcomed by the general public". As Cunha states, (2017, pp. 239-242), tourism brings wealth "not only results from the expenses made by visitors, but also investment ...". Investing in the development of rural areas through tourism projects and with the help of "government action" offers "development alternatives to rural populations, contributes to the increase of farmers' incomes and combats the depopulation of rural regions" (Cunha, 2017, pp. 239-242).

The development of sustainable rural tourism depends on the quantity, quality, and continuity of funding sources. The state has a key driving role in the development of sustainable rural tourism, especially in the financing of transport and communal infrastructure, as well as tourist signalization. As stated in some research, in most tourist countries, the state has a primary impact on the development of tourism, which is realized through incentive measures of economic policy. For sustainable rural development, the existence of effective ongoing

support and proactive advisory services is extremely important for the creation of rural policy and its implementation (Radović et al., 2020, p. 3).

Hypothesis 5: Cultural and historical heritage are a priority when discussing rural areas development strategies. Concerning sustainability of rural areas, culture and history are fundamental to the preservation of spaces because these are the two aspects that preserve the essence of places and populations. “Such is its importance that it is institutionalised in public policy and local development, creating an interdependence between heritage conservation and the development of tourism...” (Garcia-Delgado et al., 2020, p. 3)

The preservation and valorisation of historical and cultural heritage is equally important, as it contributes to the promotion of cultural identity and the creation of a traditional and unique offer, capable of attracting interest and investment. It is important to continue to involve the local community in this area (Visit Madeira 2022).

Like the monuments, the vestments, the lifestyles, the politics, the ways of thinking characteristic of the times, gastronomy is an integral part of the cultural heritage (Bessière, (1998, pp. 21-34). “Rural communities have thus seen their social and cultural capital become their main heritage asset.” (Garcia-Delgado et al., 2020, p. 2) The cultural and historical heritage of a region is its added value, as it holds its essence of community. “The conjunction of cultural heritage and tourism has been widely studied, as it opens up possibilities for the economic development of places with a depth of heritage...” (Garcia-Delgado et al., 2020, p. 3)

Shown below is a summary table where the three groups are related to the questions proposed in the interviews with the hypotheses formulated. To obtain a better understanding of the results and verification of the assumptions, the analysis of indicators aims to facilitate the understanding of what is proposed in this research work.

Hypothesis	Analysis Indicators	Question Nr.		
		LP	PC	PE
Hypothesis 1	Respondents' perspective	1	1	1
		2	2	2
		4	6	
		7	11	
		8	12	
		9		
		10		
Hypothesis 2	Responsibility and awareness	5	9	8
Hypothesis 3	Community & Government collaboration	6 a)	4	4
			7	7
			10 a)	9 a)
			10 b)	9 b)
				10
Hypothesis 4	Understanding the essentials	6 b)	5	5
			8	9 c)
			10 c)	
Hypothesis 5	Cultural & Historical knowledge	3	3	3
		11		6

Table 6 – Hypothesis and Analysis Indicators

Source: Authors

The questions were selected so that the approach across the three dimensions could be analysed with correspondences. Questions one to three were common to all segments and questions from four until the last one, was prepared specifically for each segment.

The answers to the interviews were transcribed for the present study. A total of eleven questions were prepared for residents in different strategic areas of the island where rurality is prevalent. For private companies twelve questions were selected and for public entities ten questions were prepared. See the list below.

List of question shared to all the three segments enquired:

1. What benefits do tourist routes bring to rural areas of this region?
2. Do you agree that the growth of tourist routes contributes to the sustainable development of rural areas? Why?
3. Should tourist routes expand (go beyond) the base of traditional products and enhance their potential to attract and retain visitors for longer? In what way?

List of question for Local Population (LP):

4. How do you assess the impact of existing tourist routes? What benefits could they bring to the local community?
5. How important do you think it is for the local population to be involved in the discussion on tourism planning in the municipality and on tourism investment projects for rural areas? Is there public discussion? Examples...
6. Regarding the local population:
 - a) What do you think about partnerships (between public, private, and other organisations) for the training and employment of local community members aiming at their integration in the tourism value chain (as producers, suppliers, distributors, craftsmen, local guides, local cooks...)?
 - b) How do you assess the implementation of a tourist tax and with the revenues derived from it apply them to projects that improve the quality of life of residents and sustainability of the municipality.
7. Were there more families living in this parish/town/village/council in the 1990s and early 2000s?
8. Did the lack of employment encourage many people to emigrate, was this the case in this town? Was it the only reason?
9. Would you like to see this area more developed and with more inhabitants?
10. In your opinion, can the increase in tourism help to develop this area? Do you think it could bring benefits? What are the benefits?
11. In your opinion, are tourists important to keep the traditions and history of this town alive? In what way? What can be done?

List of question for Private Companies (PC):

4. How do you assess the implementation of the STRATEGY FOR MADEIRA TOURISM 2017-2021(strategic plan), namely its effects on the development of tourist routes and its effects on the sustainable development of rural areas?
5. Do you consider that the financial support provided by the government and the EU is sufficient to incentivise the development of tourism projects for rural areas?
6. How do you assess the impact of existing tourist routes? What non-economic benefits could it bring to the company?
7. Do you think that the development of tourism projects in rural areas, especially tourist routes, helps to prevent the alienation of areas with less population density?
8. How do you assess the support provided by public authorities to the projects of the various tourism operators, especially regarding the development and consolidation of tourist routes?
9. Do you consider it important to involve the local community, businesses, and other stakeholders in the discussion on tourism investment projects for rural areas? Is there public discussion? Examples...
10. Regarding the local population:
 - a) How do you assess the quality and quantity of labour available for tourism services?
 - b) What do you think about partnerships (between public, private, and other organisations) for the training and employment of local community members aiming at their integration in the tourism value chain (as producers, suppliers, distributors, craftsmen, local guides, local cooks...)?
 - c) How do you assess the implementation of a tourist tax and with the revenues derived from it apply them to projects that improve the quality of life of residents and sustainability of the municipality.
11. Do emerging markets pose a threat when it comes to tourism projects aimed at growing rural areas?
12. How do you describe the profile of tourists looking for tourist routes and other tourism activities in rural areas?

List of question for Public Entities (PE):

- 4) How do you assess the implementation of the STRATEGY FOR MADEIRA TOURISM 2017-2021 (strategic plan), in particular its effects on the development of tourist routes and its effects on the sustainable development of rural areas?
- 5) Do you consider that the financial support provided by the government and the EU is sufficient to incentivise the development of tourism projects for rural areas?
- 6) The preservation of natural, cultural, and historical spaces is a priority for developing rural areas, what measures have already been taken and/or implemented in the municipality?
- 7) How do you assess the support of public authorities (and, particularly, your own) for the projects of the various tourism operators, especially regarding the development and consolidation of tourist routes?
- 8) Do you consider it important to involve the local community, businesses, and other stakeholders in the discussion on tourism investment projects for rural areas? Is there public discussion? Examples...
- 9) What specific measures or support has your public entity (name) implemented or supported about, for example:
 - a) Partnerships for training and employment of local community members aiming at their integration in the tourism value chain (as producers, suppliers, distributors, artisans, local guides, local cooks...).
 - b) Supporting and encouraging small-scale agriculture, sustaining producer communities, and developing partnerships with cooperatives and producer organisations supporting small-scale farmers.
 - c) Consider the implementation of a tourist tax and with the revenue from this apply it to projects that improve the quality of life of residents and sustainability of the municipality.
- 10) The document: STRATEGY FOR THE TOURISM OF THE AUTONOMOUS REGION OF MADEIRA, IN THE PERIOD 2022 2027, is currently not available to the public or on the SRTC (Regional Secretariat for Tourism and Culture) portal, despite wide publicity in the media. What do you think about this situation? Will it be available soon?

4. Data collection

A total of twenty-two responses were obtained. Data collection was separated by residents, private companies, and public organisations. Each group is represented with a table of specifications. Residents and private companies also have a geographical representation to understand the topographical position of the respondents.

The collected information's is presented on three separated segments: residents' responses, private companies answers and public bodies responses.

4.1. Residents' data collection

The residents selected are identified by residential area, gender, age, and number of years living in the district, see Table 7. It was not previously defined or selected any specific gender, age or number of years living in the region. Given the purpose of this research, any resident aged eighteen or over was accepted.

Geographical representation intents to demonstrate in a wide range where the residents from the study are positioned as shown in Figure 9.

Following, the residents' answers to each question are presented separately and a brief comment is made to accompany the analysis.

Resident Area	Gender	Age	N. ° Years living in the district
Calheta	Female	38	38
Machico-Água de Pena	Female	49	49
Machico-Marçoos	Female	22	22
Ponta do Sol-Canhas	Male	47	17
Porto Moniz-Santa	Male	78	78
Ribeira Brava	Male	46	15
Santa Cruz-Camacha High Ground	Female	32	28

Santa Cruz-Camacha Low Ground	Male	36	36
Santa Cruz-Santo da Serra	Female	55	15
São Vicente	Male	69	69

Table 7 – Residents’ Responses Specifications

Source: Authors

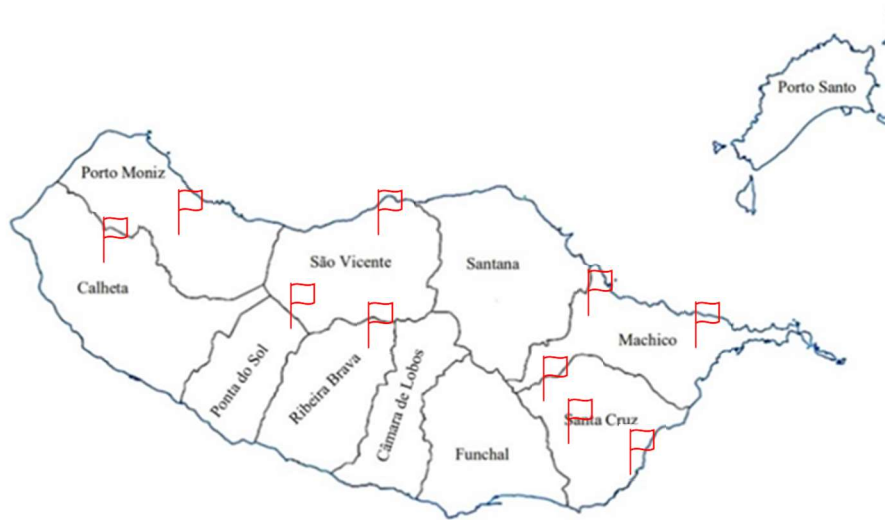


Figure 9 - Indication of the geographical areas where residents' responses were obtained.

Source: Authors

Answers from Local Population (LP)

Question 1 – What benefits do tourist routes bring to rural areas of this region?

Resident Area	Answer
Calheta	Tourist routes are particularly important to help the development of the municipality in terms of growth and cultural expansion.
Machico-Água de Pena	The benefits are, the knowledge of the culture of these people, the sale of commerce in general and the opportunity to stay in this small town.

Machico-Maroços	Tourist routes bring benefits such as making known the municipality of Machico and its attractions and helps to enrich tourism and it is important to publicize the county to visitors. It grows our economy. And it helps in the sustainable development of rural areas.
Ponta do Sol-Canhas	Without tourism it was weak, tourism is good.
Porto Moniz-Santa	They bring backpacking tourists.
Ribeira Brava	It brings economic advantages to all sectors, from hoteliers to small businesses, even in the agricultural area.
Santa Cruz-Camacha High Ground	A greater contact with Nature and attract visitors
Santa Cruz-Camacha Low Ground	Only regarding small business. There are two main Levada's much sought after, and the producers sell fruit at the beginning of the walks.
Santa Cruz-Santo da Serra	Appreciation of rural areas (resources, walking routes); strengthen rural trade.
São Vicente	Everything that brings visitors to São Vicente contributes to the development. The Caves of S. Vicente are now closed and are missed, as they brought a lot of tourism.

Residents are aware of the benefits that tourist routes provide to the rural areas. The perspective is unanimous, and population are receptive to receive tourism. The understanding that tourist is important for development are well perceived and that tourism routes are important. Depending on the perspective of the resident, all rural areas have something to benefit from the tourist routes.

Question 2 – Do you agree that the growth of tourist routes influences to the sustainable development of rural areas? Why?

Resident Area	Answer
Calheta	Yes, to make our culture known.
Machico-Água de Pena	Yes, without a doubt, because it increases local accommodations, bars, restaurants, overall helps local growth.

Machico-Março	Yes, because the growth of tourist routes is important to have sustainable development because this way, they help to protect the environment and tourists learn to value the heritage without polluting it.
Ponta do Sol-Canhas	It contributes to the growth of the areas due to the increase in demand for Levada's (Levada Nova da Ponta do Sol) and waterfalls, for hiking. The demand for local accommodation after the pandemic has grown a lot and increased the movement of the area. The population helps with photos of the places to disseminate to tourists.
Porto Moniz-Santa	Yes, but there should be more investment. Less taxes and more facilities in construction.
Ribeira Brava	Yes, I agree. It helps with the overall economy of the County.
Santa Cruz-Camacha High Ground	Yes, I agree, many spaces were already abandoned and with the arrival of more visitors, many routes were recovered.
Santa Cruz-Camacha Low Ground	Yes, but there is a lack of investment
Santa Cruz-Santo da Serra	Yes, I agree, because it enhances these same spaces, as well as the people who work there and will promote economic development in these areas.
São Vicente	Yes, after the opening of the Caves of St. Vincent the development was remarkable.

All responses are positive. Residents from rural areas agree that the growth of tourist routes influences the sustainable development of rural areas. Particularly regarding the increasing of the demand and when spaces are almost abandoned, and the tourist routes can reverse the situation. In some cases, which have a few tourist routes and depend on them to maintain their economy, when the routes are not open or receiving visitors there is a notable decrease on the economy therefore on development. São Vicente caves are an important example of depending on the tourism routes for developing the rural areas in Madeira Island.

Question 3 – Should tourist routes expand (go beyond) the base of traditional products and enhance their potential to attract and retain visitors for longer? In what way?

Resident Area	Answer
Calheta	Marketing the Levada's, viewpoints and tourist points of interest to visitors.

Machico-Água de Pena	They must provide knowledge through photos when they go to the agencies to buy the stays on our island, being known our customs, our traditions by season, our beaches, and the various places of stay on these routes.
Machico-Março	Yes, create and promote new products.
Ponta do Sol-Canhas	We have not developed anything more, but the demand for Poncha has increased.
Porto Moniz-Santa	No, what exists is sold and enough.
Ribeira Brava	Of course, everything that provides interest in visitors and that values the Municipality itself, will also be a pole of appreciation for the Region itself.
Santa Cruz-Camacha High Ground	Reducing the price of local accommodations and hotels, also including various routes and sightseeing tours. Including tourists in rural activities, creation of workshops.
Santa Cruz-Camacha Low Ground	They should invest in local production and take advantage of seasonality to promote what is on the site at regional and seasonal level.
Santa Cruz-Santo da Serra	Yes, I agree that there should be more support for the development of rural areas.
São Vicente	We have many landscapes, but there has been no concern to preserve them. We could enjoy and develop more nature activities here in S. Vicente.

The responses are not all agreeable. Some answerers defend that what we have is enough, however, a few residents disagree. Most residents have the opinion that new products must be developed, also it should be considered investing in local production and promote what is regional. An interesting answer is that the price of accommodation and activities should decrease to be more attractive.

Question 4 – How do you assess the impact of existing tourist routes? What benefits could they bring to the local community?

Resident Area	Answer
Calheta	In fact, it cannot be said that it has significant impact, because the attractive points are not many in the district.

Machico-Água de Pena	Easy access to the region, everything being remarkably close from food trade to leisure spaces.
Machico-Março	Impact is positive and the benefits are the increase of the local economy and generates more jobs that are accessible to all.
Ponta do Sol-Canhas	Opinion is divided. Those who have business are satisfied and those who do not have it are still strange regarding visitors.
Porto Moniz-Santa	They do not change much. We are used to it.
Ribeira Brava	The existing routes currently are already important for Ribeira Brava, since being a point of passage to other Municipalities, attracts tourists and curious who in one way or another move the local economy and neighbouring Municipalities. If there is movement of tourism and population in general, the local community could promote and publicize its products, services and potential for other activities that have arisen, if the full value of Ribeira Brava is disclosed.
Santa Cruz-Camacha High Ground	In the parish of Camacha the tourist attractions are not many, with some support that are emerging there are already some attractions, commercial. In other councils there are more routes and sightseeing tours.
Santa Cruz-Camacha Low Ground	Valuing existing products because mass production and cheaper imported products are hurting local production as local demand is minimal and values are higher because they are organic products.
Santa Cruz-Santo da Serra	Appreciation of rural areas (resources, walking routes); Strengthen rural trade; Job creation; Cultural exchange
São Vicente	Tourists make expenses and help in small businesses, which are mostly family owned.

The residents aware of the tourist routes in the area understand the positive impact, nevertheless, it seems that some residents do not hold knowledge of the existing tourist routes in their rural area, therefore are unaware of their present value and potential. This is an opportunity for City Councils publicize which tourist routes the area detain within their population.

Question 5 – How important do you think it is for the local population to be involved in the discussion on tourism planning in the municipality and on tourism investment projects for rural areas? Is there public discussion? Examples...

Resident Area	Answer
Calheta	It would be important to ask the local population for their opinion, but unfortunately, they do not. They decide everything for themselves, often harming the population that, in some places, is already ageing.
Machico-Água de Pena	It is important; however, they do not do it. There is an example near Machico centre, in which they are modifying the space of the leisure area next to the beach, but no one knows what is happening.
Machico-Março	Yes, it is important to incorporate the community in the decisions, especially regarding new projects for tourism.
Ponta do Sol-Canhas	I am not aware of any public discussion.
Porto Moniz-Santa	There is no public discussion.
Ribeira Brava	Yes, particularly Important, since each place has its specificities and the population with its local wisdom will help to make the best decisions for the general development. Giving opinions on the best for each location, choose which product to bet, even on the matters of construction, agriculture, handicrafts, trading, etc.
Santa Cruz-Camacha High Ground	In fact, it would be significant if local merchants, investors and even the general population participated in planning for the organization of routes, tours, how to solve the gaps.
Santa Cruz-Camacha Low Ground	There is no discussion, nor is there openness on the part of the governance of the chamber. The participation of the population is especially important. Proposals have already been tabled and vetoed without justification. There are many politics.
Santa Cruz-Santo da Serra	Currently, I do not know whether there is public discussion on the subject. Yes, it is especially important, it is very pertinent that the population of the county feels informed.
São Vicente	Yes, but the participation of the locals is little. There are no disclosures as it should be so as not to raise questions and arouse interests.

Residents agree that a public discussion open to the communities is of foremost importance. Not only to be informed about the projects that are in place, but also to provide inputs and help with the decision and solving current problems. All the inquiries do not have knowledge if there is a public discussion on the matters concerning the community and agree that City Halls could consider improve the dialog and openness to public discussion.

Question 6 – Regarding the local population:

- a. What do you think about partnerships (between public, private, and other organisations) for the training and employment of local community members aiming at their integration in the tourism value chain (as producers, suppliers, distributors, craftsmen, local guides, local cooks...)?

Resident Area	Answer
Calheta	Yes, there should be more job or training offers, to avoid emigration.
Machico-Água de Pena	The more tourism, the more jobs, the more trade, the more knowledge.
Machico-Marçoços	A good collaboration.
Ponta do Sol-Canhas	I agree, it will develop a closer relation between the tourist and the resident.
Porto Moniz-Santa	It takes young people want to work; they just want mobile phones. They should control the support. The responsible entities should better control the number of unemployed and create a job exchange to assist employers in hiring and reduce seasonality.
Ribeira Brava	Yes, there are some partnerships in this sense between the entities, but all that may arise will always be welcome.
Santa Cruz-Camacha High Ground	It exists, but it could help more producers and value local artisans much more.
Santa Cruz-Camacha Low Ground	In Camacha there are no people with ages to develop such a project, however, they should invest in the training of small producers because most young people seek courses in electronics and those who do not want to study are forced to work in areas that do not require many studies, such as gardening, cultivation, etc., but often without knowing the art.
Santa Cruz-Santo da Serra	Surely it would be an asset if it were accepted by the community and there was opportunity to expand art and culture or local commerce.

São Vicente	The Secondary School of S. Vicente promotes professional courses, and the market absorbs the workers, because there is a need for labour for hospitality. I am not aware of any other partnerships.
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There is an openness to partnerships, but with some relentless concerns, such as the youngsters not being interested in joining training unless is electronics or programming. Other concern is that people might not have the interest on learning new jobs unless is a matter of economical need.

Question 6 – Regarding the local population:

- b) How do you assess the implementation of a tourist tax and with the revenues derived from it apply them to projects that improve the quality of life of residents and sustainability of the municipality.

Resident Area	Answer
Calheta	This, I agree, will be a way for the City Halls to arrange working capital for some projects.
Machico-Água de Pena	I agree.
Machico-Marçoços	Incredibly good we appreciate these recipes and try to keep the level of tourists interested.
Ponta do Sol-Canhas	I agree and I do not think it turned tourists off.
Porto Moniz-Santa	No opinion.
Ribeira Brava	It will have to be something well thought out and that makes sense without creating an impact of distancing those who visit us.
Santa Cruz-Camacha High Ground	The tourist tax should apply to tourist routes, to tourist projects.
Santa Cruz-Camacha Low Ground	Yes, to develop new routes and maintain existing ones. To minimize the environmental impact that mass tourism is causing, namely the increase in rubbish and causes the alienation of Madeira's unique Laurissilva. Control of plants and trees in the forest.
Santa Cruz-Santo da Serra	Yes, it is important, because in rural areas the income comes from agriculture, which makes it difficult to implement tourism projects. Hence

	the taxes would be an added value for the sustainability of the tourist activity.
São Vicente	Yes, I agree and that the funds should be managed by an entity other than the municipalities councils.

Mostly the answers agree with the implementation of a tourist tax. Some residents believe that the revenues should be applied to improvements in the zones and sustainable development. A particularly interesting answer states that the tourist tax could help to minimize the negative impact caused by mass tourism, such as the increase in rubbish on the trails and the destruction of the forest due to the high number of passers-by.

Question 7 – Were there more families living in this town in the 1990s and early 2000s?

Resident Area	Answer
Calheta	Absolutely, yes.
Machico-Água de Pena	No, now we have a much larger population, with a lot of local accommodation and a large part of our population is foreign, in which they bought their houses in this county, due to the proximity of the beach, easy access to health posts, both in the private and the public, food retail and even catering.
Machico-Marçoços	From what my parents say and my grandfathers in the nineties the families were quite numerous. Currently people do not want more than two children, and this can be explained by the fact that they are working and have no one to leave them with, or do not have time to take care of. In the nineties it was only one person working to support the house and the wife took care of the children which contributed to the increase of a greater number of children. An equally critical issue is the scarcity of work in the parish of Machico, although it is a city many ended up coming to live in the Funchal, near the workplace.
Ponta do Sol-Canhas	Yes, absolutely.
Porto Moniz-Santa	Yes, there were many families.

Ribeira Brava	No, this downward trend is being countered due to the return of many emigrants and their descendants, who are seeking improvements in life here. That return is reopening new businesses and new job opportunities.
Santa Cruz-Camacha High Ground	Yes, many have move away.
Santa Cruz-Camacha Low Ground	Yes, there were many families who emigrated, but with the creation of a social neighbourhood ended up bringing more inhabitants and increasing the infrastructure to cope with the number of inhabitants.
Santa Cruz-Santo da Serra	There were more families in the nineties, and these were much more numerous than today.
São Vicente	Many more.

There were more families in the municipalities under study in the 90s and 2000s, however, with the return from some emigrants and the increase in local accommodation, some interviewees claim not to realize the difference.

Question 8 – Did the lack of employment encourage many people to emigrate, was this the case in this town? Was it the only reason?

Resident Area	Answer
Calheta	Yes, many young people emigrated for lack of employment and low wages.
Machico-Água de Pena	A few years ago, yes, many immigrated due to work. Currently, few leave this small town. And the growth of housing in this county and surroundings is very much in sight.
Machico-Marçoçs	Yes, it was for this reason, that many families went to work out and helped in the decrease of large families.
Ponta do Sol-Canhas	Yes, the lack of work and local commerce were the main reasons that led people to emigrate.
Porto Moniz-Santa	The lack of employment, but also the modification of thinking as the women went to work also led to increase the demanding.
Ribeira Brava	Yes, in the 60s, 70s and 80s. Now it is sought in the opposite direction due also to the problems of some instability in the countries that have received them.

Santa Cruz-Camacha High Ground	Yes, here there were not many opportunities, and many emigrants went searching of a better life.
Santa Cruz-Camacha Low Ground	Yes, most of them emigrated in search of better living conditions.
Santa Cruz-Santo da Serra	Yes, that was the case in this parish.
São Vicente	Yes, it was the lack of economic conditions and the lack of employment that led people to leave and look for a better life. Investment in other countries was well received and Madeirans were always well regarded for being good workers.

The responses are unanimous. Lack of employment was the main reason for emigration in the rural areas where these respondents were surveyed. Other emigrants that come back would spread the word that everyone was welcome in their countries and incentivise the immigration. Curiously was pointed out by Porto Moniz-Santa other phenomenon that also had contribute to the emigration, women started working and it led to an increasing for the job seeking.

Question 9 – Would you like to see this area more developed and with more inhabitants?

Resident Area	Answer
Calheta	Of course.
Machico-Água de Pena	Absolutely.
Machico-Março	Yes. If the Municipality of Machico was more developed the number of inhabitants tb would increase and there would be more attractiveness both for the population as well as for all those I visit us, especially tourism.
Ponta do Sol-Canhas	Yes, of course.
Porto Moniz-Santa	Yes, absolutely. But people want to study and leave the country, and no one works in the fields anymore.
Ribeira Brava	At the level of development yes. As for the number of populations, as already mentioned, the mass return of many emigrants is already satisfactory.

Santa Cruz-Camacha High Ground	Currently, this area is already much search for the calm and quiet, the opposite of the cities. We need more development, and essential public bodies such as police and firefighters.
Santa Cruz-Camacha Low Ground	Yes, but not as social neighbourhoods. Business development is needed to sustain rural development.
Santa Cruz-Santo da Serra	Yes, I liked it.
São Vicente	Yes, absolutely.

The perspective is general positiveness. All residents desire to see the area with more habitants and more developed. These answerers provide a sense of community awareness and understanding the essentials bases for sustainability as it states the need for development to maintain the rural areas alive. This view is a notable example of community consciousness and the acceptance for development.

Question 10 – In your opinion, can the increase in tourism help to develop this area? Do you think it could bring benefits? What are the benefits?

Resident Area	Answer
Calheta	Tourism always helps even if it is the local economy and so that small retailers do not close doors.
Machico-Água de Pena	It is always nice to see many more inhabitants. We still lack some bars and restaurants for all tastes and cultures. For example, we lack a Chinese restaurant, there should be one more hotel. The bars should be identical to those in Funchal, with live music. These are small examples that tourism is still looking for. We would maintain a younger tourism.
Machico-Março	I think it can help to energize, disseminate more of Machico and development at the economic level and in the social context as well. Benefits the population, as we can have new experiences, know other cultures, and increase our level of sufficiency.
Ponta do Sol-Canhas	Yes, it will bring specific labour, more commerce, greater accommodation option because everything is full.
Porto Moniz-Santa	It increases consumption, but it is limited because there is not much to offer. Drinks only.

Ribeira Brava	Yes, of course the main impact will be on the economy, and on the dissemination of the entire region. All Tourism when returning, if you get good references of the Council will make the best advertising and will make others visit us in search of these and other references.
Santa Cruz-Camacha High Ground	I think yes, many tourists end up investing in the area, such as building local accommodation, creating businesses and commerce, and it would lead to the creation of new jobs.
Santa Cruz-Camacha Low Ground	Yes, increased local production, bring visitors.
Santa Cruz-Santo da Serra	Yes, job creation; cultural exchange
São Vicente	Yes, of course. It will help create conditions for young people to settle down and raise families.

The responses are positives with some ideas to do so. Develop the economy and prevent retailers from close their businesses, invest in animation and gastronomy, job creation and cultural exchange are some ideas to increase tourism in the rural areas. As benefits it was pointed out to help bring more visitors and some families back.

Question 11 – In your opinion, are tourists important to keep the traditions and history of this town alive? In what way? What can be done?

Resident Area	Answer
Calheta	Yes, they are important because they like our climate, our landscapes, they like the Levada's, farms, etc. Around here they could invest in better conditions for the pedagogical farm for example, because Calheta is famous the beach and then yes has always tried to invest a little in maintenance.
Machico-Água de Pena	Tourism partly seeks our own culture. This is what arouses the interest of our tourism. It is not only what the island of Madeira has to offer, such as the climate and the majestic mountains of this beautiful island, but also the rural traditions, the stories of each city, and even the good mood of this our people.
Machico-Março	Tourists are the livelihood of our island as they contribute to monetary development.

Ponta do Sol-Canhas	With or without tourists the traditions are maintained. The festivities are made for the population and visitors take the opportunity to visit. The culture and tradition are maintained by the people.
Porto Moniz-Santa	They changed the popular festivals to facilitate sales and began to come more tourists and visitors to the island.
Ribeira Brava	Of course, if there is demand for this place, there will be an opportunity for the population to have an extra reason to keep all the traditions, making nothing or little is lost. More research can be invested among the older population, encouraging them to be the greatest disseminators of our traditions and customs that are being lost over time. Encourage the younger ones to be interested in learning and conserve all these traditions and customs.
Santa Cruz-Camacha High Ground	Of course, many of our traditions can be used in their countries of origin, just as some festivities that were not ours are already held, from other countries. As I mentioned before, we could promote workshops including internships. An example. The Madeira Ball is one of the biggest tourist posters, organize with the various folk groups' activities, for example learn to play instruments, learn the steps, wear the uniform, feel Madeiran!
Santa Cruz-Camacha Low Ground	Tourism is important for maintaining culture and history, but it must be rethought to avoid the masses. We have folk groups that represent the island and are energized through tourists. Culture and history should be boosted, but they should not merge with others and take advantage of to promote and sell. It is important to innovate but maintain cultural integrity.
Santa Cruz-Santo da Serra	Yes, they are, because there are many of the traditions of the parish that keep the tourist poster of the same.
São Vicente	Yes. The Folklore Group closed because there are no people to maintain the tradition, nor visitors to show and promote our customs. If we welcome more people to visit St. Vincent, the traditions and cultures will certainly be invigorated.

All residents are aware that visitors are important for maintaining our culture and history, however, some festivities do not depend entirely on visitors, but on people inclined to maintain traditions. The example of St Vincent's is the most peculiar, as the Folklore Group closed

because there was no one to promote the local costumes. Tourists are important for keeping culture and historical sites alive, as they visit and spread experiences all over the world, but if there is no population to keep tradition going in the first place, culture will become extinct.

4.2. Private Companies data collection

Private companies are identified in relation to their activity. As demonstrated on Table 8 it is specified the company, the business subject and profession from the responders. The professions indicated were not selected specifically for this research, but are the result of the responses obtained, since no specific profession was defined, but rather the company selected. A considerable number of private companies were invited to participate, however, due to the peak tourism season, it was not possible to obtain their responses.

Company	Business	Profession
EBike Madeira	Bike & Motorbike Ride Services Provider	General Manager
Epic Madeira	Nature Experiences Provider	Nature Guide
Intertours	Travel Agency & Tourism Operations	Inc. Dep. Coordinator
Lucullumar S.A.	Hospitality & Sustainable Services	Technical Services and Sustainability Manager
Madeira Adventure Kingdom	Adventure & Nature Experiences Provider	General Manager
MB Tours	Travel Agency & Tourism Operations	General Manager
Nuno Oliveira	Independent Mountain Guide	Mountain Guide
Quinta da Serra – Bio Hotel	Rural Tourism Hotel and Bio certificated	General Manager

Table 8 – Private Companies Responses Specifications

Source: Authors

Answers from Private Companies (PC)

Question 1 – What benefits do tourist routes bring to rural areas of this region?

Company	Answer
EBike Madeira	The tourist routes, in fact, are beneficial for rural areas, since they boost the space and make known the cultural and historical heritage of areas not so well known or visited, highlighting new points of interest.
Epic Madeira	The tourist routes help to develop the rural areas and are also a way to show an important part of our island, which is the rural environment, calm, surrounded by nature and with an extraordinary beauty, unique in Europe.
Intertours	There are several benefits, undoubtedly, the economic development and the various activities of the region, also enhancing the growth of tourist activities and related to this activity. Consequently, the increase in employment, the settlement of the population in these areas, the improvement of infrastructure and basic services. It can also promote the revitalization of traditions and customs, local gastronomy, and handicrafts, and the preservation and protection of natural resources.
Lucullumar S.A.	Visitors look for landscapes, various locations of the cities. In Madeira we have the south coast developed and at 5m we have the rural areas. Tourists come to the Island for this. It is all remarkably close.
Madeira Adventure Kingdom	There are many. It creates jobs and keeps young people here, helps to reduce tourist hotspots and diversify demand, and helps the local economy grow.
MB Tours	The benefits are many, from the settlement of people in these same areas thus avoiding the desertification of the rural fabric, economic development and with it the improvement of life of the people who live there and above all the preservation of identity of each of these sites
Nuno Oliveira	They bring more development and more jobs with the construction of infrastructure
Quinta da Serra – Bio Hotel	I totally agree that tourist routes bring benefits to rural areas. We are partners together with the municipality of Câmara de Lobos to develop or create a bioregion in the Autonomous Region of Madeira.

Tourist routes bring many benefits to rural areas. It boosts rural places, helps economy, increases employment, improve infrastructures, and promotes tourism projects. Energizes culture besides promoting “the preservation and protection of natural resources.”

Question 2 – Do you agree that the growth of tourist routes contributes to the sustainable development of rural areas? Why?

Company	Answer
EBike Madeira	Of course. The growth of tourist routes increases the number of people visiting certain destinations and consequently, contributes to the development of these places. With good management, everything is sustainable, but when you lose control out of interest, everything becomes the complete reverse.
Epic Madeira	I agree, because tourist routes are a way to develop both in the amount of people who come to know rural areas and pass on their experience to other people, as well as financially, when people spend on their food, accommodation, lived experiences, among others.
Intertours	They contribute if there is an awareness of a sustainable growth that also benefits the local population and the region in all its aspects, social, economic, and environmental, protecting uses and customs, natural and cultural resources, infrastructures, as well as the authenticity of the people and the region. If we move to a growth and massification of these routes the effect may be the opposite.
Lucullumar S.A.	Yes, tourist routes are key. We must foster the circular economy and bring the rural to the cities. We must adapt the menus to the fruits and vegetables of the season helping local producers.
Madeira Adventure Kingdom	Yes, rural activities are considerable for development, but they are not always sustainable.
MB Tours	Yes.
Nuno Oliveira	No.
Quinta da Serra – Bio Hotel	Perhaps it is the only process of being able to develop and maintain smaller projects in a sustainable way in every way and to disperse investment from cities.

Although all comments agree that tourist routes contribute for the sustainable grow of rural areas this investigation finds this response that states the best the answer to this question: “Perhaps it is the only process of being able to develop and maintain smaller projects in a sustainable way in every way and to disperse investment from cities.”

Question 3 – Should tourist routes expand (go beyond) the base of traditional products and enhance their potential to attract and retain visitors for longer? In what way?

Company	Answer
EBike Madeira	They should not only promote traditional products, but also the culture and history of the destination with the tourist routes.
Epic Madeira	Tourist routes should broaden the base of traditional products and should try to keep their visitors by showing in more detail, or even to the people themselves to try making the traditional products.
Intertours	It will depend on each region but maintaining the base of traditional products by creating experiences, with creativity and innovation, can certainly captivate visitors to enjoy these spaces in longer stays.
Lucullumar S.A.	Before our guest stayed in the hotels for more time, currently the average stay has fallen. They stay a week. Although awareness about the ecological footprint has increased, people come for short periods. So, we should do what we can to increase and diversify supply. It is important to limit the licenses to diverge the masses, to reduce the waiting time and the agglomerations to avoid diverging tourism to other destinations.
Madeira Adventure Kingdom	Yes, it is necessary to increase the supply. There are few recommended and certified routes. More rural routes should be developed.
MB Tours	The ideal would be to keep the traditional moth, but times are different and if it is not possible to find the perfect marriage between traditional and modern. The recovery of old sleeping spaces, a careful recovery of paths, Levada’s and other attractions or ancient traditions in each of the areas surrounding the intervened space.
Nuno Oliveira	Yes, doing activities throughout the year
Quinta da Serra – Bio Hotel	It is necessary to get away from the existing itineraries and create new and different routes that are appealing to attract visitors. It is necessary to see if

there is interest in this. It is necessary to pay attention to the tourist masses and spread-out visitors to avoid saturation of spaces. Exhaustive work must be done to create routes and maintain. It is necessary to create conditions of attractiveness.

The focal point is to maintain the tradition and historical products and places, nevertheless innovation and diversification to increase demand is necessary.

Question 4 – How do you assess the implementation of the STRATEGY FOR MADEIRA TOURISM 2017 2021 (strategic plan), namely its effects on the development of tourist routes and its effects on the sustainable development of rural areas?

Company	Answer
EBike Madeira	Not answered
Epic Madeira	During the realization of the tourist plan during these 4 years it was, in general, well executed, but I think they should have been more explored, or disclosed the points about the safety on the island, its microclimates that we can have by the island and the local tradition and culture, because it is what those who want to visit us, the more they will remember and transmit to their family and friends when they talk about their experience here in the island. I also add that the part of easy access to the island already becomes a point that, is no longer particularly important to disclose, because if someone really wants to visit the island, they will do everything to make it possible.
Intertours	We have seen some decentralization and development of rural areas, but there is still much to be done and there are many difficulties in retaining the population and getting labour. We have verified a growth of some areas in an unsustainable and careful way, verifying excesses of load capacity that cause chaos in the operationalization.
Lucullumar S.A.	We must realize that everything leads to the financial part. The three important pillars, the social, the environmental and the economic are the priority, but then implementation is difficult. The tourism boom facilitates the execution of the plan nor the monitoring of it. It remains to publicize

	the diversifying certifications of destinations, such as EarthCheck that Madeira has.
Madeira Adventure Kingdom	The expected impacts were not achieved. Madeira does not have quality tourism with was a definite goal. We do not capture high-value market segments. There was an impact on tourism uptake all year round, winter tourism increased. Satisfying the tourist need through natural diversity, yes it was achieved because the tourist who comes here seeks nature activities.
MB Tours	I do not like very many strategies that are merely political designed by 'technicians' that do not have the slightest experience in the field, and the experience with the one who seeks us, the tourist. That is why I did find it poor and uninteresting.
Nuno Oliveira	Bad.
Quinta da Serra – Bio Hotel	I am not familiar with the plan but agreeing to the outlined guidelines I do not see that it has been met. The strategy was outlined without contact us or a rural hotel that I am aware. Madeira is certified as a tourist and sustainable destination. However, no entity has contacted us to know our opinion, as a rural hotel, or what we do as a Bio-hotel. We are far ahead of the curve on sustainability and sustainable development, and we have not been asked what we do or how we do it.

“The three important pillars, the social, the environmental and the economic are the priority, but then implementation is difficult. The tourism boom facilitates the execution of the plan nor the monitoring of it.” The strategy outlined was not well implemented, because it was prepared from professionals without enough experience in the field and without contact the shareholders.

Question 5 – Do you consider that the financial support provided by the government and the EU is sufficient to incentivise the development of tourism projects for rural areas?

Company	Answer
EBike Madeira	Currently Turismo de Portugal continues to highlight Internal Tourism with the phrase 'Go outside here,' however the prices charged to residents at the hotel level is the same as to people coming from other countries. In this

	way, it was necessary to find a way to capture the interest of the Portuguese in traveling through the country instead of opting for other destinations.
Epic Madeira	I think there could be more support than to develop projects in rural areas in a more direct way, and not only to companies and micro-enterprises in the tourism sector, due to the rural areas of the island being a focal point in Madeira's tourism.
Intertours	The main question is, are they being applied well?
Lucillumar S.A.	Most rural investors are unaware of support. The supports run out fast because those who know are always the first. There is a lack of disclosure of support since disclosure is not mandatory. It has already happened to us, we wanted to replace the panels with lost funds and when we heard about the funding, it was too late.
Madeira Adventure Kingdom	The support provided by the EU has been fundamental, but not sufficient. They should invest much more support to expand other areas and other points of interest.
MB Tours	Yes, and if they were used correctly, they would undoubtedly be a huge tool. It is a pity that politics also prevails and the individual good prevails over the common. The projects are not appreciated for their content, but rather for the entity / individual that proposes.
Nuno Oliveira	No
Quinta da Serra – Bio Hotel	I am not aware as we have not received support. Our policy does not allow us to receive financial support, because the demands imposed when you receive the support are surreal and the company is not willing to submit to it. However, I agree that support should be made available for those who do not have financial availability.

Financial support from governments and EU could be increased and better disclosed. Some companies are not aware that they exist. Also, politics and bureaucracy to apply for the support could be simpler.

Question 6 – How do you assess the impact of existing tourist routes? What non-economic benefits could it bring to the company?

Company	Answer
EBike Madeira	They provide economic benefit, but also in terms of visibility (e.g., through social networks) and collecting feedback to the company so that they can always provide a good/better service.
Epic Madeira	I think that working within tourist routes we must be careful to protect the environment and prevent negative impacts in rural areas.
Intertours	Some routes in the Region, are already exhausted, very massified and tourist, we know that there are points that the visitor does not want to miss visiting, but we can limit, order, and maintain the authenticity of our traditions, our crafts so that they continue to be attractive. And, to promote other, less well-known routes, to maintain the unity and protect infrastructures and natural resources of the region.
Lucullumar S.A.	They bring economic benefits because they prefer to stay in the hotel to avoid the crowds, but they are a less environmentally conscious customer. It does not take care to reuse the towels, for example, it does not care about energy sustainability, it is a tourist less focused on the environment.
Madeira Adventure Kingdom	The impact of the existing routes has been positive, visitors are highly active. The benefits, in addition to economic are social, job creation and better quality of life.
MB Tours	The existing routes in many of the places are saturated, this saturation can lead to a discredit of them and sequential loss of interest by parts of tourists, so I do not see any interest for us that they are not economically viable.
Nuno Oliveira	Few alternative routes. I do not see any other than the economic one
Quinta da Serra – Bio Hotel	They are an added value, brings more visitors since it encourages the search for various purposes, from sports, enjoying nature and others. The impact is great if there is a well-defined structure and enhance the tourist projects outside Funchal.

Besides the economic benefits the existing tourist routes brings notoriety, feedback for improvement, promotion of nature environments and culture and history dissemination,

however these routes are being a bit neglected because of the massive tourism. A strategy must be outlined to prevent future damages.

Question 7 – Do you think that the development of tourism projects in rural areas, especially tourist routes, helps to prevent the alienation of areas with less population density?

Company	Answer
EBike Madeira	By creating tourist routes in rural areas, we increase the number of people who find themselves in areas that are often in 'decay'. By placing new people in a rural area that is far away, we also end up taking a little more care for the safety of those who live there.
Epic Madeira	It helps prevent alienation, because it is helping in a financial way, such as in a way that increased people get to know these places with lower population density, sometimes making people want to stay in that place they visited.
Intertours	Yes, if the promoters are careful to involve the local population, promote traditions, commerce, and agriculture, with fair and appropriate incentives that can fix the population and still attract other people to settle in these regions.
Lucullumar S.A.	For each parish, bed quotas must be created. Some parishes have many beds and others almost none. They should divert beds to rural areas with agricultural projects and help bring people to rural areas.
Madeira Adventure Kingdom	Tourism projects in rural areas help to prevent the alienation of areas with less population density and fix the local population.
MB Tours	Yes, as I said in point one
Nuno Oliveira	Yes
Quinta da Serra – Bio Hotel	Yes, absolutely.

Responses are unanimous. Tourists' routes projects help prevent depopulation of rural areas. Divert the economy to those areas will increase agriculture and families will benefit from it. Develop tourism projects or improve tourism routes that already exists is a way to prevent families from leaving rural areas.

Question 8 – How do you assess the support provided by public authorities to the projects of the various tourism operators, especially regarding the development and consolidation of tourist routes?

Company	Answer
EBike Madeira	The support of public entities should be more frequent and in greater quantity since in many of the projects, they only help after ensuring that they get a return, causing many of the projects never to reach their realization for lack of incentives.
Epic Madeira	Over the years it has been improving, but more support will be needed for the operating entities to be able to consolidate the routes in the long term.
Intertours	Extremely limited.
Lucullumar S.A.	Support is needed, but there is a lack of checks to verify its proper use.
Madeira Adventure Kingdom	It is positive, there has been goodwill from the government, but the bureaucracy prevents it from moving forward with good and innovative ideas.
MB Tours	Weak
Nuno Oliveira	Weak
Quinta da Serra – Bio Hotel	There is interest from the City Halls in developing tourist routes, but there is no real support.

The support from public authorities is limited, and the bureaucracy do not help. In the opinion of private companies there is a lack of incentives to increase project development.

Question 9 – Do you consider it important to involve the local community, businesses, and other stakeholders in the discussion on tourism investment projects for rural areas? Is there public discussion? Examples...

Company	Answer
EBike Madeira	Yes. It is always important to realize and listen to the opinions of the local community and the companies that exist there so that a project is created that favours all people and that does not cause conflict of interest/ disadvantages for those who 'got there first' and live from that space.

Epic Madeira	It is important for local communities to speak up and give their opinion on tourism investment projects for rural areas because it is where they live and to show their point of view, both for good and for bad.
Intertours	It is especially important to promote an open dialogue, to listen to all stakeholders, to evaluate opinions and impacts very well. Local authorities, governments, associations must be promoters of these discussions, which may go through discussion forums by areas of intervention, or even the creation of collaborative and participatory networks including actors from various areas, it is important to give voice to all stakeholders.
Lucullumar S.A.	Yes, there is no doubt that the population should be aware of the projects.
Madeira Adventure Kingdom	There is no public discussion, but I consider it essential for the population to be involved since it is in their rural areas that most of the activities are developed.
MB Tours	Yes, particularly important, the public discussion would indeed be an asset because involving the community this feel if it would be part of it and not mere extra. Examples: in some of the recoveries made recently by the IFCN in hiking trails this heard several players of the tourist animation, and this fact made the passage of testimony either for the operational or for the tourists and local community were much more peaceful than in the past
Nuno Oliveira	Yes, it is important. I am not aware of any real debates in those terms
Quinta da Serra – Bio Hotel	I am not aware of public discussion. There was a few years ago, but at this time there is not. They do not question us, they do not consult us, they do not inform us of anything or anything. The council is open to listening if we go to them but does not consult with us for any decision making.

Private companies agree that there should be more public discussion if there is any at all. It would be an incentive to the population, it would be helpful to find investors and the “population should be aware of the projects” regarding the city Council.

Question 10 – Regarding the local population:

- a) How do you assess the quality and quantity of labour available for tourism services?

Company	Answer
Bike Madeira	Not answered
Epic Madeira	The quality is good, but the workforce must increase, because tourism is also increasing.
Intertours	It depends on the areas we are talking about, however, at this moment there is little quantity and a very relative quality, Portugal still has a lot to do to value its workforce, creating incentives, reducing taxes, creating incentives for career development.
Lucullumar S.A.	Little quality and little quantity. We have not been able to train the staff to keep up with the new requirements of the current tourist. They want to receive more but have no added value in qualities.
Madeira Adventure Kingdom	The quality and quantity available are exceptionally low.
MB Tours	Excellent quality, poor quantity
Nuno Oliveira	Little
Quinta da Serra – Bio Hotel	There is no workforce available, and the hotel ends up not doing activities with tourists due to lack of human resources.

There is a lack of hand labour available, and the quality is not the best. Tourists increased in a spiral since the pandemic is over and younger people do not want to work in hospitality or other services regarding tourism. Tourism jobs has a reputation of low salary and many service hours. If the paradigm changes the situation might reverse.

Question 10 – Regarding the local population:

- b) What do you think about partnerships (between public, private, and other organisations) for the training and employment of local community members aiming at their integration in the tourism value chain (as producers, suppliers, distributors, craftsmen, local guides, local cooks...)?

Company	Answer
EBike Madeira	Not answered

Epic Madeira	The partnerships for the training and employment of members of the local community is something that could be better, because then we can show the work in the way of the locals, as locals, which is highly valued for tourists today.
Intertours	It is great that they can unite and collaborate in this sense, increasingly we must think that we are nothing alone, that we are more if we collaborate and cooperate, and it will be easier to find compatible and positive solutions for all parties.
Lucullumar S.A.	We contacted vocational schools and were told that many courses do not have enough graduates to open and when they work students drop out halfway through the course. Some of them go to the hospitality school and leave. We offered jobs positions here at the hotel and there is no demand. Creating synergy between entities is an added value, but without people it is not possible. Tourism has increased a lot and hoteliers have not kept up with the renumbering due to the increase in demand. If we did that, we would be able to attract more coworkers.
Madeira Adventure Kingdom	It looks good to me and would make up for the labour shortage. That would be key. And on the part of the government there should be an initiative to encourage production and not the other way around.
MB Tours	If the government enters the equation the process is soon vitiated.
Nuno Oliveira	It would be a good partnership
Quinta da Serra – Bio Hotel	Yes, it is feasible, and we are available for this, however, there are some obstacles, namely the certification of these people and trainers qualified to provide the training. Even with recourse to support and training entities, our core business is not training, we can always teach in a work context. We have many staff from here in Jardim da Serra, but there are no qualified ones.

The lack of hand labour is a real problem in rural areas. Partnerships to increase employment is a “positive solution.”

Question 10 – Regarding the local population:

- c) How do you assess the implementation of a tourist tax and with the revenues derived from it apply them to projects that improve the quality of life of residents and sustainability of the municipality.

Company	Answer
EBike Madeira	Not answered
Epic Madeira	The revenues should be applied to projects that improve the quality of life of residents and sustainability of the municipality as for the tourism companies of the municipality.
Intertours	I agree, to be applied in the municipality and in the improvement of infrastructures and protection of resources, but there must be a truly clear, objective, and transparent management of it.
Lucullumar S.A.	There is already a tax in the municipality of Sta. Cruz and is applied in improvement of green spaces, and environmental areas in general, but there is neither information by the municipality on the subject, nor do we see the differences, that is, it is not perceived whether they were properly applied or not.
Madeira Adventure Kingdom	I have advocated the implementation of a tax, and it would be key. Not a fee for each attraction, but a one-time fee paid at the time of entry, an amount for the days of stay, and controlled by an entity to apply to the various needs.
MB Tours	An excellent tool if it can be used exclusively for the purpose for which it is created. Exceedingly difficult in the current landscape. For example, what did Santa Cruz do with the revenue from the tourist tax, where is the promised work?
Nuno Oliveira	A worthwhile investment
Quinta da Serra – Bio Hotel	I am in favour of the tourist tax. An independent and transparent body had to be set up to manage these funds. A fee charged at the airport to all and directed by agreeing to the needs transmitted by the municipalities.

Private companies agree and favour the implementation of a tourism tax; however, the revenues must be well managed. Its applications should be “clear, objective and transparent.”

The revenues must be used to improve infrastructures, to protect resources, to improve residents' quality of life, and all matters that are connected to tourism rural areas.

Question 11 - Do emerging markets pose a threat when it comes to tourism projects aimed at growing rural areas?

Company	Answer
EBike Madeira	In our view, they do not create a threat. They end up offering more choice to tourists and causes the economy to eventually grow with a greater number of people.
Epic Madeira	They can be a threat, but only to those who are still at an early stage, or who do not have enough knowledge to prevent these markets from being a threat.
Intertours	No, we must communicate well.
Lucullumar S.A.	Yes, increasingly our tourism is diverse. At this moment we have tourists looking to do everything in the 4 or 5 days of stay. The destination that provides the most experiences in the least time could be a threat to us.
Madeira Adventure Kingdom	Competition is always good and emerging markets force us to work well to develop a unique destination and when we are unique, we have no competition.
MB Tours	By no means will the threat to exist be from everyone and not only from the emerging ones
Nuno Oliveira	No
Quinta da Serra – Bio Hotel	Emerging markets are not a threat to us. In the sense of new markets/countries coming to Madeira is not a threat, but new destinations can be a threat. Madeira is full because there are factors that divert tourists here, when other parts of the world stabilize, new tourist markets will appear. City tourists are interested because they come to know the island.

The opinions are divided. Emerging markets could be a threat if the Island are not prepared for it. There must be a focus in sustainability and “develop a unique destination” to better deal with emerging threats.

Question 12 – How do you describe the profile of tourists looking for tourist routes and other tourism activities in rural areas?

Company	Answer
EBike Madeira	Usually, the type of tourist who wants these routes is a tourist who comes to know the habits and customs of the country they visit. He is an interested and active person, however, because he chooses to visit rural areas, he is also someone who wants to avoid the confusion of the central areas and crowds of people in the cities.
Epic Madeira	For sports activities in rural areas, the tourist is usually younger and looking for challenges, for other types of activities, it can be young to the elderly, but it aims to relax and get to know the countryside, and most people come to relax than to perform sports activities.
Intertours	They are customers with greater awareness of themselves, of the community, of the planet. They seek contact with nature with a great sense of protection of these resources, the authenticity of the regions and the population, they want to know the locals and interact with them, they want to know the uses and customs of the land and participate in local activities, they want to experience the traditions, they appreciate the gastronomy and local handicrafts.
Lucullumar S.A.	It is the youngest tourist and the one who is concerned about rural areas. There are those who stay in the hotels, but those who go out want to enjoy nature. One feels the lack of closeness with the collaborators.
Madeira Adventure Kingdom	The profile of the current tourist values the contact with nature, are younger people and value sustainability. They prefer to invest in the experiences rather than the hotel.
MB Tours	Like tourists. That is, with a desire to know, to learn and enjoy the space, to interact with the locals, to share experiences and to enjoy the unique beauty of many of our 'corners';
Nuno Oliveira	People with a desire to know the true essence of the place they visit
Quinta da Serra – Bio Hotel	The tourists of Quinta da Serra before covid were middle-aged couples, without children, active and came to walk in the mountains, after the pandemic we already have younger couples looking for nature. They

already come with all the packages purchased and with rental cars, they are very autonomous.
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There is no usual tourist that choose to do the same. The perspective is divided between younger and middle-aged visitors; look for experiences or just aim to relax, but people looking for the contact with nature seem to be common in different markets.

4.3. Public Entity data collection

Public organisations, such as town halls, were contacted to take part in the interview. Although all of Madeira's town halls were contacted, only four were available and provided answers to this study. Table 9 shows the respondents and identifies them by Municipality and its representatives. The table indicates the geographical area in square metres, as it was considered relevant to the research to understand the coverage of the area, as shown in Figure 10.

Public Entity	Geographical Area m2	Represented by
Machico City Hall	68,33 km2	Division Manager for the Environment and Sustainability
Porto Moniz City Hall	82,40 km2	President's Support Office Manager
Ribeira Brava City Hall	65,00 km2	Communications Office & President's Support Office Managers
São Vicente City Hall	43,70 km2	Vice-President for São Vicente Municipality Office

Table 9 – Public Entities Responses Specifications

Source: Authors

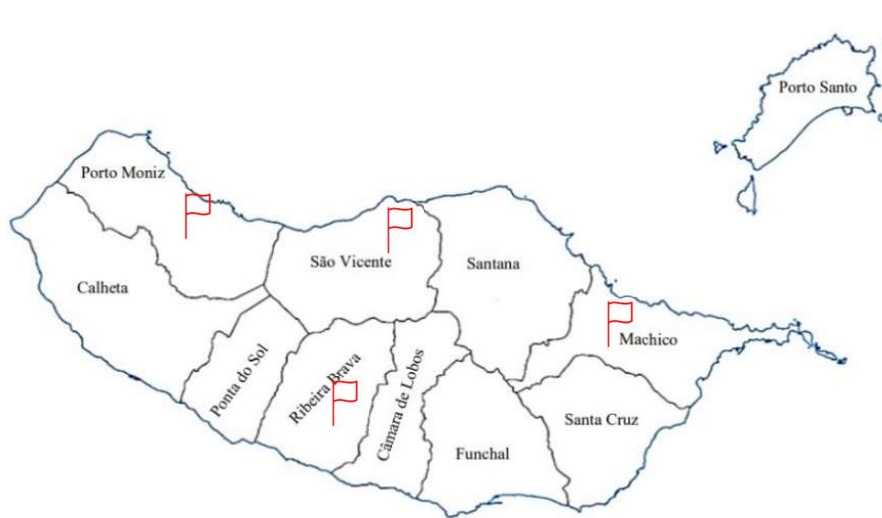


Figure 10 - Indication of the geographical areas where Public Entities responses were obtained.

Source: Authors

Answers from Public Entities (PE)

Question 1 – What benefits do tourist routes bring to rural areas of this region?

Public Entity	Answer
Machico City Hall	The tourist routes make known distinct types of natural / cultural values existing in the County, bringing more visitors to these areas that can stimulate the economy of each place. These tourist routes are being defined as ecosites defined by a set of rules. Ecosites are all the sites of the municipality of Machico, which have remarkable characteristics from the point of view of Geodiversity, Biodiversity, Landscape and / or History / Culture, bringing together multidisciplinary values and interests in the scientific, didactic and / or socioeconomic scope.
Porto Moniz City Hall	To respond effectively, the Municipality would have to have mechanisms to monitor affluence and satisfaction, which unfortunately does not have, however, the common observer and, from the point of view of notoriety of the destination, are very important tools to publicize the tourist offer and

	create new tourist products to attract visitors and reduce the pressure of load to the most visited areas.
Ribeira Brava City Hall	The tourist routes bring critical mass to the municipality of Ribeira Brava, visitors and potential investors. The county grows and only must gain from tourism which is one of our main industries. All the activities that are around this segment will grow with the tourist routes if they are properly attractive. We are talking about the local merchants and service providers who stand to gain from our visitors.
São Vicente City Hall	The municipality of S. Vicente depends a lot on tourism. We almost depend exclusively on the tourist routes.

The four municipalities agree that tourist routes bring benefits to their cities, whether bringing's mores visitors or potentialize the offer to attract investors, every measure that can promote economy growth is welcome.

Question 2 – Do you agree that the growth of tourist routes contributes to the sustainable development of rural areas? Why?

Public Entity	Answer
Machico City Hall	Yes, I agree, because with this growth there is a need to take care of the spaces, thus protecting them so that they are accessible to all. And the more sustainable, the more environmentally friendly, the better, because they are more attractive, are more differentiating and tourists recognize good practices.
Porto Moniz City Hall	Yes, due to the tourist dispersion that we can instil in the destination, better distributing the expenses made in the County, in a transversal way to the entire business fabric of the County. As mentioned earlier, it is also a way to reduce the tourist load in places that are already reaching their maximum capacity at certain times of the year.
Ribeira Brava City Hall	Our rural areas are suffering from desertification. We need to fix people, provide material to promote their well-being and only through trade and job creation can you fix people in one place. And in this respect tourism is fundamental. If we give as an example the business of Local

	Accommodation, hotels, restaurants, etc., which need customers to maintain their business, we easily realize that the greater the projection we have in terms of tourist location, the better sustainable development our rural areas will have.
São Vicente City Hall	The routes are fundamental to keep the municipality running, they are what bring tourists to the hotels and keep our economy running.

Differentiation, good practices, tourist dispersion, expenses distribution, rural areas desertification, these are key words when the discussion is the contribution of tourist routes to the sustainable development of rural areas. These four municipalities understand what is needed to maintain their rural locations.

Question 3 – Should tourist routes expand (go beyond) the base of traditional products and enhance their potential to attract and retain visitors for longer? In what way?

Public Entity	Answer
Machico City Hall	Tourist routes should go beyond traditional products and try to innovate with them. We can not only promote a viewpoint with its views, but we can also promote concerts, as nowadays happens in the Municipality with the initiative "Music in the Viewpoints", through the Culture Division, or other welfare initiatives. Interpretive visits are also promoted, through Ecos Machico, open to the entire population to better know the territory, in the natural and cultural aspects.
Porto Moniz City Hall	For the reality of the Municipality of Porto Moniz, it is essential that visitors can be kept longer, creating eclectic products and tourist attractions, which can occupy them for two / three days within the limits of the Municipality, "obliging" them to have longer stays in the existing hotel.
Ribeira Brava City Hall	More than broadening the base of traditional products, it is essential to encourage the consumption of traditional products, those that are genuine and ours alone. The extension of these products is a complement and not the main activity, because what matters is to reinforce the potential of what we already produce. We can reinvent the products we have to offer in a way that does not change them. The poncha is a good example of this. The

	traditional Madeiran drink made throughout the island, ends up following the same recipe in a unique way, since each one ends up giving their distinctive touch. If this strategy is done well, it ends up enriching traditional products.
São Vicente City Hall	The strategy is to meet what the tourist is looking for. Surfing here in S. Vicente is much sought after, but not by local people. We must bet on the development of this activity and others to bring more participants. There is still a lack of a regional strategy to promote the walks. We have many tours, but they are not properly disclosed. We developed a map to help in the dissemination, it helped a lot and exhausted, but ended up not being continued due to the lack of support. We even had software promoting recommended paths, but there was no continuity either. It lacks a little coordination of everyone, guides, hotels, promoters, etc.

The answers are consistent regarding attracting more tourist by “enriching traditional products,” increase marketing on the existing rural routes and “encourage the consumption.” As Ribeira Brava City Hall states “we can reinvent the products we have to offer in a way that does not change them.”

Question 4 - How do you assess the implementation of the STRATEGY FOR MADEIRA TOURISM 2017-2021 (strategic plan), in particular its effects on the development of tourist routes and its effects on the sustainable development of rural areas?

Public Entity	Answer
Machico City Hall	I do not know the strategy.
Porto Moniz City Hall	All plans, if they are well thought out, have the potential to add more value to the sites for which they are implemented. However, in the concrete case of Porto Moniz, there is no monitoring and adaptation of the idealized plan for the reality of this northern municipality, falling short of the expectations and effective results that could be desired, and the municipality is obliged to create its own strategy with the merger means it has at its disposal.
Ribeira Brava City Hall	This strategic tool reveals the Madeira Destination as a whole, highlighting the fusion between the sea, the mountain, and the culture, through a wide

	<p>range of differentiated experiences. It also affirms the region as a safe tourist destination for the full year, differentiating itself from the others by the mild climate, the welcome to tourists and visitors, the authenticity and diversity, the quality of the experiences and the commitment to social and environmental economic sustainability. Based on this strategy and considering the work of the Regional Secretariat of Tourism and Culture, through the Madeira Promotion Association, developed in the countries that emit tourism, on a global scale, the entire Region stands to gain, including the Municipality of Ribeira Brava that must know how to welcome those who visit us and provide activities and reasons for them to stay or want to enjoy our county again.</p>
São Vicente City Hall	<p>I do not know the plan. The plan was presented, but it remained on paper. It is very well drafted, there is a lot of work, but it stayed by the plan. The transition plan to reach the operators is missing. I am sure that no tourist agent knows the plan, because in practice the interest of the economic decision-makers that are the companies that work to bring the visitor has not been aroused. The great challenge was not fulfilled because it was not presented to the people. The plan is required to be drawn up and presented in the EU because funds are waived for this. It is necessary to reach out to those who work with tourism.</p>

Not all the four municipal councils are aware of the previous plan for the Tourism Strategy for Madeira 2017-2021. The plan must be put into practice and not just presented; it must have a strategy. Those who are familiar with the general lines of the plan have not presented any effects.

Question 5 – Do you consider that the financial support provided by the government and the EU is sufficient to incentivise the development of tourism projects for rural areas?

Public Entity	Answer
Machico City Hall	<p>I do not think that enough are available, and especially in eligible projects. Certain interventions are not eligible, but that they are preponderant for greater attractiveness.</p>

Porto Moniz City Hall	However, the real problem is the lack of incentives for private individuals to invest in rural areas. With more attractive tax packages and with investment support premiums, investment is made outside the major centres. There is a negative perception for the allocation of support to those who invest in the northern municipalities of Madeira.
Ribeira Brava City Hall	Support is never too much, and all financial aid is welcome. But it is also up to investors to present valid proposals that are an added value and that fit into the local and regional tourism strategy.
São Vicente City Hall	Now we do not have projects funded by the government or the EU, but we have many rural roads open with community and regional funds and the support was fundamental for the development of S. Vicente. We gave accessibility to places that had no passages and were abandoned and promoted the development of these rural spaces.

There is a deficiency in financial support for rural projects by the EU and governments, also it is missing investors. Due to lack of marketing the places properly or lack of knowledge of the rural place's potential. Investments to promote the rural spaces and packages incentives are a suggestion as states Porto Moniz City Hall. The rural areas must be presented in a more attractive way to incentivize the investors.

Question 6 – The preservation of natural, cultural, and historical spaces is a priority for developing rural areas, what measures have already been taken and/or implemented in the municipality?

Public Entity	Answer
Machico City Hall	A lot of investment was made in the promotion of these places through the creation of the Ecos Machico project co-financed by the European Union and in partnership with AIG – Associação Insular de Geografia. An Ecos Machico Interpretive Centre (ICES), a website (www.ecosmachico.pt), social networks (Instagram and Facebook) were created, and diverse types of activities are streamlined for various target audiences. A seminar and a conference were also held.

<p>Porto Moniz City Hall</p>	<p>Our great heritage is undoubtedly the natural, with the existence of the largest patch of Laurissilva in the world and its coastal zone. Regarding the Laurissilva, it is classified as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO and about 80% of the territory of Porto Moniz is protected by the Natura 2000 Network. Regarding the coastal zone, the Municipality is proud to display the Blue Flag more often on the island of Madeira, which is an award of excellence that attest to the quality of its waters, the award of the Gold Quality award by QUERCUS is recurrent, in addition to other environmental programs that MPM competes recurrently. One of the last major investments of the Municipality was the construction of an Ecocenter dedicated to the collection of solid waste, which is a way to rationalize and minimize the transport of the same, as a more effective separation of the final waste.</p>
<p>Ribeira Brava City Hall</p>	<p>Yes, the preservation of natural, cultural, and historical spaces is a priority to develop rural spaces, because we sell our history, our culture, our architecture, our landscapes. In this aspect, we are a little embryonic, but gradually we are building our poster with our added value that goes a lot through nature tourism, our gastronomy, and the hospitable way we welcome those who visit us. The preservation of natural spaces has been done for several years through the Natural Park of Madeira. Seventy-five percent of our territory is part of the Natural Park, which involves a partnership and teamwork with the Municipality. The Natura 2000 Network is one of the measures that is applied in the Municipality and allows the protection of the environment. It covers part of the eastern and western slope of the Ribeira Brava valley, part of the slope south of Caldeira da Achada and part of the slope south of the parish of Campanário which, because they are areas without human intervention, have a great tourist impact, enhancing the observation of birds and marine life that lives protected in their natural habitat. However, we believe it is important to establish a fund so that the municipalities could recover and maintain some spaces (trails, paths, viewpoints, etc.).</p>
<p>São Vicente City Hall</p>	<p>We have the Caves of St. Vincent that last year brought more than 150 thousand people to visit the historical place. Unfortunately, due to the last</p>

two earthquakes we had, the caves cannot reopen soon. We are making efforts to reopen this attraction that brings a lot of revenue to S. Vicente; however, it is being extremely difficult since we do not have in Madeira specialists in the area or financial endowment for the renovation. The preservation of these spaces is a priority of ours, but we have a difficulty added by bureaucracy, lack of funding and lack of specialists in the field. We still have the bar and the Volcanism Centre open because they are not directly connected to the caves.

Machico Municipality has a specific plan for development, the Ecos Machico and they also share the Natura 2000 with the councils of Porto Moniz and Ribeira Brava, which “is a network of core breeding and resting sites for rare and threatened species, and some rare natural habitat types which are protected in their own right.” (European Commission. Environment. Natura 2000) São Vicente has fewer cultural and historical places, the most important is closed, nevertheless, they are making efforts to reopen.

All city councils are aware of the importance of the cultural and historical places in their cities and as they have showed efforts are being made for improvements.

Question 7 – How do you assess the support of public authorities (and particularly, your own) for the projects of the various tourism operators, especially regarding the development and consolidation of tourist routes?

Public Entity	Answer
Machico City Hall	The municipality has given indirect support, that is, the Municipality of Machico, to enforce its projects Ecos Machico and Madeira Machico Trail Capital (https://mmtc.pt/) has carried out several cleanings of routes that have been used by various institutions that promote various events. One of these is for example the MIUT, Trail Natura Porto da Cruz, Trail Santo da Serra. Through the Whale Museum was disclosed to several operators, the identification of cetaceans, as well as the most diverse rules of observation of these cetaceans.
Porto Moniz City Hall	It is almost non-existent.

Ribeira Brava City Hall	In this regard, the Municipality of Ribeira Brava is waiting for more investors in tourism who want to implement themselves in the municipality and develop their activities. We are receptive and open doors to support the implementation of new projects. Tour operators are fundamental to the creation of services that are the engine of development of a business area that is expanding, but that it is necessary to work on it to attract and captivate those who visit us. There is a need for a large hotel operator that will boost and promote the municipality and all the surrounding offer as a tourist destination. The support of the entities is always welcome, but they are scarce and are not always channelled to this area.
São Vicente City Hall	Yes, during the pandemic we directly supported with help for hotels and other businesses to stay open. We support all religious events in the county, otherwise there were no religious festivals. The figures are spread over the various sectors. Tour operators never asked us for support or presented us with financing projects.

City Councils support with financial and non-financial help. When financial funds are available must have investors with a project. Non-financial help is given when the municipality cleans the tourism paths or help in events coordination.

Question 8 – Do you consider it important to involve the local community, businesses, and other stakeholders in the discussion on tourism investment projects for rural areas? Is there public discussion? Examples...

Public Entity	Answer
Machico City Hall	There have been no tourism investment projects, however at the level of the Ecos Machico project in the definition of ecosystems, the team has promoted the participation of citizens through social networks, by email or in person at ICES.
Porto Moniz City Hall	Yes, and yes. Participatory budgeting, preparatory public meetings for the elaboration of structuring plans for the Municipality, etc.
Ribeira Brava City Hall	This articulation with the local community is indispensable, because only united and rowing all to the same side is reached a good port. This does not

	always happen, because each one thinks in individual terms and ends up working in isolation, hoping that it will be the autarchy that finds solutions and promotes investment projects.
São Vicente City Hall	It is particularly important the participation of people who perceive and are interested in the development of the municipality. In 2013 I will create the tourism division in the city council. A tour group consisting of hotel owners, tour guides, restaurants and other businesses has been added. This is to promote tourism. Some initiatives have been developed, namely the application of location of tourist places, the Best Guide. However, there were few municipalities that joined and ended up not advancing. Regarding the population, you must go to people directly because otherwise they do not come here to question. We got to have a lot of regulations under public discussion, and no one spoke up.

All the four enquired City Halls are aware of the importance of the community engagement in municipalities decisions. According to the responders the residents are informed and invited to participate in the Councils projects.

Question 9 – What specific measures or support has your public entity (name) implemented or supported about, for example:

- a) Partnerships for training and employment of local community members aiming at their integration in the tourism value chain (as producers, suppliers, distributors, artisans, local guides, local cooks...).

Public Entity	Answer
Machico City Hall	Not answered.
Porto Moniz City Hall	Partnerships for the training and employment of members of the local community aiming at their integration into the tourism value chain (such as producers, suppliers, distributors, artisans, local guides, local cooks...) Creation of Official Stores, where space is given to local artisans and producers to put their products up for sale, entrepreneurship incentive program "Empreende +" and the creation of a business incubator dedicated to the areas of tourism and modern technologies.

Ribeira Brava City Hall	The Municipality of Ribeira Brava has done great social and economic work to help its local community overcome difficulties, create, or maintain jobs and encourage investment. We have a municipal market that every week receives farmers from the county to sell their products. We have an employment incentive regulation to occupy the long-term unemployed and/or young graduates who are unable to enter the labour market. We are quick to reduce bureaucracy in the licensing processes for the implementation of companies in the county
São Vicente City Hall	We have the Agricultural School of Madeira that develops training actions. The offices follow the productions, and we support them logistically. What the council did was to extend hiring to clear roads, etc., which, in addition to strengthening staffing, also helped to reduce local unemployment.

City Halls are in favour of partnerships, and according to responders, they develop many forms for rural places sustainability therefore helping the tourism value chain. Open stores to help sell local production, municipal markets to incentivize farmers to increase production and sell without difficulty and avoid production loss and reducing bureaucracy is an excellence form of helping. These measures help reduce unemployment and maintain a healthy community.

Question 9 – What specific measures or support has your public entity (name) implemented or supported about, for example:

- b) Supporting and encouraging small-scale agriculture, sustaining producer communities, and developing partnerships with cooperatives and producer organisations supporting small-scale farmers.

Public Entity	Answer
Machico City Hall	Not answered.
Porto Moniz City Hall	There are several programs and incentives in place for the primary sector, such as support for transport for animals for slaughter, annual distribution of molluscicide and rodenticide, provision of threshing machine, free of charge, for the extraction of cereals, provision of equipment (mill) for grinding cereals, etc.

Ribeira Brava City Hall	<p>In terms of support to farmers, we help, as far as possible, in the cleaning of paths, in the construction or requalification of Levada's that allow irrigation water, we have implemented in the county a farmer support desk, the responsibility of the Regional Secretariat of Agriculture, which enables the support to our farmers in various areas of activity. There is also the Relevant Project of Municipal Interest (PRIM) that encompasses the enterprises to be located in rural or urban land, of recognized municipal interest, for the impact on the occupation of the territory, for the importance in the promotion and stimulation of the development and social economic revitalization of the municipality, or for its functionality, plastic or monumental expression, among others, provided that they enhance the creation of employment, or encompass large investments equal to or greater than one million euros. The Municipal Master Plan (PDM9 of the Municipality of Ribeira Brava has the mission of assuming and defending the humanized landscape, as a capital factor of maintenance and valorisation of the tourist product. It provides for the implementation of Tourist Occupation Spaces in areas that, due to their location and landscape setting, benefit the implementation of structures linked to tourism activity and tourist enterprises, in accordance with the legislation in force, as well as their support infrastructures, without prejudice to other compatible uses.</p>
São Vicente City Hall	<p>We do not have the funds for this, we help logistically in the same way that we do with the Agricultural School of Madeira and in the cleaning of agricultural paths.</p>

There is a common interest in supporting small communities. These municipalities help with distribution, transport, provide some equipment, offer pesticides, and help with logistics. These approaches support small-scale farming and increase local production. They are ways of encouraging labour responsibility and community awareness.

Question 9 – What specific measures or support has your public entity (name) implemented or supported about, for example:

- c) Consider the implementation of a tourist tax and with the revenue from this apply it to projects that improve the quality of life of residents and sustainability of the municipality.

Public Entity	Answer
Machico City Hall	Not answered.
Porto Moniz City Hall	It is something that will be a reality in a few years.
Ribeira Brava City Hall	We are too small a means for each municipality to adopt the tourist tax. It would be fairer to have a single regional tax, the value of which would revert to the municipalities.
São Vicente City Hall	I partially agree. A fee that is charged on the entry of the tourist, which is managed by a company defined for this and the application of the funds controlled. We had to pass an image of particularly good organization since a fee can drive away the visitor. We should not be the same as other countries that charge fees just for charging. The expenses must be borne by those who benefit from them, such as the companies that sell the services. Fees can decrease demand, they can lower interest, etc. We must be careful.

Three of the councils agree with the implementation of a tourist tax, only Machico left unresponded this question. They agree that tax incomes must revert to the cities to invest in development and maintaining sustainable municipalities.

Question 10 - The document: STRATEGY FOR THE TOURISM OF THE AUTONOMOUS REGION OF MADEIRA, IN THE PERIOD 2022 2027, is currently not available to the public or on the SRTC (Regional Secretariat for Tourism and Culture) portal, despite wide publicity in the media. What do you think about this situation? Will it be available soon?

Public Entity	Answer
Machico City Hall	Strategy is still being outlined. But the Regional Secretariat for Tourism and Culture was invited to participate in the I Ecos Machico Conference, where the certification process of RAM as a sustainable destination was

	presented and should also be a pillar for this same strategy that should already be available.
Porto Moniz City Hall	Effectively it should already be being executed, but, despite everything, our expectation is that this postponement of its implementation will serve to improve and optimize the plan, so that unequivocal results are obtained.
Ribeira Brava City Hall	Not answered.
São Vicente City Hall	I do not know the plan; it has not yet been disclosed to the municipality.

City Halls are not aware of the strategic plan or neither have knowledge of its disclosure. The project is outlined, and according to the representatives from the offices enquired the plan is almost perfectly designed; however, it is poorly publicized to city councils, and neither were draft an implementation strategy.

5. Analysis of the results and discussion

In this chapter it will be presented an interpretation of the answers to the interviews, separated by group. Although the opinion of the three groups merges on most issues, some of the aspects, regarding perception, differ. The analysis demonstrates the interest of all participants in the growth of projects to maintain committed and participatory communities in the development of tourist routes as a way of sustainability of rural spaces.

5.1. Analysis of residents' responses

Residents understand the needs from the space they live in. They know the land, the climate, all the surroundings, who emigrated, who returned and what is missing. The answers obtained to the interviews demonstrate that the population has knowledge about their district and understands what is needed for its development. Communities are aware of the benefits that tourism provides and agree that the development of rural areas influences the sustainable growth of areas with lower population density. Although some of the residents surveyed were reluctant to expand tourist routes, they were concerned about maintaining existing routes. The population is deeply accustomed to the presence of the tourist; however, it is understood, as a first condition, to promote and maintain the products that already exist and then create and design new products.

The lack of public discussion (or failure to disseminate) between municipalities and the population is pointed out by residents as a primary need for healthy understanding between the parties and for people to feel that they are part of the decisions about their habitat.

When we talk about partnerships for the training and integration of community members in employment chains linked to tourism, rural communities are resistant, not because they do not agree, but because there are no people with a possible profile for this. In the nineties the lack of employment in rural areas led to the exponential increase in emigration, so that currently the population residing in rural areas is either too senior to integrate training or are too young and have no interest in work related to tourism. Respondents pointed to the interests of the young population as electronics and technology and only in case of economic need they would accept a job related to tourism.

On the implementation of a tourist tax to apply in development projects and improvement of the quality of life of the locals aiming at the sustainability of the community the agreement is

general. In the opinion of the residents, the revenues can be applied to minimize the environmental impact on tourist routes caused by mass tourism and develop projects to improve the spaces.

The population living in rural areas understands the need for development and growth of these areas. Tourism is a way of promoting rural areas, maintaining traditions, and preventing their alienation. Tourist routes present themselves as a starting point for the future of rural areas.

5.2. Analysis of the responses of private companies

A question that was asked to private companies refers on the agreement that tourist routes contribute for the sustainable development of rural areas, to which all answers were positively responded, however, one answer deserved to be highlighted in this analysis since it summarizes the purposes of this question: “Perhaps it is the only process of being able to develop and maintain smaller projects in a sustainable way and to disperse investment from the cities” (Quinta da Serra Bio-Hotel, response to the question n.º 2).

Regarding the development of tourist routes and going beyond traditional products to attract more tourism and keep visitors longer, the responses are similar to those given by the residents. The focus is to maintain traditional products; nevertheless, it is necessary to innovate and diversify.

The lack of communication for disclosure of projects by government entities was also noted by private companies. They claim that there is no public discussion, however, the government's effort for the execution of development plans is recognized, though, when it comes to execution is different. There is no presentation of an action plan for the implementation of the strategy defined by the regional and central governments. The same problem of communication and dissemination is present about knowledge of European funding. Private entities point out flaws in the disclosure of financial support and, therefore, delay the implementation of projects already set in advance and awaiting economic support.

In the opinion of private entities, tourist routes promote the island's notoriety, as the natural environment, the local culture, and history, but must be protected to avoid irreversible damage in the future. They agree that development projects in rural areas increase the development of agriculture and improve the standard of living of family's that depend on it, preventing the areas from being abandoned.

Private companies claim that there is a great difficulty in hiring local hand labour and the quality of the existing one is not the most suitable for tourism. Developing partnerships to train residents to work in tourism projects could be a positive solution.

The creation of a tourist tax is also supported by the private sector reinforced that the management of the funds must be done by an external entity and the application of the same, should be appropriately managed. By this they mean that to avoid mismanagement the tax should be implemented, but not managed by government entities.

The profile of the tourist who visits Madeira Island is not unique. The island welcomes different profiles of visitors. There are families looking for activities to do with their children; young couples who want to do extreme sports and get to know nature; senior groups who choose all-inclusive hotels; people who want to rest and enjoy the green spaces around the island. Nonetheless, they all have something in common: They seek for a memorable experience on the island. The Archipelago should stand out from emerging markets as a "unique destination" (Madeira Adventure Kingdom, response to the question n. ° 11) focused on sustainability according to one of the answers obtained to question eleven.

5.3. Analysis of the responses of public entities

As already mentioned in point 3.2, although the objective of the study was to obtain answers from all municipal councils, apart from Porto Santo, the analysis was obtained by four municipalities, that were very participatory.

The four municipal councils agree that tourist routes bring benefits to rural areas and that it is necessary to invest in the dispersion of tourism to contribute to the sustainable development of rural areas. Regarding the expansion of tourist routes by going beyond the existing base the responses are consistent. The importance recall on “enriching traditional products” (Ribeira Brava City Hall, response to question n. ° 3), increase marketing on the existing routs and “encourage the consumption of traditional products” (Ribeira Brava City Hall, response to question n. ° 3).

About the Strategy Plan for Tourism in Madeira 2017-2021, it was presented to this research as a form of response of a public entity, the monitoring of the objectives defined in the plan, however it does not demonstrate relevant data for the present study since it does not include monitoring of specific data of rural tourism or demand for tourist routes. The four municipalities share the same opinion as private companies on the presentation of strategic plans. The plans

are well defined and demonstrate effort in their preparation, however it fails in the disclosure and implementation of strategy goals.

City councils are aware of the lack of financial support from the European Union and governments for tourism development projects in rural areas. On their point of view, rural areas should be the target of an intensive marketing plan to encourage demand for investment and, consequently, strengthen financing. In the absence of financial support, the city councils help with other measures, such as logistics and operational. Among other non-financial facilities, these are some actions adopted by City Councils to help reduce unemployment:

- ✓ Equipment for agriculture;
- ✓ Help in the cleaning of Levada's and rural paths to facilitate farmers and visitors.
- ✓ Encouragement of partnerships that support local handicrafts worker and artists to promote and sell their product and art;
- ✓ Provide markets spaces to facilitate the sale of local products;
- ✓ Reduce bureaucracy.

Regarding the participation of communities in the public discussion, City Councils understand that is important for representatives of private entities and residents to participate in public discussion. Contrary to the responses of population and private companies, city councils affirm that all projects are disclosed, and the community is invited to participate.

About the implementation of the tourist tax, the opinion is shared with residents and private companies. The city councils are in favour of the tourist tax if it is well managed and implemented. There is no comment is the funds should be managed by public or private entities.

The preservation of rural areas is a notorious priority in the plan of the municipalities. Although the financial part is missing, the representatives from City Councils are committed to sustainability as they demonstrated their plans for environmental protection; a creation of an Eco Centre to promote sustainability; some Councils are associated with Natura 2000 Network, whose vision is to conserve natural habitats and their species; others help in any way that is possible.

On the question that refers to the non-availability of the Strategy Plan for Tourism of the Autonomous Region of Madeira, in the period 2022-2027, in one of the answers, the link to access the plan in a new location (available in the bibliography: [Turisver](#) 2022) was addressed to this study.

5.4. Discussion

According to this study's investigation all three groups understand that tourism routes are important for the development of rural areas, as the routes help to maintain rural places alive, therefore, all agreed that the priority is to preserve the existing routes. Nevertheless, there is a concern that the existing choices are not enough and it is necessary to investment in new options to increase demand.

Regarding public discussion it was noted a lack of communication between public, private companies, and residents. All groups understand the importance of the participation from all parts in public discussions, however, despite City Councils confirm that all participants are invited to participate, the community, including private companies, does not have acknowledge of the meetings or documents disclosure.

Concerning partnerships to facilitate job capabilities to integrate tourism projects, although the three segments perspective are accordant, a few points contrast from each other. Residents agreed with partnerships but believe that there are not people available to proceed with this measure to increase employment because most of residents from rural areas are seniors or youngster that are not interested in tourism. Private companies have a concern about the quality of the hand labour available even with new partnerships for training. Governments representatives are also in favour, and they support all kind of partnerships. Even though the entities do not have financial availability they help in other approaches.

About the implantation of a tourism tax the groups agree and are aware that financial help is needed to facilitate the good maintenance of spaces and help to develop new projects related to tourism development in rural areas. They pointed that the funds from the tourist tax must be well managed, so everyone see the transparency of it and the application.

Another concern is the strategy plans. When governments define strategy plans for rural tourism City Councils should be aware and involved helping define the implementation strategies and policies. Nevertheless, when discussing sustainability all have showed concern in being a part of the development plans and being able to help in future development plans.

When discussing the financial support from European Union and Governments all agree that there is not many or not at all, resulting in a difficulty to increase interest from investors. There is also a lack of disclosure about European support.

5.5. SWOT analysis

Considering the responses and the factors pointed by the three groups, this study decided to combine all aspects that helps understand the impacts of the main question of our investigation: Can tourism routes help the sustainable development in rural areas, in a SWOT analysis.

Strengths	Weaknesses
✓ Nature	✓ Lack of public discussion
✓ Sea and mountains proximity (Turisver, 2022, p. 74)	✓ Poor investment
✓ Clima (Turisver, 2022, p. 74)	✓ Too much bureaucracy
✓ Cultural and historical heritage	✓ Lack of financial support from EU and governments
✓ Community engagement	
✓ Easy access	
✓ Tourist marketing	
Opportunities	Threats
✓ Rural tourism projects developments	✓ Massive tourism
✓ Expansion and creation of new routes	✓ Absence communication between government and communities
✓ Cultural dissemination	✓ Poor preservation of natural places
✓ Create a tourist tax to support local projects	✓ Unreasonable prices of accommodation and activities
✓ Create partnerships to increase hand-labour	✓ Not prioritize local production
	✓ No hand-labour
	✓ Emerging markets

Table 10 - SWOT Analysis

Source: Authors

6. Conclusions

To confirm the research first objective pointed in chapter one, and considering all the responses, this investigation concludes that tourist routes can contribute to the sustainable development of rural areas preventing the alienation of those areas as the routes are an important part of rural tourism. For small and rural areas tourist routes represent economic development and demographic stability.

Other objective was to recognise if tourism routes can be rethought so their potential can be explored, and more routes created. This study finds that it is possible to improve the existing choices of routes and there is also capacity to expand the potential for development of new options.

Responses from residents and private entities provide clarity for governments to seek community engagement, so when defining strategies related to rural tourism or other community issues, everyone understand the importance of sharing information and discuss future development of small regions.

Another objective was to support the importance and encourage the development of partnerships to facilitate job creation. This research has pointed the concerns and recommendations from the groups enquired.

The last objective of this research was to clarify the goals for the future, so that everyone involved understands the essential needs to keep tourist routes alive and recognises all the potential they present for sustainable development and growth. This investigation concludes that population understands the magnitude of tourist routes as a means of development and governments recognise the importance of involving communities in decisions, policies, partnerships, and all matters relating to the spaces they share. All the groups are aware of the need to invest in tourist routes as well as the representation of culture and history that rural areas symbolise.

6.1 Validation of the hypothesis formulated on chapter 3

- ✓ Hypothesis 1: The community has a positive perception of tourism routes and the benefits that it can bring to rural areas.

Hypothesis 1 was validated. All three groups recognise the benefits tourist routes can bring to rural areas. The perspective shown in the responses, whether from residents, private companies, or public entities, is positive. Respondents understand the importance of sustainable development of rural areas and, consequently, of projects for the growth of tourist routes, particularly in less populated areas to avoid demographic alienation. As far as the development of new routes is concerned, opinion is divided, although, positive. Some responses support that a larger investment in products and in existing routes is necessary, others incentivize that new forms of exploitation of rural areas must be considered. Tourist routes have a significant impact on rural areas; however, the region's tourism development plan should include better implementation and promotion within the regions.

- ✓ Hypothesis 2: The participation of the population is important in public debates on the development for future tourism projects.

Hypothesis 2 was validated. When communities are not involved in the matters of the county they reside, resistance to change is bigger. Residents understand it as a lack of communication from the representatives of the public entities and feel that their opinion has no value. In rural areas and for the time being, the population is senior. They are people whose contribution is significant because they have many years of knowledge and learning, and their participation may change some initial ideas, in a positive sense. It is the people who live in the countryside who know the spaces better than anyone else. In the present study, a discrepancy was observed between the responses of residents and the responses of private companies with government representatives. Residents and private individuals say they are unaware of the existence or disclosure of public discussions, whatever the subject may be. Contrary to this assertion, the public authorities attest that the subjects under discussion are posted in the City Halls and that no one attends for this purpose. Nevertheless, residents and private companies show great interest in participating in the public discussions promoted by the municipality where they live.

Collaboration between the community, private companies and public entities is the first, and most important, step towards the development of tourist routes in rural areas. The discussion between these groups is the starting point for a good understanding and understanding of all parties involved, whether they are the stakeholders and shareholders where the government will benefit from the knowledge and experience of all involved.

- ✓ Hypothesis 3: Strategy plans and partnerships encourages rural tourism development and empower quality local employment.

Hypothesis 3 was validated. Rural areas are entirely dependent on investment and partnerships. For its development to be possible, an investment plan and investors are indispensable. Development projects in rural areas provide job creation. Partnerships facilitate the availability and integration of the workforce. The labour available in rural areas, if any, is considered unqualified to take part in tourism projects, since most of them are farmers, small traders and, as far as women are concerned, they are stay-at-home spouses. To be able to integrate these people into the tourist labour market, qualified training is required. There is a need to create policies that facilitate investment, particularly in the training and qualification of people, thus facilitating the lack of labour faced by investors. This research observed the reality of the lack of people to work in rural areas, however, the community is open to the development of partnerships aimed at job creation and help maintain favourable conditions for families to stay in rural areas. Private entities are available for development, but there is a need for support from public entities.

Through the present study it was noticed that the strategic plans for the development of rural areas are outlined by government entities without consulting private investors, nor some municipal councils, because some respondents said they did not know the plan and others say they are aware, but without formal presentation. It was also understood that although it has been stated in some of the responses that the strategic plans are well defined, there is no proposal for their implementation.

- ✓ Hypothesis 4: The financial support (local, UE or tourist tax) is significant for future projects development.

Hypothesis 4 was validated. Financial support is important when it comes to development, especially in less populated areas and the lack of financial incentives drives investors away. Developing rural areas adds concerns such as the shortage of workforce, often difficult accessibility, increased bureaucracies, complexity in the definition of appropriate policies for the development of rural areas, etc. The answers provided on the financial investment states that the opinion is common to all three groups. The financial support available by local public entities, central government, and the European Union, prove the absence of investment and the understanding for the need for it.

- ✓ Hypothesis 5: Cultural and historical heritage are a priority when discussing rural areas development strategies.

Hypothesis 5 was validated. Cultural heritage is not any existing product or memory, cultural heritage is selected by the members of the community agreeing on the values existing in that community, defined by the members of a particular social group. The heritage is genuine and unique, it becomes a historical-cultural aspect being maintained through transmission between generations.

The present investigation found that residents, private entities, and government bodies agree to maintain existing traditions and cultures in rural areas. The community understands the importance of sustainability for the development of tourist routes, as they promote their culture and history to visitors. Dissemination of cultural and historical places from tourists is one of the best marketing strategies for rural tourism development.

6.2 Limitations

The fact that, in this past year, the island does not depend on seasonality, presents an increased difficulty in establishing communications with private companies linked to rural tourism, however, it was noted an effort of the participants to contribute to the study.

Another limitation found was the contact with public entities. The investigation was faced with a great difficulty in obtaining answers to the requests for interviews, which caused a conditioning factor to the present study. Despite the insistence, no answers were obtained to the contacts made, apart from the four municipal councils that are part of the investigation.

6.3 Future Research

Future research focuses on realizing who are the possible investors and what are their needs to move forward with development projects in rural areas. It is also important to understand what fundings are available and propose new policies to increase investment for the development of projects in rural areas. An interesting study will be to promote a study of all the existing routes and the percentages of affluence. This study can help in the dispersion of tourism and avoid overloaded routes, as well as understand which routes can be explored and which new routes can be created.

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