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Sustainability gaps in tourism clusters

Dominican Republic

This paper focuses on an analysis of sustainability gaps in the tourism clusters of Puerto Plata and Colonial City in the Dominican Republic, based on the idea that tourism is an economic sector with great potential to contribute to the development of a territory, provided that it is based on sustainability.
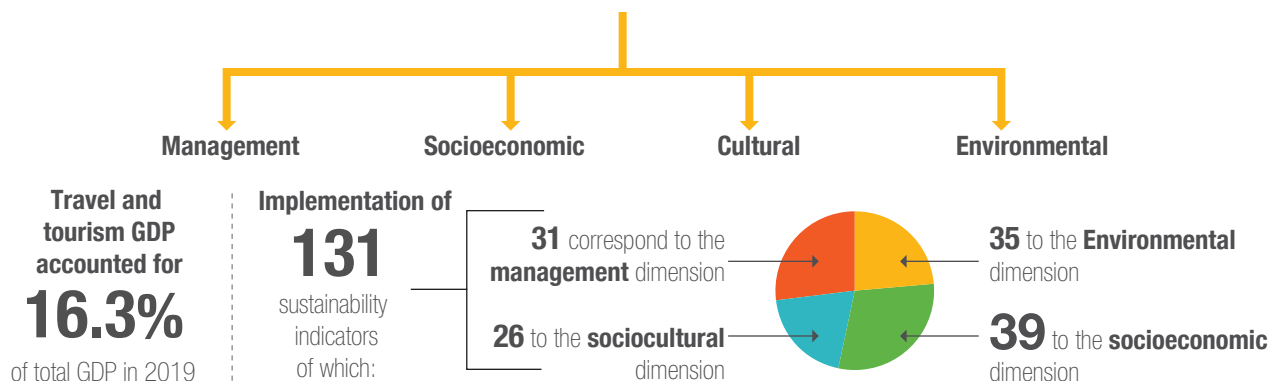
Sustainability in the tourist clusters

Sustainability is related to the optimal use of the environmental resources of tourist destinations, conserving natural resources, taking advantage of their cultural heritage, involving the local population in their development, education, and constant monitoring of the territory.

The Dominican Republic has more than five decades of developing a successful tourism business model that has driven it to becoming the leader in international tourist arrivals in the insular Caribbean. However, recent economic, social and biological crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic, have highlighted the vulnerability and lack of resilience of the sector and, therefore, the need to make changes aimed at its recovery.

Identification of sustainability gaps

Adaptation of 131 sustainability indicators to identify and measure the sector's gaps and implement public policy recommendations to strengthen management structures and create disciplines for systemic monitoring of tourism impacts in four dimensions is proposed:

Management   Socioeconomic   Cultural   Environmental

Travel and tourism GDP accounted for 16.3% of total GDP in 2019

Implementation of **131** sustainability indicators of which:

31 correspond to the **management** dimension

26 to the **sociocultural** dimension

35 to the **Environmental** dimension

39 to the **socioeconomic** dimension

Ranking of indicators by dimension

The information gathered in the study allows for identification of gaps between the four dimensions of both tourism clusters. Gap implies inequality; this represents a barrier to sustainable development of the tourism clusters.
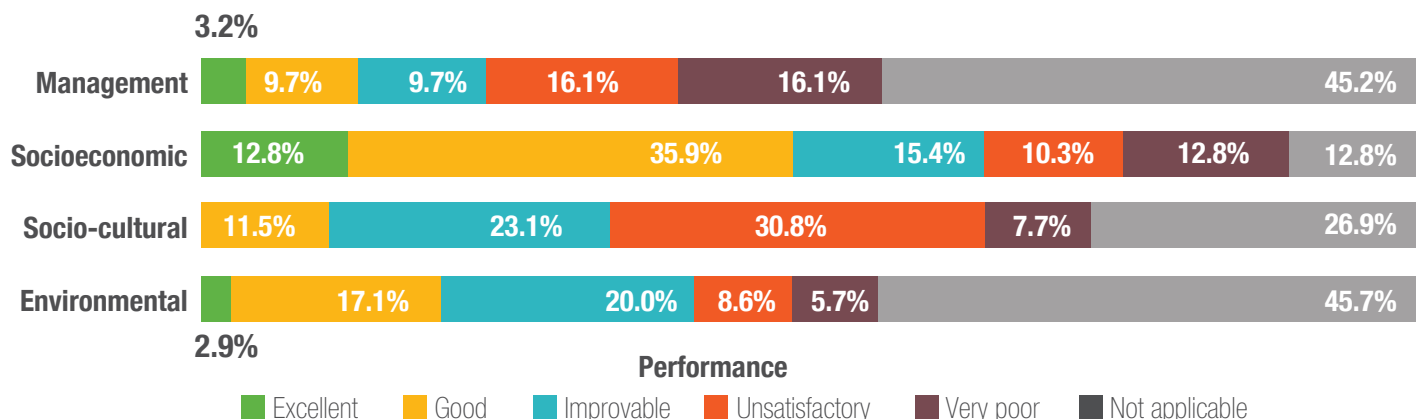
Puerto Plata[1]

Ranking	Description	Management	Socioeconomic	Sociocultural	Environmental
1	Very low performance	5	5	2	2
2	Unsatisfactory performance	5	4	8	3
3	Improvable performance	3	6	6	7
4	Good performance	3	14	3	6
5	Excellent performance	1	5	0	1
N/A	Not applicable	14	5	7	16
Total		**31**	**39**	**26**	**35**

1: Prepared by the authors
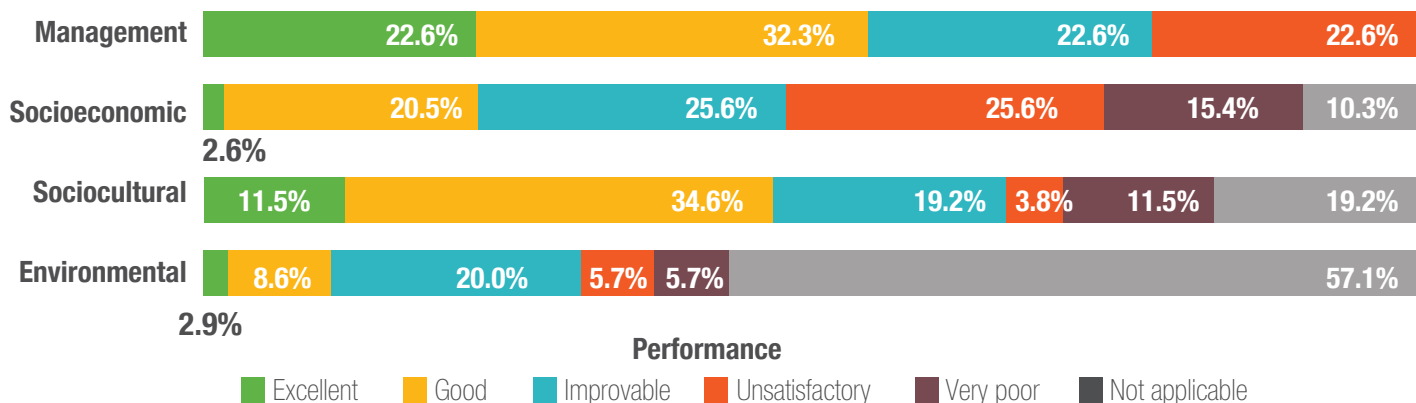
Sustainability gaps in tourism clusters

Puerto Plata[1]

This exercise represents a first methodological and measurement approximation of these indicators. The implementation involved challenges related to the availability and systematization of the required information, so the lessons learned from the process are being incorporated into a second exercise that is being carried out in the remaining six tourism clusters of the Dominican Republic.

3.2%

	Excellent	Good	Improvable	Unsatisfactory	Very poor	Not applicable
Management		9.7%	9.7%	16.1%	16.1%	45.2%
Socioeconomic	12.8%	35.9%	15.4%	10.3%	12.8%	12.8%
Socio-cultural	11.5%	23.1%	30.8%	7.7%		26.9%
Environmental		17.1%	20.0%	8.6%	5.7%	45.7%

2.9%

Performance
🟩 Excellent 🟧 Good 🟦 Improvable 🟥 Unsatisfactory 🟫 Very poor ⬛ Not applicable

Colonial City[2]

Ranking	Description	Management	Socioeconomic	Socio-cultural	Environmental
1	Very low performance	7	6	3	2
2	Unsatisfactory performance	0	10	1	2
3	Improvable performance	7	10	5	7
4	Good performance	10	8	9	3
5	Excellent performance	7	1	3	1
N/A	Not applicable	0	4	5	20
Total		31	39	26	35

	Excellent	Good	Improvable	Unsatisfactory	Very poor	Not applicable
Management	22.6%	32.3%	22.6%	22.6%		
Socioeconomic		20.5%	25.6%	25.6%	15.4%	10.3%
Sociocultural	11.5%	34.6%	19.2%	3.8%	11.5%	19.2%
Environmental		8.6%	20.0%	5.7%	5.7%	57.1%

2.6% (Sociocultural) **2.9%** (Environmental)

Performance
🟩 Excellent 🟧 Good 🟦 Improvable 🟥 Unsatisfactory 🟫 Very poor ⬛ Not applicable

Note: In the environmental dimension, the rating "does not apply" corresponds to 20 indicators (57.1%) of the 35 that comprise it. Of these, 8 (22.9%) were discarded because they fall into the category of protected areas and Colonial City is an urban destination. It was not possible to measure the remaining 12 indicators due to lack of available information.
2: Prepared by the authors.