



“Conservation-based Volunteer Tourism in the Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica: Community Impacts and Ways Forward”

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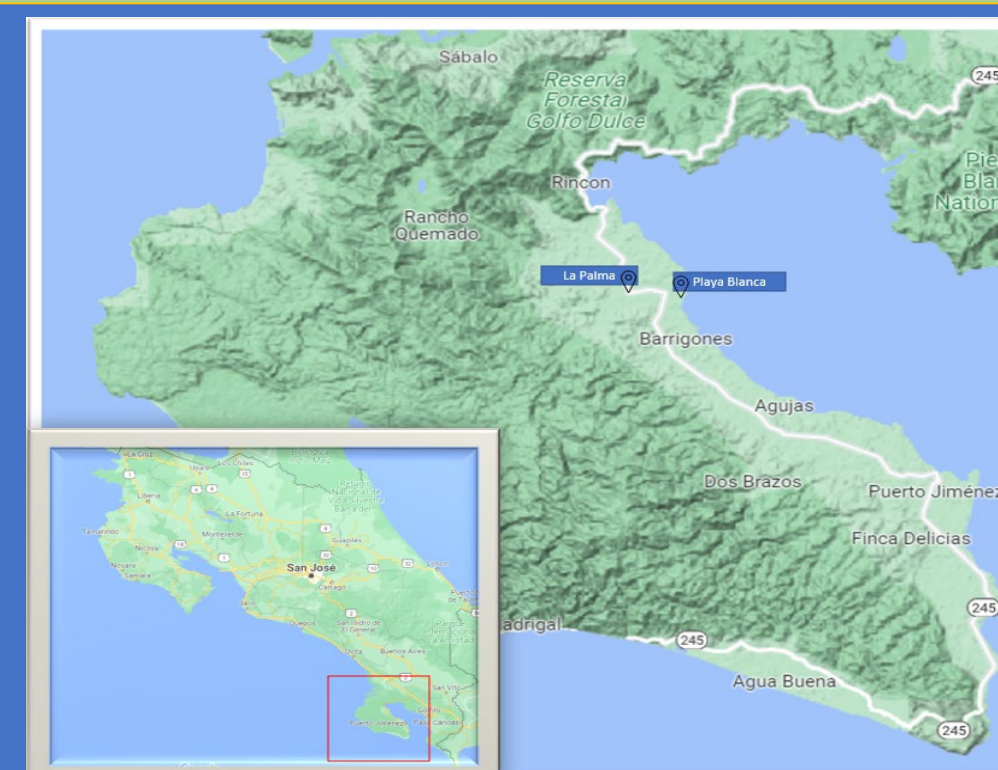
Background

Host Organization:

Latin American Sea Turtles Association

Location:

Playa Blanca – La Palma, Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica



Tourism and Conservation may have a symbiotic relationship. Two broad types of tourism are observed here: Nature-based tourism and volunteer tourism. They are linked here as:

Conservation-based Volunteer Tourism

The Osa Peninsula holds about 2.5% of World Biodiversity and Tourism accounts for about 6.4% of Costa Rica’s GDP (2016)

There is great potential for true ecotourism that benefits the environment and the local communities.

General Objective

This study has two main objectives:

1. Analyze the impacts of ongoing conservation-based volunteer tourism conducted by LAST in Playa Blanca
2. Identify long-term strategies to optimize and improve upon existing relationships between LAST and the local community of Playa Blanca.

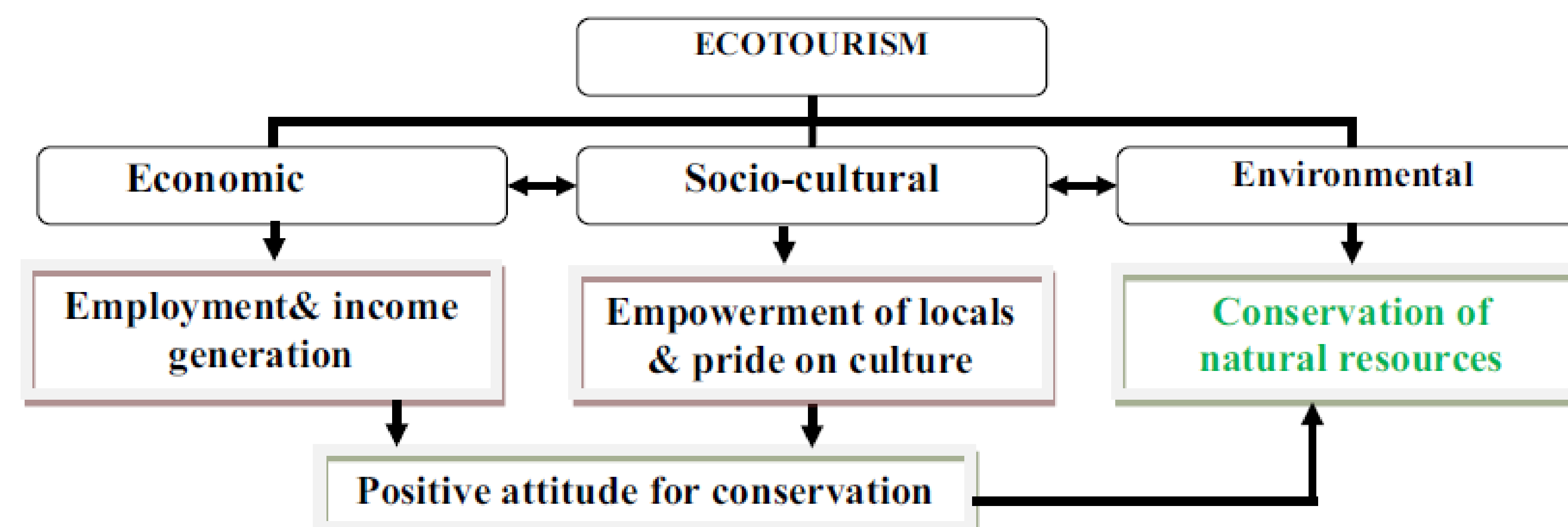
Methodology

Semi-Structured Interviews w/
13 Community Members
15 Local Businesses
37 LAST Volunteers

Personal Observations



Contextual-Conceptual Framework



Das & Chatterjee, 2015 - Ecotourism Standard C/C Framework

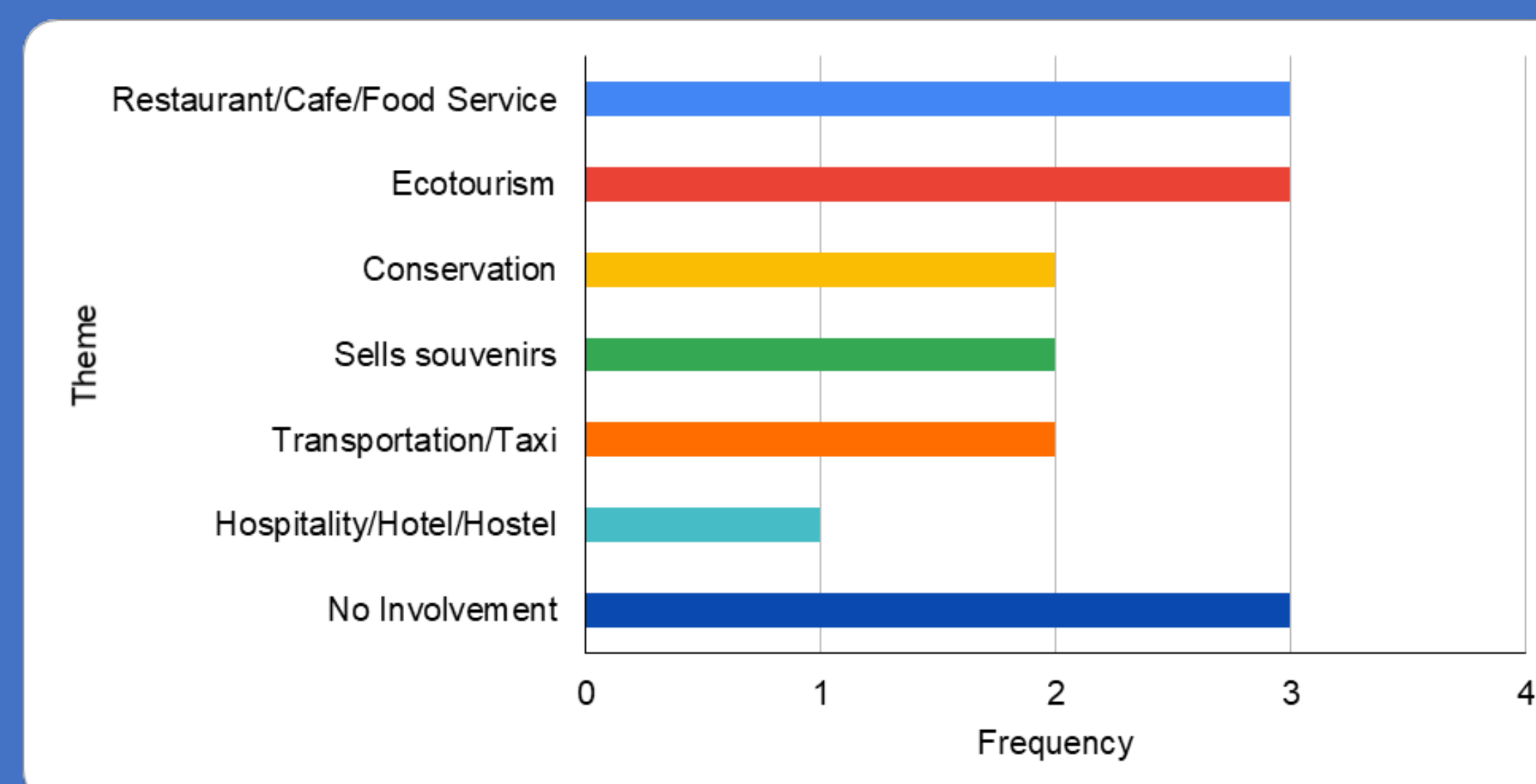
Scan the QR Code for Expanded C/C Framework



Results

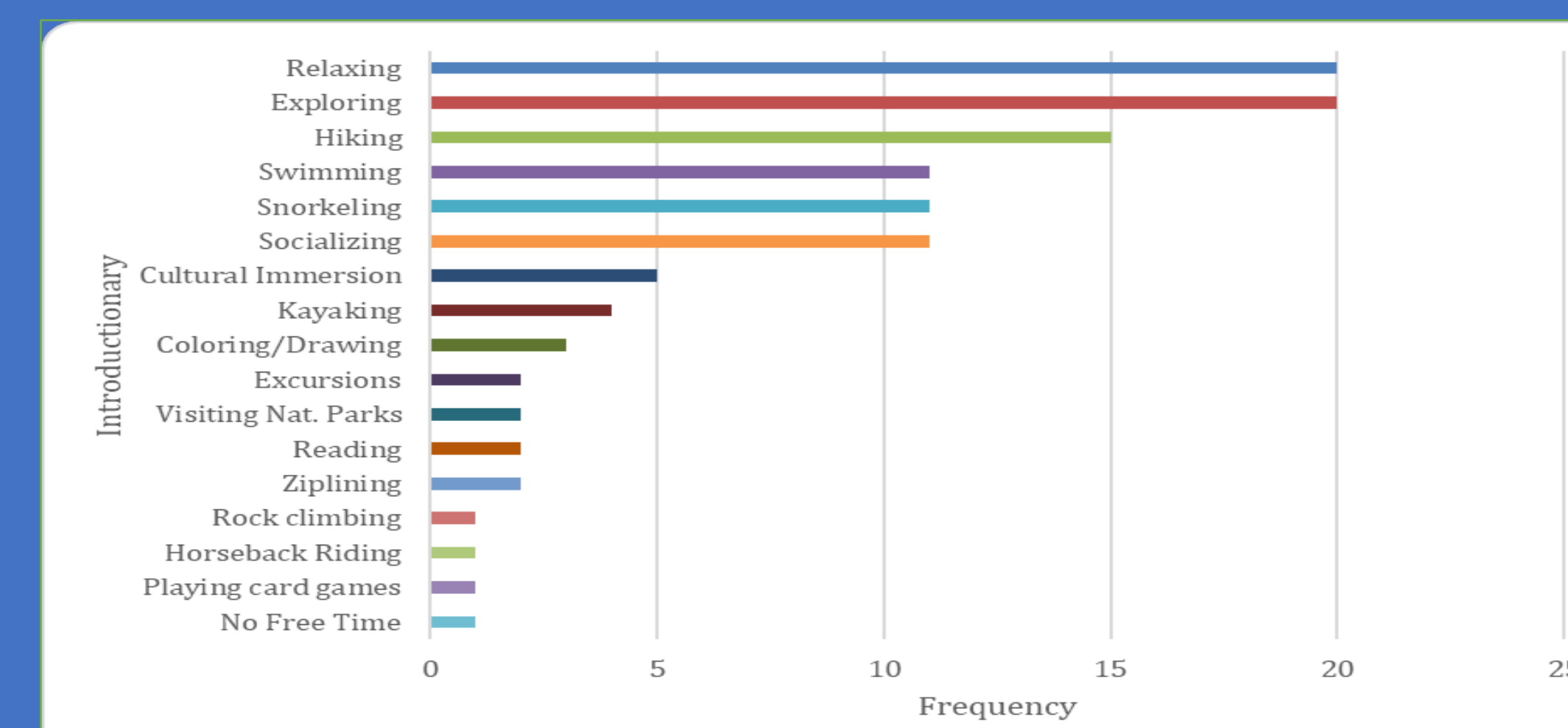
SOI:

1. Tourism is a major economic activity in this region as almost all businesses and the majority of community members interviewed are engaged in tourism in some form or fashion
2. Most tourism activities in this region are generated from the influx of volunteers visiting Playa Blanca and La Palma to assist LAST – any other people visiting the Osa tend to travel to Puerto Jimenez
3. LAST maintains active partnerships with local businesses
4. Community has a degree of knowledge on conservation, sustainability, and tourism development concepts – and is familiar on the concept of Community-Based Conservation



SOII:

1. There is high interest among the local community to establish partnerships with LAST to maximize on tourism
2. Potential of augmenting tourism-focused enterprises to cater to recreational preferences of volunteers visiting the region
3. High willingness to engage in cross-cultural exchange through activities such as language and culture exchange among Volunteers
4. Community members suggest to form partnerships with LAST through activities that promote tourism – such as a Sea Turtle Festival held during World Oceans Week; Local cuisine sampling; etc.
5. The most important finding is to incorporate multi-stakeholder engagement processes with the local community as they are stakeholders in the tourism economy.



Please scan this QR Code for a full list of results related to the questionnaire
- Community Members (Left)
- Businesses (Right)



Please scan this QR Code for a full list of results related to the questionnaire for Volunteers that participated in this study

Conclusions

Understanding the perceptions regarding tourism is of utmost importance in developing a tourism strategy. There is great potential in La Palma - Playa Blanca to further develop tourism as the community has a high interest. There is also a strong relation in these communities between Ecotourism, Sustainability, and Community-Based Conservation.

For tourism development to be implemented in the region – as suggested by the community and businesses – there needs to be multi-stakeholder collaboration among LAST and its partners and the communities of Playa Blanca and La Palma. The community is interested in being included; the only path left is to act on this opportunity in a thoughtful way, as the community has yielded fruitful suggestions and input.

This study conveys opportunities and guidance on how to potentially develop tourism by integrating feedback expressed by the community and businesses interviewed and potential opportunities for tourism as indicated by the LAST volunteers.



AJ Hart and Eduardo A. of LAST presenting to a group of volunteers at one of the partner businesses in regards to the project and the field practicum.

Acknowledgements

University of Florida: Dr. Angelica Almeyda-Zambrano, Dr. Taylor Stein, Dr. Glenn Galloway, Dr. Andrew Noss, and Dr. Rebecca Williams.

Latin American Sea Turtles Association: Didiher Chacón (Director), Nicki Wheeler (Volunteer Coordinator), Eduardo Altamirano (Biologist), Britany Baez (Translator), Diego Esteban (Translator)

Peer Reviewers: Priya Pershadsingh (UF-MDP) & Sarah Strohminger (UF-MDP)

To my family & friends