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IU Discussion Papers, Reihe: Business & Management, Vol. 7, Issue 15 (SEP 2026)

ISSN: 2750-0683

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56250/4153>

Website: <https://repository.iu.org>

From Mass Tourism to Meaningful Travel

Unlocking the Potential of the German Market for Indigenous Tourism in Mexico

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ABSTRACT:

This study investigates the potential of the German tourism market to support Sustainable Indigenous Tourism (SIT) in Mexico. Against a backdrop of growing global demand for transformative, values-driven travel, Mexico's reliance on mass tourism has generated severe environmental degradation and the marginalization of indigenous communities. Sustainable Indigenous Tourism—defined by indigenous ownership, cultural preservation, and community-led economic empowerment—offers a systemic alternative aligned with ethical consumption and sustainability goals. Grounded in an integrative theoretical framework combining the Theory of Planned Behavior, Theory of Consumption Values, and Past Behavior, this mixed-methods research examines German travelers' interest and willingness to pay (WTP) for SIT experiences. Quantitative findings from a structured survey of 204 respondents, analyzed via multiple regression and exploratory factor analysis, reveal that perceived value ($\beta = 0.525$, $p < .05$) and motivation ($\beta = 0.317$, $p < .05$) are significant positive predictors of WTP. One-way ANOVA confirms that prior experience with sustainable tourism further reinforces payment intentions. Qualitative insights from six in-depth interviews underscore cultural immersion, authenticity, and sustainability as primary motivators, while limited awareness and accessibility emerge as key barriers. The results identify a viable market segment—predominantly well-educated, environmentally conscious women from western Germany—with 68% of respondents willing to pay €250–€600 for a weekend SIT experience. The study concludes that strategic partnerships with local stakeholders, targeted marketing emphasizing social impact, sustainability certifications, and improved digital and physical accessibility are critical to positioning Mexican SIT as a differentiated, equitable alternative within the German tourism market.

KEYWORDS:

Sustainable Indigenous Tourism; Willingness to Pay; German Tourism Market; Mexico; Macromarketing

JEL classification: z.B JEL: M, O, Q, Z



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He is actively involved in initiatives related to higher education internationalization, sustainable development, innovation transfer, and capacity building. Through his engagement with the Saxon Science Liaison Office (SSLO) and various university partners, he has coordinated academic exchange activities, international conferences, and collaborative projects funded by organizations such as the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

His professional interests include customer behaviour and marketing, academia–industry collaboration, entrepreneurship, sustainable innovation, and the promotion of MINT (Mathematics, Informatics, Natural Sciences, and Technology) education. He has contributed to the development of international networks connecting universities in Saxony with institutions in countries such as Vietnam, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Peru, supporting knowledge exchange and the co-creation of innovative educational and research initiatives.



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Introduction

Tourism plays a pivotal role in global economic development, accounting for over 10% of global GDP and serving as a driver of employment and foreign direct investment (Lopez-Cordova, 2020). However, evolving traveler preferences are reshaping the industry. A growing shift from destination-focused tourism to transformative, values-driven experiences reflects broader trends toward ethical consumption and the increasing popularity of eco-tourism (ITA, 2019). This shift presents opportunities to align tourism with global sustainability goals while addressing pressing social and environmental challenges. In macromarketing terms, this evolution reflects a movement from transactional to relational and societal models of marketing systems (Layton, 2014), where tourism is framed as a system that impacts cultural, economic, and environmental dynamics at multiple levels.

Mexico, renowned for its rich cultural heritage and natural landscapes, is well-positioned to capitalize on this trend. Yet, its heavy reliance on mass tourism has led to severe environmental degradation, such as habitat destruction in biodiversity-rich regions, and the marginalization of indigenous communities in popular tourist destinations (Barrientos et al., 2020). Currently ranked 118th in tourism sustainability (World Economic Forum, 2018), these challenges highlight the urgent need for innovative approaches to foster sustainable tourism development.

Sustainable indigenous tourism (SIT) offers a promising solution. Defined by its emphasis on indigenous ownership, cultural preservation, and community-led economic empowerment, SIT provides travelers with immersive experiences while ensuring that economic benefits remain within indigenous communities. This aligns with Wooliscroft's (2021) call for marketing systems that are inclusive, equitable, and environmentally resilient. Initiatives such as those in Oaxaca and Chiapas exemplify SIT's potential to integrate cultural preservation with sustainable income streams. Framed by the Indigenous Tourism Network in Mexico (RITA) and the Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2030, SIT represents both an economic opportunity and a platform for raising awareness of the challenges faced by indigenous communities.

This study investigates the potential of the German tourism market to support SIT in Mexico, focusing on travelers' interest and willingness to pay (WTP) for such experiences. Germany, known for its environmentally conscious travelers, represents an ideal market, with 42% of German tourists prioritizing sustainable practices when choosing destinations (VIR, 2023). By investigating predictors such as cultural awareness, environmental attitudes, and perceptions of authenticity, this study fills a critical gap in the sustainable tourism literature by addressing the often-overlooked consumer perspective. This research seeks to advance understanding of how culturally immersive and community-driven tourism can simultaneously drive economic development and promote cultural appreciation. This, in turn, contributes to macromarketing literature by examining consumer behavior in a system seeking to balance ethical, cultural, and environmental values (Haase, Becker & Pick, 2017).

Empirical setting

THE MEXICAN TOURISM SECTOR: AN OVERVIEW

Mexico has established itself as a globally recognized destination through a distinctive combination of cultural heritage, culinary tradition, biodiversity, and archaeological wealth. The country is home to 71 ethnic groups with histories spanning over 3,000 years, and its cuisine has been designated as one of three Intangible Cultural Heritages of Humanity by UNESCO (CONANP, 2018; PROMEXICO, 2014). Mexico ranks as the fifth most biodiverse country worldwide, harbouring approximately 12% of planetary biodiversity, while its territory encompasses more than 45,000 archaeological sites (CONANP, 2018; PROMEXICO, 2014). These attributes contributed to Mexico's position as the second most visited country in absolute terms in 2021, with 32 million international tourists, and as the leading contributor to regional tourism in the Americas (World Economic Forum, 2019; WorldData, 2021). More recently, Mexico has been identified as the most competitive tourist destination in Latin America under the Travel and Tourism Development Index (Statista, 2022).

The economic significance of tourism for Mexico is considerable. From 2010 to 2019, the sector contributed an average of 8.4% to national GDP, surpassing the contributions of construction, financial services, and mining (Statista, 2021; OECD, 2022). The pandemic disrupted this trajectory, reducing the share to 6.3% in 2020 and 7.5% in 2021, though the pre-pandemic peak of 8.6% in 2019 illustrates the sector's substantial weight. Domestic tourism constitutes the primary driver, accounting for 84% of total visitors and 82.7% of tourism consumption in 2017 (SECTUR, 2018; PROSECTUR, 2020). International tourism, while representing a smaller share of visitor numbers, generates higher expenditure per trip, with visitors spending an average of EUR 488 and contributing EUR 21.65 billion in receipts during 2018 (OECD, 2020; PROSECTUR, 2020). The principal source markets are the United States at 55%, Central America, the Caribbean and South America at 16%, Canada at 12%, and Europe at 12% (PROSECTUR, 2020).

Despite these strengths, Mexico's tourism model has been heavily dependent on mass tourism since the 1970s, when the government established Integral Planned Centers to capture international demand. The first such initiative was Cancun, followed by Huatulco, Ixtapa, Loreto, and Los Cabos (CEPAL, 2009). This model, oriented around sea, sun, and sand, was reinforced after the 2008 economic crisis through expansion and diversification of the offer (Kozak, 2001; Alegre and Cladera, 2006; Andrews, 2011). Although efforts were made to diversify into real estate and luxury tourism, Mexico remains structurally tied to mass tourism.

The global sustainable tourism market has demonstrated robust growth, with an estimated valuation of EUR 850 billion and a projected compound annual growth rate of 23.4% between 2022 and 2032, potentially reaching EUR 8 trillion (FMI, 2022). The indigenous tourism segment specifically is expected to attain EUR 61 billion by 2032 (FMI, 2022). Mexico's participation remains modest, with its sustainable tourism sector valued at approximately EUR 31 million in 2023 and a projected growth rate of 13.8% annually, representing roughly 3% to 4% of the global market (FMI, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated reflection on the vulnerabilities of conventional mass tourism, exposing failures that necessitate radical restructuring (Barrientos et al., 2020).

Mexico's position in global sustainability rankings reflects these accumulated pressures. The country ranks 118th in tourism sustainability, attributable to high marginalization, severe overcrowding, and deficiencies in basic social services (World Economic Forum, 2018; Barrientos et al., 2020). The concentration of tourism is striking: 70% of tourists are confined to just five destination clusters (SECTUR, 2020). This gives rise to three interconnected problems. First, inequality in economic distribution is pronounced, with conventional tourism channeling 80% of expenses to international corporations, leaving minimal returns for local micro-enterprises that comprise 80% of national tourism employment (Barrientos et al., 2020; ATTA and UNWTO, 2020). Second, overtourism has driven ecosystem destruction and social exclusion, with 76.7% of international tourists concentrated in five clusters in 2018 (SECTUR, 2020). Third, low participation of local producers perpetuates economic leakage, as mass tourism relies on imported inputs and excludes farmers, fishermen, and artisans from meaningful engagement (Barrientos et al., 2020). These structural conditions underscore the urgency of transitioning toward sustainable tourism models that redistribute economic benefits and integrate local communities as active participants.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE INDIGENOUS TOURISM

International Perspective

Indigenous tourism has gained increasing support within the international normative framework since the 1990s, when indigenous rights and cultural preservation began developing in parallel with the biocultural approach. This approach emphasizes the interrelationship between linguistic diversity, biodiversity, and indigenous territories, recognizing indigenous communities as key stewards of conserved landscapes and the protection of their beliefs and practices (SECTUR, 2021). At the 7th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP7) in 2001, it was formally noted that indigenous and local communities play an important role in sustainable tourism (Barrientos et al., 2020; SECTUR, 2021). More recently, the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the UN 2030 Agenda. The 17 SDGs encompass 169 associated targets covering all aspects of sustainability, and tourism has been identified as playing a particularly important role in the pursuit of 10 specific goals: 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 17 (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023; Barrientos et al., 2020).

National Perspective

Context of the Indigenous Communities Rights. - The development of indigenous tourism in Mexico is inseparable from the historical struggle for indigenous rights. Since independence and throughout the 19th century, indigenous culture was instrumentalized as a resource to differentiate Mexico from other nations and forge a national identity, primarily through education (Oehmichen and de la Maza, 2019; Villalobos, 2014). In 1859, the nationalization of property resulted in the government acquiring archaeological sites and communal lands previously owned by indigenous communities. The 20th century witnessed the patrimonialization of archaeological sites accompanied by the folklorization of cultural practices such as regional dances and music for domestic and international tourism, all

conducted without recognition of indigenous rights (Martinez, 2016; Oehmichen and de la Maza, 2019). A pivotal moment came in 1992, when the pluricultural nature of the nation was constitutionally recognized following persistent advocacy by indigenous organizations. The constitution mandated government protection of indigenous languages, cultures, traditions, uses, and customs. However, political rights to territory and autonomous administration remained unrecognized, and a constitutional reform facilitated the sale, mortgage, and transfer of communal lands, intensifying dispossession by mining, energy, and large-scale tourism enterprises (Oehmichen and de la Maza, 2019). Although a new constitutional reform recognizing collective rights was approved in 2001, it failed to address crucial issues relating to the protection of territorial lands, natural resources, and agricultural areas.

Context of Indigenous Communities and Entrepreneurs within the National Strategy of Financial Literacy in Mexico.- Virokannas et al. (2020), through a systematic literature review, delineate groups frequently recognized as vulnerable, among which ethnic minorities are also included. Mexico's National Strategy of Financial Literacy highlights the higher risk of vulnerability by indigenous communities. The strategy identifies three primary groups considered to be in situation of vulnerability: individuals with disabilities, speakers of indigenous languages, and recipients of social welfare programs. Among these, the population of indigenous language speakers is noted as particularly vulnerable. A key area of focus within the strategy is the promotion of financial and organizational skills among entrepreneurs and businesswomen, specifically targeting communities where indigenous languages are spoken. The strategy's action lines include the development and implementation of financial education programs tailored for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SME's), with special emphasis on the aforementioned vulnerable target groups (Gobierno de México, 2025). Financial inclusion among vulnerable entrepreneurial groups, such as indigenous entrepreneurs is crucial across countries, as it mitigates information asymmetries between the financial markets and entrepreneurs. Enhanced financial record-keeping contributes to improved creditworthiness, thereby facilitating greater access to external financing required for sustainable development and business growth. Devender et al. (2026) conducted a bibliometric analysis using the Scopus database, identifying 276 relevant articles published from 1993 to 2025. The study, centered on small business owners and SMEs, mapped the literature linking financial literacy primarily to entrepreneurship. Their findings underscore financial literacy as a central topic, closely associated with business sustainability, access to finance and firm growth. Molosiwa and Holland (2025), through a systematic literature review of 18 empirical studies published between 2016 and 2024, conclude that financial literacy significantly enhances SMEs ability in budgeting, debt management and investment appraisal. The preceding arguments, grounded in the scientific literature, underscore the specific importance of indigenous entrepreneurial communities in shaping Mexico's national financial literacy strategy.

Contemporary Regulatory Framework. - The contemporary regulatory framework for sustainable indigenous tourism derives from a hierarchical structure of national planning instruments. The National Development Plan (PND) 2019–2024 serves as the main instrument compiling national priorities, aiming to promote social well-being and sustainable development (Barrientos et al., 2020;

SECTUR, 2021). From this derives the Tourism Sector Program 2020–2024 (PROSECTUR), which governs national tourism policy and involves social, ethical, and economic redevelopment aimed at promoting tourism as a right inclusive of all population sectors, particularly the most vulnerable (OECD, 2022; SECTUR, 2021). PROSECTUR establishes four priority objectives, of which the fourth—"Promote sustainable tourism in the national territory"—stands out for the new tourism model in Mexico. "Mexico Renace Sostenible" (Mexico Reborn Sustainable) is the major strategy for achieving this objective, ensuring social well-being and harmony with nature, fully aligned with the SDGs (SECTUR and Natoure, 2020). The strategy is divided into three pillars: economic, social, and environmental. Within the economic pillar, the Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2030 directly responds to SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth (SECTUR and Natoure, 2020; SECTUR, 2021). The Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2030 is a collaborative innovation involving civil society organisations, government, international organisations, business, indigenous peoples, local communities, academia, investors, and travellers. Its vision for 2030 is that "Mexico will be the country of the future of tourism because it will be socially inclusive, economically fair and for the preservation of its biocultural heritage." The strategy rests on seven strategic pillars: build collaborative governance; prioritise biocultural heritage; inspire traveller confidence; promote sustainable destinations; finance and fund projects; promote innovation and development; and facilitate the holistic integration of tourism (SECTUR and Natoure, 2020; Barrientos et al., 2020).

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY 2030 AND INDIGENOUS-RUN SMES

The Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2030 envisages broadly sustainable indigenous tourism through an approach that is healthy, socially inclusive, economically fair, intellectually relevant, and respectful of nature. Its holistic approach proposes a horizontal organization structure among the main actors in tourism, with particular focus on tourists and local tourism service providers, including indigenous and local communities as well as Afro-Mexicans (SECTUR and Natoure, 2020; Barrientos et al., 2020). The strategy offers a significant opportunity for indigenous entrepreneurs to enhance their businesses, marking a departure from previous governmental interventions that predominantly favored large, non-indigenous enterprises operating in the mass tourism sector. In 2018, a study of the tourism value chain by Natoure revealed that low-scale tourist destinations have an annual occupancy rate of less than 30% and receive, on average, only 7% of what travelers pay, underscoring the need for structural change that the strategy aims to address (Barrientos et al., 2020).

The strategy proposes several specific actions within its seven pillars to benefit indigenous entrepreneurs. These include promoting the development of socio-environmental governance that integrates tourism with priority sectors such as agriculture, aquaculture, fishing, forestry, and handicrafts for the benefit of indigenous communities; empowering indigenous leaders as Climate Ambassadors; promoting projects to expand internet access in rural communities, thereby bridging the technological gap and reducing marginalization; recognizing indigenous, local community, and Afro-Mexican history and medicinal culture; training tourism promotion agents from government, civil society, and businesses in indigenous and local tourism sites with cultural relevance and respect for community traditions and protocols; establishing environmental education for indigenous communities to educate visitors; promoting tourism in natural protected areas through collaboration with local communities and indigenous groups; and creating virtual tourism dynamics that generate

expectations for visitors by involving tourism service providers, such as Mayan grandparents and birdwatching experiences (SECTUR and Natoure, 2020; Barrientos et al., 2020).

For the purposes of this research, the enterprises included in the Sustainable Strategy 2030 serve as a point of reference for the sustainable indigenous tourism services considered in the questionnaire. Unfortunately, a list of participating SMEs is not available in the strategy literature, though it was possible to assume the participation of some SMEs through their membership in RITA, one of the authors of the strategy (Barrientos et al., 2020). Local online tour operators are also considered, as the call for participation in the strategy was made online via Google forms (ADAPTUR, 2020; SECTUR, 2020). Although the specific SMEs currently participating are not entirely known, some general characteristics have been identified. The SMEs are mostly micro and small enterprises, largely informal, and employing fewer than 15 people. The variety of tourism services offered ranges from restaurants to tourist packages that include several services such as accommodation, food, and activities (Mexico Desconocido, 2017; Rutopia, 2018; Barrientos et al., 2020; SECTUR, 2021; SECTUR, 2022).

Several examples illustrate the range of enterprises involved. At the regional level, Expediciones del Norte, Cerro Pelon Xplor, and Zapoteco Tours represent different approaches to indigenous tourism. At the national level, Rutopia has distinguished itself in the field of sustainable tourism and social entrepreneurship, with the aim of connecting indigenous hosts with both local and global visitors. Rutopia has been described in various articles as the Airbnb of local and indigenous communities (Conecta, 2019). Despite these initiatives, the sector faces severe challenges in designing value propositions and marketing tourism products. As reported by Rutopia, a startup focused on community tourism and winner of the 2019 Hult Prize social entrepreneurship contest, over 70% of almost three thousand indigenous-led enterprises or projects launched in the last decade have been unsuccessful in generating a feasible product. During its field research in certain indigenous communities in Mexico, Rutopia identified significant weaknesses in the identification of local tourism strengths, the lack of an effective sales system, and limited marketing due to a lack of tools and marketing resources. These issues have restricted the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises, and approximately 10,000 cottages remain abandoned (Rutopia, 2019; Barrientos et al., 2020).

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CONSUMPTION IN GERMANY

Germany is globally recognized for its sustainability performance, ranking fourth in the SDG index in 2018, and in 2019 four German cities were among the top 20 sustainable cities according to the criteria of people, planet, and profit (GNTB, 2019). These evaluations are reflected across different industries, and tourism is no exception. According to the World Economic Forum 2019, Germany ranked third in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index, which evaluates the tourism potential of 140 countries based on criteria including health and hygiene, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability (GNTB, 2019). This index assesses the enabling conditions for tourism across nations, and Germany's strong position indicates a mature market with well-developed infrastructure and high standards of environmental management that shape consumer expectations.

Despite these strengths, however, Germany's comparatively high environmental standards do not imply that the tourism sector is free of sustainability-related challenges. At the national level, significant areas for improvement remain across the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of tourism

sustainability. These challenges have been examined more specifically through the *Tourism Sustainability Satellite Account* (TSSA), developed as part of a project funded by the German Environment Agency (Umweltbundesamt). The TSSA provides a framework for assessing the economic, environmental, and social sustainability of tourism in Germany. Its findings underline the considerable contribution of tourism to value added and employment, while also revealing comparatively low labour productivity. Although labour productivity in tourism-related economic sectors has increased over time, gross value added per employed person remains 10.5% below the economy-wide average. From an environmental perspective, the tourism sector as a whole exhibits slightly below-average energy intensity. Nevertheless, its greenhouse gas intensity remains above the national economic average, primarily due to the substantial environmental impact of air transport. This impact becomes particularly apparent from a consumption-based perspective: in 2015, domestic tourism consumption generated approximately 130 million tonnes of CO₂, corresponding to around 12.3% of Germany's national consumption-based CO₂ emissions. Social sustainability also remains an area of concern, particularly with regard to working conditions, although the gender pay gap in tourism is smaller than that observed in other economic sectors (Balls et al., 2021). Overall, these findings suggest that Germany's strong sustainability performance at the national level coexists with considerable sustainability challenges within the tourism sector itself.

Sustainable development in the tourism sector is not only a concern for the supply side; German consumers are also increasingly looking for ecologically and socially sustainable holidays. According to the report "Daten & Fakten zum Online-Reisemarkt 2023" by the German Internet Travel Sales Association, almost one fifth of Germans currently take sustainability into account when booking their holidays, and the desire for ecologically and socially responsible holidays is around 42% and 56% respectively (VIR, 2023). This indicates a substantial latent demand for sustainable tourism offerings that align with German travelers' values. Germans are interested in sustainable travel, but 69% of them believe it is the responsibility of travel providers to make sustainable travel easier. For example, a sustainability filter in booking platforms or travel agencies that follow sustainability concepts could meet this expectation (VIR, 2023).

The findings of the Research Association for Holidays and Travel (Forschungsgemeinschaft Urlaub und Reisen, FUR) further highlight this discrepancy between sustainability preferences and actual travel behaviour. As part of its *Reiseanalyse* (Travel Analysis), FUR examines the long-term development of sustainability awareness and demand for sustainable holidays while also providing recommendations for tourism providers. The results point to considerable potential for more sustainable holiday travel but reveal a persistent attitude-behaviour gap, whereby positive attitudes towards sustainability do not necessarily translate into corresponding travel choices. (Schmücker et.al., 2025). This gap has also been identified in academic literature and appears to be influenced not only by the level of environmental concern but also by practical, social, and psychological constraints. Research focusing on Generation Z, for instance, identifies perceived costs, competing priorities, social norms, and rationalization strategies as important barriers to sustainable travel behaviour (Kleiser et al., 2023; Stengel & Brysch, 2023).

The discrepancy between attitudes and behaviour is particularly evident in recent travel patterns. In 2024, 49% of respondents expressed a preference for environmentally sustainable holidays, while 61% desired socially responsible holidays. Nevertheless, sustainability was a decisive factor in only 3% of

trips in 2023 and constituted a relevant decision-making criterion for a further 17%. At the same time, air travel for holiday purposes reached a very high level in 2023, even exceeding the previous record set in 2019. Conversely, the uptake of sustainable mobility options demonstrates that travel behaviour can be influenced when sustainable alternatives are affordable, accessible, and convenient, as illustrated by the high use of the €9 public transport ticket for domestic travel. Overall, the evidence suggests that the challenge is not necessarily a lack of consumer interest in sustainable tourism, but rather the difficulty of translating existing preferences into actual purchasing and travel decisions. Sustainable tourism products therefore need to be made not only environmentally and socially credible but also visible, attractive, convenient, and easily accessible to consumers (Schmücker et al, 2025).

This finding is particularly relevant for the marketing of sustainable indigenous tourism experiences in Mexico. For German consumers, who generally demonstrate comparatively high levels of sustainability awareness, the key challenge may therefore lie less in generating interest in sustainability than in effectively communicating the sustainability attributes of indigenous tourism experiences and reducing the perceived barriers to choosing them. Clear sustainability-related information, credible signalling, and accessible communication may help bridge the existing attitude–behaviour gap and translate consumers’ sustainability preferences into actual purchase decisions. This provides an important starting point for examining how sustainable indigenous tourism experiences from Mexico can be positioned and communicated to the German market.

Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development

The study integrates three influential theoretical frameworks—Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Theory of Consumption Values (TCV), and Past Behavior (PB)—to examine purchasing intentions in sustainable tourism.

SUSTAINABLE INDIGENOUS TOURISM IN MEXICO

Indigenous tourism, while globally diverse in its definitions, consistently centers on the active participation and ownership of indigenous communities in tourism experiences. The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) highlights various forms, distinguishing between experiences that are indigenous-owned and operated, those that interpret indigenous culture, and those involving indigenous people as employees or contractors. For your research, the focus is on the first two categories, emphasizing indigenous leadership and cultural interpretation.

Type of tourism	Definition
Indigenous Tourism	All tourism businesses majority owned, operated and/or controlled by First Nations, Métis or Inuit peoples that can demonstrate a connection and responsibility to the local Indigenous community and traditional territory where the operation resides.

Indigenous Cultural Tourism	Meets the Indigenous tourism criteria and, in addition, a significant portion of the experience incorporates Indigenous culture in a manner that is appropriate, respectful, and true to the Indigenous culture being portrayed. The authenticity is ensured through the active involvement of Indigenous people in the development and delivery of the experience.
Indigenous Cultural Experiences	Does not meet the Indigenous tourism criteria (majority Indigenous ownership), however offers the visitor a cultural experience in a manner that is appropriate, respectful, and true to the Indigenous culture being portrayed.

Table 1. Definition of Indigenous Tourism; Source: ITAC (2017)

In Mexico, the evolution of this concept has been distinctly community-driven. Initially, terms like "alternative tourism" and "ethnic tourism" were used, often interchangeably with indigenous tourism. However, the term "indigenous tourism" was officially coined by indigenous communities themselves in 2004, leading to the formation of the Indigenous Tourism Network in Mexico (RITA). This network defined indigenous tourism as an activity where communities offer visitors the opportunity to engage with their traditions, customs, and ways of life, promoting cultural preservation and sustainable interaction with the environment (Morales, 2011).

Critically, indigenous tourism aligns seamlessly with the United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) definition of sustainable tourism, which emphasizes economic, social, and environmental impacts while catering to all stakeholders (UNWTO, 2019). Indigenous tourism, as defined by RITA, embodies sustainable principles by:

- Promoting interaction, knowledge, and appreciation of nature and culture.
- Minimizing cultural and natural impacts.
- Maximizing responsible experiences for all involved.
- Operating as an entrepreneurial organization for community self-management of patrimonial resources, with democratic and solidary benefit distribution.
- Aiming for community prosperity, dignity, and improved living and working conditions.

Based on these considerations, sustainable indigenous tourism can be defined as a type of sustainable tourism where indigenous communities own, develop, and manage the tourism experiences, ensuring that generated income remains within the community. It offers visitors the chance to experience and understand indigenous culture, traditions, and ways of life, promoting the preservation and revitalization of cultural elements and identity through sustainable interaction with their natural environment.

Although indigenous tourism is a subtype of sustainable tourism, it is useful to compare it and situate it within the context of the fundamental differences between these types of tourism.

Non-sustainable	Sustainable	Indigenous
(Mass tourism, traditional tourism)	(Responsible tourism, regenerative tourism, alternative tourism)	(Community tourism, rural tourism)
– Many travelers in few places – Few owners and foreigners – Plenty money in few hands	– Travelers distributed by destination capacity – Plenty of local owners – Money distributed in many hands	– Respectful cultural exchange between travellers and communities – Majority-owned, operated and/or controlled by indigenous peoples – Community economic development

Table 2. Fundamental differences between types of tourism; Source: ITAC, 2017; Natoure.org

THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR (TPB)

TPB posits that behavioral intention is influenced by three key predictors: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Boronat-Navarro and Perez-Aranda, 2020). This theory is useful for understanding how travelers' perceptions and social influences shape their decisions to engage in sustainable tourism practices.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a robust framework for understanding and predicting consumer intentions, finding applications across various fields, including tourism and hospitality, especially concerning pro-environmental and social behaviors (Perez-Aranda and Boronat-Navarro, 2020; Heesup et al., 2017). Expanding upon the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the TPB considers both volitional and non-volitional aspects of behavior, offering a more comprehensive view of decision-making (Ajzen, 1991; Armitage & Conner, 2001; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001). Within the TPB, three key predictors determine behavioral intention: attitude toward behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Nekmahmud et al., 2022; Heesup et al., 2017).

Here's a detailed explanation of each predictor within the Theory of Planned Behavior:

Attitude toward behavior (Ajzen, 1991): This volitional determinant refers to "the degree to which an individual forms a positive or negative evaluation of the behavior" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). Essentially, it captures an individual's favourable or unfavourable assessment of performing a particular action. In tourism, a positive attitude significantly influences a tourist's decision to visit a specific destination, as demonstrated by Hsu and Huang (2012). Similarly, a positive attitude toward sustainable accommodation products strongly impacts travelers' intentions to choose them, as found by Han et al.

(2010), highlighting how a favorable view of environmental and social benefits increases the likelihood of selection.

Subjective norm (social pressure): This is another volitional precursor to intention, defined as the perceived social pressure to engage in the behavior. It reflects an individual's belief about whether important others (e.g., family, friends, colleagues) approve or disapprove of them performing a specific behavior (De Groot & Steg, 2007). Hsu and Huang (2012) indicated that subjective norms play a role in tourists' decisions regarding destination choice, where perceived social pressure from relevant others can influence travel intent. Furthermore, Han et al. (2010) revealed that social pressure significantly influences travelers' intentions to choose sustainable accommodation products; if an individual perceives that their social circle values or expects sustainable choices, they are more likely to intend to make such choices. This is further supported by Quintal et al. (2010), who specifically showed that subjective norms positively and significantly influence the destination choices of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese travelers, underscoring the cross-cultural relevance of social pressure in tourism decisions.

Perceived behavioral control (ease/difficulty): This non-volitional determinant refers to an individual's belief regarding the ease or difficulty of performing a behavior (De Groot & Steg, 2007). It encompasses perceived control over resources, opportunities, and skills needed to execute the behavior. Hsu and Huang's (2012) findings supported that perceived behavioral control influences tourists' decisions to visit a destination; if tourists believe it is easy to plan and execute a trip, they are more likely to intend to go. Similarly, Han et al. (2010) demonstrated that the perceived ease or difficulty of the decision-making process for choosing a sustainable accommodation product significantly impacts travelers' intentions; when finding and booking sustainable options is seen as easy, intentions to choose them increase. Quintal et al. (2010) also indicated that perceived behavioral control positively and significantly influences the destination choices of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese travelers, emphasizing its importance in their travel planning.

These three variables serve as predictors for behavioral intention, leading to the proposed hypotheses regarding willingness to pay (WTP) for sustainable indigenous tourism services:

- H1: Attitude toward the behavior has a positive influence on WTP.
- H2: Subjective norm has a positive influence on WTP.
- H3: Perceived behavioral control has a positive influence on WTP.

WILLINGNESS TO PAY (WTP)

Building upon the Theory of Planned Behavior, willingness to pay (WTP) is considered a key behavioral intention that precedes actual purchasing behavior (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Ajzen, 1991). Willingness to pay (WTP), from an economic perspective, represents the maximum monetary amount a consumer is prepared to expend for an additional unit of a good or service (Dannenberg & Estola, 2018).

Economic models highlight income and the usage level of a good as primary determinants of WTP. When individuals consider paying for improved environmental quality or sustainable services, their decisions are inherently limited by their disposable income. Consequently, income is consistently expected to have a positive relationship with the amount individuals are willing to spend on environmental goods or services that enhance environmental quality or prevent degradation. For this reason, income is frequently included in stated preference surveys to understand its influence on WTP (Carson, Flores, & Meade, 2001).

Within the context of ecotourism, research by Meleddu and Pulina (2016) demonstrated that visitors with a strong awareness of ecotourism showed a greater WTP to support relevant projects. This willingness was also positively influenced by their subjective norms and environmental beliefs. However, price often emerges as a significant barrier to green and sustainable consumption (Yadav and Pathak, 2017; Gleim et al., 2013). This makes it particularly valuable to investigate whether more conscious and aware consumers exhibit a greater WTP for indigenous sustainable tourism services (Yadav and Pathak, 2017; Gleim et al., 2013; Perez-Aranda and Boronat-Navarro, 2020). For this research, WTP serves as the critical behavioral intention predicting the actual purchase of sustainable indigenous tourism services.

PAST BEHAVIOR (PB)

Recent advancements in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) suggest that past behavior or prior experiences can significantly impact future intentions (Lam and Hsu, 2006; Perugini and Bagozzi, 2001). Research utilizing both the TRA and TPB models has consistently shown that incorporating past behavior substantially enhances their predictive capacity and efficacy in anticipating individuals' decisions and behaviors (Heesup et al., 2017). This component is critical in understanding how repeated behavior in similar contexts may drive purchasing behavior for SIT experiences.

This effect holds particular significance in the context of services or intangible products, such as tourism (Buhalis, 2000; Namkung and Jang, 2017; Lam and Hsu, 2006; Lee and Back, 2007). For instance, Buhalis (2000) identified a correlation between past experiences and behaviors within the relationship between travelers and destinations. The inherent intangible nature of services makes it challenging for customers to anticipate service quality without prior experience (Back, 2005), a characteristic that is particularly relevant for sustainable indigenous tourism.

Within the tourism field, the concept of sustainable experiences has gained traction. While still evolving in definition and empirical operationalization (Breiby et al., 2020), scholars view sustainable experiences as a means of achieving competitive advantage, especially in emotional and social aspects, while simultaneously enhancing a destination's sustainability and experiential value (Chen et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2016; Lu et al., 2017; Poudel & Nyaupane, 2013; Smit & Melissen, 2018). Notably, Chen et al. (2011) demonstrate the importance of tourism experiences in relation to sustainability issues, suggesting that increased environmental awareness derived from these experiences can lead to long-term changes in tourists' travel intentions. Other studies reinforce the positive relationship between sustainable experiences and sustainable tourism, with Chia-Jung and Pei-Chun (2014) finding that "green consumption" customers are more inclined to select sustainable tourism options, particularly hotels with sustainable practices.

Given the crucial role of past behavior (previous experience) in service industries like tourism, coupled with the positive correlation between sustainable experiences and sustainable tourism, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Past behavior has a positive influence on WTP.

THEORY OF CONSUMPTION VALUES (TCV)

To address the limitations of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) concerning human emotions and desires in decision-making, the Theory of Consumption Value (TCV) is utilized, building upon its application in sustainable consumption research (Nekmahmud et al., 2022). Consumption values are widely used in marketing, consumer behavior, and the analysis of green products and tourism purchases (Heesup et al., 2017). In the context of indigenous tourism, TCV helps identify how travelers' motivations—such as a desire for cultural enrichment or an emotional connection to sustainability—affect their decisions.

Nekmahmud et al. (2002), in a comparative study of European and non-European tourists, define consumption values as customers' comprehensive evaluations of the effectiveness and satisfaction derived from the products and services they acquire and use (Hanninen and Karjaluo, 2017; Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991). Sheth et al. (1991) identify five key consumption values that significantly influence consumer preference: functional value (encompassing price and quality), social value, emotional value, epistemic value, and conditional value. While comprehensive, the TCV model acknowledges a need for deeper insight into the underlying reasons for these values.

Functional Value (Price and Quality). – Functional Value is defined as the perceived usefulness derived from an alternative's capacity to deliver functional, practical, or physical performance (Sheth, Newman & Gross, 1991, p. 21). Key elements contributing to functional value include performance and functionality (Deng et al., 2010; Creusen & Schoormans, 2005; Sweeney et al., 1999), efficiency (Previte et al., 2019), quality and durability (Han et al., 2019; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001), and price (Sanchez et al., 2006). Both price and quality are critical factors in consumer purchasing decisions (D'Souza et al., 2007; Nekmahmud, 2022). It is a well-established principle that consumers aim to achieve maximum utility at minimum costs (Hur et al., 2012). Interestingly, research indicates that some consumers are willing to pay a premium for environmentally-friendly products, provided these products offer personal and social benefits without compromising quality (Liu et al., 2013). Thus, two hypotheses are proposed to reflect this:

H5.1: Functional value (quality) positively influences WTP.

H5.2: Functional value (price) positively influences WTP.

Social Value. - Social value (SV) pertains to how goods or services contribute to an individual's self-identity and their perceived usefulness within specific socioeconomic, stereotypical demographic, and cultural-ethnic segments (Mohd Suki & Mohd Suki, 2015; Ramkissoon et al., 2009, p. 22). Consequently, the choice of green products by tourists can lead to positive perceptions within their social groups (Jiang and Kim, 2015). This aligns with the concept of descriptive social norms, which refers to the typical perception of a behavior in a given consumption situation and is prevalent in sustainable consumer behavior literature (Han, H., 2021). Given the strong social characteristic inherent in sustainable indigenous tourism, the following hypothesis is put forward:

H6: Social value positively influences WTP.

Emotional Value. – Emotional value, as described by Sheth, Newman & Gross (1991), refers to the perceived usefulness resulting from an alternative's ability to evoke emotions or affective states like

excitement. Aspects contributing to emotional value that have been extensively studied include aesthetics (Holbrook, 1999; Homburg et al., 2015; Creusen & Schoormans, 2005), usability (Kim & Moon, 1998; Lee et al., 2015), comfort (Previte et al., 2019; Sanchez et al., 2006), pleasure (Deng et al., 2010; Holbrook, 1999; Pinochet et al., 2018; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001), auditory experience (Kato et al., 2020), reputation (Holbrook, 1999), and relationships (Arslanagic-Kalajdzic et al., 2020). These elements are frequently explored in design and user experience (UX) literature (Kato, T., 2021, pp. 22–23). Consumers who prioritize environmental responsibility attach significant emotional importance to using eco-friendly products (Amin and Tarun, 2020; Lin and Huang, 2012) and to tourism-related offerings (Wang et al., 2018; Nekmahmud, 2022). Sustainable indigenous tourism inherently possesses a high emotional component due to its cultural experience and the historical background of indigenous communities. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7: Emotional value positively influences WTP.

Epistemic Value. – Epistemic value (EpV) is defined as "the perceived utility derived from an alternative's ability to arouse curiosity, provide novelty, and satisfy the desire for knowledge" (Sheth et al., 1991, p. 162). This implies that consumers' purchasing decisions are often motivated by a desire for novelty and knowledge. The consumption of environmentally friendly products, such as bamboo textiles or innovative sustainable products and services, can satisfy this desire for knowledge and provide novelty and curiosity. The concept of epistemic value also shares similarities with the theory of diffusion of innovation, which elucidates how innovative attributes contribute to the adoption of new products and services (Rogers, 2003, p. 23). Sustainable indigenous tourism, with its unique activities and destinations, represents a distinct tourism model that naturally generates interest and a sense of novelty among tourists. Like environmentally conscious products, sustainable tourism necessitates a proactive integration of innovative elements. Consequently, the hypothesis is as follows:

H8: Epistemic value positively influences WTP.

Conditional Value. – According to Sheth et al. (1991), conditional value (CV) is the perceived usefulness of an alternative under specific circumstances faced by the decision-maker (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991a, p. 162). This highlights that consumer purchases are often contingent upon a particular set of circumstances and conditions (Samson and Voyer, 2014, pp. 23–24). For example, increased awareness of climate and environmental issues can influence consumer preferences for purchasing eco-friendly products (Lin and Huang, 2012). Furthermore, Nekmahmud et al. (2022) confirmed the impact of this variable in their study, finding a positive and significant correlation between conditional value, cognitive value, and green purchase intention among both European and non-European tourists. It is also suggested that governmental and business sectors can significantly enhance conditional value by offering incentives and promoting green products. As previously noted, awareness of sustainable practices is crucial for supporting sustainability, a predictor of behavior also recognized by marketers in their product promotion efforts. In the context of this research, conditional value variables are analyzed to determine the specific circumstances under which sustainable indigenous tourism may be consumed, including factors related to price, value proposition, or awareness of sustainability concerns. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H9: Conditional value positively influences WTP.

RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

The proposed model (Figure 1) hypothesizes that these factors positively influence willingness to pay (WTP) for SIT experiences. Specifically, we anticipate that travelers who perceive indigenous tourism experiences as culturally authentic, socially valued, and aligned with their personal sustainability beliefs will show higher WTP. Furthermore, prior positive experiences with similar services are expected to reinforce these intentions, suggesting that customer satisfaction and previous engagement play a significant role in shaping future behavior.

This integrative framework aligns with the systemic approach in macromarketing, emphasizing how value co-creation within ethical tourism systems shapes long-term consumer engagement and supports the development of alternative, socially embedded marketing systems (van Dam & Apeldoorn, 1996).

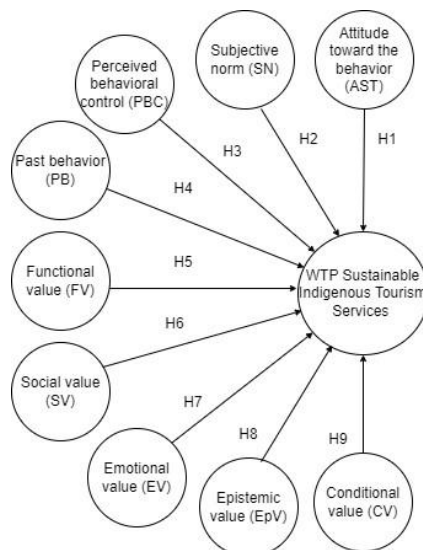


Figure 1. Research Model

H1: Attitude toward the behavior has a positive influence on WTP

H2: Subjective norm has a positive influence on WTP

H3: Perceive behavioral control has a positive influence on WTP

H4: Past behavior have a positive influence on WTP

H5.1: Functional value (quality) positively influences WTP

H5.2: Functional value (price) positively influences WTP

H6: Social value positively influences WTP

H7: Emotional value positively influences WTP

H8: Epistemic value positively influences WTP

H9: Conditional value positively influences WTP

Research Methodology

This chapter explains how the study was carried out. It covers the overall approach and design, how the main ideas were measured, and the tools used to collect data. It also describes who took part in the research and how they were reached. The chapter provides a full picture of how the study was set up and executed.

RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

The study used a mixed-method approach to explore the understudied market of sustainable indigenous tourism. Combining numbers and words allowed the research to both identify key factors and gain deeper understanding of travelers' thinking. The quantitative part helped pinpoint what drives willingness to pay, while the qualitative part filled gaps and added new insights about the sustainable indigenous tourism world. Both parts support each other and were needed to meet the study's goals.

The design is exploratory because the topic is not well understood yet. The main aim was to learn about how Germans view sustainable indigenous tourism in Mexico. An exploratory design is suitable when a subject is new and the researcher seeks to build initial understanding rather than test fixed ideas.

DESCRIPTION OF MEASUREMENT OF CONSTRUCTS AND KEY CONCEPTS

This section is split into two parts: one for the quantitative approach and one for the qualitative. Each part used its own measurement tool. For the quantitative part, the focus was on measuring the research model explained in Figure 1. For the qualitative part, the focus was on defining key ideas used for coding and analysis. The tools used are also described for each part. For the quantitative approach, the main tool was an online questionnaire made with Google Forms, chosen for its ease and simplicity. This tool has been used in earlier studies that helped shape the research model, and the same ideas were tested through it. Ethics and anonymity were taken into account. For the qualitative approach, the main tool was structured online interviews done through Zoom, which helped add depth and complement the study.

Quantitative approach

The research model has nine independent variables that measure German willingness to pay for sustainable indigenous tourism services. From the Theory of Planned Behavior, there are three predictors: attitude toward sustainable tourism, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. From the Theory of Consumption Value, there are five values: functional value (quality and price), social value, emotional value, epistemic value, and conditional value. Past behavior is also included. Willingness to pay serves as the dependent variable and is treated as the behavioral intention in both theories. Each variable is briefly defined with its source in Table 3.

N°	Variable	Definition	Source
1	Attitude toward sustainable tourism	Positive or negative evaluation of the behavior	Grilli et al. (2021); de Araújo et al. (2022)
2	Subjective norm	Perceived social pressure to engage in the behavior	Wang et al. (2018); Nekmahmud et al. (2022)
3	Perceived behavioral control	Person's belief regarding the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior	Perugini & Bagozzi (2001); Breiby et al. (2020); Wang et al. (2018); Nekmahmud et al. (2022)
4	Previous experience	Prior experiences that can be transformative and stimulate new and deeper understandings, where the outcome is a sustained change in the person	Perugini & Bagozzi (2001); Breiby et al. (2020)
5	Functional value (quality)	Maximum utility at minimum costs regarding quality	Sweeney & Soutar (2001); Awuni & Du (2016); Wang et al. (2018); Nekmahmud et al. (2022)
6	Functional value (price)	Maximum utility at minimum costs regarding price	Sweeney & Soutar (2001); Gugkang et al. (2013); Wang et al. (2018); Nekmahmud et al. (2022)
7	Social value	Usefulness in terms of being perceived positively by social groups	Awuni & Du (2016); Khan & Mohsin (2017); Sweeney & Soutar (2001); Wang et al. (2018); Nekmahmud et al. (2022)
8	Emotional value	Evokes emotions such as excitement; relates to aesthetics, usability, comfort, pleasure, auditory experience, reputation, and relationship	Awuni & Du (2016); Lin & Huang (2012); Sheth et al. (1991); Nekmahmud et al. (2022)
9	Epistemic value	Arouses curiosity, novelty, and satisfies the desire for knowledge	Awuni & Du (2016); Lin & Huang (2012); Sheth et al. (1991); Nekmahmud et al. (2022)
10	Conditional value	Belief that consumer purchases depend on a specific situation and condition	Dholakia (2001); Hirschman (1980); Lin & Huang (2012); Awuni & Du (2016); Nekmahmud et al. (2022)
11	Willingness to pay	Behavioral intention: maximum amount a consumer will spend for an extra unit	Aydin & Álvarez (2020); de Araújo et al. (2022)

Table 3. Summary of Variables Definition

It is also important to clarify what sustainable indigenous tourism means in the questionnaire. Four key terms were defined at the start: sustainable indigenous tourism itself, the destinations where it happens, the providers who offer it, and the services they sell. These definitions helped respondents answer accurately, as shown in Table 4.

N°	Term	Definition	Source
1	Sustainable indigenous tourism	A form of sustainable tourism in which indigenous communities and towns provide visitors with the chance to experience and learn about their traditions, customs, and ways of life. It promotes the preservation and revitalization of their cultural elements and acknowledges their identity through sustainable daily interactions with their environment.	Author's creation based on Morales (2011); RITA (2007); UNWTO (2019)
2	Sustainable indigenous tourism destination	Refers to the places where sustainable indigenous tourism is present, most commonly in rural areas with natural resources endowment.	Author's creation based on Morales (2011); RITA (2007); UNWTO (2019)
3	Sustainable indigenous tourism providers	Refers to local communities and indigenous communities named in the Strategy as groups of local tourism service providers.	Barrientos et al. (2020)
4	Sustainable indigenous tourism services	The series of activities sold by indigenous entrepreneurs. These are not standard services; for example, a tour package or gastronomy experience, depending on business maturity and value proposition.	Barrientos et al. (2020)

Table 4. Terms Used in the Questionnaire

The questionnaire has 41 items divided into three sections. The first gathers personal background information such as age, gender, country of origin, place of residence, education level, and income. It uses yes-or-no questions, single-answer multiple choice, and open questions. The second section explores awareness and interest in sustainable indigenous tourism generally and in Mexico. An infographic about sustainable indigenous tourism in Mexico was shown to help answer specific questions. This section uses single-answer multiple choice and a seven-point scale to measure past behavior. The third section measures the research model and tests the hypotheses, mainly using a seven-point agreement scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Two items use a frequency scale and two use multiple choice to better understand certain ideas.

To test the model, 24 items were adapted from previous work on sustainable consumption, sustainable destinations, and new tourism types. Most use a seven-point scale for agreement. The other items not directly measuring the model, such as background and category questions, can be seen in the full questionnaire in the appendix.

The construct with the most items is willingness to pay, measured with six questions. Attitude toward sustainable tourism has four items. Subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, functional value, conditional value, emotional value, epistemic value, and past behavior each have two items. Social value and subjective norm each have only one measuring item.

Qualitative Approach

The qualitative analysis used key concepts organized into main categories for coding. There were two interview groups. The first group came from questionnaire participants, seen as potential travelers. The second group were experts on the topic. Two coding frames were built, one for each group.

For the first group, three main categories were used with a concept-driven deductive strategy: general awareness of sustainable indigenous tourism, travel experience in Mexico, and interest in Mexico's sustainable indigenous tourism experiences. The interview guide shaped this strategy. This is a medium-complexity coding frame with more than one dimension but only two levels. The first level looks at how interviewees see sustainable indigenous tourism overall. The second level digs deeper into interest specifically in Mexico, with subcategories for motivations, barriers, expectations, and price willingness.

For the second group, three main categories were also used, mainly concept-driven with some data-driven elements: German market interest, Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2030, and sustainable indigenous tourism SMEs. The interview guides shaped the concept-driven parts, while a data-driven approach was used only for the challenges subcategory. This is also a medium-complexity frame with two levels. The first level addresses the research foundations. The second level explores these foundations more deeply to fill literature gaps and find new insights, with subcategories for status and benefits under Strategy 2030, and characteristics and challenges under SMEs.

The coding process was the same for both groups but done separately due to different frames. First, relevant material was selected from the six transcripts based on the research question and objectives. Then coding units were marked using thematic criteria. A preliminary frame was created, tested on one interview from each group, modified, and then finalized. The first full coding was applied to all material. Because only one researcher did the coding, a second round was done after ten days. Few changes were needed, and then interpretation and results were prepared.

The main tool was structured online interviews through Zoom. For the first group, a short format of 11 open questions about the topic plus 2 demographic questions was used. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes, though most ran longer because interviewees asked questions showing natural interest. For the second group, interviews varied in content based on each expert's knowledge but lasted about the same time on average, roughly 90 minutes.

The first expert interview had 10 open questions about the diplomatic view of indigenous tourism in Germany, current strategies by SECTUR and the Mexican Embassy, and perceptions of German market interest. The second expert interview had 10 open questions about the association's identity and characteristics, value proposition, customer types, international view, and impact of Strategy 2030. The third expert interview had 6 open questions about sustainable tourism's position in Mexico, main programs and strategies by SECTUR, and how these support sustainable indigenous tourism.

Sample and Data Collection

The quantitative sample was drawn from an infinite population of German residents using convenience sampling, consistent with similar studies in sustainable consumption and tourism (Salgado, 2019). Three population groups were targeted: (1) a proposed group of Germans with Latin American cultural

connections (Spanish speakers, event attendees, Facebook group members, or partners of Mexicans); (2) an extended group of German university students; and (3) an international group of Germany residents regardless of nationality.

Data collection occurred from October 2023 to March 2024 through both offline and online strategies. Offline distribution involved QR-coded flyers at cultural events (e.g., Día de Muertos celebrations in Cologne), Latin/Mexican restaurants, university bulletin boards, and the International Tourism Exchange Berlin (ITB). Online distribution utilized social media platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, LinkedIn), Facebook groups related to Mexico travel and sustainability, and student survey groups. A motivational strategy offering free German and Spanish language practice sessions was implemented in January 2024 to boost response rates.

A total of 218 responses were collected, with 14 excluded for non-residence in Germany, yielding 204 usable responses. This exceeds the minimum threshold of 10 cases per independent variable for multiple regression analysis (Rodríguez del Águila & Benítez-Parejo, 2011) and the recommended minimum of 100 responses for 10 predictors (Boronat-Navarro & Pérez-Aranda, 2020). The sample comprised predominantly young (74% aged 21–35), female (70%), well-educated (62% with Bachelor's degree or higher) respondents from western Germany (75%), with 68% German nationals and 32% from over 30 other countries.

For the qualitative component, convenience sampling was used for Group 1, while purposive sampling selected experts with specialized knowledge in Mexican sustainable and indigenous tourism (Palinkas et al., 2015).

DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 29.0.2.0. The analysis proceeded in five stages: (1) descriptive statistics to characterize the sample and variable distributions; (2) diagnostic tests including Cronbach's alpha for reliability and Kolmogorov-Smirnov/Shapiro-Wilk tests for normality; (3) Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Principal Axis Factoring with oblique (Promax) rotation to identify underlying factor structures; (4) Pearson correlation analysis to examine relationships between variables; and (5) multiple linear regression with forced entry to test the predictive model. Additional inferential tests included independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA to examine group differences.

Qualitative data were analyzed manually using QCA. Transcripts were coded according to the hierarchical frames described above, with thematic criteria applied to select relevant material. After preliminary frame testing and modification, all material was coded, followed by a second coding round after ten days to ensure consistency.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study adhered to ethical research principles throughout. Questionnaire participation was anonymous and voluntary. Interview participants provided informed consent for recording and use of their responses. No personal identifying information is disclosed in the findings. The research design was reviewed to ensure compliance with data protection standards for online survey and interview data collection.

Quantitative Results

DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

The final sample comprised 204 respondents residing in Germany. The demographic profile revealed a concentration among young adults (74% aged 21–35 years, mean = 31, mode = 24), with a notable female majority (70%). Educational attainment was high, with 62% holding a Bachelor's degree or higher. Income distribution showed 54% earning between €500 and €2,000 monthly. Geographically, 75% resided in western German states, with North Rhine-Westphalia (30%), Bavaria (18%), and Saxony (14%) as the primary locations. While 68% were German nationals, 32% represented over 30 other countries, reflecting Germany's diverse resident population.

Awareness of indigenous tourism was limited: 64% had not previously heard of the concept, and 72% had no experience with it in the past three years. However, interest in Mexico's sustainable indigenous tourism (SIT) was considerably higher—89% found it interesting, and 83% expressed willingness to visit rural communities in natural areas. Travel preferences within Mexico favored cultural trips to cities or towns (30%), followed by relaxing beach trips (28%) and adventure trips to natural zones (26%).

Regarding willingness to pay (WTP), 47% of respondents indicated a willingness to pay €450–€600 for a two-night, three-day package including accommodation, half-board meals, local transport, and community activities. A further 33% would pay €250–€450, while only 4% would pay €1,000–€1,500. Conditions influencing purchase decisions emphasized authentic experiences (118 votes), positive community impact (113 votes), and sustainability awareness (60 votes), whereas discounts or subsidies were least important (50 votes).

DIAGNOSTIC RESULTS

Reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for all multi-item constructs (Table 6). All values exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.60 (Hair et al., 2018), with most exceeding 0.70. The WTP construct demonstrated excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.929$), while attitude toward sustainable tourism ($\alpha = 0.814$), emotional value ($\alpha = 0.797$), and epistemic value ($\alpha = 0.766$) showed good internal consistency. Conditional value approached the lower bound at $\alpha = 0.647$ but was retained for further analysis. Two constructs with single items (subjective norm and social value) were not subjected to reliability testing.

Construct	Items Retained	Cronbach's Alpha
Attitude toward sustainable tourism (AST)	AST1–AST4	0.814
Perceived behavioral control (PBC)	PBC1–PBC2	0.892
Functional value (FV)	FVq1, FVp1	0.707
Emotional value (EV)	EV1–EV2	0.797
Epistemic value (EpV)	EpV1	0.766
Conditional value (CV)	CV1–CV2	0.647
Willingness to pay (WTP)	WTP1–WTP5	0.929

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Summary. *Source: Author's creation. Note: PBC3, EpV2, and WTP6 were excluded due to low item-total correlations or factor loadings.*

Normality and Exploratory Factor Analysis. Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests indicated non-normal distributions for all items ($p < .001$). However, with $n = 204$, the Central Limit Theorem applies, rendering parametric tests appropriate. Skewness and kurtosis values fell predominantly within the acceptable ± 2 range, supporting this decision.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Principal Axis Factoring with Promax rotation was conducted on 20 retained items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified sampling adequacy ($KMO = 0.907$), and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 2909.038$, $df = 231$, $p < .001$). Three factors with eigenvalues exceeding 1 emerged, explaining 57.38% of total variance:

- Factor 1: Motivation for experiencing SIT in Mexico (42.37% variance)—comprising functional value, social value, emotional value, conditional value, and perceived behavioral control items.
- Factor 2: Willingness to pay for SIT experiences (9.79% variance)—comprising all five WTP items.
- Factor 3: Perceived value of SIT (5.22% variance)—comprising attitude toward sustainable tourism, subjective norm, and epistemic value items.

This factor structure aligns with the theoretical framework while revealing that PBC loaded with TCV predictors (motivation) rather than TPB predictors, and epistemic value loaded with TPB predictors (perception) rather than TCV predictors.

INFERENTIAL RESULTS

Correlation Analysis. Pearson correlation revealed significant positive relationships between all factor pairs (Table 6). Motivation for experiencing SIT (VI1) correlated moderately with WTP ($r = 0.499$, $p < .001$). Perceived value of SIT (VI2) correlated more strongly with WTP ($r = 0.564$, $p < .001$), indicating a large effect size. The two independent variables also correlated substantially ($r = 0.648$, $p < .001$).

	VI1 (Motivation)	VI2 (Perceived Value)	VD (WTP)
VI1 (Motivation)	1		
VI2 (Perceived Value)	0.648**	1	
VD (WTP)	0.499**	0.564**	1

Table 6. Pearson Correlation Matrix; *Source: Author's creation.*

*Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Multiple Regression Analysis. A multiple linear regression with forced entry was conducted to test the predictive model. The results indicate that VI1 and VI2 statistically significantly predict WTP for

SITs, $F(2, 196) = 47.573$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .327$, adjusted $R^2 = .320$. The model explains approximately 32% of variance in WTP.

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	t	p
Motivation for experiencing SIT (VI1)	0.317	0.088	0.261	3.600	< .001
Perceived value of SIT (VI2)	0.525	0.101	0.377	5.190	< .001

Table 7. Regression Coefficients for Predicting WTP for SITs; Note: R^2 adjusted = 0.320 ($N = 204$, $p < .001$).
SE = standard error. Source: Author's creation.

Both predictors contributed significantly. Perceived value (VI2) demonstrated the stronger effect ($\beta = 0.377$, $p < .001$), followed by motivation (VI1) ($\beta = 0.261$, $p < .001$). The model satisfied all key regression assumptions: Durbin-Watson = 2.248 (independence of residuals); VIF = 1.535 (no multicollinearity); linearity and homoscedasticity confirmed via scatterplot inspection; residual normality supported by P-P plot and histogram analysis.

Group Differences. An independent samples t-test found no significant difference in WTP between German nationals ($M = 5.47$, $SD = 1.30$) and non-German residents ($M = 5.44$, $SD = 1.38$), $t(202) = -0.172$, $p = .863$, Cohen's $d = -0.026$. This suggests that residence and integration into German society, rather than nationality per se, shape WTP intentions.

A one-way ANOVA revealed that prior experience with indigenous tourism significantly influenced WTP, $F(1, 202) = 6.989$, $p = .009$, $\eta^2 = .033$. Experienced travelers ($M = 5.87$, $SD = 1.09$) showed higher WTP than non-experienced travelers ($M = 5.32$, $SD = 1.37$).

A second one-way ANOVA (Welch's $F(2, 52.457) = 18.24$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .199$) demonstrated that interest level strongly affected WTP. Games-Howell post hoc tests confirmed significant differences across all three groups: low-interest ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 2.06$) < middle-interest ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.15$) < high-interest ($M = 6.03$, $SD = 0.91$), all $p < .05$.

Qualitative Results

GROUP 1: POTENTIAL TRAVELERS

Three interviews with questionnaire participants (aged 29–35, all German nationals, predominantly female) provided depth to quantitative findings. All expressed genuine interest in SIT experiences in Mexico, though awareness was generally low prior to the questionnaire.

Awareness and Previous Experience. Participants had encountered indigenous tourism concepts primarily in Thailand, Costa Rica, and Bolivia, but none had undertaken dedicated indigenous tourism trips. Participant 1 articulated a common ambiguity: *"This brings up the question of what counts as indigenous tourism. For me, sometimes it's not clear if it's truly part of their actual community or just staged for tourists."* This distinction between authentic and staged experiences emerged as a central concern.

Motivations. Cultural immersion was the primary motivator. Participant 1 sought *"to really immerse myself in the culture, to learn about the customs and daily life of indigenous people."* Participant 3 emphasized linguistic and cultural discovery: *"I like languages and I like cultures, and that's why I travel a lot... You get to know people, you get to know the way they live."* Sustainability was mentioned as a secondary but important consideration.

Barriers. Lack of information dominated barriers (Figure 8), mentioned repeatedly by all participants. Language concerns ranked second, particularly for non-Spanish speakers. Time constraints were mentioned least frequently.

Expectations. Ten characteristics were identified as important for ideal SIT experiences. The three most frequently mentioned were: (1) authentic, real experiences involving daily community activities (cooking, crafts); (2) simple, community-appropriate accommodation rather than luxury hotels; and (3) a reliable contact person or guide to address language barriers and logistical issues. Additional single mentions included real community support, safety, local transport, physical activities, advance itineraries, sustainability certifications, and peer recommendations.

Price Willingness. Responses varied based on assumptions. Two participants suggested €100–€250 for a weekend, expecting modest accommodation costs. However, Participant 1 would pay *"about double the price of a normal accommodation"* if the benefit flowed directly to the community. Participant 3 expressed willingness to pay substantially more (*"maybe around 4,000 euros"* for an extended trip) contingent on direct community benefit: *"I'd be willing to pay more if I knew that the money was going directly to the people living there and not to some intermediary."*

GROUP 2: EXPERTS

Three expert interviews provided supply-side and market perspectives.

German Market Interest. Florentino Cabrera (Mexican Embassy in Germany) confirmed strong German interest in sustainable and fair-trade products, noting that *"if a product such as a chocolate bar has fair trade certification, it is much more valued in Germany."* He identified specific indigenous tourism activities already attracting German travelers: birdwatching in Baja California Sur, Mayan archaeology and astrology tourism, and traditional gastronomy experiences. Germany's environmental consciousness, reflected in Green Party influence, underpins this demand. However, Cabrera emphasized that products must be *"well consolidated and adapted to the needs of the German market"* to succeed.

Strategy 2030 Status. Nancy González (SECTUR) confirmed the strategy is progressing but slowly, without specific KPIs. She acknowledged the complexity of multi-stakeholder coordination and highlighted the challenge of federal-to-local continuity given political transitions. Ricardo Campos (RITA) noted the strategy has been *"implemented by few"* due to SECTUR leadership changes. Critically, he stated the strategy has *"not yet impacted the German market"* as tourism promotion remains focused on the U.S. and Canadian markets (approximately 80% of international tourism).

SME Characteristics and Challenges. RITA encompasses 100 organizations across 19 indigenous communities in 17 Mexican states, mostly microenterprises with 1–2 employees. Only around 20 maintain independent websites; RITA serves as the primary digital platform. Four characteristics

aligned with German market demand emerged: (1) positive social impact with community benefit distribution, (2) authentic experiences preserving local traditions, (3) safety and basic comfort amenities, and (4) cultural and historical depth.

Five major challenges were identified: (1) product/service consolidation—developing differentiated, quality tourism products rather than standardized offerings; (2) internationalization—including language barriers, international payment systems, and market-specific product adaptation; (3) weak community governance—decision-making and ownership issues affected by social instability; (4) marketing—limited promotion and market segmentation capacity; and (5) digitalization—poor internet connectivity in rural indigenous destinations hinders online presence and booking.

MARKET ANALYSIS INSIGHTS

Demand Estimation. Using the Chain-Ratio Method (Kotler & Keller, 2016), potential demand is estimated at approximately 130,637 German travelers annually: Germany's population (83.4 million) × 55% interest in responsible holidays × 0.32% travel rate to Mexico × 89% interest in SIT experiences.

Customer Segmentation. Four subsegments emerged from combining interest level (middle/high) and experience (yes/no):

- **Middle & Experienced** (n = 30): 75% female, 80% aware of SIT, 30% WTP €450–€600
- **Middle & Non-Experienced** (n = 97): 64% female, 12% aware of SIT, 47% WTP €450–€600
- **High & Experienced** (n = 52): 75% female, 91% aware of SIT, 58% WTP €450–€600
- **High & Non-Experienced** (n = 25): 77% female, 19% aware of SIT, 56% WTP €450–€600

The "High & Experienced" segment shows the strongest WTP and awareness, while the "High & Non-Experienced" segment represents the largest untapped potential.

Price Strategy. Benchmarking against existing operators reveals: basic local tours (€250–€450), standard national tours such as Rutopia (€450–€600), and premium international operators (€600–€1,500). The German market demonstrates willingness to pay at basic and standard levels, with 80% of respondents willing to pay €250–€600. The high-income German market and preference for local provider authenticity suggest potential for upward price mobility if quality and transparency are assured.

Discussion

RESEARCH QUESTION INSIGHTS

This study addresses the question: What is the level of interest and willingness of the German market to pay for sustainable indigenous tourism services in Mexico? The findings reveal a moderate-to-high level of interest, with 89% of respondents finding SIT in Mexico interesting and 80% willing to pay between €250 and €600 for a weekend experience. These results position the German market as a viable target for Mexican indigenous tourism enterprises, contingent upon addressing critical supply-side and information-access barriers.

POTENTIAL DEMAND

The estimated potential demand of approximately 131,000 German travelers annually, derived through the Chain-Ratio Method, should be interpreted cautiously given the exploratory nature of the study and the assumptions underlying the calculation. Nevertheless, this figure provides a preliminary market sizing that can guide strategic planning for indigenous tourism stakeholders. The primary target segment—well-educated young women residing predominantly in western Germany, with limited Mexico travel experience but strong intention to visit—aligns with profiles identified in Canadian indigenous tourism research. Destination Canada and the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) identified "Learners" (aged 25–34, seeking authentic cultural immersion) and "Cultural Explorers" (predominantly women with above-average education) as key German market segments for indigenous tourism (ITA, 2019). The present study corroborates these profiles while extending them to the Mexican context.

The subsegment analysis reveals that interest level exerts a stronger effect on WTP than prior experience ($\eta^2 = .199$ versus $.033$). This finding is strategically significant: it suggests that marketing efforts aimed at cultivating interest may yield greater returns than those targeting only experienced sustainable travelers. The "High & Non-Experienced" segment—representing 25 respondents (12% of the sample) with 56% willing to pay €450–€600—constitutes a particularly promising target for awareness-building campaigns.

WILLINGNESS TO PAY

The WTP findings (47% at €450–€600; 33% at €250–€450) position the German market at the basic-to-standard tour level relative to existing Mexican operators. This aligns with Rutopia's national-level offerings and RITA's cooperative packages. The qualitative data suggest upward price mobility is possible if transparency regarding community benefit is assured. Participant 3's willingness to pay "maybe around 4,000 euros" for an extended trip—contingent on direct community benefit—illustrates that price sensitivity is moderated by perceived impact authenticity. This supports the theoretical proposition that WTP for sustainable tourism is not merely a function of disposable income but is strongly influenced by value-laden beliefs about where expenditure flows (Dannenberg & Estola, 2018).

The finding that 85% of respondents are willing to pay more for environmental protection and 84% for local (versus international chain) provision reinforces the importance of sustainability signaling. German travelers' established environmental consciousness, reflected in Germany's fourth-place SDG index ranking and strong Green Party influence, translates into tangible purchase intentions when credibly communicated.

FACTORS INFLUENCING WILLINGNESS TO PAY

Perception

The regression results confirm that perceived value (VI2)—comprising attitude toward sustainable tourism, subjective norm, and epistemic value—is the strongest predictor of WTP ($\beta = 0.377$). This factor's dominance supports H1, H2, and H8. The attitude toward sustainable tourism (AST) component is particularly salient: the item measuring protection of local habitat, flora and fauna achieved the highest mean (6.17) and lowest standard deviation (1.28) across all constructs, with 57% "strongly agreeing." This finding extends De Araújo et al.'s (2022) work on ecotourism attitudes and WTP by demonstrating that environmental protection attitudes transfer to the indigenous tourism context.

The epistemic value loading on the perception factor—rather than the motivation factor as theoretically anticipated—suggests that information-seeking behavior among German travelers is cognitively integrated with attitudinal evaluation rather than operating as a separate motivational drive. This has practical implications: providing detailed, credible information about SIT offerings may simultaneously satisfy epistemic needs and reinforce positive attitudes, thereby amplifying WTP through the perception pathway.

Subjective norm's contribution, while statistically supported, was less pronounced than anticipated. The social approval item (SV1) registered a neutral mean (4.18, mode = 4), suggesting that German travelers' SIT intentions are driven more by personal values than social signaling. This contrasts with findings in Asian markets where social norm effects are typically stronger (Quintal et al., 2010), potentially reflecting cultural differences in individualistic versus collectivistic decision-making orientations.

Motivation

The motivation factor (VI1)—encompassing functional value, social value, emotional value, conditional value, and perceived behavioral control—also significantly predicted WTP ($\beta = 0.261$), supporting H3, H5, H6, H7, and H9. However, its weaker effect relative to perceived value indicates that emotional and practical considerations operate as secondary drivers once attitudes and values are established.

Within this factor, perceived behavioral control (PBC) and conditional value (CV) exhibited the highest loadings. The PBC findings are concerning from a market development perspective: 56% of respondents expressed negative-to-neutral confidence in having sufficient information to purchase SIT experiences in Mexico. This "information gap" represents a critical bottleneck constraining demand translation. The qualitative data confirm this: lack of information was the most frequently cited barrier across all interviewees. Cabrera's observation that products must be "well consolidated and adapted" to reach the German market underscores that accessibility failures occur on both the information and supply sides.

Conditional value's prominence—particularly the condition that purchases depend on ensuring positive community impact—resonates with the fair-trade and ethical consumption trends prevalent in Germany. Notably, discounts and subsidies were the least important purchase condition (50 votes versus 118 for authentic experiences), suggesting that German travelers resist price-based incentives in favor of impact-based assurances. This finding challenges conventional tourism promotion strategies and supports value-based positioning over discounting.

The emotional value confirmation (H7) aligns with Nekmahmud et al.'s (2022) finding that emotional value strongly influences green purchase intentions among European tourists. The item measuring contribution to sustainable development achieved a mean of 5.33, indicating that German travelers derive meaningful emotional utility from aligning consumption with sustainability goals.

Functional value presented an interesting asymmetry: price value was rated more favorably (mean = 5.18) than quality value (mean = 4.77), with a 10-percentage-point gap in "strongly agree" responses. This suggests that while German travelers perceive SIT as valuable, quality assurance remains a concern. The qualitative data reinforce this: participants expected "simple" but authentic accommodation, implicitly accepting lower material standards if authenticity is guaranteed. However, the 4.77 mean for quality—only moderately positive—indicates that quality signaling should not be neglected in marketing communications.

Past Behavior

The ANOVA results support H4: prior indigenous tourism experience significantly enhances WTP ($p = .009$). However, the effect size is modest ($\eta^2 = .033$), and the mean difference between experienced (5.87) and non-experienced (5.32) travelers, while statistically significant, is not dramatic. This contrasts with Navarro and Pérez-Aranda's (2020) finding of strong experience effects on WTP for sustainable hotels. The discrepancy may reflect the relative novelty of indigenous tourism: unlike sustainable hotels, which have achieved greater market visibility, indigenous tourism remains unfamiliar even to experienced sustainable travelers. Consequently, prior experience may confer less informational advantage.

The comparison between experience and interest effects is instructive. Interest level's substantially larger eta-squared (.199 versus .033) suggests that cultivating enthusiasm through education and exposure may be more effective than relying solely on experiential learning. This has resource implications for stakeholders: investments in awareness campaigns may yield higher marginal returns than investments in trial-inducing subsidies.

Country of Origin

The absence of significant WTP differences between German nationals and non-German residents ($p = .863$, $d = -0.026$) suggests that acculturation to German sustainability norms, rather than nationality, shapes consumption intentions. This finding extends Navarro and Pérez-Aranda's (2020) observation that European cultural distances are diminishing in sustainable tourism contexts. For marketing practice, it implies that campaigns can target Germany-resident populations broadly without nationality-specific segmentation.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to sustainable tourism literature in three ways. First, it integrates the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Theory of Consumption Values (TCV), and past behavior (PB) into a single explanatory framework for indigenous tourism—a context rarely examined from the consumer perspective. While TPB has been widely applied to pro-environmental behaviors in tourism, scholars have criticized its reliance on purely rational predictors (Bertoldo & Castro, 2016). By incorporating TCV—which captures emotional and desire-based drivers—and PB, which is critical for intangible service evaluations, this research addresses a theoretical gap in understanding value-laden consumption decisions.

Second, the exploratory factor analysis reveals important deviations from theoretical expectations that advance our understanding of how these constructs operate in cross-cultural, niche tourism contexts. Perceived behavioral control, traditionally conceptualized as a non-volitional TPB predictor, loaded with TCV values (functional, social, emotional, conditional) into a "motivation" factor. Conversely, epistemic value, typically classified as a consumption value, loaded with attitudinal and normative TPB predictors into a "perception" factor. This suggests that for experienced, sustainability-conscious European travelers, the cognitive evaluation of accessibility (PBC) is emotionally and practically intertwined with motivational considerations, while information-seeking behavior (EpV) is cognitively integrated with attitudinal formation rather than operating as a separate desire. These findings challenge the rigid boundaries between "rational" and "emotional" decision-making pathways in sustainable tourism research.

Third, this study advances the conceptualization of sustainable indigenous tourism (SIT) itself. By converging the UNWTO's triple-bottom-line sustainability framework with RITA's community-based indigenous tourism principles and ITAC's ownership criteria, we propose a theoretically grounded definition that emphasizes indigenous proprietorship, community benefit retention, and cultural revitalization through sustainable environmental interaction. Given that indigenous tourism remains minimally theorized in consumer behavior literature, this conceptual clarification provides a foundation for future cross-cultural research.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings offer guidance for three stakeholder groups: indigenous tourism providers, destination marketers, and policy actors.

For providers and networks such as RITA, the central task is product consolidation. The German market demonstrates willingness to pay at basic and standard levels (€250–€600 for a weekend experience), yet over 70% of indigenous-led initiatives fail to generate feasible products. Quality signaling must improve: while price value was rated favorably (mean = 5.18), quality value scored lower (mean = 4.77), indicating that German travelers perceive SIT as valuable but remain uncertain about service standards. Providers should prioritize authentic community immersion—cooking, crafts, daily activities—over standardized offerings, and ensure basic comfort amenities (reliable contact persons, local transport, advance itineraries) that reduce perceived behavioral barriers.

For marketers targeting Germany, the "High & Non-Experienced" segment represents the most promising opportunity. This group—predominantly well-educated women with strong intention but no prior indigenous tourism experience—shows 56% willingness to pay at the €450–€600 range. Marketing should emphasize environmental protection and direct community benefit rather than price discounts, which ranked lowest among purchase conditions. Digital accessibility is critical: 56% of respondents expressed negative-to-neutral confidence in having sufficient information to purchase SIT experiences in Mexico. Partnerships with German-language booking platforms, sustainability-certified aggregators, and targeted social media campaigns can bridge this information gap.

For governmental and strategy actors, the Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2030 remains under-executed in the German market. Tourism promotion continues to prioritize the U.S. and Canadian markets; the strategy has not yet developed specific KPIs or internationalization pathways. Federal-to-local continuity is undermined by political transitions, yet the German market's established environmental consciousness and fair-trade orientation make it a strategic priority for diversification beyond mass tourism.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations that qualify its conclusions. First, the sample of 204 respondents, drawn primarily through convenience sampling in western Germany and student networks, is not representative of the broader German population. The concentration of young, female, well-educated respondents limits generalizability to older demographics or eastern German states, where sustainability attitudes may differ.

Second, the cross-sectional design captures intentions at a single point in time. Willingness to pay, while a strong predictor of behavior, does not guarantee actual purchase—particularly for experiential services where quality uncertainty is high and prior experience is limited.

Third, the research model explains approximately 32% of variance in willingness to pay, suggesting that additional factors not captured here—such as destination image, perceived risk, flight accessibility, or language barriers—may substantially influence German travelers' decisions.

Fourth, the qualitative component comprised only six interviews, with three potential travelers and three experts. While these provided depth and supply-side validation, a larger interview sample would strengthen the contextual understanding of barriers and expectations.

Finally, the study was conducted during the post-pandemic recovery period (October 2023–March 2024), which may have influenced travel preferences and risk perceptions in ways that are not fully generalizable to stable market conditions.

Conclusion

This study examined the German market's interest and willingness to pay for sustainable indigenous tourism (SIT) experiences in Mexico through an integrative theoretical lens combining the Theory of Planned Behavior, Theory of Consumption Values, and past behavior. The findings confirm a viable

market opportunity: 89% of respondents expressed interest in Mexican SIT, with 80% willing to pay €250–€600 for a weekend experience, and an estimated potential demand of approximately 131,000 German travelers annually.

Two factors emerged as drivers of willingness to pay. **Perceived value**—encompassing attitude toward sustainable tourism, subjective norm, and epistemic value—proved the stronger predictor ($\beta = 0.377$), reinforcing that German travelers' decisions are primarily shaped by value-laden beliefs about environmental protection and cultural authenticity rather than by social signaling or price incentives. **Motivation**—comprising functional, social, emotional, and conditional values alongside perceived behavioral control—also contributed significantly ($\beta = 0.261$), though its weaker effect suggests that emotional and practical considerations operate as secondary drivers once foundational attitudes are established.

The research contributes to macromarketing literature by examining consumer behavior within an alternative marketing system seeking to balance ethical, cultural, and environmental values. Sustainable indigenous tourism represents a shift from transactional mass tourism toward relational, community-embedded exchange where indigenous proprietorship ensures economic benefits remain local. Yet this system remains fragile: the "information gap" identified—56% of respondents lacking confidence to identify and purchase SIT experiences—represents a critical bottleneck that constrains demand translation and perpetuates reliance on conventional tourism intermediaries.

Strategically, the findings suggest that cultivating interest through awareness-building and transparent sustainability signaling may yield higher returns than targeting only experienced sustainable travelers. The "High & Non-Experienced" segment, comprising 12% of the sample with strong willingness to pay but limited prior exposure, represents a particularly promising target for educational campaigns and digital accessibility improvements.

Ultimately, the German market's established environmental consciousness, evidenced by Germany's fourth-place SDG index ranking and strong Green Party influence, translates into tangible purchase intentions when credibly communicated. For Mexican indigenous tourism enterprises and policymakers, the imperative is clear: consolidate quality-assured, authentic experiences; improve digital and physical accessibility; and communicate community impact transparently. Only then can SIT fulfill its promise as a differentiated, equitable alternative within the global tourism economy.

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