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# Mahahual

## Destination & Domicile

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A Study of Cruise Tourism Impacts on the Community  
of a Mexican Village

14<sup>th</sup> June 2019



Advisory Graduation Report

Loreen Scharf - 564934

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## Executive Summary

Tourism is a continuously growing industry that, through its wide inclusion of sectors can have many impacts on a destination and its residents. It can help a community to reach economic prosperity and engage in cultural exchanges with other nationalities. At the same time, it can put enormous pressure on the host community through disruption and gentrification, disrespectful behaviour of tourists and adaption of the host culture. In the case of cruise tourism this is often more extreme, because of large masses of tourists that arrive at the destination at the same.

However, residents can significantly influence the experience that visitors have and their support for tourism is crucial. Venice and Barcelona are examples where the host population has taken drastic measures, such as demonstrating and leaving hate messages for tourists across the street. This clearly reflects the importance of considering the host society in the tourism development of a destination.

Mahahual in Southern Mexico is a small village and second cruise ship destination in the country. TAKATA Experience, the Commissioning Client of this project, is a research centre that strives to achieve a sustainable development of the village. They realized that cruise tourism has, for most of the community, not yet reached the economic benefit that they wish for, while it leads to many issues in their everyday life. The first step in including them into the tourism management is by listening to their opinions and finding out what the socio-cultural impacts of cruise tourism are, as perceived by the community.

The Objective was therefore to gain insight into the perceived balance of positive and negative impacts of cruise tourism by Mahahual's residents, in order to provide the tourism stakeholders of Mahahual with recommendations on how to improve the socio-cultural impacts of cruise tourism on the host population.

A look into the literature has shown that measuring socio-cultural factors influenced by tourism is more difficult than measuring economic or ecological factors, since it is very subjective. Therefore, an extensive critical literature review was carried out and various models and theories chosen that appeared most applicable.

The final model that was chosen is based on Deery, Jago, & Fredline's (2012) overview of factors influencing the socio-cultural impact of tourism as well as Faulkner and Tideswell's (1997) overview of *extrinsic* and *intrinsic characteristics*. In the final model, these were referred to as *destination characteristics* (extrinsic), measured with Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle, Doxey's Irritation Index and Cohen's Tourism Typology and *resident characteristics* (intrinsic), assessed with the aid of the Social Exchange Theory (SET) in combination with the elements of power and institutional trust. In additional, socio-cultural impacts of cruise tourism as perceived by the locals and socio-cultural impacts of Costa Maya Port were considered, the latter assessed based on Klein (2011).

A qualitative research approach was chosen, with semi-structured and structured interviews as well as participant observation to get in-depth inside into the perception of Mahahual's locals.

Looking at destination characteristics, it was found out that according to Butler and Cohen, the tourism development of Mahahual is already in the last stages, while assessing the development by means of Doxey, it seems less advanced. This could be directly linked to SET, since it explains that residents are more likely to evaluate contact with tourists as positive if they are economically dependent. This can be concluded since the majority of residents moved to Mahahual from within and outside of Mexico, to work for the port. 85% of its locals are employed within the industry. However, residents do not have institutional trust because they do not feel involved in the tourism development of Mahahual, nor do they trust in the government's ability to manage tourism well. Other residents' characteristics considered in the research did not seem to influence their opinion on tourism.

Assessing the port management, it became clear that the port is owned by the billion company ITM Group, but Costa Maya also offer their own transportation, tours, beach clubs and hotels, trying to keep as much of the business to themselves as possible. Also, Klein's elements of homogenisation of the port experience and lack of social authenticity could be observed.

For this reason, the economic benefit of tourism is not fairly distributed and there are still locals that cannot afford brick houses. Looking at the socio-cultural impacts, it became very apparent that infrastructure and services are not adapted to the residential growth of the village and the number of tourists arriving. This includes drainage, water treatment plants, waste management, roads as well as health and police services. Naturally, this leads to a big impact on the environment, that most locals depend on for their tourism or fishing employment. Unfortunately, tourism has not brought more interesting things to do in Mahahual, and many residents complain about the lack of entertainment opportunities. This leads to many people leaving during their days off, not only spending the money outside of Mahahual, but also making it difficult to creating a community feeling. This is worsened by the physical division of the village and the different working hours of port employees and people working in the village.

All in all, the negative impacts of tourism do, at the current state, outweigh the positive ones for the locals of Mahahual and their quality of life is negatively impacted by it. Nevertheless, they support tourism because they are aware of their economic dependence. However, if the situation does not improve and locals do not feel incorporated in the tourism management this might change in the future.

Therefore, various recommendations are provided to improve the socio-cultural impacts of tourism. For TAKATA and the community, it is advised to create a market, which takes advantage of the cultural diversity that exists in Mahahual, and can be used to socialize, educate, sell, and buy, and therefore strengthen Mahahual economic, cultural and social situation. For the Tourism Secretary of Quintana Roo, it is crucial to include the population more in the decision making, make them feel valued and become more transparent. To inform about meetings, decisions or plans, the active Facebook pages of Mahahual can be used to access a wider audience. Also, together with the responsible ministries, the infrastructure of Mahahual should be adapted in a timely manner. Lastly, for Costa Maya Port it is advised to try to improve the relationship with the community, by leaving them tourism business too. Additionally, an educational element should be added to the shows inside the port to add context that help tourists understand what they see.

## Foreword

Four years ago, after having travelled extensively, I wanted to help others to live the same experiences as me and started full of excitement to study tourism management. Already in the first year I got pulled back to the ground by learning about all the negative side effects that tourism can cause. Today, with a continuous steep growth rate of the industry, these effects seem to become more apparent every year, and one does not have to be a professional of the industry to be aware of it.

Nevertheless, travelling is amazing. It can broaden horizons, increase appreciation and help one to grow. It can bring nations closer together and create more understanding. And this does not even consider the beautiful natural wonders one gets to witness. People love to travel for a reason, and they will not stop.

While I hate the negative impacts tourism can cause, I believe in the ability of it to contribute to making this world a better place and the only way that I can be part of this and help to diminish negative side effects is by working within it.

I already took the first step into this direction with my internship at UNWTO. Now, after having spent a semester in Mexico in falling in love with the country, I got the chance to not only research something that really interests me, but also to give back to this place that made me feel so welcomed and is so filled with beautiful people.

I hope this research will be successful and helpful to the community of Mahahual and I want to thank my Inholland Supervisor Swen Waterreus to guide me through this process. Of course, my thanks also goes to my company supervisor Cassiopea Doneys, to give me the chance to return to Mexico and include tourism in the work of TAKATA when it seems so difficult to combine with the work of a marine biologist.

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## 1. Introduction

Mahahual, a beautiful Caribbean village in the south of Mexico, embedded white sandy beaches and a green mangrove forest. Down the road there is a cruise port, accommodating up to 15,000 passengers at once, contrasting the 1500 permanent residents.

The cruise tourists arriving in Mahahual surely have good intentions and think they benefit the villagers. They do not see the wooden shacks outside the village, in which some of the residents live. They do not think about the amount of trash and human waste that the village must cope with. And most certainly they never find out how left out Mahahual's residents are from the port and the tourism management of the village. The paradisiac flair and relaxed atmosphere of Mahahual covers up an important fact: The village is not ready to welcome this number of visitors and those who feel it the most are the locals.

However, for a healthy tourism development their support is essential. The first step in reaching this is by understanding the socio-cultural impacts of tourism from a residents' perspective. Which implications does the cruise tourism have for Mahahual's locals and what are their thoughts about the cruise tourism in their village and how does their society and culture change because of it?

This research delivers answers to those questions.

It therefore first provides information about the Commissioning Client, TAKATA Experience and Mahahual. This is followed by the reason for the research; relevant trends and a problem analysis reflect its importance. The objective is derived from this, including the relevance for both TAKATA and the society. The subsequent chapter discusses relevant literature finally leading to the model that was used as a base for this research. A description of the research questions is followed by the methodology, where the research choices for this study are justified. The chapter Mahahual: Destination and Domicile outlines the results gained, while the conclusion delivers the answer to the central question of the research. Finally, recommendations are provided to fulfil the research objective and make those benefit from the tourism that deserve it the most – the locals.



## 1.1. Background of the research

This chapter outlines relevant background information, specifically about the Commissioning Client and the village about which research was conducted, Mahahual.

### 1.1.1. The Commissioning Client – TAKATA Experience

This research is carried out for TAKATA Experience, which is based in Mahahual, Mexico. The organization consists of two bodies, a dive centre and the attached research centre, the latter functioning as a non-governmental organization which is funded by the profits of the diving school, is the Commissioning Client for this research.

The research centre was set up in 2016 and is specialized in ecosystem conservation, environmental management and environmental education. Cassiopea Carrier Doneys is the director of the centre and was supervising this research project.

The vision of the research centre is “to [ensure] the future of our oceans by creating a sustainable community and an environmentally aware population” (TAKATA Experience, Research Center, 2019, para4).

Therefore, the centre has established various projects which do not only build the groundwork for environmental conservation but also encourage local engagement. Current projects include amongst others a Coral Reef Restoration Program, an Environmental Awareness and Education Program and the Eco-Mahahual Certification for restaurants and hotels.

While environmental sustainability is at the core of the research centre, TAKATA Experience also collaborates with the local community and government to turn Mahahual into “a world-renowned eco-touristic destination”, where social and economic sustainability form an essential part. The knowledge and traditions of locals are highly valued and incorporated in the actions of the centre to ensure a healthy relationship between the community and nature. It is “[TAKATA’s] goal to create a sustainable centre, which is healthy for the environment and benefits the local economy and social community. [They] aim to have the most positive impact possible on nature and people” (TAKATA Experience, Social Perception, 2019, para6).

### 1.1.2. The destination – Mahahual

Mahahual is a village in the state of Quintana Roo in southern Mexico. It lies embedded between the Caribbean Sea and a mangrove forest and is, as part of the tourist region Costa Maya, surrounded by a diverse offer of tourist attractions, such as beaches and the Mesoamerican Reef, after the Great Barrier Reef the second largest reef of the world. Additionally, the Mayan ruins of Chacchoben and the lake of seven colours in Bacalar are just a one-hour drive away.

Yet, the closest community is Xcalak, located 60km away from Mahahual, while the main highway (Cancún-Chetumal) is 55km away (see Fig.1). Because of its remote location the village grew slowly from the time that the first settlers came in 1909 until 2000, when the village was home to only 149 inhabitants (Daltabuit Godás, Cisneros Reyes, & Valenzuela Valdivieso, 2016). However, the construction of a cruise ship dock during the same year (Costa Maya Port) has led to a rise in tourism numbers until category 5 *Hurricane Dean* hit the village in 2007, destroying the town vastly and leading to the shut-down of the port for over a year

(Clark, 2009). Subsequently, the village was restored and a coastal boulevard, the *malecón*, was built (Redclift, Navarette, & Pelling, 2011). The transformation of the village led to a renewed growth of tourist and inhabitant numbers (Garcia, 2015). While in 2000 only 196 people lived in Mahahual, in 2005 the village already had a population of 411 people, showing an annual increase of 16% (Castillo, Velázquez, Iturbe, & López, 2008). Today Mahahual has a population of between 1500 and 2000 people, which varies greatly between high and low season (Duron, personal communication, 2019). This population increase is directly linked to the operation of the port and raising tourism numbers.



Figure 1 Location of Mahahual within Mexico ("Everything Playa del Carmen," n.d.)

Today Mahahual consists of three different districts (Fig. 2);

- **Mahahual Downton**

The centre of Mahahual, or Mahahual downtown, consists of a few streets expanding along the coast, and the *malecón*, a two-kilometre-long beach promenade and main street of the village, accommodating most of the tourist offers, such as hotels, restaurant, shops and dive centres. Additionally, the secondary school is in this part of Mahahual and the so-called *Domo*, a dome which can be used for events or markets.

- **Kilometro 55**

Located the furthest away from the seashore, this is the place where most underprivileged locals of Mahahual live. While there are the primary school and kindergarten, grocery stores, restaurants and a hotel in this part, some houses here are still

built of wood and most of the streets are dirt roads. The houses do not have access to black water treatment from *the Potable Water and Sewerage Commission* (Spanish: *Comisión de Agua Potable y Alcantarillado*), and the majority of houses do not have septic tanks, so that black water directly flows into the mangrove forest.

- **New Mahahual/ Casitas**

The development of this area started in 2000 together with the construction of the Costa Maya Port. The area is located right behind the port, where modern, concrete streets and houses were built. The first few rows, consisting of small “box-houses”, were intended for the employees of the port, while the rest of the houses were more luxurious and intended for the employees of international companies. Today the area is mostly inhabited by expats and better gaining locals.



Figure 2 Map of Mahahual's Districts and Port

Since the expansion of the port for the season 2018/19 Costa Maya Port can accommodate up to four cruise ships at once with a total capacity of 15,000 passengers (Cruise Mapper, n.d.). Once a fishing village, Mahahual is now a rapidly developing tourist centre and the second most important cruise destination in the Mexico after Cozumel (Cruise Mapper, n.d.), which due to its small size can be observed considerably.

## 1.2. Reason for the Research

In this chapter recent trends and developments concerning socio-cultural impacts of tourism in general and more specifically cruise tourism are described, which underline the importance of this research. This is followed by an in-depth problem analysis.

### 1.2.1. Relevant Trends & Developments

#### **Tourism – Blessing or Curse?**

Tourism is a service industry in which the customer is required to visit the place of production to consume the product. "This means that tourism will bring with it the physical presence of tourists and this will stimulate changes in the behaviour and dress style of the host population" (Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert, & Wanhill, 2013, p. 204). Ritchie & Crouch (2003) agree, that the presence of tourists has, in most cases, an impact on the host society and culture. These impacts can be beneficial and detrimental for the host population.

Impacts of tourism on the destination's population can be classified as direct, indirect and induced in nature and "the diversity of productive sectors associated directly or indirectly with the tourism industry is such that these types of socio-cultural impacts will probably be more widely spread as a result of tourism development than any other industry" (Fletcher et al., 2013, p. 205).

According to Archer, Cooper, & Ruhanen (2005) some of the socio-cultural impacts caused by tourism include discrepancies in behaviours and values of locals and tourists, exploitation of local culture and customs, gentrification and disruption of the local population. Staged authenticity and adaption of local traditions to the entertainment needs of tourists are some additional results of tourism. The latter leads to "a constant tension in countries wishing to be part of the global tourism movement but also to retain their cultural authenticity" (Archer et al., 2005, p.89).

Another issue that has been observed is the so-called demonstration effect, the confrontation of affluent tourists with deprived host communities. On one hand, locals might be motivated to work harder and achieve the same living standards as their touristic counterparts. On the other hand, residents often develop jealousy, and failure in achieving the same prosperity might become frustrating and unsatisfying. For this reason, some researchers have changed the term into 'confrontation effect'. In extreme cases this situation can even lead to crime, prostitution, gambling and drug traffic (Archer et al., 2005).

However, tourism can also be a main driver for the protection or even revival of local customs and arts. One example listed by Archer et al. (2005) is the indigenous Maya population that got into contact with Archaeologists to learn more about their cultural heritage in order to present these to tourists. For tourism to lead to socio-economic development and contribute to the safe-keeping of cultural heritage, the right management of the sector is essential and sustainable and responsible practices are key elements.

According to Zhu, Liu, Wei, Li, & Wang (2017), sustainable tourism is only possible if the residents are actively involved in the development process. Ap (1992) argues that

"[i]rrespective of how tourism is introduced and developed, residents are important players who can influence the success or failure of the local tourism industry" (p.668). Brida and Zapata (2010) agree that tourists' satisfaction in a destination is influenced by the behaviour of people that they get into contact with. However, if locals feel exploited their reaction can lead from poor service, to rudeness up to criminality (Ap, 1992).

Nevertheless, social sustainability is not only beneficial for the host population, but also for the preservation of the touristic attractiveness of a destination. According to Ritchie and Crouch (2003) "... the cultural and social characteristics of a region are second only to physiography (natural beauty and climate) in determining the attractiveness of a destination" (p.115).

### **The cruise ship industry**

The cruise ship industry is a rapidly evolving sector of tourism and is, and has at times developed almost twice as fast as the tourism industry as a whole (Brida & Zapata, 2010). Between 1970 and 2010 the sector has grown by an impressive 1000 percent (Becker, 2013) and also in the last decade it has shown an uninterrupted progress, as can be seen in Figure 3 (The Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association, 2018). Mexico is no exception: According to Statista cruise passenger arrivals increased from 4.35 million in 2014 to 7,28 million in 2017, an impressive raise of 67% (retrieved February, 11, 2019 from <https://www.statista.com>).

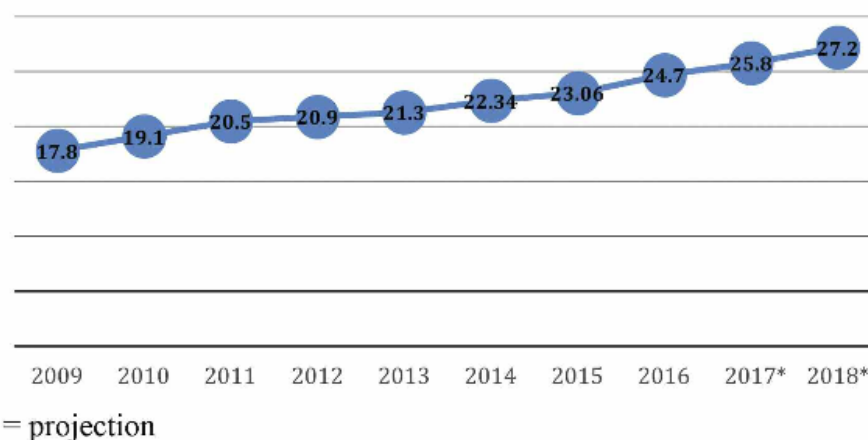


Figure 3 Global Ocean Cruise Passengers (Millions) (The Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association, 2018)

Looking at revenue, it was estimated in 2015 that 39.6 billion US Dollars are generated annually by cruise tourism (retrieved February, 11, 2019 from <https://www.statista.com>). However, in Mexico the amount of money spent per passenger within the country has declined yearly since 2010, with an average of 59.9 US dollars spent in 2016 compared to 84.7 US Dollars in 2012. This represents a decline of almost 30% percent within four years (Gore, 2017).

According to Najafipour, Marzi, & Foroozanfar (2014) a cruise is defined as "to make a trip by sea in a liner for pleasure, usually calling at a number of ports" (p. 213). The cruise starts and ends in a *homeport* and various so-called *ports of call* can be visited by the passengers throughout the trip. The vessel usually combines the elements of transportation, accommodation and entertainment and is therefore like an "all-include"-resort moving on water (Brida &



Zapata, 2010) or according to Klein (2011): "The ship is increasingly the destination" (p.113). Accommodation and resort facilities usually cover approximately 75% of the boat, leaving only the rest to its operation (Brida & Zapata, 2010).

This mixture of services leads to the sector having, like the tourism industry in general, direct, indirect and induced impacts, but unfortunately, the potential of the segment is barely used to benefit the host communities. The distribution of revenue of the cruise industry is unequal; most ports only receive a small fee of the ships and few fair job and business opportunities are provided to locals and cruise ships charge up to 90% of commission for excursions booked by their passengers (Klein, 2013).

Most of the socio-cultural impacts are in line with tourism impacts, others, which are more specific for the cruise industry are listed in the Critical Literature Review.

Visitors spend usually less than 10 hours in a port of call before they go back on the ship to make use of eating, sleeping and entertainment facilities there. Often, cruise liners discourage their guests to go ashore (Klein, 2011) and "it is well known that a substantial minority of cruise ship passengers do not even disembark in the different port destination that are visited" (Brida & Zapata, 2010, p. 215). For this reason, "...the cruise tourism product provides tourists with an impoverished experience and leaves local communities disempowered and underpaid" (Najafipour, Marzi, & Foroozanfar, 2014, p. 220).

How disempowered locals will eventually react can currently be observed in various destinations. Barcelona and Venice both have a problem with cruise tourism, leading locals to protest on the street and 'welcome' tourist with hate signs (Mečiarová, 2017). In 2016, 12 pirate boats blocked the way for cruise ships to enter Venice while crowds on land shouted, "no to big boats" (Hu, 2016). The two destinations are economically dependent on tourism but reached a stage where this is not reason enough to support tourism.

Possibly, these are some of the reasons why cruise companies started efforts to compensate for their negative impacts. Examples are funds and in-kind donations, partnerships with existing NGOs, volunteering and disaster relief. A comprehensive overview can be found in Appendix I.

This section reflects the importance of monitoring the development of the cruise sector in Mahahual and finding possible solutions for improvement.

### 1.2.2. Problem Analysis

The examples listed above clearly show that tourism can cause disturbance for the local community and destruction of local culture. Especially the cruise sector, due to its nature, size and growth rate plays an important factor in the sustainability of a destination. Since the application of all three sustainability aspects would be too extensive for this research, this investigation focusses on socio-cultural sustainability.

In Mahahual as well, cruise tourism has impacts which are not only positive, as various researchers have shown (Malbos, 2018; Armitage, et al., 2017; Arce-Ibarra, Carlos Seijo,

Headley, Infante-Ramírez, & Villanueva-Poot, 2017; López Santillán, 2012; Redclift et al., 2011).

Already during the early stage of the development of Mahahual in 1990, locals have sold their properties to international investors and moved further inland (Arce-Ibarra et al., 2017). This distribution of properties can still be observed today, with less affluent residents moving to kilometro 55, because they cannot afford to live in the centre or Casitas. Then, after the hurricane Dean, the government took advantage of the situation and “defeat[ed] the already weak local resistance to mass tourism” (Redclift et al., 2011, p. 144) to build the *malecón* and fit the needs of mass tourism.

Additionally, Mahahual’s privately owned Costa Maya Port is managed by entrepreneurs from Cozumel, Chetumal and the peninsula of Yucatan and “the dollars spent by the thousands of cruise passengers who take a stroll in Mahahual every year is tightly controlled by these businessmen, and the benefits for the community are extremely meagre” (Redclift et al., 2011, p. 143), also leading to intense competition between the locals of the village. Fair benefits from cruise tourism are currently not given, which is an issue already and can worsen in the future.

Being a provider of tourism products, while actively caring for the environment and social development, TAKATA Experience needs to find a solution on how sustainability and tourism can be combined. Up to this stage, TAKATA has received researchers and interns of environmental or anthropological backgrounds. However, cruise tourism forms a vital part of Mahahual’s economy and the only way to sustainably develop the village is by considering the cruise industry, especially after the expansion of the cruise port which impacts the village considerably due to its small size. Being the first professional from the tourism industry, the researcher therefore laid the cornerstone for actively considering (cruise) tourism in the sustainable development of Mahahual, so that environmental, economic and social aspects can be combined in the most beneficial way. The work in this field will be continued by other tourism students which join TAKATA during the second half of the year.

The research leads to recommendations to TAKATA Experience, the Tourism Secretary of Quintana Roo (SEDETUR) and the Costa Maya Port on actions to improve the impacts caused by cruise tourism on Mahahual’s residents. For TAKATA multiple ideas for (research) projects are provided, which can be implemented by the next tourism students. The results will also be published via TAKATA’s website as censored version. Additionally, the results forwarded by the researcher to the port and SEDETUR, the latter showed a particular interest in receiving them.

### 1.3. Objective

Based on this information, the following objective was formulated:

**The objective is to gain insight into the perceived balance of positive and negative impacts of cruise tourism by Mahahual's residents, in order to provide the tourism stakeholders of Mahahual with recommendations on how to improve the socio-cultural impacts of cruise tourism on the host population.**

#### 1.3.1. Delineation

Perceived balance of positive and negative impacts: This is influenced by resident's characteristics, destination's characteristics and the socio-cultural impacts of tourism, which will be explained further in the CLR and research questions.

Tourism Stakeholders of Mahahual: For the purpose for this research this include TAKATA Experience, SEDETUR of Quintana Roo and Costa Maya Port.

Socio-cultural impacts: These include any impacts of tourism on society and culture in Mahahual which finally influence the Quality of Life (QoL) of Mahahual's residents. Its indicators are explained in detail in the CLR.

While the focus of this research lies on socio-cultural impacts, economic or environmental impacts may be considered if they directly influence the QoL of an individual. This is also explained further in the CLR.

#### 1.3.2. Practical Relevance

For TAKATA, the involvement with all the stakeholders from Mahahual and the cooperation to jointly work on the sustainable development of the town is of utmost importance, not only from a social perspective, but also because nature and local culture form the assets that their products are built upon. Mahahual's inhabitants will greatly impact the stay of TAKATA's customers, who are not only in the destination for diving but also to get to know the Mexican culture and engage with the local population. This will influence the satisfaction of TAKATA's customers and consequently the profit of the company is earning the employment of their staff.

#### 1.3.3. Social Relevance

The goal of this research is obtaining the opinions of Mahahual's residents and ultimately the enhancement of their QoL. The community does not only benefit from the outcomes of the research, but the research process itself can also contribute to a feeling of being valued and taken seriously because their concerns are at the core of this research.



Additionally, welcoming locals can positively influence atmosphere, quality of service and experience of tourists wherefore the outcomes of this research are also relevant for the tourist's satisfaction.

For port and cruise companies it can create a rewarding feeling to give back and contribute to the development of the local community, if they make use of the recommendations.

## 2. Critical Literature Review

In this chapter relevant literature for gaining an understanding of socio-cultural impacts is collected and critically revised. The chapter starts with a general definition of socio-cultural sustainability, followed by its implication for the tourism sector. Subsequently, an impression of theories and models which have been used for socio-cultural tourism impact research is given and finally an overview provided of which factors will be taken into consideration for this study.

### 2.1. Towards a definition of socio-cultural sustainability

In the 'our common future report' (1987) the United Nations Commission on the Environment and Development (UNCED) defines sustainable development, as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p.45), commonly known today as Brundtland definition. To achieve this, it is necessary to combine ecological, economic and social sustainability. The originator of the term Triple Bottom Line, John Elkington, observed that "we need to bear in mind that it is not possible to achieve a desired level of ecological or social or economic sustainability (separately), without achieving at least a basic level of all three forms of sustainability, simultaneously" (Elkington as cited in McKenzie, 2004, p.6).

As the focus of this research lies on the socio-cultural impact of tourism, this section of sustainability should be explained further.

According to the Western Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS) "Socially sustainable communities are equitable, diverse, connected and democratic and provide a good quality of life" (cited in McKenzie, 2004, p.18).

The principles included in this definition are described as following;

- 1. Equity:** the same opportunities and outcomes apply for all community members, especially the poorest and most vulnerable
- 2. Diversity:** diversity of the community is stimulated
- 3. Interconnectedness:** Systems and structures are provided which connect the community internally and externally
- 4. Quality of life (QoL):** basic needs are met, and a good quality of life is promoted for all community members
- 5. Democracy and governance:** democratic processes and open and accountable governance structures are implemented

These principles are incorporated to a certain extend into the research questions and will be referred back to in conclusion and recommendation.

While this investigation is focused on socio-cultural sustainability, the above outlined theory reflects the difficulties in separating socio-cultural sustainability from its ecological and economical counterpart. Hence, for the purpose of this research, some ecological and economic factors were considered if they directly influenced the QoL of locals.

The implications of social sustainability for the tourism sector are described in the following section.

## 2.2. Socio-Cultural Sustainability in (Cruise) Tourism

Since sociological and cultural implications coincide to a large extent or influence each other, they are often combined into socio-cultural effects (Fletcher et al., 2013), a definition that will also be applied for the purpose of this research.

The definition adapted from the American Heritage Dictionary defines culture as "...the totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions and all other products of human work and thought characteristic of a community or population" (in Ritchie & Crouch, 2003, p. 116).

The health of social and cultural systems affects the QoL of residents. It exceeds the economic security of a destination and residents might even exchange QoL goals for economic considerations (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

In chapter 1.2.1. socio-cultural impacts of tourism have been described. The same issues apply for the cruise sector. However, through the masses of tourists that arrive simultaneously, some issues are especially present. Klein (2011) summarizes the most important problems into three categories; (1) *people pollution*, (2) *homogenisation of the port experience* and (3) *social authenticity*. People pollution refers to overcrowding caused by arrivals of cruise ships, leading to disruption of the residents' lives and increased living costs (Klein, 2011; Brida & Zapata, 2010). Homogenisation of the port experience is caused by shops within the port, usually owned by large foreign corporations, which only sell a limited number of different items (e.g. souvenir and diamond shops). Often the same shops are present within different ports at different destinations. The socio-cultural authenticity is affected because of visitor crowds at cultural sights, negatively affecting the experience for locals, over-night tourists, and cruise passengers themselves.

All of the above findings built the framework for understanding the topic of socio-cultural sustainability and cruise tourism and the impacts listed by Klein are directly integrated into the research questions.

## 2.3. Researching socio-cultural impacts of tourism

There are several factors influencing residents' perception of tourism, ranging from the effects of tourism on, and characteristics of the destination and population over the types of tourists, to the nature of the host-guest interaction. This makes the subject difficult to research and it has been observed that "...the socio-cultural factors influenced by tourism activity are, in general, the most difficult ones to measure and quantify (because they) are often highly qualitative and subjective in nature" in comparison to environmental and economic indicators (Fletcher et al, 2013, p. 216). A difficulty that has also been observed by Asmelash and Kumar (2019) and McKenzie (2004). For this reason, an intensive critical literature review follows, to assure a good theoretical base for the research.

### 2.3.1. Extrinsic and Intrinsic Factors of socio-cultural Sustainability

Various researchers have identified variables that influence residents' attitudes towards tourists. Some elements and theories appear in the work of many researchers, while others are only identified by a few. Two important areas influencing residents' attitudes towards tourism are residents' and destination characteristics.

### Residents' characteristics

These include: geographical proximity to activity concentrations, community attachment, community concern, state of the economy, socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics or the resident's resources enabling them to benefit from tourism, participation in decision making/ empowerment, level of contact with tourists, degree of involvement in tourism/ dependency on the tourist industry, residents with distinct opinion groups, towards their own community, period of residence, institutional trust, ability and willingness to adapt to change, resident's general values, ecocentric attitudes, shared usage of residents' facilities with tourists and socio-cultural differences between hosts and guests.

### Destination characteristics

These comprise stage of tourism development, tourist/ resident ratio, types of tourists, seasonality, speed of development and degree of tourism concentration (Brida et al., 2011).

Table 1 shows, which characteristics have been identified by which researchers.

	CHARACTERISTIC	SOURCE
INTERNAL	Geographical proximity to activity concentrations	Brida, Riaño, & Aguirre Zapata( 2011), Del Chiappa, Lorenzo-Romero, & Gallarza (2018), Faulkner, & Tideswel (1997), Kayat, 2002)
	Community attachment	Brida et al. (2011)
	Community concern	Gursoy, Jurovski, & Uysal (2002)
	State of Economy	Brida et al., 2011; Gursoy et al., 2002; Kayat, 2002
	Socio-demographic & socio-economic characteristics/ resident's resources	Brida et al., (2011), Faulkner & Tideswell (1997), Nunkoo (2016), Kayat( 2002), Fletcher et al. (2013)
	Participation in decision making/ empowerment	(Kayat, 2002; Ap, 1992),
	Level of contact with tourists	Brida et al., 2011; Del Chiappa et al., 2018
	Degree of involvement in tourism/ dependency on the tourist industry	Shafaei & Mohamed (2015), Brida et al. (2011),Faulkner & Tideswell (1997), Nunkoo (2016), Kayat (2002)
	Residents with distinct opinion groups	Brida et al. (2011)
	Attitudes towards their own community	Nunkoo (2016)
	Period of residence	Faulkner & Tideswell (1997)
	Institutional trust	Nunkoo (2016)
	Ability and willingness to adapt to change	Kayat (2002)
	Resident's general values	Kayat (2002)
	Ecocentric attitudes	Gursoy et al. (2001)
	Shared usage of residents' facilities with tourists	Gursoy et al. (2011)
Socio-cultural differences between hosts and guests	Fletcher et al. (2013)	
EXTERNAL	Stage of tourism development	Shafaei & Mohamed (2015), Faulkner & Tideswell (1997) Fletcher et al. (2013)
	Tourist/ resident ratio	Faulkner & Tideswell (1997)
	Types of tourists	Faulkner & Tideswell (1997), Fletcher et al. (2013)
	Seasonality	Faulkner & Tideswell (1997)
	Speed of development	Fletcher et al. (2013)
	Degree of tourism concentration	Brida et al. (2011)

Table 1 Internal and external characteristics of socio-cultural tourism impacts with sources

In framework, these elements are divided into *extrinsic dimension*, corresponding to destination characteristics, and *intrinsic dimension* corresponding to residents' characteristics (Fig. 3). Elements of the *extrinsic dimension* include stage of tourism development, tourist/resident ratio, type of tourist and seasonality, while the *intrinsic dimension* entails involvement, socio-economic characteristics, residential proximity and period of residence. It is also indicated in the model, that the extrinsic factors are underpinned by Butler's Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC) and Doxey's Irritation Index (Irridex), while the intrinsic factors can be derived from the Social Exchange Theory (SET).

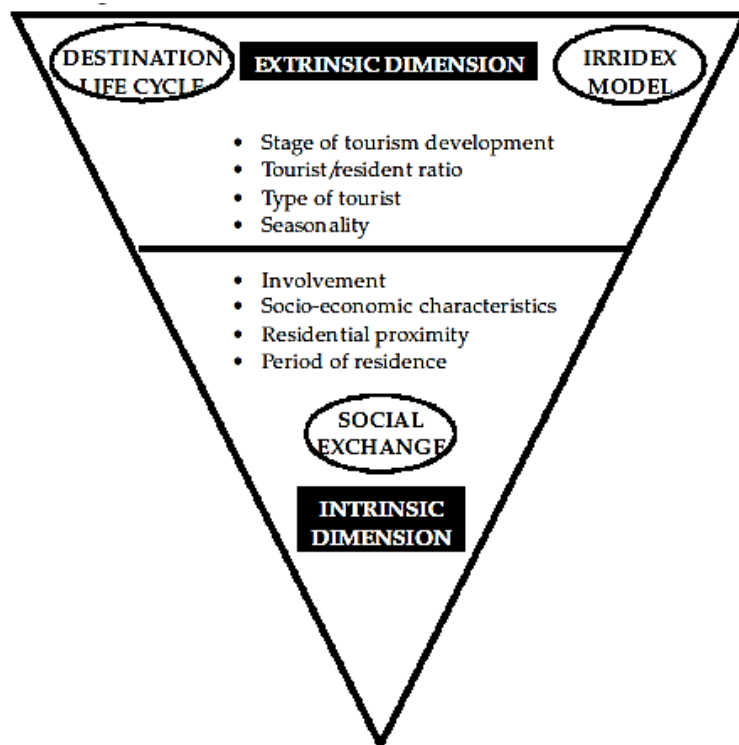


Figure 4 Framework for analysing the social impacts of tourism (Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997)

### 2.3.2. Assessing extrinsic factors

TALC, Irridex and SET have also been applied by numerous other scholars researching the socio-cultural impacts of tourism (e.g. Shafaei, Fatemeh; Mohamed, 2015; Del Chiappa et al., 2018; Gerritsma & Vork, 2017; Brida et al., 2011). Fletcher et al. (2013) add Cohen's as well as Plog's typologies of tourists to the list. Plog will not be considered here.

**Cohen's typology of tourists** (Fig.4) is a model for categorizing different types of tourists based on the extent of novelty and non-institutionalised tourism they are seeking. They range from *organised mass tourist*, looking for familiarity and purchasing ready-made packages to *individual mass tourist*, which is more open towards new destinations and has a more personal choice but uses organized tours. This is preceded by the *explorer*, who searches for new experiences and self-organises trips with comfortable and reliable elements. Lastly, the *drifter* is looking for novelty and immerses him/herself in the culture without fixed planning (Fletcher et al., 2013).

<p><b>The organised Mass Tourist</b> Low on adventurousness, try to maintain “environmental bubble”; purchase ready-made package tour; little contact with local culture or people</p>	<p><b>Institutionalised tourism</b> Dealt with routinely by the tourism industry</p>	<p>Familiarity</p> <p>Novelty</p>
<p><b>The individual mass tourist</b> Similar to the above but more flexibility and scope for personal choice is built in; organised tour; “environmental bubble” shields him from the real experience of the destination</p>		
<p><b>The explorer</b> The trip is organised independently; looking to get off the beaten track; comfortable accommodation, reliable transport, “environmental bubble” is abandoned on occasion</p>	<p><b>Non-institutionalised tourism</b> Individual travel, shunning contact with the tourism industry except where absolutely necessary</p>	
<p><b>The drifter</b> No connection to the tourism industry; get as far from home and familiarity; no fixed itinerary; lives with locals, immerse in their culture.</p>		

Figure 5 Cohen’s typology of tourists (StudyBlue, n.d.)

**Doxey’s Irritation Index** (Fig.5) in comparison, relates the number of tourists visiting a destination to hosts’ attitudes towards tourism. The stages range from initial positive *Euphoria*, where tourists are welcomed with open arms, over *Apathy*, where tourists are seen as a source of income and contact between hosts and guests is primarily of commercial nature, to *Annoyance*, where locals need additional facilities to cope with the number of tourists until reaching the last stage of *Antagonism*, where hosts feel exploited by tourism and openly show their antagonism towards tourists (Fletcher et al, 2013).

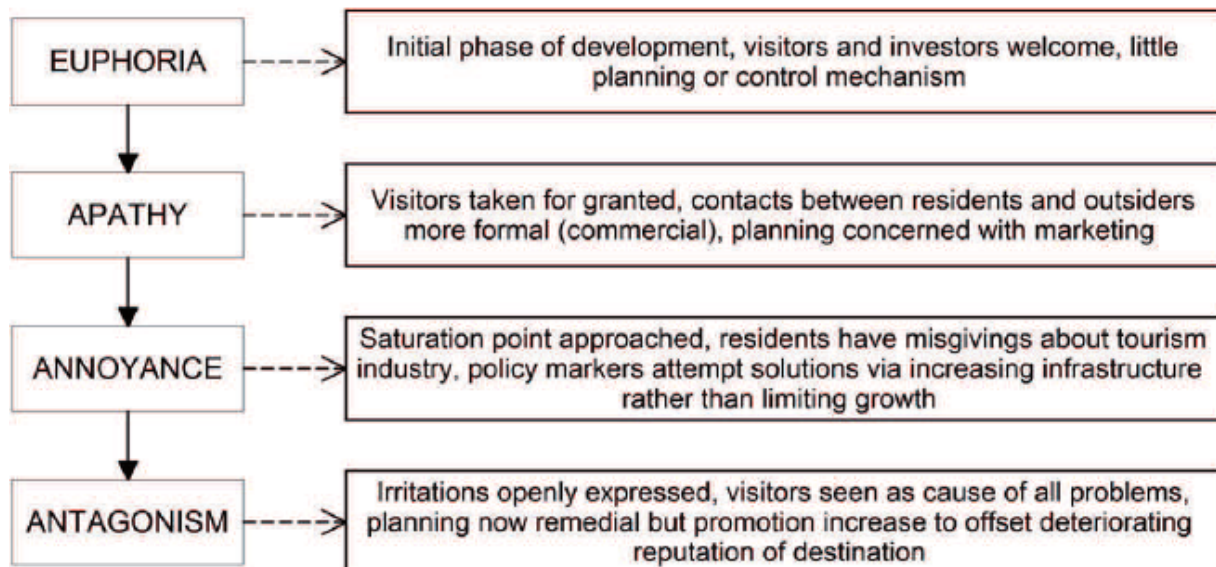


Figure 6 Doxey’s Irritation Index (Apollo, 2015)

**Butler’s Destination Life Cycle** (Fig.6) is derived from the Product Life Cycle model and suggests that, depending on number of tourist arrivals and commercialisation of the tourism

offer, a destination moves through various stages. During the *exploration stage* only few tourists (Cohen's *drifter*) visit a destination without specific facilities for visitors. Contact between locals and tourists is high and tourism has little impact on local economy and social life. With increased numbers of tourists, locals will start to provide facilities geared (exclusively) towards visitors, reaching the second stage, *involvement*. A low level of travel arrangement organization starts, catering for Cohen's *explorer*. During the *development stage*, tourism advertising becomes heavier while local's inclusion in the tourism development declines significantly. Modern facilities of external organizations replace small-scale local amenities and the physical look of the area will be adapted, which might be disapproved by the local population. During high season tourist numbers may outweigh locals and proper management from regional and national governments is necessary. At this stage destination attracts *individual mass tourists*. During the *consolidation stage* visitor numbers are still growing, however the rate of increase will decline. Tourist numbers are higher than residents and local economy will greatly depend on tourism. At this stage locals might feel dissatisfied with tourism, especially those not involved in the industry. At this stage, *organized mass tourists* visit the destination. This is followed by the *stagnation stage*, where the destination capacity has been reached or exceeded, leading to environmental, social and economic issues. The destination is no longer fashionable and will have problems to achieve a high occupancy. Depending on the management approach the latter can be proceeded by (immediate) decline, stabilization, reduced growth or rejuvenation. However, as every theory, TALC is conceptualized and not every destination has to go through all these stages with the given characteristics (Butler, 1980).

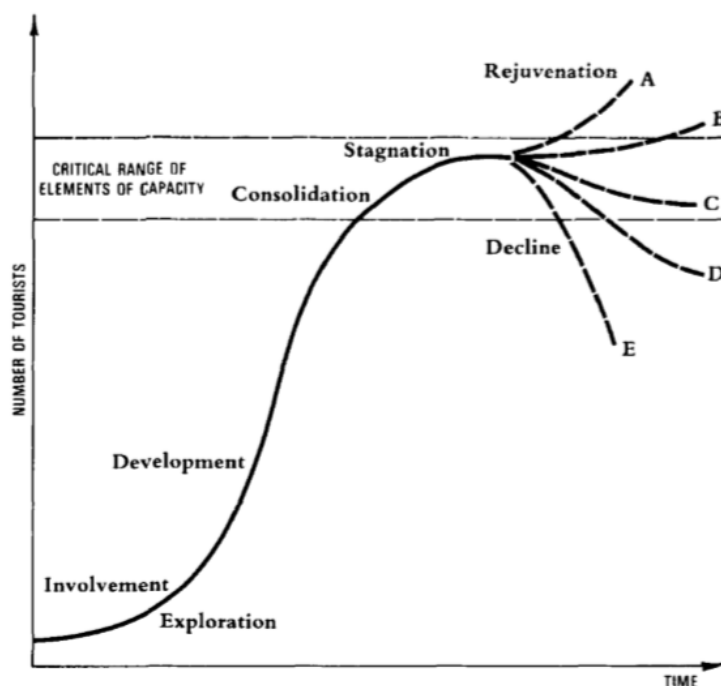


Figure 7 Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (Butler, 1980)

Fletcher et al. (2013) developed a graph reflecting the cohesion of the four theories (including Cohen) by combining them into one overlapping two-dimensional frame (Fig.7). They underline that the developed framework is static and does therefore not adequately consider



the dynamics of the process. As Cohen is not considered here, the upper line reading allocentric, midcentric, and psychocentric can be disregarded.

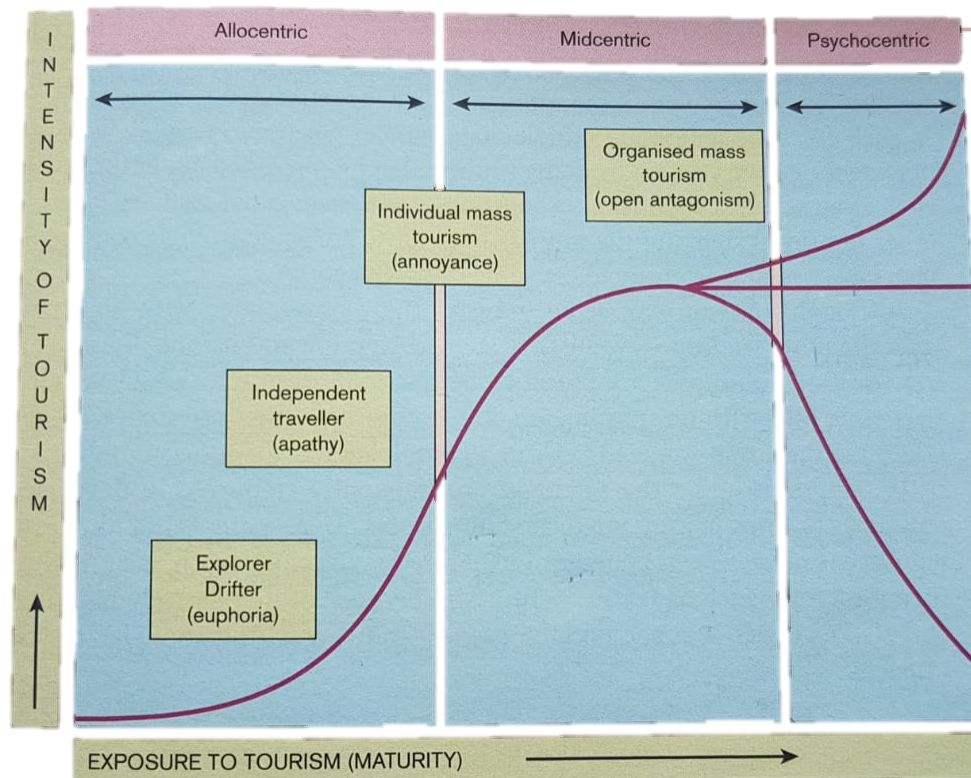


Figure 8: Approaches for study the socio-cultural impacts of tourism (Source: Fletcher et al., 2013)

### 2.3.3. Assessing intrinsic factors

It has been criticised that Irridex and TALC assume a homogeneity within a community and its relation to tourism, even though residents' attitudes can vary depending on various inherent factors differing for every individual (Shafaei & Mohamed, 2015, Faulkner & Tideswell; 1997). The literature therefore also considers the intrinsic factors, which are often analysed by means of Social Exchange Theory (SET).

SET is a sociological theory that seeks to explain which factors influence the agreement or disagreement of a host population with tourism. Although not taken into consideration by Fletcher et al. (2013), SET was incorporated by many other researchers in their studies of socio-cultural tourism impacts of (e.g. Ap, 1992; Kayat, 2002; Nunkoo, 2016; Shafaei, Fatemeh; Mohamed, 2015; Ward & Berno, 2011).

SET is used to describe the exchange of resources between two individuals or two groups. Resources can be materialistic, social or psychological, ranging from property and money to skills, competence and knowledge in a tourism context (Ap, 1992; Kayat, 2002). Both residents and tourists evaluate the success of an exchange based on a cost-benefit analysis. The perceived benefits should outweigh the costs if the social exchange is to be assessed as fruitful (Ap, 1992). Depending on how locals value the economic, socio-cultural and environmental



elements of the exchange with tourists, they will favour or oppose tourism development (Nunkoo, 2016; Gursoy et al., 2002).

Power and trust are other aspects which will influence the perceived success of a social exchange, although scholars have different opinions how the element of power affects the evaluation. Ap (1992) and Nunkoo (2016), on one hand, argue that powerless communities tend to rate a social exchange more negatively because of the imbalance of benefits and costs. They define power as the ability to take advantage of tourism and therefore ownership of relevant resources. Blau, on the other hand, suggests that residents with lower power will have more positive attitudes towards tourism. However, he defines power as the residents' dependency of tourism (in Kayat, 2002). Kayat, conducting a study in Malaysia to analyse the correctness of the two propositions, concluded that Ap's proposition did not apply in his study, while Blau's proposition was fully applicable. Gursoy et al. (2002) and Andereck & Nyaupan's (2011) agree that the state of the local economy and therefore the community's dependency on tourism, influences the local's perception positively.

Kayat (2002) concludes that the most effective option to measure attitudes of the local population towards tourism is a combination of SET and the element of power distribution. According to Nunkoo (2016) it is also important that residents have trust into the government, which he also referred to as 'institutional trust'. This is in line with TALC, which also incorporates the extend of locals' inclusion in tourism development. The elements of power, defined as economic dependency, and institutional trust have both been judged as important and were applied to assess the socio-cultural sustainability in Mahahual.

#### 2.3.4. Combining the elements

The work of Deery, Jago, & Fredline (2012) assessing different studies on the social impacts of tourism, provides an overview of the above-mentioned elements. Figure 8 shows a summary of the most important variables influencing the socio-economic impact of tourism they found based on the work of several other scholars.

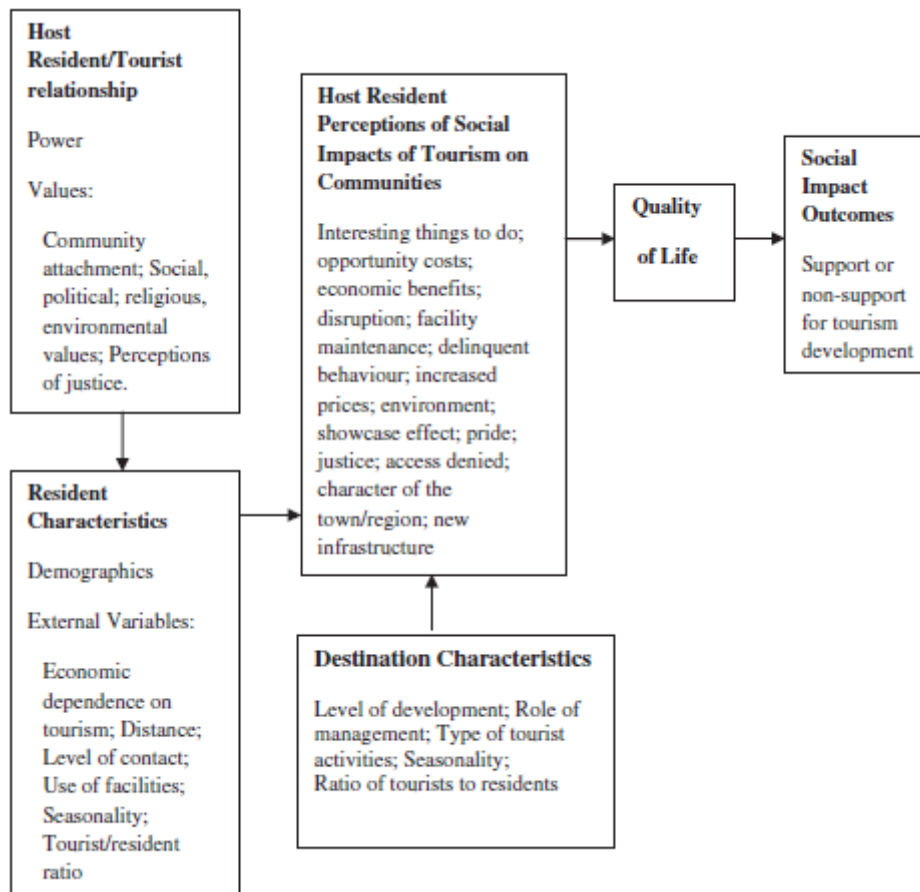


Figure 9: Key variables for researching the socio-cultural impacts of tourism (Deery et al., 2012)

The **host resident/relationship** refers to elements influencing the satisfaction of locals with their tourist encounters. This is in line with the social exchange theory as also applied by Ap (1992), Kayat (2002) Nunkoo (2016). The variable of power as discussed above is also incorporated in their model. Additionally, they list a number of residents' values. However, the element of trust, as argued by Nunkoo (2016) as one essential part of the social-exchange theory is not indicated in their summary of key variables.

Another important topic are the **characteristics of residents** including demographics, as well as external variables such as economic dependence on tourism, level of contact with tourists, distance of tourism activity, use of residents' facilities by tourists, seasonality, tourist/resident ratio and the distance from tourism activity. This set of resident's characteristics are largely in line with Faulker and Tideswill (1997) and Del Chiappa et al. (2018), even though Faulkner and Tideswill and Gursoy et al. (2002) also included the period of residence as a crucial factor.

The third field of influence are the **destination characteristics**, where level of development, role of management, type of tourist activities, seasonality and ratio of tourists to residents are considered.

The **key social impacts** according to the study of Deery's et al. (2012) are interesting things to do, opportunity costs, economic benefits, disruption, facility maintenance, delinquent behaviour, increased prices, environment showcase effect, pride, justice, denied access,

character of the town/region and new infrastructure. All of these elements will ultimately influence the quality of life of residents and their attitude towards tourism development.

An explanation of each of the variables of the model of Deery et al. (2012) and corresponding indicators can be found in the table in Appendix II.

Comparing this model to Faulkner and Tideswell (1997), host resident/ tourist relationship and resident characteristics can be considered as intrinsic factors, assessed by the aid of the social exchange theory, while destination characteristics reflect the extrinsic dimension which can be analysed with the TALC and Irridex.

The summary of Deery et al. (2012) is very detailed and includes previous work of various researchers and is in line with other scholars (e.g., Fletcher et al., 2013, Nunkoo, 2016; Kayat, 2002, Gursoy et al., 2002; Zhu et al, 2017; Del Chiappa et al., 2018). However, some elements mentioned by other researchers are not considered in this model. These include for instance institutional trust (Nunkoo, 2016), socio-cultural differences between hosts and guests, speed of development and type of tourists (Fletcher et al., 2013), ecocentric attitude (Gursoy et al., 2002) and period of residence, (Tideswell & Faulkner, 1992). Nevertheless, if these small elements are added the summary of Deery et al. seems to be fairly complete and in agreement with a lot of existing literature on socio-cultural sustainability in tourism.

Although Deery et al. (2012) suggest another research approach which is built upon established organisational culture research, this still seems to be in an experimental stage and has not been applied by other scholars after 2012 (e.g. Del Chiappa et al., 2018; Fletcher et al., 2013; Shafaei & Mohamed, 2015). It was therefore assessed as inappropriate for this study.

### 2.3.5. Researching socio-cultural Sustainability in a Cruise Tourism Context

In research on socio-cultural impacts of cruise tourism, some scholars have not employed any of the above mentioned models and rather utilized indicators (e.g. Brida & Zapata Aguirre, 2009; MacNeill & Wozniak, 2018), while others have indeed applied SET (Brida et al., 2011; Del Chiappa et al., 2018); Irridex (Brida et al., 2011) and Faulkner & Tideswell classification of intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Del Chiappa et al, 2018).

Based on a revision of related literature, del Chiappa et al. (2018) argue that "...residents' perceptions of the impacts of cruise tourism predominantly vary across persons rather than across places" (p.172). However, after conducting their own field research, they underline that "studies applying the community-based tourism approach in the context of cruise activity are highly site-specific and hardly generalizable" (Del Chiappa et al., 2018, p. 170) and argue that extrinsic factors might be of big influence in the cruise tourism sector and should therefore be considered in further studies of the field.

To summarize the findings of above, scholars seem to agree that due to the heterogenic nature of communities, the assessment of socio-cultural tourism impacts, also in a cruise tourism context, can only be made through the analysis of both, residents' and destination characteristics. Also, for the purpose of this research it has been assessed as necessary to have this insight into the combination of intrinsic as well as extrinsic variables. However, since the scope of this research does not allow to assess each item listed by Deery et al. (2012),

another less extensive framework has been created based on their model but adapted to a cruise tourism context, which is displayed below.

## 2.4. The final Research Model for this Study

Based on the framework created by Deery et al. (2012) a new model was created for the purpose of this study, but with various changes which according to the researcher seem more appropriate or because the elements are not in scope of this research, explained below (Fig.9).

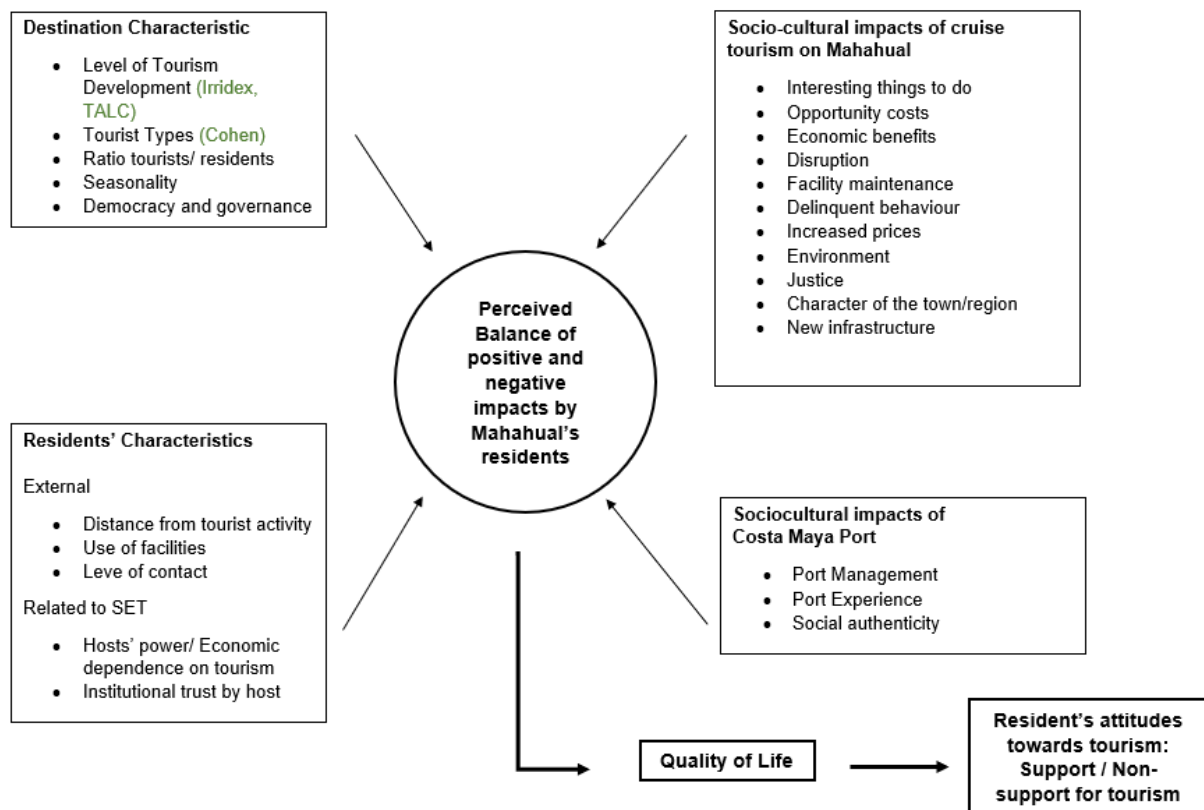


Figure 10 Key variables for researching the socio-cultural impacts of cruise tourism in Mahahual

In the centre of the newly developed model is the *perceived balance of negative and positive impacts of tourism* by residents, as indicated by Del Chiappa et al. (2018), because all other elements influence this perception of the host population. Consequently, arrows have been added to *residents' characteristics* and the observed socio-cultural impacts of tourism pointing towards the perceived balance of positive and negative impacts. The two separate sections *Host Resident/Tourist Relationship* and *Host Characteristics* have been combined into one section, because they all describe residents' characteristics which ultimately influence the host/tourist relationship. The models used to assess some of the indicators are noted in green. Additionally, various elements of each section have been added or removed to the chart, justified underneath:

Residents' characteristics (Initially separated into Host/Tourist relationship and residents' characteristics)

- *Internal characteristics* have been removed from this model, because even though they seem important, they are out of the scope of this research and difficult to assess considering the limited amount of interviews
- *Seasonality* and *tourist/resident ratio* (external variables) have been removed from this section because they are covered in the destination characteristics, where they seem more appropriate.
- *Power* and *institutional trust* together form elements of SET. While power was already in the initial model, the element of institutional trust has been added to the model, because it appeared relevant considering the information of the Commissioning Client that taxes paid by residents are not reinvested in the community's development
- *Economic dependence on tourism* has been removed, because it is considered within the dimension of power

#### Destination Characteristics

- *Tourist Types* has been added since some scholars (e.g. Fletcher et al., 2012) mention their importance, but they only consider cruise tourists. It has been assessed, based on the knowledge of the sector, Mahahual's tourism development and description of locals
- *Role of Management* has not been added to the model, because it has not been explained in further detail by Deery et al. (2012) wherefore it is unclear how this could be researched. Instead *democracy and governance* were appended, referring to the political empowerment of residents and open and accountable governance structures. This was listed as one of the principles of social sustainability by WACOSS (McKenzie, 2004).

#### Social impacts of cruise tourism on Mahahual

- *Show case effect* does not seem relevant enough since it is highly co-related with residents' increased pride which has been researched
- *Pride* has been removed, since most locals are not from Mahahual, wherefore it is not visible, if the pride has increased
- *Access denied* has been removed, since it refers to the tourist/resident ratio already covered in destination characteristics
- *Culture* has been added because since the initial model only considered social impacts. Culture was assessed based on lived traditions and change of lifestyle of residents.

#### Socio-cultural impacts of the port:

- This section was added to the list, since Costa Maya Port is a big employer and can influence the community in many ways. Its management as well as port experience and social authenticity were researched, which are based on Klein (2011), whereby *people pollution* was not added, since it is already covered by disruption as indicated from Deery et al. (2012)

### 3. Research Questions

This chapter describes the central question followed by the sub-questions which together will result in the answer for the central question.

#### 3.1. Central Question

##### **How do Mahahual's residents perceive the balance of positive and negative impacts of cruise tourism in Mahahual?**

This question reflects the centre of the above shown model (fig.9). It was answered by the sub-questions, which are based on the various sections of the model, namely, resident's characteristics, destination's characteristics, socio-cultural impacts of cruise tourism and the social-cultural impacts of Costa Maya Port, all influencing the perceived balance of positive and negative cruise tourism impacts by Mahahual's residents.

#### 3.2. Sub-questions

##### **1. What are Mahahual's characteristics as a destination?**

The CLR has reflected the importance of a destination's characteristic on the perception of tourism by locals. Destination characteristics and include level of development of Mahahual, which was assessed using the TALC and Irridex model, tourist types, using Cohen's tourism typology, seasonality and ratio of tourists to residents.

##### **2. What are the characteristics of Mahahual's residents?**

Characteristics of Mahahual's residents are classified into external and directly related to SET. This is a critical because a community is not homogenic, which can influence the perception individually. External factors include distance from tourist activity, level of contact with tourists and use of facilities also employed by tourists. Those characteristics directly related to the SET are the power of residents/economic dependency on tourism and institutional trust. These characteristics are not relevant as numeric element, but to provide insight into why individuals perceive tourism in a certain way.

##### **3. How is Costa Maya Port managed?**

Costa Maya Port is the main employer and tourist attractor of Mahahual. The question provides insight into its management to draw conclusions on the economic impact, as well as the *port experience* and *social authenticity* based on Klein (2011) (see CLR).

##### **4. Which socio-cultural impacts caused by cruise tourism can be observed in Mahahual?**

This question reflects impacts on Mahahual's community as perceived by the locals. These include: Interesting things to do, opportunity costs, economic benefits, disruption, facility maintenance, delinquent behaviour, increased prices, justice, environment, character of the town/region, new infrastructure.

## 4. Methodology

In this chapter the methodology of the research is outlined and justified. Therefore, research design, sampling, methods, techniques, as well as the analysis of the results are described. Partially this is clarified per sub-question, proceeding a table showcasing techniques and respondents per sub-question.

The choices made are in line with the research topic and goal and should lead to the most possible reliability and validity. *Validity* refers to the credibility and transferability of information, while *reliability* is about consistency and repeatability (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012).

### 4.1. Population, Sampling and Respondent Criteria

A sample of the population is used when there are too many cases within the population of a research topic. In this case *non-probability sampling* was applied, where the probability for each case of the population to be selected is not known, because there is no database of residents of Mahahual. Although generalisation might be possible, it cannot be used as a base for statistical implications (Saunders et al., 2012).

#### 4.1.1. Sampling techniques for non-probability sampling

Cases were selected based on the researchers' own judgement, so-called *purposive sampling*. This technique was used to receive rich information into the different impacts of tourism in Mahahual instead of statistically representative material. *Heterogeneous sampling* (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012) was chosen, where participants with a variety of characteristics were selected, to be able to receive opinions of different resident groups. Considered was anyone living in Mahahual but for the most part Mexicans, reflecting a mix of inhabitants of Casitas, kilometre 55 and Mahahual Centre, since they have a varied proximity to tourism activity. Additionally, a mix of gender and employment within or outside the tourism industry is given, reflecting their dependency on tourism. The mix of research respondents increases the validity of the research, since it is more likely that it reflects the general opinions of the population. The *snowball sampling method* (Saunders et al., 2012) was used for many cases, based on recommendations from respondents and TAKATA. The trust already gained by them helped to increase the validity of the answers, while choosing a heterogeneous sample made the results more reliable.

Interviews were carried out further than the saturation point, since already the first five respondents mainly gave overlapping answers. However, more interviews were conducted to ensure reliability and validity and to get more information about specific topics, such as the working conditions of restaurant or port employees.

#### 4.1.2. Respondents and their selection

In total fourteen interviews were carried out, of which one was done with the director of the Tourism Secretary of Quintana Roo and one with the mayor of Mahahual. The twelve other interviews were conducted with locals, of which ten worked within the tourism industry. While initially it was planned to have more respondents that do not work in the tourism industry, respondents which were approached in a non-business setting still ended up working within tourism. This is not surprising, since 85% of Mahahual's residents work within tourism (Duron, personal communication, May 21, 2019), wherefore the sample is representative for the population. A broad array of tourism businesses was covered, ranging from hotels, to tour providers, shops, restaurants and port employees. Appendix III displays a list of respondents with relevant information.

Informal conversations were carried out with two fishermen, a man that has lived in Mahahual for 9 years and two Costa Maya employees.

Additionally, emails were sent to the previous port director<sup>1</sup>, who initially answered, but did not follow up on answering the questions. Emails were also sent to Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd., Carnival Corporation Plc and Norwegian Cruise Lines (NCL). These cruise companies are the three main companies docking at Costa Maya Port. **Royal Caribbean** Cruises Ltd. fully owns **Royal Caribbean** International, Celebrity Cruises, and Azamara Club Cruises and hold stakes of Silversea Cruises, TUI Cruises, Pullmantur Cruises and CDF Croisières de France. Carnival Corporation Plc owns the brands Carnival Cruise Line, Princess Cruises, Holland American Line, Seabourn, Cunard, Aida, Costa, P&O Cruises and P&O Cruises Australia. Of the cruise lines only NCL answered, which is still in contact with the researcher for a possible collaboration.

## 4.2. Research Design and Methods

For this research, *advice-based research design* has been chosen, resulting in the provision of recommendations, since it is TAKATA's first research on Mahahual's tourism and it would be out of the scope of the research to deliver a product.

In accordance with the commissioning client it has been agreed on a *qualitative research approach*, which "studies participants' meanings and the relationships between them" (Saunders et al., 2012, p.163) because of the anthropological base and because a deeper understanding of local's subjective attitudes and opinions is more important than numeric data.

## 4.3. Research Techniques

Various techniques help the researcher collecting the relevant data. For the qualitative approach, techniques used are non-standardised, allowing questions to be adapted to the respondent. These include desk research, interviews and observations (Saunders et al., 2012).

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<sup>1</sup> The port director changed one month before the researcher's arrival and again during the researcher's stay. The email was sent to the port manager before the researcher arrival, of whom the contact details were known to TAKATA and who still works for Costa Maya in another port.



#### 4.3.1. Desk research

Desk research describes the use of secondary data to accumulate previously collected information from websites, (research) articles, newspapers and online databases. The collection of secondary data often forms a basis of research studies and the received information can still be further analysed or complemented (Saunders et al., 2012). This was also applied in this case, since it allowed the researcher not only to build the theoretical framework of the research, but also to gain an understanding of Mahahual in the months before her arrival.

Information based on desk research was collected carefully, considering the date, authors and sources and mostly includes research papers or books, with only few exemptions for trends, information about the port and the commissioning client.

#### 4.3.2. Observations

*Observation* include "the systematic observation, recording, description analysis and interpretation of people's behaviour" (Saunders et al., 2012, p.340). Living in Mahahual, participating in everyday activities and engaging with locals, in fact being a local, the researcher was automatically engaged in *participant observation*. This form is often connected to sociological and anthropological studies and helps to obtain qualitative data and is therefore adequate for this study (Saunders et al., 2012).

Additionally, the researcher was able to access the port premises where she took the role of a *complete observer* by taking the role of a tourist and observing employees and the port. It was chosen to not reveal the identity since otherwise access would have been denied and the answers/behaviour would have not been reliable. More is explained in the chapter gaps; the observation description can be found in Appendix VI.

#### 4.3.3. Interviews and Informal Conversations

Semi-structured and unstructured interviews, ranging from 30 minutes up to 1 hour 15 minutes as well as informal conversations were conducted. *Semi-structured interviews* are non-standardised, with a set of themes/main questions. The order of the questions can be adapted to the flow and further probing questions can be asked to get a deeper understanding of the topic and the interviewee's opinions (Saunders et al., 2012). The researcher directs the interviews while allowing the respondent to describe his/her opinions.

*Unstructured interviews* are informal and while there is no prearranged list of questions the interviewer must know which aspects s/he wants to explore more in-depth. The interviewee steers the talk with his/her priorities (Saunders et al., 2012).

*Informal conversations* can be used to find new information and can be classified as unplanned and unstructured interviews.

Additionally, informal conversations formed an essential part for this project to receive more informal, unbiased information and opinions.

Apart from the Skype interview with the Director of SEDETUR, all interviews were conducted face-to-face with one up to three respondents.

The interview with the mayor of Mahahual as well as the Director of SEDETUR and the first resident interviews were carried semi-structured with prepared questions, avoiding the researcher to ask leading questions and reducing researcher bias. At the same time, it was possible to compare answers while giving the respondent the option to explain or add additional information, helping the researcher to receive in-depth data in line with the qualitative research design and diminishing respondent bias.

Answers of residents started to be repeated immediately, giving the researcher quickly an understanding of the issues. Unstructured interviews were then used to broaden the scope, following what the interviewee perceives as important and possibly allowing issues to arise that were initially not considered. This appeared appropriate, since the opinions of the residents are the centre of this research.

To increase validity, respondents were informed about the research and its goal. All interviews were anonymous; the names in the interview transcripts are changed, excluding the interview with Mahahual's mayor and the director of SEDETUR.

#### 4.4. Collecting and analysing the data

When possible, interviews were recorded and transcribed, ensuring transparency of the analysis and increasing reliability. In three cases respondents did not agree with being recorded, so notes were taken during the interview and a summary written immediately after.

Out of fourteen interviews two were held in English, one in German and eleven in Spanish. The German and Spanish ones were translated into English and then labelled following a deductive approach, namely labels were oriented on the literature. Since the literature helped to clearly define the research questions, organizing the answers accordingly appeared most logical and worked well.

During everyday activities the researcher always carried a notebook to take notes. During the observation inside the port, notes were taken with the phone to not draw any attention.

The report that published on TAKATA's website does not include transcripts is censored, to avoid the recognition of interviewees.

#### 4.5. Research Techniques and Sampling per Sub-question

##### 1. What are Mahahual's characteristics as a destination?

Objective information about Mahahual's tourism development was collected with desk research, while interviews with locals provided insight into subjective judgements of tourism numbers and seasonality. During the interview with the director of SEDETUR, reliable tourism numbers could be received. The combination of desk research in-depth interviews helped to analyse if the results were coherent, leading to more reliability and validity.

##### 2. What are the characteristics of Mahahual's residents?

Since it is not the numeric or statistical value that is important, but rather the 'why' of locals' perceptions, this question was answered through interviews and informal conversations with locals from different areas of the village, to see if any differences could be observed. Another method used were informal conversation with locals.

**3. How is Costa Maya Port managed?**

This was answered through desk research, interviews with locals, of which many have worked with or inside the port in the present or past and participant observation inside the port.

**4. What are the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in Mahahual?**

To answer this question, desk research and observations in Mahahual provided a first idea of impacts caused by tourism. Interviews with locals and tourism businesses gave insight into their perception, while the interview with SEDETUR provided information about actions that were undertaken or are planned from a political perspective.

Table 2 shows an overview of the methods and techniques applied per sub-question.

SQ	METHOD	TECHNIQUES	SAMPLING METHODS AND RESPONDENTS
1	Qualitative	Desk Research, Participant observation, Interviews	Inholland Library, research papers, articles etc. Purposefully selected & Snowball, Locals, Tourism Businesses, SEDETUR
2	Qualitative	Interviews, focus groups, observation	Purposefully selected & Snowball, Locals
3	Qualitative	Desk Research Interviews	Inholland Library, research papers, articles etc. Purposefully selected & Snowball, Locals, Tourism Businesses, Port employees, Observation inside the port
4	Qualitative	Desk research, Participant observation, Interviews	Inholland library, research papers, articles etc. Purposefully selected & Snowball, Locals, Tourism Businesses, SEDETUR

Table 2 Overview of research techniques and respondents per sub-question

**4.6. Gaps**

Overall the research was challenging for the researcher, due to the scope that includes many factors and the element of Spanish. Nevertheless, she considers it a successful study with reliable and valid results.

The theoretical framework and models proved to be an excellent choice. Some changes had to be made, but through the early realization they did not negatively impact the research and are part of the necessary flexibility. The following changes have been made:

The elements of *culture* and *tourist types* had been added before starting the fieldwork, since the researcher has realized that it was missing. The factors *economic benefit*, *delinquent*

*behaviour* and *environment* have been added during the fieldwork, since many respondents mentioned them. However, this did not negatively influence reliability or validity, quite the opposite, since mentioning these issues without having been specifically asked for it, reflected their importance for the locals. *Internal resident characteristics* had been removed, because the researcher realized that it is out of the scope of this research. However, elements such as values have been included to a certain extent in *culture*. Increased Pride also has been deleted, since the researcher realized that most people just lived in Mahahual for one to three years, wherefore it is not measurable if their pride has increased compared to times with less tourism.

Considering the width of the topic, the reduced length of the research report posed a challenge. Because of the limited space, the previously included first sub-question, "What are good practices in the field socio-cultural sustainable cruise tourism?" had to be removed, plainly because there was no room. However, it has been added briefly in the trends sections and it is not relevant for answering the Central Question. It is still added in appendix I as it is interesting for the commissioning client.

Sub-question 5, initially about good practices of Costa Maya Port, was changed to the management of Costa Maya, providing insight into good and bad practices. It is now sub-question 3, since it influences the socio-cultural impacts in Mahahual.

When it comes to approaching residents, apart from expats it was impossible to make appointments (not even the mayor appeared to the scheduled meeting). Therefore, only few interviews were scheduled and in a quiet setting. However, approaching people without meeting worked well, and locals were willing to give their time. Having been in an open setting sometimes impacted the interviews, but it could not be avoided. But by visiting places during no-docking times it was still calm and there was no rush. Like this the impact was kept to a minimum, not having a considerable effect on reliability or validity.

Conducting interviews in Spanish was, expectedly, more challenging than in English. However, having semi-structured/unstructured interviews helped for clarifying when needed and since most interviews were recorded everything could be understood.

Unexpectedly, transcribing Spanish interviews was a lot more time-intensive than transcribing English ones, which is also the reason why a limited amount of 14 interviews were conducted. Nevertheless, those interviewed showed a high frequency in repetitive answers and have given the needed results, wherefore this is not seen as a negative impact on validity and reliability.

Finally, there is a strong link between literature and interview questions and, as will be seen in the results, the outcomes are in line with the literature, reflecting their validity and the success of the research.

## 5. Mahahual: Destination and Domicile

In following chapter, the results for the sub-questions are presented, which are based on desk research, interviews and conversations with locals and observations. First an overview is given of Mahahual's tourism development, its tourism governance and the external factors influencing residents' perception. This is followed by an analysis of Costa Maya Port's management and the impact on Mahahual's economy. The chapter ends with an overview of the perceived social and perceived cultural impacts of cruise tourism in the village.

**Note:** Apart from the Director of SEDETUR Quintana Roo and the mayor of Mahahual, all respondents were given different names to protect their anonymity. Apart from Laura and Marcelo, interviews were conducted in Spanish, while 's was conducted in German. These have been translated to English.

### 5.1. Tourism Development, Residents and Governance

This chapter combines destination characteristics and residents' characteristics, since the latter are necessary to explain the Irridex of Mahahual, which forms part of destination characteristics.

#### Tourism Development

Costa Maya Port started operating in 2001 followed by six years of strong and steady growing cruise tourist arrivals, until Hurricane Dean hit Mahahual in 2007, destroying the port and village. After the reopening in season 2008/09 numbers initially stayed low but started growing again from 2016 on, reaching a record high in January 2019 with 160,818 passengers (Fig.10). In the whole of 2018 1.255.934 cruise passengers visited Costa Maya Port.

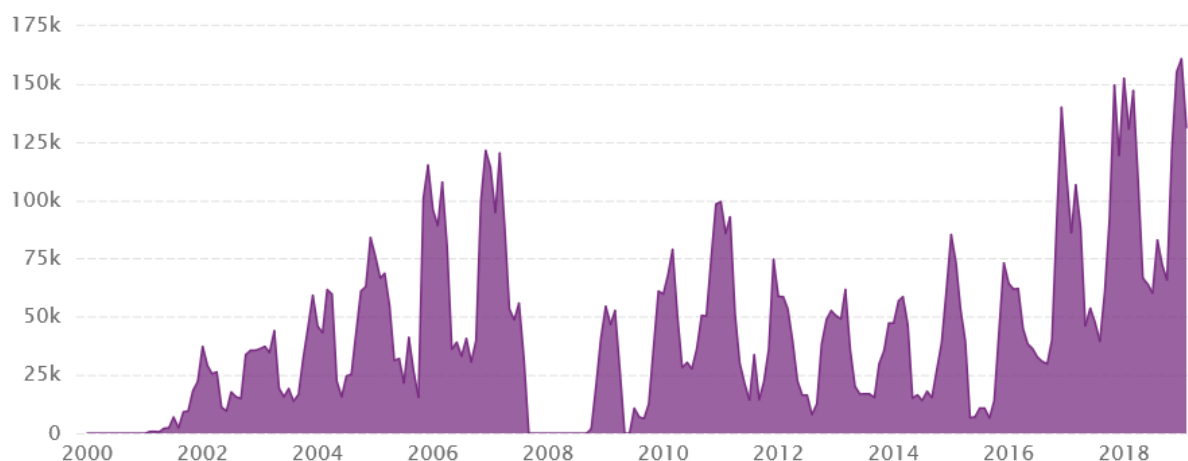


Figure 11 Cruise Passenger Arrivals in Mahahual 2000-2018 (Received May 16, 2019 from [www.ceicdata.com](http://www.ceicdata.com))

Also visible in the graphs, is the strong seasonality of the destination, caused by a period of rain and hurricanes lasting exactly half of the year from May to October (Fig.11). The strong

decline in numbers makes life for locals difficult. Many of the seasonal workers leave for off-season while all-year inhabitants explained the necessity of saving a lot during the high season to make a living in low season.

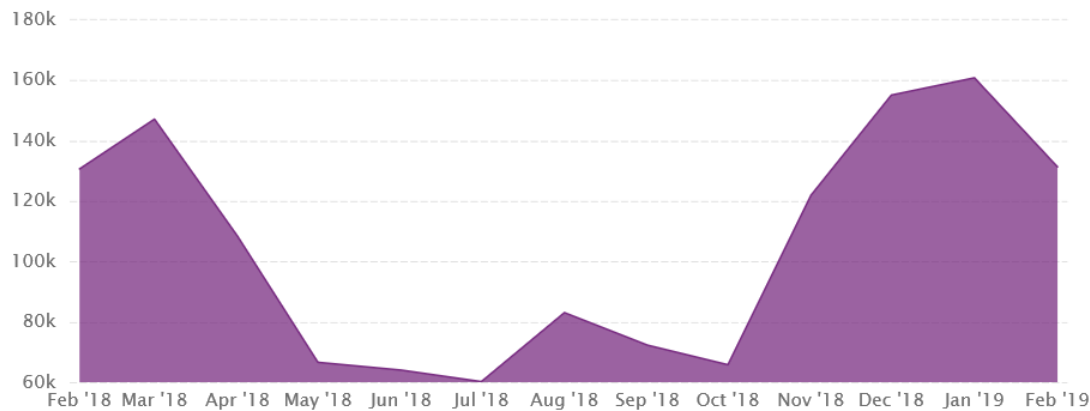


Figure 12 Cruise Passenger Arrivals in Mahahual 2018/19 (Received May 16, 2019 from [www.ceicdata.com](http://www.ceicdata.com))

As explained in the problem analysis the village was adapted to fit the needs of the mass-tourism brought in by cruises. Looking at Butler's TALC, Mahahual could be placed within the *consolidation stage*, since tourist numbers grow at a slower rate, the local economy depends heavily on tourism, and modern, larger tourism facilities are being build. While in 2008 the number of rooms was 246 spread across 37 hotels, by 2018 this number had increased by almost 130% to 565 rooms in 42 hotels (Editorial Living Terra, 2018). The first 37 hotels had an average of 7 rooms, the additional five hotels counted an average of 64 rooms; a remarkable increase of the size of the additional accommodation. Another important characteristic of the consolidation stage is the lack of control by locals, which is also applicable in Mahahual, explained further during the application of the SET below.

Considering only cruise tourists, they can be classified as *organised mass tourists*, seeking familiarity and purchasing ready-made packages. Various respondents have described that tourists often think that Mahahual is an island or that the port is actually the village. Marcelo, who regularly picks up participants of his snorkel tour inside the port, observed:

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*It's very sad or it's very interesting, that the people [the tourists], they work for a whole year and they finally have the opportunity to get this vacation, they put everything on the credit card, so they get out finally from their country, they come from a different country, and they do exactly what they do at home, you know, back in their backyard. They request to listen to their music; they request to eat their food and they just add a little flavour of the culture. And it is what is happening in the port*

*(Marcelo, personal communication, April 22, 2019)*

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Assessing Mahahual by means of Irridex, Mahahual can be classified between the level of *Apathy* and *Irritation*. The general response received from Mahahual's residents showed, that



while they are unhappy with some of the effects of tourism, the opinion about tourists is usually not a negative one and residents are proud that tourists come to see their home. Valeria, working in a hotel in kilometre 55, explains:

*It (the large number of tourists) doesn't bother me, because I feel that it is good that we can share our natural resources, in this case Mahahual, the beach, the malecón, all that. But on one hand yes, because I think that more than anything is the local work that is being done here in Mahahual, I do not like to go to the boardwalk and find a lot of garbage, a lot of people. All of them in one way or another affect here, so in this sense I do not agree, but if I agree in sharing our resources.*

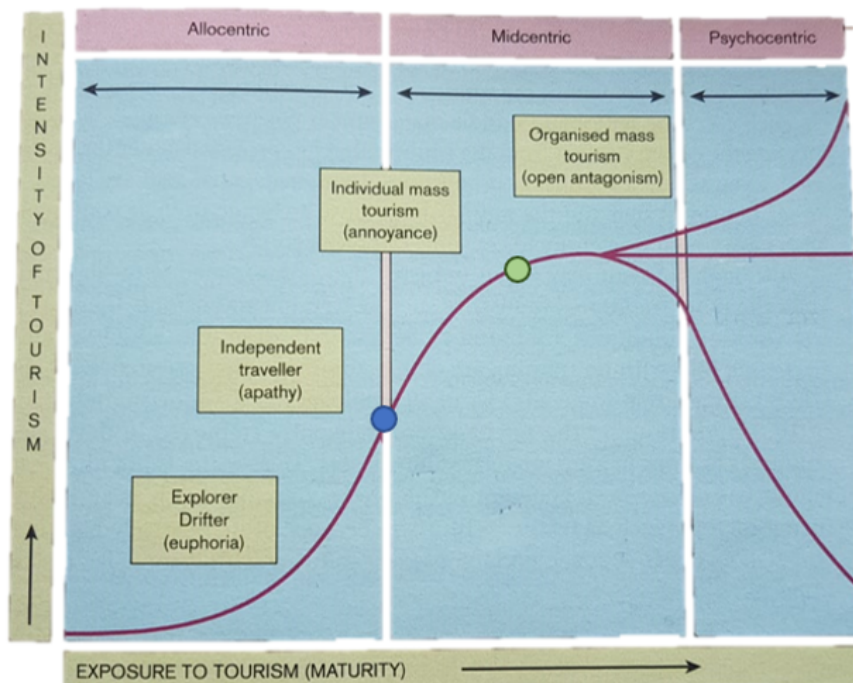
*(Valeria, personal communication, April 30, 2019)*

The table below shows the classifications for Mahahual for each of the theories.

Model	Stage/ Type
<b>Butler's Destination Life Cycle</b>	Consolidation Stage
<b>Smith's Tourism Typology</b>	Organized Mass Tourism
<b>Doxey's Irritation Index</b>	Apathy/Annoyance

Table 3 Models applied in Mahahual

Looking at figure 12, where the various models are compared, it becomes apparent, that attracting *organized mass tourists* (Cohen) and being in the *consolidation stage* (Butler) is not in line with *Apathy* or *Annoyance* but would normally lead to *Antagonism* of residents (Doxey).



● Mahahual's Tourism development acc. to Irridex    ● Mahahual's Tourism Development acc. to TALC and Cohen

Figure 13 Mahahual's Tourism Development acc. To Irridex, TALC and Cohen

### Residents' Characteristics

This can be explained with the Social Exchange Theory. In the CLR it was described, that local's assessment of tourist contact gets influenced amongst others by their economic dependency on tourism.

The viewpoint of Mauricio, living in Mahahual for 20 years, is in accordance with this theory:

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*Well, as we've grown through development, you already have [nuisances] as part of your normal day. You could feel the change of the hurricane, that there were no people, there was no work, there was no solvency, you felt it. But as you move forward and you see work, you grow, you move forward, you see more people, then you adapt to this system of life. You need to work for money in order to survive. So, yes, there is a change, let's not say negative, half positive you could say...*

*(Mauricio, personal communication, May 14, 2019)*

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On the other hand, both of the two interviewed expats, have expressed that while cruise ships are docking, they avoid the centre because of over-crowding. Unlike the local Mexicans, they are less economically dependent on tourism in Mahahual (Marie, Personal Communication, 2019; Laura, Personal Communication, 2019). Distance from tourism activity did not seem to influence resident's opinions, since respondents living in the three parts of Mahahual gave the same answers, while for instance the two Expats lived outside the centre but still expressed some annoyance. Additionally, it was observed that those locals that do not work directly with tourism, usually are more annoyed by the masses of tourists (Marcelo, personal communication, 2019). None of the respondents talked about any shared facilities apart from taxis.

The second influencing factor on local's opinion on tourism, is their institutional trust. This turned out to be one of the biggest issues in Mahahual since there is no trust. Not one single of the 12 interviewed locals has indicated trust in the governmental tourism management of Mahahual. One issue raised is that the taxes they are paying are not reinvested in the community.

Marie, an expat living in Mahahual for nine years, explains:

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*It's difficult. Mahahual pays 8 million taxes per year to the municipality of Otón P. Blanco. And nothing comes back, 0 Pesos. No roads will be repaired, no sewage system will be adjusted, no new garbage truck will be brought, nothing, 0. And that's why all the shops here are angry. We are angry because we say Mahahual brings a lot of jobs, it brings tourism to the South, and not only to Mahahual (...). And nothing comes back.*

*(Marie, personal communication, May 1, 2019)*

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Also, locals do not feel incorporated in any decision making that concern tourism development. None of the respondents has been involved or knew of anyone that has been involvement in the tourism development process in Mahahual. Hotel employee Marcelo explains:

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*They talk to you on the phone at each hotel, they ask about the occupation and how you are managing tourism. But they don't help you much. There is in the branch that should do it, but they only go on with irrelevant things, like to see what you are earning, how much hotel occupancy you have, but not... so that they can charge you. But they don't help you in these problems, we are on the natural side.*

*(Marcelo, personal communication, May 14, 2019)*

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Additionally, it has been mentioned by various respondents, without asking a question directly geared towards this, that more regulations and control is needed in Mahahual.

Laura (Personal Communication, April 30, 2019) expresses that she thinks "they have abandoned Mahahual". Rodrigo, working in a souvenir shop in the centre, agrees:

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*... Seeing the schools well, they lack a lot of support, a lot of help, a lot of interest. And I feel this part of here, because in Quintana Roo we are the southern part, because it is a little neglected, as it is not a city, they do not dedicate so much interest to it.*

*(Rodrigo, personal communication, May 8, 2019)*

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This situation of not feeling important, or even "neglected" as Rodrigo said, must be assessed as very critical because it could lead to major issues in the future.

### Governance

Looking at democracy and governance, Mahahual's tourism management falls under the responsibility of the Tourism Secretary of Quintana Roo (SEDETUR), located in Chetumal, 140 kilometres apart from Mahahual. Apart from Mahahual it manages the tourism in the ten other municipalities of Quintana Roo. According to the Director of SEDETUR Quintana Roo, various practices are in place in the village, including the development of a Master Plan providing a tool to calculate the carrying capacity of the eleven municipalities. Moreover, there is a committee for sustainable tourism development of Mahahual, which works with representatives from the tourism industry and civil society of Mahahual. This is in line with the research of Arce-Ibarra et al. (2017) which shows that small-scale tourism enterprises have received advice from state institutions such as the Ministry of Economy (SEDE) on improving their business. But, as outlined above, it cannot be confirmed by the responses received from locals of this study, an important observation, since the benefit of inclusion of the local community is questionable if a big part of the community is not reached or is not aware of it.

The port and the area of Casitas are privately owned by Costa Maya, even though its inhabitants pay taxes to the government, while the kilometre 55 has started as an illegal settlement, and while most people living there today, did pay for their property, they do still not possess any official document. The director of SEDETUR therefore explained:

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*The problem is also that many of the settlements, many of the service providers are not regularized. So, this is also a limitation for the Secretariat to invest in those places where the service providers are not regularized (...). Then, what we have to promote is growth and development in an orderly manner. And also with complete legality. We cannot invest in that area, where services are not optimal.*

*(Aguilar Becerril, Director SEDETUR Quintana Roo, personal communication, May 30, 2019)*

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This makes the issue of local governance somewhat complex and difficult to understand and is not always clear who is accountable for what. This is also in line with the sentiment of locals that Mahahual lacks some regulations.

Considering that Mahahual is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important cruise destination of Mexico, with a total of approximately 1.3 million visitors in 2018 it is questionable if the current tourism governance is sufficient.

## 5.2. The Enterprise Costa Maya

As explained in the introduction, Mahahual, as it is today, has evolved because of Costa Maya Port. While the growth rate has been barely noticeable before the port construction in 2000, the village has attracted more and more residents ever since. The whole area of Casitas was constructed by Costa Maya to accommodate its employees. The port was founded by the Lebanese businessman Issac Hamui and was transferred to his half Mexican son Mauricio Hamui. It is part of the ITM group, a billion-enterprise managed by Mauricio, which entails other resorts, restaurants, convention centres and a development agency. Apart from Costa Maya Port they own four other ports in the Caribbean (Marie, Personal communication, 2019).

By now Costa Maya does not only own the port, but also an aquatic parc, three beach clubs (Uvero Beach Club, Beach Escape and La Bamba), Quinto Sole Hotel, Costa Maya hotel which hosts Costa Maya employees, tour and transportation operators and Casita's community center, Wayak. Naturally, all of these attract employees of which most come from other parts of Mexico. According to one of their employees, Costa Maya currently employs 750 people (Juan, personal communication, June 2, 2018).

In addition, the port attracts a large number of tourists, economically impacting the village. Approximately 85% of the community live from tourism, of which the biggest part is cruise tourism (Mayor, personal communication, 2019). Ramón, who came to Mahahual to work for the port described:

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*Well, it (cruise tourism) is really something very important here in Mahahual, for the same reason that it was built, the village has been developed on the basis of the port, right? So, it's the first economic spill, or the first economic donor here. Then, everything moves around the port. A lot of the people who come here come to work on that basis.*

*(Ramón, personal communication, May 15, 2019)*

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Or as the mayor summarises:

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*So, if the businesses close and the port closes, everything is going to close, and everything is going to collapse.*

*(Duron, Mayor Mahahual, personal communication, May 21, 2019)*

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Observation inside the port has shown that the port does now not only include restaurants, shops, bars and pools but also a dolphin show and an aviary experience with exotic birds. Visitors have the possibility to indulge in a Mayan healing experience or fish spa, participate in a tequila or chocolate tasting or watch one of their shows, including the dance of Mayan Warriors, lucha libre (Mexican wrestling) and a Papantla's Flying Show. To leave the port customers can take the trolley or rent golf cards while various excursions guide them to the jungle, Mayan ruins, the lagoon of Bacalar, a snorkel side or one of three of Costa Maya's Beach Clubs. This leaves other entrepreneurs with few opportunities to offer new products or services. Some of the places in the port are rented by smaller entrepreneurs, but they are very expensive. Pedro, who used to own a souvenir shop inside the port, explained that he had to pay 100 USD per cruise ship for his 2-3m<sup>2</sup> place, making it 400 USD of rent for one day with four ships. The Mayor is not happy about the port management either;

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*... the truth is, they (Costa Maya Port) see many millions of dollars and we don't see anything. And at the end of the day, it doesn't help us develop the community, as you can see. And so, that's the impact that the port leaves me, really...*

*(Duron, Mayor Mahahual, personal communication, May 21, 2019)*

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One diving school was given the right to sell tours directly via the cruise ship companies. The co-manager of the dive shop explained that out of the 89 USD they receive per participant for a Discover Suba Dive (DSD), they have to pay 6 USD commission for the port and 6 USD for transportation, while the participants pay between 130 and 170 USD to the cruise companies (Laura, personal communication, 2019). This indeed reflects an added commission of up to 90% as indicated in chapter 1.2.1. Another interesting point is the start of the collaboration between cruise ships and the diving school.

One tourism service provider depicted that some of his customers said that inside the port they were given wrong information about the existence or location of it. This is in line with one of the travel agencies which inform clients on their website that port employees might provide them with wrong information because they are not affiliated with the port.

To be able verify these statements and assess the port experience and social authenticity as described by Klein (2011) an observation was conducted inside the port premises. Klein mentions the issue of the homogenisation of the port experience, which could also be observed in Costa Maya Port. Shopping facilities include mostly souvenir shops, printed fabric shops and jewellery stores, often owned by big companies such as Diamond international. Some exceptions of this were a leather boots and bag shop, the Xbaal boutique, which is Mexican and works together with a foundation employing and educating (Mayan) women, and a stand selling artistries of Casitas' community centre. Unfortunately, the latter was placed close to the exit of the port where it can be easily missed.

Klein applies the issue of Social Authenticity in the context of cultural attractions. However, since inside the port 'Mexican' experiences are sold and shows performed, it is applied in this study in the context of the port premises. Lucha libre, Papantla's Flying Show and Mayan Warriors do form part of the Mexican Culture and are still performed in Mexican cities as well. However, they originate in different parts of Mexico and are displayed without any context or information inside the port, making it difficult for the visitor to grasp an understanding of it. Also, while there is Mexican food served inside, it is adapted to the taste of foreigners and decoration with plastic food and vegetables make the place seem far from authentic. Fish Spas on the other hand are not part of the Mexican Culture.

Covering as a tourist, groups of employees were asked during the observation about the safety to leave the port. Fortunately, apart from one of these groups replying that the village is dangerous because of robberies and drunk people, everyone said it was safe, also alone as a girl. Nevertheless, one respondent said the village is not interesting. She did, however, give honest information about the golf card business outside the port.

Nevertheless, without asking for it, there would not be any information provided about the existence of Mahahual or how to get there. None of the maps placed inside the port display anything outside its premises (see Fig13). Also, it can be confirmed that it is difficult to leave the port because two out of three entrances are closed. An in-depth description of the observation of the port can be found in Appendix IV.





Figure 14 Map of Costa Maya Port and caption

These issues are obvious enough to have cruise passengers criticising them on TripAdvisor:

**Enjoyable. The pool is Great. A couple of flaws.**

One of two things that are really annoying is the trolley style carts that they transport people to town in. The cab drivers are not allowed to pick up in the center ring. People are told they have to pay 3.00 per person and take the Trolley style service into town. Which is a lie. (...) The second is finding your way out of the compound. It's a maze and they make you walk past every store possible. They want the money spent inside the compound.

1993zr1. (2017, September 23). Enjoyable. The pool is Great. A couple of flaws. [Review]. Retrieved May 14, 2019 from: [https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g499450-d647108-r526879703-Costa\\_Maya\\_Port-Mahahual\\_Costa\\_Maya\\_Yucatan\\_Peninsula.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g499450-d647108-r526879703-Costa_Maya_Port-Mahahual_Costa_Maya_Yucatan_Peninsula.html)

**Disney does Mexico**

*What an awful place. At least we got off the cruise ship for a few hours but don't think you are visiting Mexico. It's a cruise port built out of nothing to accommodate cruise passengers (mainly geared for Americans). It's like visiting Disney does Mexico. However, if you fancy a day at what seemed like part of Epcot and like paying high prices for production line food and crazy prices for drinks and tacky souvenirs this is probably a great choice.*

G., Jerry. (2019, March 15). Disney does Mexico [Review]. Retrieved May 14, 2019 from: [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/ShowUserReviews-g499450-d647108-r656141066-Costa\\_Maya\\_Port\\_Mahahual\\_Costa\\_Maya\\_Yucatan\\_Peninsula.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/ShowUserReviews-g499450-d647108-r656141066-Costa_Maya_Port_Mahahual_Costa_Maya_Yucatan_Peninsula.html)

### 5.3. Socio-cultural Impacts of Cruise Tourism in Mahahual

In this chapter the socio-cultural impacts of cruise tourism in Mahahual are explained. Since it implies many different factors this was divided into various sub-chapters to increase the readability.

#### 5.3.1. Economy

Mahahual's Economy is very dependent and affected by the port, direct as much as indirect and induced, since most residents came to Mahahual because of tourism and are now using also non-tourism related services in the village. A cruise tourist eating in a restaurant is an example of a direct impact, while the restaurant buying its products from the local supermarket can be considered an indirect impact. Port employees, with solely came to Mahahual to work in cruise tourism and are not spending money at the local businesses is an example of an induced impact. The interviewed bricklayer explained that due to this he can feel the effect of tourism on his affluence and Marie, neither working in tourism, observed:

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*One way or another we all live from tourism, even if you are not directly involved with tourism now, if things go well and you have a shop, then you sell well because people buy well.*

*(Marie, personal communication, May 1, 2019)*

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Nevertheless, the overall economy of Mahahual, is not affected as much as it should, since only 5% of cruise tourists come to the village (Mayor, personal communication, 2019), which is clearly visible by looking for instance at kilometro 55. One of the beach club employees receives a wage of 5000MXN (250€) per month, while tip-based waiters can earn up to 200 USD on a good day in a restaurant on the *malecón*. However, without a fixed salary there is no income when there is no ship, making it very difficult during low season. Mauricio also explained "the foreigner's monetary solvency is not as high as it used to be", which is in line with the research on trends, and especially during off-season cruise lines attract less affluent tourists with special offers.

During this time and on weekends without boats, many of the residents leave Mahahual, therefore, much of the money earned does not contribute to Mahahual's economy. Additionally, many residents buy their supplies in other, cheaper towns.

Apart from interviewees own opinions on the economic impact, a walk through kilometro 55 clearly reflects that the positive impact is not sufficient. Here, many people still live in wooden shacks with iron sheets. Pictures are provided in the next chapter.

### 5.3.2. Perceived Social Impacts

#### Infrastructure and Facility Maintenance

Mahahual grew from a tiny fishing village to the town it is today because of the port. Consequently, its infrastructure can be directly linked to the port. Mauricio portrays what the village looked like 20 years ago:

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*When I arrived for living here, there were no streets, there weren't many people; it was a fishing area. There weren't so many services, there weren't many things. Now in all that time we have hotels, we have infrastructure, drainage, electricity, ... police, there was no police, there was nothing.*

*(Mauricio, personal communication, May 14, 2019)*

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Nevertheless, all the respondents agree that the infrastructure and services do not develop in accordance with the population and tourism growth. Residents complained that there is not enough streets and maintenance of the streets. The *malecón* has been built and extended because of tourism but research of TAKATA has shown that it has damaged the connection between the mangroves and the sea, ultimately leading to a damage of the reef.

Power and portable water just arrived in kilometro 55 about five months ago and power cuts are common in the whole of Mahahual, although they get less frequent. Also, water pressure is extremely low.

However, the biggest issue which was mentioned by everyone is the sewage and trash situation. The water treatment plants are not sufficient for the amount of people. For instance, the water plant in Casitas was built for 1000 people. In high season this number is outgrown by its residents, without considering any tourists. Marie described how the water plant and pipes overflow during rainy season:

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*But this one we have here was once foreseen for 1000 people. And now we still have between 2000 and 3000 people living here in high season. In the low season there are less people, but you have to imagine that all the people who come from the ship go to the toilet somewhere. Where should all this go? I also made films here last year during the rainy season, that really made you sick. Everything overflowed and then all the shit runs into the mangroves and from the mangroves into the sea.*

*(Marie, personal communication, May 1, 2019)*

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Additionally, there are almost no garbage cans in public areas. Trash is getting picked up more regularly by now, in Casitas the port started doing it after negotiations with the citizen group Mahahual Limpio Grupo Casitas, since they own the area, even though residents pay taxes to the government. During some of the clean ups, the port also sent help in those areas that are



crossed by their tourists. Nevertheless, it has been witnessed many times that trash still overflows.



Figure 15 Costa Maya's garbage truck picking up trash in Casitas



Figure 16 Trash cans overflowing with garbage in Casitas



Figure 17 Street in Casitas

In kilometre 55 the reality looks even worse, with trash laying around, non-paved street and houses still built of wood and steel sheets. One of the respondents referred to it as "ghetto" (Marcelo, personal communication, April 22, 2019) while Marie explains:

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*And Mahahual, the last two years, looks more and more like the slums. I mean when you drive in the kilometro 55 then you actually want to turn around again and go, it's really intense.*

*(Marie, personal communication, May 1, 2019)*

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Nevertheless, it has to mentioned that today more houses of kilometro 55 look decent, with proper walls and a roof. Hotel rooms and rental rooms are being build and some residents are investing in lands. However, due to illegal settlement, the residents receive rarely any support from the government and if they want improvements of streets and the like they mostly have to organize amongst themselves.

In the centre, public areas, like the *Domo* are not taken care of. The only area that is well maintained is the *malecón* and the beach, even though this is done by the restaurant employees. During the beginning of the researcher's stay they did not get any help with

removing the Sargasso, however, once the Sargasso problem got more intense, the government started paying external workers, because this causes a massive threat to tourism.<sup>2</sup>



*Figure 18 Street in Kilometro 55*



*Figure 19 House in kilometro 55*



*Figure 20 Beach filled with Sargasso*

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<sup>2</sup> Sargasso or Sargassum, is a seaweed that currently washes up on the Caribbean beaches. To a certain extent this is natural, however, in recent years this is grown enormously, and it is thought to be caused by climate change and nutrient runoff. It does not only pose a huge threat to tourism but also to corals and is believed to cause health problems.

### Public Services

Before the construction of the port there were no public services in Mahahual, such as schools or health services. Valeria, who arrived for the first time 19 years ago, explained:

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*We came to Mahahual, because we had a house here for a long time. We left, because there were no possibilities like school, health centre, in my parents' work. So, we left, but we were going to come back.*

*(Valeria, personal communication, April 30, 2019)*

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But still today there is no big supermarket, no market and no bank. The two ATMs in town which carry Mexican Pesos sometimes run out of money.

Up to today there is not public transportation system in Mahahual and while taxi services did not exist before port construction, today many taxis do not transport locals during cruise docking times, because they can charge tourists considerably higher prices. Police and security services have increased but are still not up to level with the development. There are four policemen working in Mahahual and placed for police and firemen are rented and limited.

There is no hospital in Mahahual, only a public Health Centre in the centre and Costa Med in Casitas, belonging to the port. Costa Med is private and too expensive for most locals. However, tourists trust this health facility more, leading to a good division of facilities. Nevertheless, "they have a lot of deficiencies. They don't have adequate service" (Rodrigo, personal communication, May 8, 2019). Marie agrees that the assistance during an emergency would not be sufficient:

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*If you have a heart attack here, the probability that you will die is relatively high. Because if you go from here to Chetumal with the ambulance it almost takes you two hours, you probably won't make it.*

*(Marie, personal communication, May 1, 2019)*

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The mayor is aware of these deficiencies, but he is financially dependent on Chetumal, because Mahahual, so far, is not its own municipality. He is currently trying to change that.

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*I don't have hospitals, I don't have room for the police, they are borrowed places. I don't have amusement parks, thematic parks that I don't have, more sidewalks, more paving, I lack many things, there, yes, we lack many things.*

*(Duron, Mayor of Mahahual, personal communication, May 21, 2019)*

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### Environment

The issue of the infrastructure not being adapted to process the garbage and human waste, as well as the construction of the *malecón* and the pollution caused by cruise ships and vehicles, all influence the health of the mangroves and the reef. This is drastic in itself, but additionally it also threatens the livelihoods of locals, since most work within the tourism or fishing industry. The pollution issue was mentioned by every respondent.

### Disruption

When it comes to disruption respondents have mentioned crowding in the centre during cruise ships times, increased traffic and noise. Respondents also declared that they often cannot go to the beach areas in front of restaurants without paying, even though Mexico's beaches are federal property<sup>3</sup>. It has also been mentioned that some of the tourists are drunk and rude, not respecting local norms. Nevertheless, as previously explained, the overall opinion of tourists is not a negative one.

### Prices

Mahahual in general has very high prices concerning anything, this is not only related to tourism but also from its remote location. A 3% tax is paid on everything including, rent and services because Quintana Roo is classified as a tourist region. Restaurants are rated as expensive as well. However, most residents connect the high prices to the remote location of Mahahual but many of them complain about the raised taxi prices and rent which can be related to tourism. According to Marie the rent in Casitas now is four times higher than nine years ago, connected to foreign investments and Airbnb, leading to an issue of gentrification. Additionally, there is inflation on prices and speculation on lands directly linked to tourism, this makes living very pricy for Mahahual's locals. This also leads to the issue of gentrification, since many residents had to move away from Mahahual's centre and now also have to leave Casitas. Marcelo explained:

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*(The tourists) can afford a little more rent to pay (...) and now they're kicking out the locals to a different neighbourhood that is called the 55, that is a little bit...that is truly the ghetto you know*

*(Marcelo, personal communication, April 22, 2019)*

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<sup>3</sup> The first 25m of beaches in Mexico officially belong to the state and can therefore legally be trespassed and used by everyone, as long as the own equipment (e.g. towel) is used.



### 5.3.3. Perceived Cultural Impacts

#### Interesting things to do

Not many interesting things to do appeared in Mahahual through cruise tourism. There are a lot of restaurants, and a few bars and clubs. However, Mexicans have in general an eating-out culture, independently of tourism, and since the cruise passenger leave latest at 7pm they do not influence bars or nightclubs. There is one cultural centre in 55, which according to the mayor is rarely active and a plaza on the *malecón* which is not used at all. The *Domo* was built two years ago, a dome which can host events; however, it is not well maintained. Casitas has a community centre, Wayak, owned by the port, which offers outdoor sport facilities, workshops and sport classes for a small fee. The port itself is only accessible with special permit and the waterpark is despite a reduced fare too expensive for locals. There are a few small boutiques which probably would not exist without the cruise tourism, but for locals this is not sufficient. Mauricio, living in Mahahual for 20 years, complains:

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*Aha, we don't have a market, it's necessary, a market, as they have in any other place, selling vegetables, legumes, fruits, exactly. And you still need a park, a recreation area for people to be, go out to the park ... there is no area for healthy fun, right? It is so very neglected in this regard, Mahahual. Everything focuses mostly on diving, snorkelling, and so on. There's nothing else. And restaurants and sunbathing on the beach, and that's it, fishing.*

*(Mauricio, personal communication, May 14, 2019)*

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The lack of entertainment possibilities is also one of the reasons why many locals leave the village on their days off, as the employees of the port that do not have work on days without cruise ships. These two factors combined with the physical division of the village make a community sensation difficult.

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*One of the small problems, or big problems that Mahahual has, is that most people work and the days they supposedly have to rest, they go to Chetumal or they go to I don't know where. And they no longer focus on socializing anymore with the people of the village, on living together. We have a slightly bigger division between those who work for the port, who live in Las Casitas, and the people who work in the village, who live in 55.*

*(Mauricio, personal communication, May 14, 2019)*

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#### Culture & Values

Additionally, many of Mahahual's residents come from other parts of Mexico, Belize and other countries.<sup>4</sup> Even within Mexico culture varies enormously, resulting from the mix of various indigenous roots and different colonies, leading to varied traditions and values which can make it difficult to connect with each other. The peninsula of Yucatan is marked by Spanish- Mexican

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<sup>4</sup> This can also be observed in the diversity of respondents as indicated in table in Appendix III.

roots. Nevertheless, culture is not lived to a great extent in Mahahual. Valeria, who grew up in a small village close to Mahahual, misses the Mayan traditions:

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*In my case, I grew up in a small town before coming to Mahahual. There's a lot of Mayan culture there. So, every year we had celebrations there, Mayan and religious. (...) We, personally. I miss that. And sometimes I can't go, because I'm working, because I was studying, because I have other commitments. So, I think that in that sense tourism, yes, it has been involved, because it makes the place develop a little bit more and when the place develops a little bit more, people have to come to provide those services, that's why, yes, it affects as much directly as indirectly*

*(Valeria, personal communication, April 30, 2019)*

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Other respondents agree with this. The mayor (personal communication, May 21, 2019) spoke about festivities that happened in the past, while now "everyone focusses on making dollars, dollars, dollars". Him and some fishermen of the village also explained that Mayans have a deep co-relation with nature but the Mahahual's residents do not respect nature sufficiently anymore. This is in line with the trends, which should that in the process of development destinations often have problems to retain their cultural authenticity. However, they did show that their proud of their culture and heritage and are happy to share this with visitors.

It was also mentioned that drug/ alcohol consumption is increasing, which could be linked to the few options for locals to entertain themselves. When it comes to criminality, opinions differ. Some respondents said that there is an increased amount of robberies, mainly in the low season and connected to drug problems and immigration, while others say that the criminality is low. This could possible reflect the confrontation effect, as described in the trends section.

### Delinquent behaviour

When it comes to delinquent behaviour of tourists, a few locals have mentioned that some of them are drunk and behave disrespectfully. However, overall Mahahual is not a destination that attracts party tourists.

## 6. Conclusion

Combining the results of the sub-questions, this chapter show the link between trends, literature and the research findings and leads to the answer of the central question.

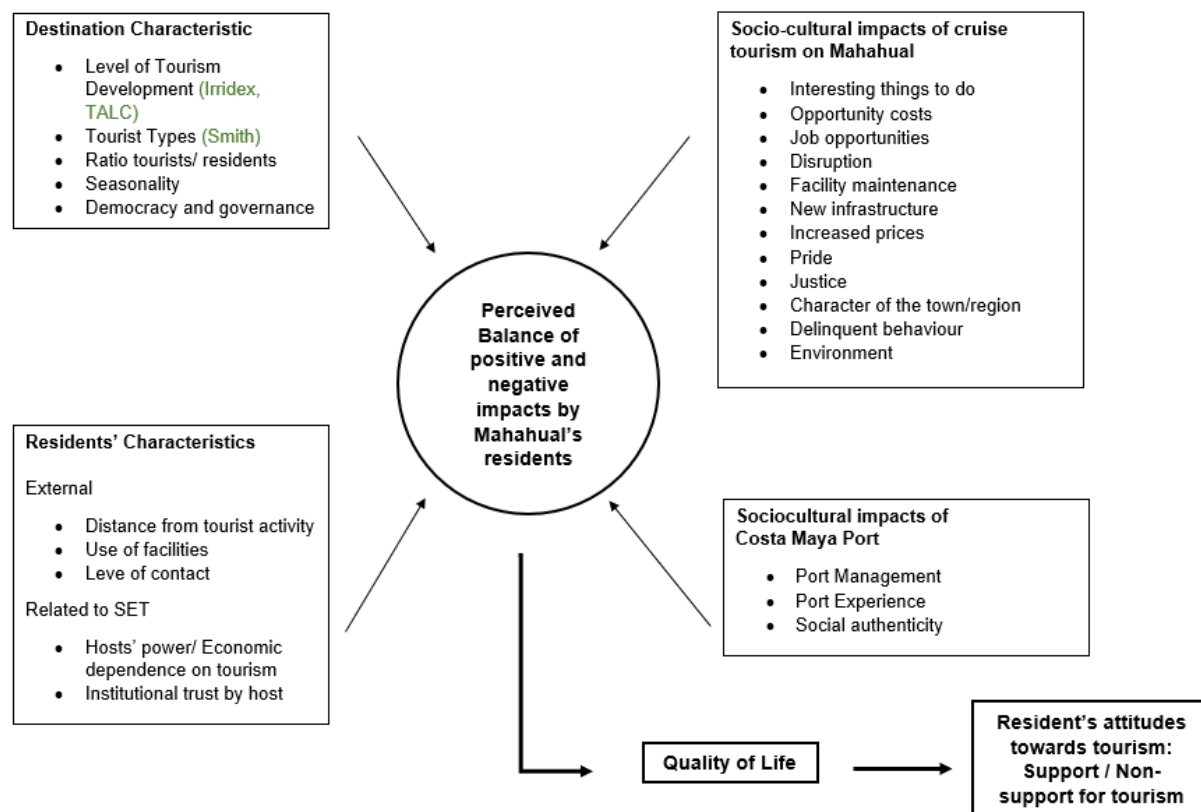


Figure 21 Key variables for researching the socio-cultural impacts of cruise tourism in Mahahual

Combining all the elements of the theoretical framework (Fig.20), it can be observed that the economic benefits of tourism, connected with the monopolized management of Costa Maya Port, are not assessed sufficient to outweigh residents experienced nuisances concerning contamination, traffic, change of culture, increased drug consumption and crime rate. Residents perceive an imbalance of positive and negative impacts, which finally affects their QoL negatively. Ramón summarises this observation in his words:

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*It's not a tourism that spills a lot, a lot of money. Or maybe nothing. But well, he [the tourist] arrived, and maybe he stopped there and threw his bottle of water away and peed and pooped. So, he didn't leave anything behind, but he came to pollute.*

*(Ramón, personal communication, May 15, 2019)*

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Nevertheless, the imbalance is not assessed as immense and usually tourists are not being blamed but rather the poor management of the village. Respondents did not demand less tourists but the adaption of infrastructure, so that those issues that come along with tourism could be dealt with properly. Therefore, tourism support is currently still given.



According to SET, this perception is likely influenced by the economic dependence that Mahahual's residents have on tourism. However, institutional trust is low since they do not feel included in the governance of Mahahual's tourism, and as listed by WACOSS this is one element of a socially sustainable community. Costa Maya Port is not only monopolized but also shows Klein's (2011) elements of homogenisation and low social authenticity. Consequently, trust in the government is low and anger towards the port high.

Assessed to be in the Consolidation stage of the TALC, the right management approach and a tourism that brings economic benefits is crucial now, to safeguard Mahahual. The mayor of Mahahual explains what will happen if this is not the case:

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*... I have a lot of demands from the families that there is no money, if there is no work, delinquency begins. It's a fundamental part of a development community, to promote the industry of work, in all senses, all aspects. If we don't have it, the robberies, kidnappings, rape, prostitution and a lot of insecurity begin and that is what I really don't want, I believe that this is accessible to everyone. That we all have the benefit of a certain percentage of economic development is what I really want.*

*(Duron, Mayor of Mahahual, personal communication, May 21, 2019)*

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The actions of both, port management and the government are needed for this. The trends have shown that poor destination management can lead to drastic reaction of locals, even when they are economically dependent on tourism and the reactions of Mahahual's residents lead towards this. Currently they are still supporting tourism, but if the negative impacts start to outweigh the positive impacts further this might change.

Sinking crime rates, welcoming residents and a varied offer of authentic tourism activities will be beneficial for the success of Mahahual as a (cruise) tourism destination. Complaints on review sites reflect that not everyone appreciates commercialisation and staged authenticity and within Quintana Roo there are various destinations, where tourism development has led to big issues, which was also acknowledged by SEDETUR during the interview. Obviously, this is not a desirable situation for neither tourism development nor city development as a whole.

While the port could lose profit on the short term, and the government would have to invest money into the village, on the long-term it is probable that by listening to Mahahual's residents and in including them in the tourism development they will benefit from it as much as the population itself.

Therefore, on the long-term, both, the government and the port management should advocate a tourism development which includes Mahahual's residents. However, to not only rely on action by these institutions, it is recommended that the community jointly work on a bottom-up approach, a movement, that will ensure that the community is not left out. The small stakeholders of Mahahual, such as hotel owners, tourism service providers, taxi drivers but also locals currently not yet involved in tourism, must collaborate with each other and find solutions together to achieve a more beneficial tourism industry for everyone.

In the next chapter one possible way to increase the socio-cultural benefit is explained.

## 7. Recommendations

Based on the conclusion described in the previous chapter, this chapter outlines the main recommendation for TAKATA Experience/ the community, SEDETUR Quintana Roo and Costa Maya Port to improve the socio-cultural impacts of cruise tourism in Mahahual.

They are forwarded to the responsible person, namely the director of SEDETUR and the director of the cruise port

### 7.1. For TAKATA/ Mahahual's Community

#### **Market**

One long-term oriented solution to tackle various of the above- mentioned issues, would be to create a market within the centre of Mahahual, where various products such as ready-to-eat meals, souvenirs, artistries, fruits, vegetables and other supplies can be sold to both locals and tourists. It could be divided into sections, each reflecting a region of Mexico and other countries that Mahahual's residents originate from.

A market like this could improve the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in five ways, which are in line with the principles of social sustainability by WACOSS, as explained in the CLR, indicated below in red:

1. It improves directly, indirectly and induced the local community through:
  - Providing employment especially for locals that do currently not work within tourism – **Equity, Quality of life**
  - Offering shopping opportunities, so that not only tourists but also more locals shop within Mahahual – **Quality of life**
2. It provides a place for locals to socialize with each other and engage in a healthy activity (not connected to drugs) – **Interconnectedness (between locals)**
3. It provides an opportunity for locals currently not employed in tourism, to engage with tourists – **Interconnectedness (between locals and tourists)**
4. It helps to not only keep the culture and traditions of different parts of Mexico alive/present, but also educates both, the residents and tourists about the different cultures in Mexico – **Diversity**
5. Increased pride or ability to share their pride for their culture

It is recommended that apart from just providing goods there should be educational panels or similar, informing about the various cultural backgrounds with a special focus on the Mayan culture which is present in Quintana Roo. In the future guided tours could provide this educational background with a more co-creational angle, possibly with a combination of a food tour. Additionally, the location could provide a space for festivities and traditional performances. The possibilities are basically endless.

Of course, receiving support from government or port can help to establish the proposed market. Support directly from cruise operators can be sought as well, by making use of their foundations or other resources (see Appendix I). The researcher was in contact Norwegian Cruise Lines for a possible cooperation and is currently awaiting their response. Since the Costa

Maya is the second most important port in Mexico, they cruise lines should provide some support.

Nevertheless, this idea is not exclusively dependent on others, but can be possible by collaborating within the community and applying a suitable marketing strategy that attracts cruise tourists even without the support of the port.

### **Tour through Mahahual**

The commissioning client raised concerns about locals giving up their current employment to sell on a market without having the security of it functioning well. The idea is therefore to start with a guided tour which leads visitors to the houses/workplaces of residents which create products. At this stage it is known that there are people producing hot sauces, honey and bracelets. Here the same principle of showing diversity and educating can be applied. Once this is well established and there are enough interested tourists, this can be moved to the market.

Additionally, this approach has another side effect. If tourists are led to kilometre 55, the government might feel urged to restore this area, since they will not appreciate tourists seeing the bad condition of the roads and the lack of infrastructures.

### **Follow-up (research) projects**

To put this idea into practice, additional research is needed; on one side the community must be researched; given skills, interest to participate and cultural backgrounds. On the other side the customer demand should be investigated. In Cozumel there is a market which is, according to online research, also visited by cruise passengers. This could provide a first impression of interest and demand.

### **Adapting the Eco Certificate**

TAKATA is currently providing eco-certifications to Hotels and Restaurant depending on how ecologically sustainable they are. However, this certificate does not include any social aspects, even though it is one of the three pillars of sustainability. The recommendation therefore is to rename the Eco Certificate to for instance, Sustainability Certificate, and include various rules concerning the social aspects. These could be for instance a minimum number of Mexicans employed, a minimum wage, social benefits such as insurance, amount of holidays that exceed the legally required amount of five days per year and could possibly go further to engage with the community, for instance donating left-over food, hosting community events or volunteering.

### **Workshops**

Researching customer demand and marketing behaviour, which is needed for the market, could also lead to other projects supporting tourism businesses, such as:

- ❖ A workshop on diversifying the touristic offer of Mahahual provided to tourism entrepreneurs
- ❖ A workshop on marketing approaches to reach cruise tourists without depending on the cooperation of the port provided to tourism entrepreneurs

### **Cruise Platforms**

Additionally, it is recommended to contact cruise platforms which are used by cruise passengers to inform themselves about ports and destinations. Since Costa Maya Port does not inform their visitors about Mahahual, these platforms can be used as a tool to raise passengers' awareness and knowledge of Mahahual, since some passengers believe that the port IS the village.

The first step has been taken by the researcher by contacting [cruisemapper.com](http://cruisemapper.com) to request that they add more information on Mahahual to their page of Costa Maya Port. They promptly replied and updated the information. Other platforms include [www.cruisecritic.com](http://www.cruisecritic.com), [www.whatsinport.com](http://www.whatsinport.com) and the websites of the cruise liners, which provide information about their ports.

#### **7.2. For Costa Maya Port**

A previously discussed, on the long term it is probably that the port will also benefit from working together with the community.

Therefore, it is firstly recommended to provide honest answers inside the port, where Mahahual is not displayed as dangerous but as it is, a nice village with beautiful beaches. Information should be given about the existence of Mahahual and how to get there, by for instance indicated it on the Costa Maya Port.

When exiting the port passengers might be reminded to behave respectfully, since some respondents have mentioned that some of them are too drunk and become rude.

Also, for inside the port some changes are recommended. While the shows provided there are not inauthentic, since they do exist in Mexico, they are displayed out of context. It would be great to provide some information about their origins, their purpose etc. This information could be provided either with panels, a person or a video. Those guests that are interested have the possibility to learn, those that are not can just enjoy the show.

Further visitor research could also show if there is interest for a museum about for instance Yucatan's history, rooted in the Mayan and Spanish culture. If there is, an interactive, modern museum could educate the tourists further.

#### **7.3. For the Tourism Secretariat of Quintana Roo**

Looking at the tourism management of Mahahual, two things were especially present. Firstly, the infrastructure is not adapted to the number of tourists visiting Mahahual. This does not only lead to nuisances for the community, but it also threatens the natural landscape of

Mahahual, which is the main reason why people are visiting. Prioritized should be the improvement of drainage, water treatment plant and waste management to reduce the impact on the environment and the further dying of the mangrove forest and coral reef. Through their employment within the tourism and fishing industry, residents directly depend on the health of the ecosystem and they have mentioned it as the main problem.

Additionally, roads and services such as health services and police should be adapted to the growing number of people, at least during high season, where there are not only more tourists but also more locals.

The second very apparent issue was that locals do not feel included in the tourism management of the village. If it is true that tourism stakeholders and Civil Society are already involved, as SEDETUR is saying, then they have to communicate this better to the community. One way to do this, would be by making use of social media. There are three Facebook groups of Mahahual<sup>5</sup> which are used intensely and could support. Additionally, decisions and plans should be made public and presented in a way that is understandable for the community. Here as well, Facebook can be used to reach a wider audience within Mahahual.

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<sup>5</sup> These are *amigos unidos por Mahahual*, *Todos somos Mahahual* and *Mahahual Living*

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## Appendices

### Appendix I: Best practices by cruise companies

In this section various projects for a positive social and cultural impact on communities implemented within the cruise tourism sector are described. Some interesting social projects could be found. Many of the cruise lines listed below also visit Costa Maya Port and it is hoped that some projects applied in other ports of call could also be undertaken in Mahahual.

This overview should on one hand provide an inspiration for possible projects which can be developed in Mahahual and on the other hand introduces organizations that TAKATA could directly cooperate with to jointly work on a more (socially) sustainable tourism development in Mahahual.

#### Funds and in-kind donations

##### **Cruise Industry Charitable Foundation**

The Cruise Industry Charitable Foundation (CICF) is a non-profit public charity, founded 1998 by the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), to improve the quality of life of communities of those destinations that are visited by the cruise ships industry by partnering with state and local businesses at the destination. CICF supports NGOs which work on the following areas:

1. Civic and Community Development
  - Job creation and training programs
  - Access to basic community services, disaster relief, emergency service assistance
  - Civic education, self-sufficiency and individual awareness programs
2. Educational Assistance and Training Programs
  - Education for all different ages, especially for minority and disadvantaged students to advance literacy, reading, math and science proficiencies
  - Improve basic life skills, good citizenship and public service
3. Public Health Programs
  - Public health facilities that provide treatment and support
  - Medical research focussed on disease prevention
4. Environmental Awareness & Education and Maritime Environmental Technologies
  - Promote environmental awareness and education
  - Enhance maritime environmental technologies

CICF is supported by 23 different cruise lines, amongst others AIDA, Carnival, Disney Cruises and Royal Caribbean International. A full list of supporters can be found [here](https://www.cruisefoundation.org/supporters) (<https://www.cruisefoundation.org/supporters>).

Public charities can apply a grant for any of the above-mentioned causes and may not use more than 10% of the received money to cover staff and running costs with the rest directly going towards the program cost or the organization of program activities. Donations by CICF can be received for a maximum of three years. (Retrieved on May 1, 2019, from <https://www.cruisefoundation.org>).

### **Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association's Foundation**

Consisting of 21 member lines, the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA) is a not-for-profit trade organization offering its members a forum to discuss cruise industry issues. It brings together the cruise lines operating in Florida, the Caribbean and Latin America with government, ports and private as well as public sector representatives to increase passenger and cruise line spending and enhance the visitor experience at the destination with the goal to stimulate cruise passengers to return to the destination as overnight tourist (Received on May, 6, 2019 from <http://www.f-cca.com>)

FCCA's outreach program can help with needed projects upon request of any destination. Some examples of projects include; cleaning beaches/roads, painting Schools/Hospitals/Orphanages, hurricane clean up, community projects and hospital volunteering.

FCCA also has its own foundation which supports charities working for different causes at the destinations. In the past funds were provided to for instance hurricane relief in Cozumel, food programs in the Dominican Republic, Red Cross chapters in Aruba and St. Maarten, and Earthcare, an environmental education organization in the Bahamas. Additionally, through their holiday gift project presents get shipped to children in foster homes and other institutions in the Caribbean and Latin America. The children receive the gifts during a holiday party on one of the partner vessels organized in their honour (Conservation International, 2006).

### **The Princess Cruise Community Foundation**

Established in 2008, the Princess Cruise Community Foundation is a non-profit public benefit corporation which supports non-profit organizations through financial as well as in-kind donations to improve education, preservation of natural and historical attractions, disaster relief and global communities' local health and welfare efforts (Princess Cruises, n.d.).

### **Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. Donations & funds**

Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. offer in-kind cruise donations as well as cash funds to organizations which benefit the entire community and are either focused on marine conservation or education, excluding individual schools, parent-teacher associations/originations, health-related charities (Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd., n.d.)

### **Donating used goods**

In the process of refurbishing their vessels, some cruise ships donate used goods such as chairs, tables, beds, mattresses, refrigerators, utensils and toys but also televisions, laptops and even pianos. Two examples of this are Windstar Cruises, Carnival Cruise Line and Holland Cruise Line who have gifted used goods to various organisations in port communities including orphanages, senior centres, churches and temples and schools (Conservation International, 2006; Windstar Cruises, 2012; Carnival Corporation & plc., 2017 ).

## **Donating Food**

Carnival's Costa Brand is working on the 4GOODFOOD Program since 2016, which addresses food scarcity by reducing food waste by improving food preparation, designing food consumption more responsibly and donating excess food. For the latter, Costa is cooperating with the Italian food bank charity Fondazione Banco Alimentare ONLUS, to which 'ready to eat' meals are donated which have not been consumed in the restaurants on board. Additionally, the costs saved by reducing food waste on board are donated to the network of Food Gardens in Africa, which is promoted by the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity (Carnival Corporation & plc, 2017). With this project, the foundation intends to create 10.000 food gardens in African Schools and communities to increase awareness about the value of food diversity and access to healthy, fresh food (Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, n.d.).

### **Pan American Development Foundation Partnership**

Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. partners with the Pan American Development Foundation (PDAF), with which they support communities of their Latin American and Caribbean ports of call. Cruise members get actively involved in projects which range from disaster relief and education and sustainable livelihood programs to literacy programs in and the support of small businesses and artisans in Latin America and the Caribbean (Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd., n.d.).

### **Hurricane & Disaster Relief**

Various cruise corporations offer support for destinations hit by a hurricane by donating money and supplies as well as volunteering. These include amongst other Carnival Corporation & plc, Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. and the cruise associations FCCA and CLIA (Princess Cruises, 2017; Carnival Corporation & plc, 2018).

### **Volunteering**

Cruise ship companies do also not only provide volunteer opportunity amongst their employees, such in the case of Disney Cruise Line and Princess Cruise Lines, but also give their passengers the chance to actively be involved in volunteering tasks (Disney Cruise Line, 2008).

Carnival Corporation & plc used to run the Fathom line, dedicated to providing volunteer opportunity to its guests in Cuba and the Dominican Republic (Carnival Corporation & plc, 2017). However, the line was quietly discontinued in the year 2019.

### **Community Involvement/ Engagement**

#### **Cunard and the Embera Indian village**

The partnership between the cruise line Cunard and the Embera Indian village offers cruise passengers the possibility to visit this tribe in the Panamanian rainforest. After arrival with the canoe, visitors will get greeted by the Tribe Chief, try traditional local food, learn about the tribes' culture, artistries and life and get the possibility to buy local crafts. While care must be taken to provide fair pay to the local community and avoid staged authenticity as well as commoditization, this product is a great way to bring economic benefits to the tribe, keep local traditions alive, educate visitors and promote intercultural communication (Conservation International, 2006).

#### **Partnership with artisans and restaurants**

In the Galápagos Islands, local artisans have the opportunity to sell their goods directly onboard the Celebrity Xpedition, carried out by Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd (Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd., n.d.-b).

### **Partnership with local restaurants**

Norwegian Cruise Lines used to have a partnership with restaurants in Bermuda, offering their guests 25\$ lunch or 50\$ dinner vouchers, for which they paid 5\$ or 10\$ subsequently. These could be redeemed in any of the restaurants on board or in any of the 35 up to 50 participating restaurants on shore. These restaurants would then receive the money from NCL. However, since no information is available online anymore, it is assumed that this partnership is no longer existing (Conservation International, 2006).

### **La Gamba Community Tour for Windjammer**

Windjammer Barefood Cruises, which are no longer operating since 2007, used to offer a community tour to the village La Gamba in Costa Rica. The tour was established by La Esquinas Rainforest Lodge, after staff of the Lodge realized that tourists barely get into contact with locals not employed in the tourism industry. The tour included amongst others the visit of a community school where tourists, children and educators could interact, a stop in an organic soap laboratory, where participants can learn about the process and purchase soaps and a stop at the townhall, providing the opportunity to buy handmade crafts of local artisans. The guide of the tour was a member of the La Gamba community and the payments for the tour were distributed to the community school and other groups of the community (Conservation International, 2006).

### **Overnight Stay**

Windstar Cruises dock until midnight or even for the whole night at some destinations, providing their passengers with the opportunity to spend an evening out at the destination and leaving local restaurants and bars with more business for the night (Moore, 2018).

### **Education**

Various Cruise Lines also work on efforts to educate both, the communities they are visiting and their own passengers. Disney offers an onboard youth activity program which educates children about environmental issues. Timon and Pumbaa from "The Lion King" motivate to take action in one's everyday life. Additionally, the cruise line sponsors various eco-camps across The Bahamas and U.S. Virgin Islands which are tailored to the local flora and fauna and teaches children about conservation and recycling (Conservation International, 2006). Other cruise lines educate their adult guests with during lectures about various topics, including learning about the destinations they visit, while others use technology as a tool for this, such as in the case of Oceanview by Carnival Corporation & plc (Carnival Corporation & plc, 2017).

Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. financed the construction of an energy-efficient and hurricane and earthquake resistant school building near Labadee, Haiti. Children can attend the school from pre-kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade and follow a curriculum in accordance with the government's requirements (Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd., n.d.-b).

### **Training Programs**

FCCA offers various training programs to destinations to improve tourist satisfaction and therefore the impact of cruise tourism. There are different workshops available, tailored to



specific professions within the tourism industry, including for Greeter & Front-Line Staff, Tour Operators and Taxi Drivers. The workshops cover a wide array of subjects such as the impact of (cruise) tourism, understanding cultural differences, complaint handling, cruise line insurance requirements and crisis response (Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association, n.d.).

Note: It is not the intention of the researcher to praise those cruise companies which have been mentioned in this chapter. The information provided was collected from the companies' websites as well as the report *From Ship to Shore Sustainable Stewardship in Cruise Destinations*, (Carnival's sustainability report from 2017 is even *named sustainability from ship to shore*) written collaboratively with some of the biggest cruise corporations wherefore the information will always be in favour for cruise lines and the cruise tourism industry in general. However, the actions of cruise lines do not always seem to be in line with their statements, nor is proved that their ethical practices are really based on a wish for more sustainability or rather used as a business tool. To name two examples, after stating 2014 in their "Code of Business Conduct and Ethics" "*we comply with the law,*" "*we work together with respect and dignity,*" "*we support human rights and core labour principles,*" Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. has been fined 600,000 Euros for violating Dutch labour laws following a labour inspection in the harbour of Rotterdam (The Ethical Travel Guide, 2017). That Carnival and Royal Caribbean have not replied to the researcher's email, is in line with this.

This clearly reflects that these projects must be viewed critically; one positive activity carried out by a corporation does not necessarily make it a in general sustainable company. Nevertheless, they provide a more sustainable solution and are one step towards the right direction. The researcher hopes that these findings can be used for Mahahual to profit from the cruise tourism that arrives at the destination.

## Appendix II: Table of indicators according to Deery et al. (2013)

Impacts	What is the issue and why is it important?
<i>Economic benefits</i>	
1 Opportunities for local business	Increased trade occurs through increased numbers of visitors and offers the opportunity to develop a variety of local businesses.
2 Employment opportunities	Tourism will generally stimulate the local economy and create employment opportunities for locals.
3 The strength of the local economy	Tourism is generally regarded as enhancing the economic strength of the local region.
4 Revenue for local government	Tourists bring additional money to the region through spending on goods and services. Additional people in the region may also increase the taxes raised by local councils.
5 Funding for public services (e.g. health, police, fire services)	Increases in the use of public services require increases in funding from local and state governments. This need for additional funding may also cause taxes to rise.
<i>Opportunity cost</i>	
6 Demand for public services (e.g. health, police, fire services)	With increases in tourists comes an increase in the demand for services. This can often lead to an increase in the services provided, but can also lead to longer queues and waiting times (this is a consequential cost as opposed to an opportunity cost).
<i>Facility maintenance</i>	
7 The standard of maintenance of public facilities such as beaches, parks and roads	Tourism has always been seen to bring new facilities into communities which benefit the community. However, tourists use these as well so the facilities require greater maintenance, which is a cost borne by the community.
8 Public transport	In some regions, public transport services may be increased to meet the needs of tourists which improves the services available for locals. In other instances, however, tourists can create additional crowding on existing services.
<i>Interesting things to do</i>	
9 Shopping opportunities	The range of shops available and the hours that they are open often increase as the number of tourists to the region increase.
10 Entertainment and recreational opportunities	Tourists require entertainment and recreational facilities and thus increased tourism can lead to the increased availability of such facilities.
11 Opportunities to socialise	With increased entertainment and recreational facilities plus tourists in the region, there are more venues and opportunities for locals to socialise.
12 Intercultural interaction	Tourists often wish to engage with local residents as part of the tourist experience and if the tourists come from different cultures, this will promote intercultural interaction.
<i>Disruption</i>	
13 The number of people in public places (e.g. parks and beaches)	While some local residents resent having to share public space with tourists, many find that moderate increases in the number of people (tourists) using public areas provides social interaction opportunities and may add to the atmosphere. Also, crowding may be affected by increases in the permanent local population, so these should be considered.
14 The availability of parking spaces	With tourists coming to the region, residents and visitors may 'fight' for the current parking availability causing frustration and conflict.
15 Noise levels	Tourists often socialise late into the evening and consume more alcohol leading to increased noise for locals. Some tourist activities such as power boating can also be quite noisy.
16 The number of people in shops, restaurants, nightclubs etc	The number of people in shops etc can present a positive or negative impact of tourism. More people may add vibrancy to the community but may also cause frustration and withdrawal of local residents.
17 Traffic congestion	Increased tourist numbers can lead to traffic congestion particularly in town centres in seasonal destinations. This can impinge on the way of life of local residents.
<i>Pride</i>	
18 Community pride	The fact that visitors want to come to a destination and spend discretionary income can enhance the sense of pride that the local community has in its destination.

<i>Environment</i>	
25	Litter Residents may feel that tourism results in increased litter that reduces the beauty of the environment and results in increased costs to have the litter taken away.
26	The available habitat for local wildlife In many regions, tourism development occurs in areas that were previously in coastal or bush settings. This urban expansion often encroaches on the habitat of native animals. As well as this, tourists will often frequent nature trails and the like which can impact on the local habitat.
27	The natural environment As above, the development of tourist facilities can detract from the natural environment.
<i>Increased prices</i>	
29	The overall cost of living Prices of goods and services, including house prices are perceived to increase in tourist destinations. Whether this is due to tourism or other factors, is difficult to determine.
30	Property values In regions where there are many tourists, there is often strong demand for real estate to service the tourist industry including workers in tourism. This can lead to increased property prices which is good for property owners but a problem for locals seeking to purchase a property.
31	Rents In regions where the tourism industry grows, the cost of rent can be pushed up by workers servicing the tourism industry, which impacts on the living costs for locals.
32	Rates Coupled with the increased property values due to tourism noted above, the flow-on effect is for rates to increase. This can be problematic for local retirees and others on fixed incomes who struggle to finance the increased rates.
<i>Access denied</i>	
33	The number of permanent residents in the Region The ratio of permanent residents to the number of holiday home owners and tourists is important to the way that the local community accepts tourists. If there is a substantial imbalance, conflict may arise.
<i>Justice</i>	
34	Social and moral values The social and moral value systems of tourists may differ quite substantially from local residents that can then cause change or conflict in the local region.
35	Relationships between local residents As different groups of locals within a community can have different engagements with and attitudes towards tourists, there can be frictions between groups in the local community.
<i>Justice</i>	
34	Social and moral values The social and moral value systems of tourists may differ quite substantially from local residents that can then cause change or conflict in the local region.
35	Relationships between local residents As different groups of locals within a community can have different engagements with and attitudes towards tourists, there can be frictions between groups in the local community.
<i>New infrastructure</i>	
36	The level of urban development Increased urban development is often attributed to tourists coming to regions and can be perceived as reducing the quality of life of residents and changing the character of the region.
37	New shops and restaurants New shops and restaurants may be built as a result of tourists coming to a region.
<i>Town/region character</i>	
38	The physical appearance of the region The infrastructure that is developed in support of tourism and the activities that are undertaken by tourists can result in changes to the physical appearance of the region, which may not suit locals.
39	The style of architecture on the region Tourism facilities that are developed within a region may not be in keeping with the existing styles and cultural heritage.
40	The character of the region Large numbers of visitors to a region in relation to the size of the local population has the potential to change the character of the region as can the type of tourism development that occurs.

Table 4 Table of indicators according to Deery et al. (2013)

## Appendix III: List of respondents

Name	Place of residence	Occupation	Connection with port	Nationality	Time lived in Mahahual	Comments
Andrés Aguilar Becerril	Chetumal	Director of Tourism Secretary of Quintana Roo	/	/	/	
Obed Duron	/	Mayor of Mahahual	/	Mexican	3 Years	
Laura	South of Mahahual (Along beach)	Dive instructor and co-manager of dive shop	Cooperation with port	Spanish	3 Years	
Mauricio	South of Mahahual (Along the beach)	Waiter & housekeeper of Hotel/Restaurant	None	Mexican (Quintana Roo)	20 Years	
Marcelo	Village	Snorkel tour guide	Cooperation with port	Mexican (Coahuila)	10 Months	
Rodrigo & María	Village / 55	Family owner / employee of souvenir shop	None	Mexican (Yucatan/Veracruz)	3 Years / 1 Year	
Ramon and Hernandez	Casitas	Security Guards	Employed by port	Mexican (Veracruz/Jalisco)	3 Years (both)	No voice recording
Ramón	Casitas	Chef & Waiter in various restaurants	None	Mexican (Mexico City)	3 Years	
Sara	Casitas	Manager of Travel Agency	None	Belizean	5 Years	
Susanne	Casitas	Yoga Teacher	None (Business related)	German	8 Years	Her NGO, Cleaning Group Casitas, gets support of the port
Carlos	Casitas	Owner of Golf Card Rental	None	Mexican	20 Years	Helped to build the port, was located in inside the port; No voice recording
Valeria & Alexandra	Kilometer 55	Owner of family- run hotel (Mother & Daughter)	None	Mexican (Quintana Roo)	19 Years	
Miguel	Kilometer 55	Bricklayer	None	Mexican (Quintana Roo)	3 months	
Pedro	Kilometer 55	Employee of Souvenir Shop	None	Mexican (Yucatan)	4 Years	Owned a souvenirship in port; No voice recording of half interview

Table 5 Respondents and important characteristics

## Appendix IV: Participant Observation inside Costa Maya Port

Date: 02/06/2019

Time: 3 pm until 5pm

Comments: Only one boat docked, the Enchantment of the Seas from Royal Caribbean, the sky was grey and it was raining a little bit in between.

Already getting inside the port was not easy to organize, since a permit is needed which can only be given by some people that work inside the port. First, a friend asked one of his acquaintances if he could get a permit to enter the port and was being told that it would not be a problem. However, suddenly that person did not answer to the messages of my friend anymore and at one point made the excuse that it was not possible because there would not be power in the port, which clearly is not the case when ships are docking and the port has to cater for thousands of tourists. It is likely that this happened because he found out the ticket was for me and since I had talked to him earlier, he knew that I am doing a research about the cruise tourism in Mahahual. We then met him on the street one day by coincidence and he said it was not possible to get me a permit because the director is in Roatán. However, over another friend it was finally possible to get a permit by pretending that I am visiting from Germany and want to do some shopping inside the port. Once at the entrance the security asked for specific permission if I can enter the port in general or just go to the one ship of the person who gave me the permit. I was finally allowed to enter the port.

Once inside the port my identity was concealed because first of all, answers could be answered differently if my purpose was known and secondly, it could lead to problems for my friend which organized the permit for me.

Therefore, no interviews were conducted. Instead, it was observed which kind of shops and shows can be seen insight. Additionally, I wanted to test what many of my respondents had told me during the interviews, namely that the port workers tell tourists that going to the village is dangerous (even though it is not) and giving wrong information about tourist facilities which are outside the port such as a golf card rental and a travel agency.

When I entered the port, I was taken aback by how false everything looked. The very first restaurant were even decorated with plastic fruits and vegetables and fake packaging, like in a Playmobil supermarket. There were restaurants offering Mexican food (even though it did not look like the Mexican street food), burgers, fish, ice-cream & dough and fruit smoothies. There were also a chocolate and tequila museum, even though they were more for tasting and buying than actual museum. Shops ranged from countless souvenir shops, to various stores selling shirts which change colours in the sun light, jewellery stores (e.g. Diamonds International, initial rings and jewellery and Silver by the Seas), drug stores, bag shops and one Cuban cigar shop. Unfortunately, I could not ask which shops were rented and which owned by the port, since it could have revealed my identity. One small boutique with the name Xbaal boutique sold some more individualised clothing. According to the tag on the clothing and the employee, some of the profits go to the Gilberto Cancun a.c. foundation which employs, educates and empowers mostly Mayan women. I also found a little stand at the exit of the port which sells handicrafts produced in the community centre of Mahahual. However, this community centre is also owned by Costa Maya, so it is not sure how much money ends up with the works. Additionally, as mentioned by some of the respondents, the exit of the port is not that easy to find. Indeed, as one of the respondents had explained as well, two of the three exits were closed and are now only used for emergency exit.

Additionally, there are two Fish Spas and a SPA offering amongst others Mayan Healing Rituals and hammock massages. Once leaving the boat the tourists get welcome by some people in the costume of Mayan Warriors, while one of the restaurants shows some poorly performed lucha libre (Mexican wrestling). There is also a tower for the Papantla's Flying Show, however, there was no show performed while I was in the port.

The whole experience is rounded up by a dolphin aquarium, where guests can swim with dolphins, and a bird zoo, with some flamingos and parrots, the latter did not move one bite in the two hours that I spend inside the port.

In addition to observing which attractions and shops there are inside the port, I also wanted to find out about the information provided for tourists. I therefore pretended to be a tourist, a solo-travelling girl. I asked the following employees whether it is safe and/or recommendable to go to the village:

- One security women
- A group of 3 employees of a shop
- One employee of a souvenir shop
- two waiters (together)
- One woman at the exit selling the tickets for the trolley to the village

When I asked the two waiters if they would recommend me to go to the village they were exchanging looks and said no, it is not safe. When I asked why exactly, if it is because of getting robbed they said 'Yes!' and because of bad people ('mala gente'), everyone would be drunk. They sounded convincing, however, having been told before that employees normally get told to say to the tourists that the village is dangerous, the exchange of looks seemed rather obvious.

Apart from this everyone said it would be safe to go, even when I directly asked if it is dangerous. Although the woman at the exist told me she is not sure what I want to do in the village, since they are only restaurants and shops. When I asked if there are beaches, she did say however that yes, there are beaches. I also asked this woman about whether there are any possibilities to rent bikes or golf cards etc. She told me that there are golf cards inside the port, but she is not sure if it is still open, and a shop for renting scooters outside. When I asked if there is a possibility to rent golf cards outside in case the other golf card rental was closed, she also explained to me the way to the one that is located outside the port.

All in all, the port creates a staged experience for is visitors, showing various different elements of the Mexican culture without any context. In fact, it seemed like even the workers are tired of having their culture presented in this way. A lot of them were on the phone and seemed very unmotivated, posing a contrast to those people working along the malecón in the center of Mahahual. Additionally, while they are so many different shops, most of them offer the same products, namely souvenirs, printed shirts and jewellery.