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СБОРНИК ДОКЛАДИ ОТ МЕЖДУНАРОДНА НАУЧНА КОНФЕРЕНЦИЯ
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PARQUE ECOLÓGICO DA NASCENÇA IN ITAPOROROCA-PB (BRAZIL): A STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

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***Abstract:** The use of ecological parks for tourism is a strategy for conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in areas of great environmental value, enhancing the potential of these environments and generating development for local populations. For this goal to be achieved, it is necessary that the public authorities invest in the planning and organization process in a strategic way, seeking to optimize public policies. Thus, it is necessary to know the scenarios in which the attraction is located, trying to understand them in order to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the positive ones. In this sense, this article aimed to evaluate the Parque Ecológico da Nascença, located in the city of Itapororoca, in the state of Paraíba (Brazil), through the SWOT analysis method. The results showed that in the internal environment the weaknesses of the ecological park are greater than the strengths, thus, it is up to local managers to pay more attention to these aspects. In relation to the external environment, several opportunities are glimpsed for this attraction, leaving it up to the government to create public policies that can promote continuous improvements and diversify the attraction. It is suggested that new studies can be carried out, taking as a starting point the level of satisfaction of visitors who frequent the park, as well as an analysis of the relationship between public and private power in this space.*

***Keywords:** Sustainable Tourism; Strategic Planning; Natural Areas;*

Introduction

The use of ecological parks for tourism is a strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in areas with great environmental value, enhancing the potential of these environments and generating development for local populations. In this context, the Parque Ecológico da Nascença, located in the city of Itapororoca, State of Paraíba (Brazil), is the main local tourist attraction and proposes to explore tourism based on the principles of sustainability. For this goal to be achieved, it is necessary that the public authorities invest in the planning and organization process in a strategic way, seeking to optimize public policies.

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Thus, it is necessary to know the scenarios in which the attraction is located, trying to understand them in order to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the positive ones. In this sense, this article aimed to evaluate the Parque Ecológico da Nasçença, located in the city of Itapororoca, in the state of Paraíba (Brazil), through the SWOT analysis method.

Dantas & Melo, (2008, p.120) state that "this methodology becomes an ideal tool in the process of management and monitoring of tourism in a particular location", allowing improvements and potentialization of the analyzed environment. Therefore, it can be seen that this technique has the potential to offer more clarity about the points that need to be further explored and that deserve more attention.

This work is justified by the need for debate on the relationship between tourism and environment, having as an analysis point the Parque Ecológico da Nasçença, so that it can contribute to other natural parks, aiming at economic and social growth and minimizing environmental impacts.

Literature Review

An ecological park is a conservation unit (UC) of public ownership and dominion, where visitation is allowed and encouraged, based on rules and restrictions established in the unit's management plan or regulation. Its main objective is the sustainable use of natural areas, seeking to conserve the fauna and flora of these ecosystems, to recover water resources and degraded areas. In addition to being suitable environments for the encouragement of research, monitoring and environmental education activities, and leisure and recreation activities for the population in harmonious contact with nature (Brasília Ambiental, 2021).

The use of ecological parks for tourism is a strategy to conserve and use natural resources in a sustainable way, enhancing the potential of these environments and generating development for local populations. For the Ministry of Tourism, ecotourism is the segment that meets the proposal of these areas, and can be defined as

The segment of tourism activity that uses, in a sustainable way, the natural and cultural heritage, encourages its conservation and seeks the formation of an environmentalist consciousness through the interpretation of the environment, promoting the well-being of populations (Ministério do Turismo, 2010, p.17).

For this tourism to develop its potential, whether economic, social or environmental, managers need to act strategically supported by tools capable of providing support for environmental analysis, among these tools, one can cite the SWOT analysis. For Dantas &

Melo, (2008), this SWOT analysis constitutes as a potential instrument to establish the level of tourism development in which localities are and has the purpose of monitoring the internal environment Strengths, Weaknesses, and external environment Opportunities and Threats of a particular company or activity (Kotler, 2012). Its origin is dated in 1950 by researcher Peter Drucker (Medeiros, Nascimento & Perinotto, 2017) and its development from the year 1960, at the Harvard Business School, seeking ways to balance the "Strengths" and "Weaknesses" of an organization, as well as its distinctive competence, and the "Opportunities" and "Threats" of a corporate environment (Fernandes et al., 2021).

Thus, Oliveira (2007, p. 37) exemplifies the SWOT analysis in this way:

1. Strength - is the differentiation achieved by the company - controllable variable - that gives it an operational advantage in the business environment (where the issues not controllable by the company are).

2. Weakness - is the inadequate situation of the company - controllable variable - that gives it an operational disadvantage in the business environment.

3. Opportunity - is the environmental force uncontrollable by the company, which can favor its strategic action, provided that it is known and satisfactorily taken advantage of while it lasts.

4. Threat - is the environmental force uncontrollable by the company, that creates obstacles to its strategic action, but that may or may not be avoided, as long as it is recognized in a timely manner.

SWOT analysis has been used as a tool of paramount importance for the strategic planning of tourist destinations, because for Medeiros, Nascimento & Perinotto (2017), it is constituted as a tool of simple use and suitable for dealing with the evolving and constant process of tourism activity. For Campodónico & Chalar (2017), tourism as a social phenomenon is coated with multidimensionality, has inter-relationship with multiple social actors, and is inserted in diverse space-time. Therefore, it is necessary tools that can accompany these profound transformations, assisting managers in decision making.

Parque Ecológico da Nascença

The Parque Ecológico da Nascença is located in Sítio Leite Mirim, 2 km from the urban area of the municipality of Itapororoca, Paraíba, its construction is dated in 1970 and was first named Parque da Nascença (Silva, Nascimento & Tuma, 2014). Its name is associated with its great hydrological potential, given that the park houses a spring that supplies the entire city for free. The term Itapororoca comes from the Tupi-Guarani language, which means: (*ita: stone; pororoca: meeting of the waters*) (Silva, 2017).

The park became a preservation area in the year 2022, through the bill No. 001/2022 with the objective of ensuring the preservation of the Atlantic forest remnants and associated ecosystems in the region, recover the degraded areas, preserve the remarkable geological forms in its limits, enable the development of tourism and preserve drinking water source (Prefeitura Municipal de Itapororoca, 2022).

The tourist attractions of the park are directly linked to its geological and geomorphological composition, its hydrology, the Atlantic forest reserve that exists in its surroundings, in addition to the structure of bars and restaurants and a bathhouse (Silva, Nascimento & Tuma, 2014).

Figure 1: Parque Ecológico da Nascença-PB



Source: Survey data, 2022

Methodology

Initially, a bibliographic and documental research was carried out that constitutes the literature review and the deepening of the main subjects addressed in these studies, such as: SWOT Analysis, Natural Heritage, Ecological Park. Subsequently, an in loco visit was made to the Parque Ecológico da Nascença in March 2022. The visit was carried out with the support of a research script and photo capture to provide greater interaction with the reality studied. After data collection, a SWOT matrix was prepared with the main findings, which will be described and discussed in the results and discussion.

The analysis of the results was carried out through four thematic axes: strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities. After dividing the components into these four groups, a detailed analysis of each one was conducted, as explained by Dantas & Melo (2008, p. 121), "it is necessary to cross Opportunities with Strengths and Weaknesses with Threats, seeking to establish strategies that minimize and monitor the negative aspects and maximize the potential", so as to generate growth and development of the tourist destination/attraction.

Results and Discussion

Next is exposed the Strategic Evaluation Matrix, in the form of SWOT Analysis at the Parque Ecológico da Nascença, reporting which are the most acting strengths, most debilitating weaknesses, of the internal environment; and which are the most accessible opportunities, and most important threats of the external environment for the development of tourism (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Matrix SWOT: Parque Ecológico da Nascença

Internal Environment	
Forces	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valorization and preservation of the natural heritage. • Local gastronomy • Inclusion of the community; • Sports practices; • Access ramps in the pool area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access road • Lack of tourist signposting; • Public bathrooms partially adapted for disabled people; • Inappropriate waste disposal. • Absence of a medical support team. • Lack of fence in the woods; • Lack of accessibility to the pools; • Non-existence of a load capacity study
External Environment	
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased demand for ecological trails and outdoor activities • Creation of the Eco-museum • Increased demand for leisure activities in preserved areas • Interest in local culture, particularly gastronomy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor safety • Environmental pollution • Cultural changes in the sense of increasingly demanding social inclusion, especially accessibility • Elderly public: the increase of this public generates a greater need for accessibility.

Source: Survey data, 2022.

Evaluation of the Internal Environment - Strengths and Weaknesses of the Parque Ecológico da Nascimento

The results showed that the main strengths are linked to the valuation and preservation of the natural heritage promoted by the park, since the law allowed the process of ordering and discipline of the space, guiding all who frequent it and avoiding negative environmental impacts.

Another important point is the participation of the local community in the services offered in the park, because several enterprises were installed that generate employment and income for local residents, through bars and restaurants that contemplate the local cuisine and that value the small farmers, having in vista that many inputs are produced or bought from them.

It is also noteworthy that the park has a calendar with sports attractions for adults, children, and the elderly who are assisted by the City Hall's Centro de Referência de Assistência Social (CRAS), encouraging the well-being for various audiences through swimming, water aerobics, and walking.

As for the weak points, we can mention the access road, which is made of "red soil", becoming flooded during rainy seasons, making it difficult for the transportation means to pass, because it gets slippery.

The absence of tourist signs is another point that calls attention, as there are no signs that can guide tourists about the prohibitions and permissions inside the park, making the existing relationships difficult and causing problems between visitors and the management team. Tourists need to be well informed about how to get to the attraction and which norms of good coexistence are implemented, avoiding damages and keeping control over existing relationships.

The bathrooms are partially adapted for people with disabilities, there are access ramps and doors in the width indicated for people who use wheelchairs, but there are no support bars inside, which is necessary to include this item.

It is also worth mentioning that the inappropriate disposal of residues is performed, because the available waste garbage cans are insufficient to meet the demand on days with a large flow of people. Furthermore, it is necessary to use waste garbage cans for selective collection, promoting better disposal of residues and contributing to sustainable issues.

The Atlantic Forest area has no fence, which facilitates the access of third parties without permission inside the park, increasing visitor insecurity and promoting degradation in the edge zone, through bird extraction and incorrect disposal of solid waste. In addition, the

park has two swimming pools for public use, however, they are not accessible for people with disabilities, making it difficult to enter for swimming.

Evaluation of the External Environment - Opportunities and Threats of the Parque Ecológico da Nascimento

Regarding the opportunities, the increase in demand for leisure activities in preserved areas has grown, as well as outdoor activities, especially during the pandemic period, so this factor can be used to promote the attraction.

Local entrepreneurs can use the space for the creation of the Eco-museum, with an exhibition of material about the fauna and flora of this space, generating an interactive and creative space for visitors and promoting environmental education.

As for the negative points, it can be highlighted that the municipality has deficient security, since the municipal guard responsible for supporting local residents is not enough for all occurrences, leaving a gap on the day of great movement in the park.

Cultural changes in the sense of demanding more and more social inclusion, especially accessibility, in addition to the increase of the elderly public generates a greater need for accessibility, being a threat, since there are few adapted places, requiring more attention to offer this public more autonomy and safety.

Conclusion

Tourism in ecological park is constituted as a great potential for conservation and promotion for environmental education, provided that it is done based on sustainable principles, for this, administrators need to monitor the development of these spaces strategically, avoiding negative social, environmental and social impacts. In view of this, this article aimed to evaluate the Parque Ecológico da Nascimento, located in the city of Itapororoca, in the state of Paraíba (Brazil), through the SWOT analysis method.

The results showed that in the internal environment the weaknesses of the Parque Ecológico da Nascimento are greater than the strengths, thus, it is up to local managers to pay more attention to items that concern the access road, lack of tourist signaling, public bathrooms partially adapted for people with disabilities; inappropriate disposal of waste, lack of medical support team, lack of fence in the forest, lack of accessibility in swimming pools, lack of study of carrying capacity.

In relation to the external environment, several opportunities are glimpsed for this attraction, leaving it up to the government to create public policies that can promote continuous improvements and diversify the attraction. In this context, we can see the need to promote public policies for the development of the tourist attraction, enabling more economic growth and greater participation in the process of reducing environmental and social impacts.

It is suggested that new studies can be carried out, taking as a starting point the level of satisfaction of visitors who frequent the park, as well as an analysis of the relationship between public and private power in this space.

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