

Ending a Touristic Destination in Four Decades: Cancun's Creation, Peak and Agony

Elva Esther Vargas Martínez¹

Marcelino Castillo Nechar²

Felipe Carlos Viesca González³

Abstract

This article aims to explain how Cancun was born in the 1970's, and how this beautiful natural site with a warm weather which had fostered a wide variety of marine and terrestrial fauna and flora was transformed. The article describes the way in which its touristic offer has evolved, the way in which the number of arriving tourists has developed throughout the years, as well as the problems faced by hotel owners due to the impact of various hurricanes and the influenza AH1N1 epidemic in 2009 amongst other facts. Cancun, similarly to other resorts created under similar circumstances, has received dramatic environmental and social impacts as a result of the substantial transformation of its natural habitat and to the application of policies which have only looked for short term economical benefits; some of these impacts are explained hereby. Finally, the consequences of the development scheme followed for decades in this Mexican resort facing serious survival problems are discussed.

Key words: Cancun, tourism, hotel business, environmental impact, social impact.

1. Introduction

Based on the argument that tourism is a phenomenon of great economic relevance, a series of policies has been put into practice. On one hand, this policies have stimulated international tourism; on the other, the growth of the service industry in order to take advantage of worldwide natural and cultural resources susceptible to being "exploited". The interest of governments to encourage the tourism industry has led to the acknowledgement of essential conditions required to develop these activities. These are to have the technology needed for the fast construction of urban and touristic infrastructure and abundant, cheap and underemployed workforce, who is willing to be in service and to be trained to follow tourists behavior patterns; count with enough exotic differences and enough urbanism where the tourist may freely wander (Castillo, 2005).

Within this frame, the handling of tourism in Mexico was not initially oriented this way. Nevertheless, the touristic industry started to be sold as a palliative model to development and modernization due to the meager life conditions of the population in the middle of the last century. It seemed that the Mexican touristic policy has been shaped under the modern conception of the touristic industry which implies the possibility of enjoyment for all involved, besides offering indisputable benefits to the recipient population. However, as shown in some studies (De la Torre, 1990; Jiménez, 1993; Castillo, 2005; Macías y Pérez, 2009), tourism has functioned as a fundamentally economic instrument for certain public and private interests.

¹Professor-Researcher of the Facultad de Turismo y Gastronomía, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, Pedro Moreno 233, Col. Morelos, Toluca, Estado de México & PhD in Environmental Sciences; MBA and BA in Tourism. Line of research: environmental and economical-administrative studies related to Tourism.

²Professor-Researcher of the Facultad de Turismo y Gastronomía, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, Cerro de Coatepec s/n Ciudad Universitaria, Toluca, State of Mexico & PhD in Political and Social Sciences, Master's Degree in Touristic Research and BA in Tourism. Line of research: Touristic socio-cultural studies and touristic policy.

³Professor-Researcher of the Facultad de Turismo y Gastronomía, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, Cerro de Coatepec s/n Ciudad Universitaria, Toluca, State of Mexico & PhD in Management; Master's Degree in Science and Statistics and Agronomist Engineer. Line of research: gastronomy and management.

The creation of large touristic resorts in the country under the concept of development poles gave origin to the so called Integrally Planned Centers (IPCs) and to the megaprojects ⁽¹⁾, which were seen as the ideal instrument to take advantage of “useless” resources, which were not been “taken advantage of”, for instance weather, landscape, culture and traditions.

During the 1970’s, the Mexican government encouraged large public construction and complementary measures to attract foreign and national investment for there was the idea that those megaprojects would bring modernization to rural areas through their insertion into the international market. Nevertheless, this position was questioned since its creation. It was argued that the supposed development would go along with severe deficiencies related to touristic urbanization, such as the overexploitation of natural resources, uncontrolled migration, irregular settlements, marginalization of the native population, crime and prostitution amongst others (García de Fuentes, 1979; Dachary y Arnaiz, 1998; Torres, 2002; Jiménez, 2010; Macías y Pérez, 2009).

It can be stated that the development of the touristic industry, in any area, depends on the action of the government, the promoters, the investors and some native collaboration. Nonetheless, for many of them this process arrived without being expected, without preparation or protection against these often desired *hordes*. In this way, tourism (and its service industry), which was initially seen as a renewable source, as an industrial resource with visitors who were portrayed as admirers –not consumers- of the landscapes, customs, and the monuments of the destination areas turned to be considered (without abandoning the former idea) as a competitor over the same resources and capital of other destination areas and became – an essential factor to the production process- a soil, environment, nature, customs, traditions, and people consumer.

2. Cancun: the birth of a touristic destination

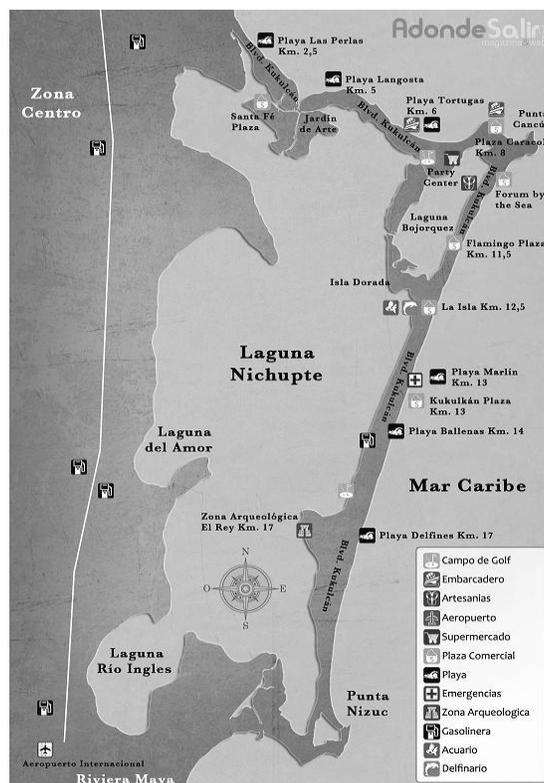
During the 1960’s economic crisis in Mexico, tourism represented an important opportunity to bring foreign currency into the country, and taking advantage of the conditions that it presented the government decided to develop what would be Cancun, one of the IPC’s. At that time, touristic policies and management relayed only on two institutions, the *Consejo Nacional de Turismo* y the *Departamento de Turismo*. Based on the need to strongly encourage this area, the *Fondo Nacional de Fomento al Turismo* (FONATUR) was created in 1974 as a planning organism of the above mentioned IPC’s (García, 1992).

Thus the federal government by means of the *Banco de México* carried out a series of research that resulted in the master plan for Cancun which included a total surface of 12, 700 hectares for the location of a touristic site (12%), a lagoon system (38%), conservation areas (33.7%) and urban purposes (16.3%) (García, 1992). The project was financed through both federal resources from government instances and international resources, such as *Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo* (BID).

The construction began in February 1970 and absorbed by itself 21% of the federal investment made by the middle of the decade. The dominant model of touristic development was characterized by the concentration of infrastructure and services in enclosed areas and the operation of the destination by selected entrepreneurial groups where FONATUR had a huge power in the decision making. The purpose of FONATUR was not only to develop and consolidate these IPC’s internationally but also to keep control and handle land taxes and touristic companies. The territory of Quintana Roo became at the time a federal state and the new municipality of Benito Juárez was created, with which Cancun gained its proper space (García, 2009)

Cancun used to be a 100 to 400 meter wide reef and was once an important ecosystem which supported numerous marine species (Wiese, 2000), together with its warm weather and vast vegetation it meant a very valuable natural zone. Being this area the most attractive, large hotels, shopping mall, condos and golf courses were established there. It is 23 kilometers long limited by the Caribbean Sea to the east, and the Nichupté Lagoon to the west; Nizuc and Sigfrido Channels limit the zone (figure 1). The Master Plan considered four sections for this touristic zone: A, the farthest, for luxury hotels; B, summer houses and golf course; C, residential areas and hotel lots; and D, also for residential and hotel lots but much closer to the city (García de Fuentes, 1979). Nowadays it is divided in five zones: 1) the so called Cancun Island or hotel zone, 2) the urban zone, 3) the Juárez Port zone, 4) the communal farming zone, and 5) the Alfredo V. Bonfil zone, located on the highway from Cancun to the Riviera Maya, predominantly for housing.

Figure 1. Map of Cancun



Source: www.adondesalir.com.mx

Hotels were built directly on the dune strip to be able to offer private beaches, so the main avenue was built behind the hotels not allowing ocean view or access to the beach. “The model of Cancun, with private beaches, is similar to that of Miami, but taken to its maximum consequence, for the tourist who flies into the city does not have any contact with it nor with the resident population; for the latter, the touristic area is “controlled” in a non-official way, but it is under a classicist scheme that questions and forces street vendors and workforce with an undesirable look to abandon the area” (Córdoba y García, 2003:124).

Nowadays Cancun is the most recognized Mexican touristic destination (FONATUR, 2010) and has become the entrance to the Riviera Maya, the Costa Maya and even the Mayan world of Central America. The economic income generated in 2009 by the more than 3 million visitors was more than 13 billion dollars. It has a diversified touristic offer and has been characterized by being the second national touristic destination with the highest foreign hotel investment. However, Mexican investment is also important since it represents 70% of the hotels (Méndez, 2007). Nowadays Cancun has 139 hotel facilities which generate thousands of jobs and make it the main national contributor of jobs related to tourism (IMPLAN, 2007).

However the construction of road infrastructure, sewer systems, airports, golf courses, restaurants, residential areas which house the growing population have caused landscape visual pollution, animal migration, litter and water scarcity. The primary activities have also been affected in the Caribbean Sea, for instance fishing has suffered the impact of the urban-industrial activities derived from to the touristic activity (Grupo Achipahuac, 2004).

With the touristic industry the population increased since people from elsewhere considered Cancun an opportunity for economic development. The population grew from 80,000 in 1983 to more than 120,000 in 1985 (Romero, 2009). According to data by the municipality of Benito Juárez the number of inhabitants in the county grows approximately 6.41% annually, rate which is superior to the state and national medium. By 2007 the population of the municipality was 572,973 inhabitants and 526,701 particularly in Cancun (figure 2).

Figure 2: Cancun's urban contrasts



Source: Prado, 2009

Evidently, the Master Plan did not project the future demographic growth, because the prospective studies forecasted 201,875 inhabitants for year 2000 and reality duplicated it (Fernández de Lara, 2009).

Romero(2009) refers that Cancun's population growth presented serious communitarian contrasts giving origin to deficiencies in the urban infrastructure since its creation. The main problems were caused by the lack of lower class housing, of financing for self-construction and of space to buy land. Although the housing situation has consolidated throughout the years, the access to basic services has withdrawn due,amongst others, to irregular settlements (IMPLAN, 2007).

3. Cancun and its hotel business

In September 1974 Cancun's first hotel began its operations. Loans from the *Fondo de Fomento a la Infraestructura Turística* (INFRATUR) and the *Banco Mexicano SOMEX* supported the construction of what would be the Hotel Playa Blanca (nowadays Temptation Blue Bay). Hotel Bojórquez opened 3 months later and by the end of the year Hotel Maya Caribe (nowadays Avalon Resorts) was in operation.

A year later, Cancun counted with 1,322 rooms and received 99,500 tourists annually. The growth of hotel offer in order to cover the hotel demand was imminent(Chart 1). Large hotelchains began to operate their facilities such as Presidente, Camino Real (nowadays Dreams) and Hyatt Cancun Caribe.

During 1976, the construction of hotels continued; large and small, national and international hotels were added to the list. This led to the establishment of hotels such as the Club Mediterraneo, the Dos Playas – which nowadays is one of the few that keeps its original beach-, Villas Kin-Ha, the Club Verano Beat and the Carrousel Cancun. The Sheraton Resort and the Casa Maya opened their doors in 1978; the Calinda Quality Inn (Oasis Beach), the Krystal (NH) and the Fiesta Americana did the same in the early 1980's. From 1975 to 1989 Cancun multiplied its hotel offer seven times and ten times the influx of tourists, passing from 99,500 to more than a million guests.

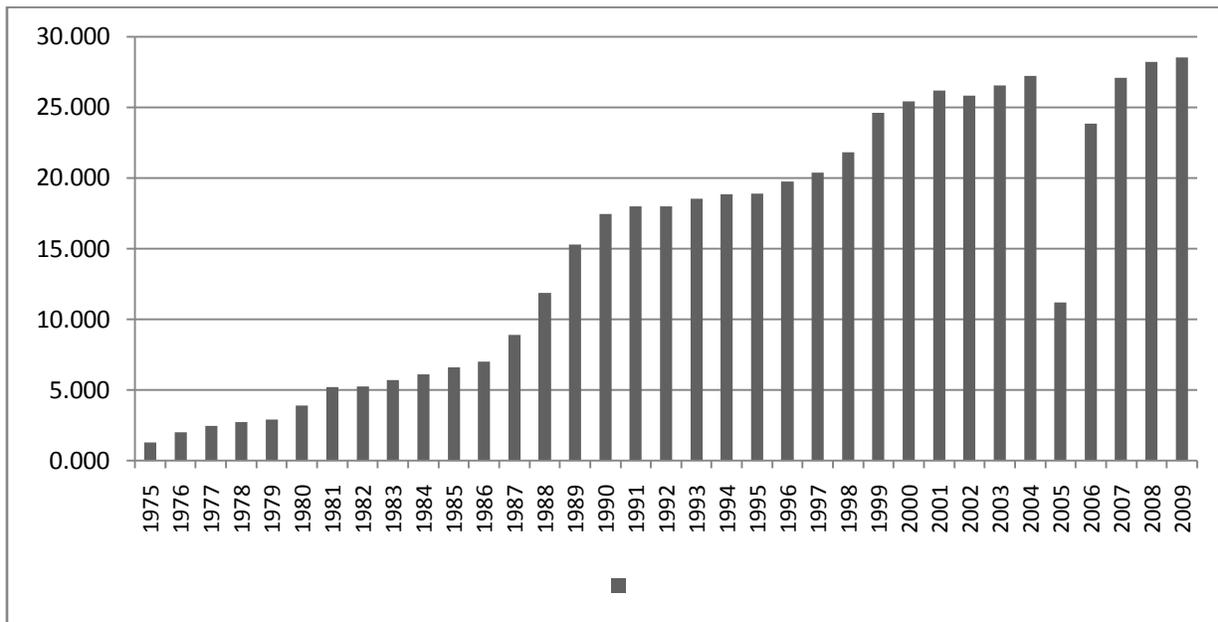
Originally, the site was conceived as an international touristic center oriented to an elitist market, mainly North American (Córdoba and García, 2003). However, during the 1980's, due to an overgrowth of the tourism industry, the hotels faced a competitive situation and offered vacation packages for middle class Americans, giving origin to the loss of exclusiveness with which the project was conceived (Torres, 2002).

The 1990’s represented the adjoining of Spanish chains to Cancun’s hotel business, although the national and international chains also grew. Hence, in that year there were 17,470 available rooms due to the incorporation of hotels from the Melia, Oasis, Westin and Marriot chains.

Nine years later 7,140 rooms had been added to the site and the Ritz Carlton, Royal Islander, Caesar Park, Hilton Cancun Beach, Gran Caribe Real, Le Meridian and Moon Palace hotels had been built.

By May 2008 the accommodation offer was integrated by 139 hotels; 20 of them are luxurious Great Tourism hotels, 30 five star hotels, 29 four stars, and not less representative are the three star hotels (34) and 13 two and one stars establishments (Chart 2). 53.2% of the hotels are located on the beach zone, 10.1% are in the area of the lagoon and 36.7% in the city. “National and international hotel chains cover most of the highest categories” (Jiménez, 2010:134).

Chart 1: Evolution of the number of rooms offered in Cancun (1975-2009)



Source: made with data from FONATUR, 2010 and BarómetroTurístico de Cancún, 2010

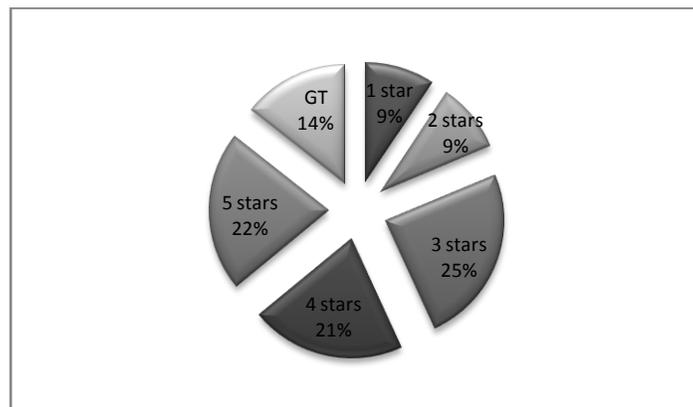


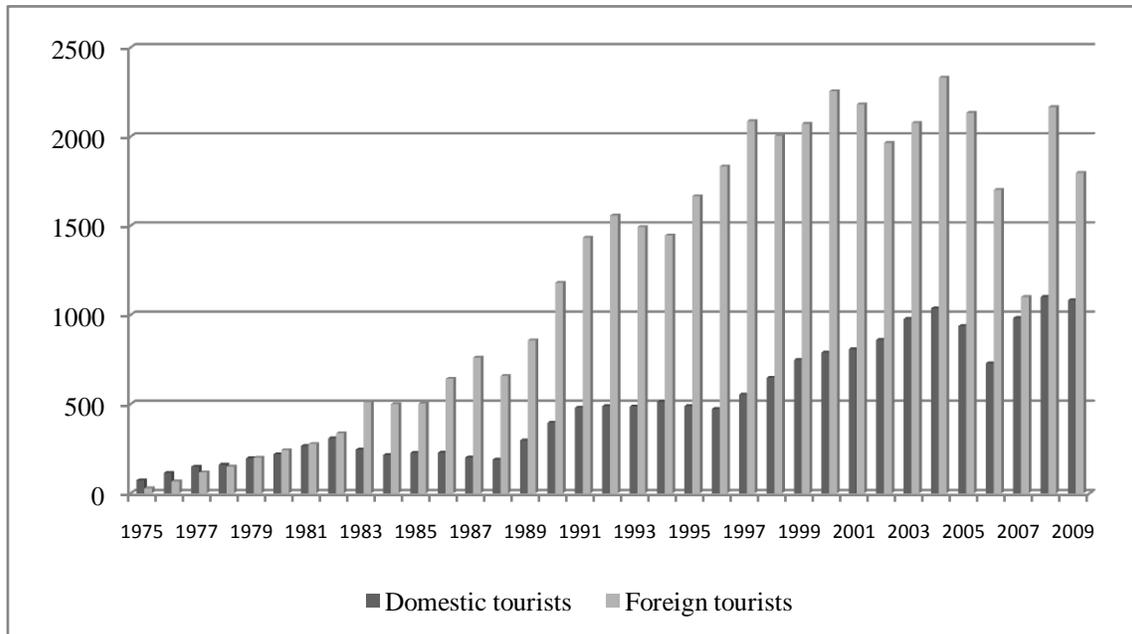
Chart 2: Percentage of hotels per category

Source: (Mora y Moncada, 2008).

The arrival of tourists has risen since its creation (chart 3). Nowadays Cancun has become a touristic product of sun and beach where the “all inclusive” model prevails.

Authorities, investors and tourism servers recognize that the future of tourism in Cancun greatly depends on the diversification of products and services offered to satisfy the continuously changing touristic demand of mass consumption.

Chart 3: Evolution of arrivals of tourists into Cancun (thousands of people)



Source: made with data from FONATUR, 2010 and BarómetroTurístico de Cancún, 2010.

4. The touristic activity in trouble

Four events have greatly affected Cancun's touristic sector: hurricanes Gilbert (1988) and Wilma (2005), the 2001 terrorist attacks in the USA, and the sanitary alert due to the influenza AH1N1 during 2009.

The first interruption suffered by the touristic activity took place in 1988 when hurricane Gilbert got to Cancun's territory. At that time the hotel offer was almost 12,000 rooms and the site had a medium hotel occupation of 70%. The municipal authorities had to take 7,000 tourists from the hotel zone to shelters built for the purpose. Such was the magnitude of the impact on the image of the resort that hotel occupation went down and different market strategies were required to recover it. Hence, the big operators offered a new concept, the "all included"² plan whose long term benefit would be only for the hotel chains, limiting local development.

According to Romero (2009) the damage caused by the hurricane was substantial. Nevertheless the worst disaster was the ecological one, when the coast line underwent a transformation by losing dunes and beaches. The jungle and the reef were affected and the phreatic zone was polluted.

Later on, the world crisis originated by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the USA also affected Cancun. The annual arrival of U.S. tourists stopped due to airport restrictions and people's fear to fly.

On October 15, 2005, what began as a tropical depression in the Atlantic Ocean hit Cancun as 280 km/hr winds hurricane Wilma. The disaster was imminent and with the degradation of the site came the damage of hotel buildings. Even nowadays some hotels are not operating yet. It is estimated that the economic damage caused by the natural disaster was of 1,411.9 million dollars (Moncada, 2009).

Local newspapers gave evidence of the bad handling of the situation by hoteliers and authorities, uncovering errors in the policies of civil protection which they had agreed on (Martoccia, 2005). The possibility of having 80% of the rooms available for the high season in December was mentioned; however, only 50% of them could be rebuilt.

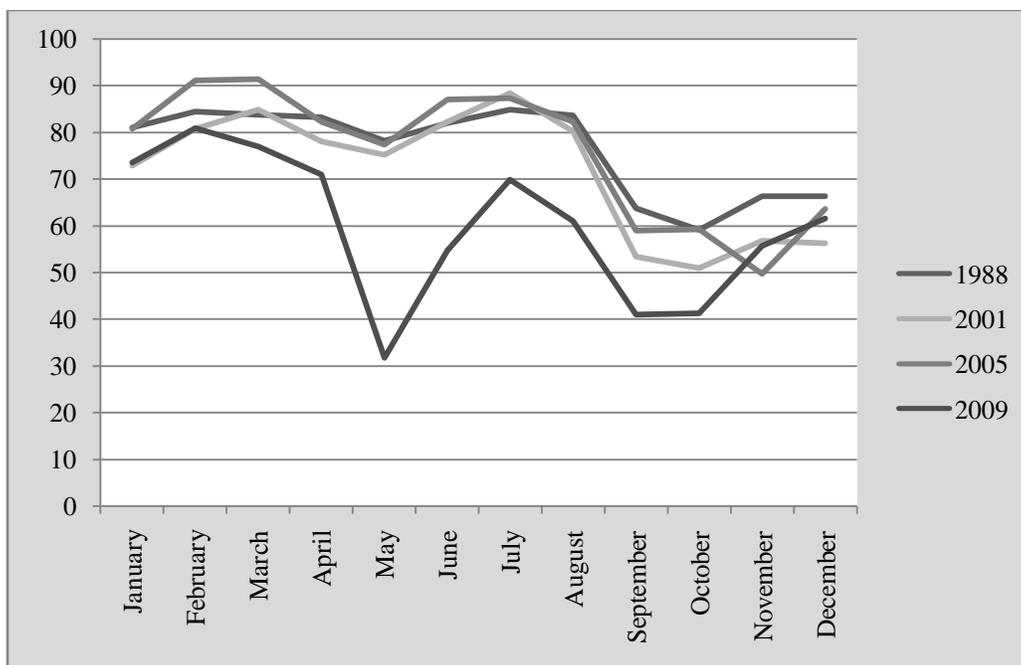
Regarding the hundreds of jobs depending on the hotel industry, the situation turned difficult, since they tried to reach the hotel managers for days without a reply. Temporary employees were forced to take obligatory vacations (Suverza, 2005).

Afterwards, on April 24, 2009 the people from Cancun woke up with the news that the country was under a series of measures to stop a new disease: influenza AH1N1. Public spaces where crowds were likely to gather should be closed in order to prevent massive infections among the population. Touristic activity was greatly damaged; international tourists left the country while foreign flights arrived almost empty. Cancun had a great fall and hotel occupation was reported between 10 and 30%. Almost 90% of the reservations were canceled (SECTUR; 2009). The negative economic impact caused by influenza AH1N1 was estimated in 307 million dollars (Moncada, 2009).

The behavior of hotel occupation of Cancun due to the impact of the above mentioned events can be observed in chart 4. The most dramatic fall of this sign took place in 2009 due to the sanitary alert of the influenza. It recovered a little during the summer to drop again in the following months.

The fall of tourism due to these events brought a series of consequences to the site and an opposite multiplier effect showed when a great number of services ceased to be offer and the production of goods stopped. This led to a massive layoff.

Chart 4. Monthly behavior of Cancun’s hotel occupation (1998, 2001, 2005 y 2009)



Source: made with data from FONATUR and AHC.

The disappearance of beaches because of the hurricanes caused negative advertising against the natural beauty of the site. That is why the recovery of the sand beaches became a mandatory task for FONATUR.

5. The dark side of tourism in Cancun

5.1 The environmental aspect

Cancun is located on a highly permeable soil; there are no rivers, and rainwater leaks to the subsoil giving origin to a phreatic zone near the surface. Insufficient drainage provokes that the volume of not processed sewers has its destiny in septic tanks that leak through the subsoil. “Every year more than 11 million cubic meters of sewage water pollute the phreatic zone as a consequence of the drainage net”, since the geographic coverage is 85% (IMPLAN, 2007:13).

There are nine sewage water treatment plants operating in the city, three of them run by FONATUR and the rest by the municipality. These plants collect 407 million cubic meters of sewage water; most of them (386 million, 95%) are produced by the tourist services (INEGI, 2009). Studies like those by Zaldívar (2007) make evident the pollution in the subsoil water in Cancun due to the high concentration of fecal waters, detergents and fats.

The accelerated population growth of Cancun has turned it into a city with high garbage production. This garbage is sent to illegal garbage dumps and has become a constant worry for researchers and ecological groups. In 1993 there were 47,000 tons of solid waste not collected in Cancun and the municipal administration decided to give the garbage recollection service of the hotel zone to a private enterprise (Romero, 2009). Nowadays 329, 000 tons of garbage is collected annually in the area, a quarter of it produced by the hotel zone.

It is evident that as a consequence of the touristic industry in the zone, beaches have been eroded and there has been a negative impact in both the reef and the lagoon systems. Hotel offer has required more land. Hence, after a few years of Cancun's creation, 370 hectares of mangrove swamp in the land designated of the hotel zone were eliminated. The decrease of the area covered by vegetation diminished as the years passed until it completed the 23 kilometers of length of the island (Pérez y Carrascal, 2000). The abuse suffered by the buffer zone by allowing touristic development on it is provoking the decrease of the population's life quality; it affects the harmonic development of its main economic activity, tourism, which is damaged without alternative in case of problems, especially of social and ecological nature (Arnaizy Dachary, 2008).

Specialists determined the high fragility of the ecosystem and the limited life-span of Nichupté's lagoon system in the mid 80's. In response to that report, authorities considered taking actions such as the elimination of sewage water, the extension of water treatment plants, the drilling of deep boreholes, the permanent cleaning of aquatic plants and the banning of the entrance of large vessels. However, the lagoon kept on being damaged because the ecological legislation was published ten years later (Romero, 2009).

During 2010, the amount of sand poured onto the beaches of Cancun was 5.2 million cubic meters, more than double of that poured during the first beach recovery which was of 2.3 million cubic meters. Eleven kilometers of beaches were filled with sand brought from marine banks such La Ollita, Megarrizaduras (Isla Mujeres) and Punta Norte (Cozumel) even though environmental organizations opposed the project (Varillas, 2010).

The lack of a policy regarding public environmental management (EM) since the birth of Cancun as a destination has highly contributed to the environmental deterioration of the place. As there was no regulatory frame which rested on an environmental legislation, the touristic development process could not be taken towards sustainability.

In recent years, Cancun's hotel offer development tendency has been oriented to residential housing development, with little hotel development (Jiménez, 2010), so that the politics and environmental instruments be overrun by the urban development, showing a clear weakness towards environmental protection and conservation. In the same way, one can observe the lack of coordination among the different federal, state and municipal government branches whose decisions regarding environmental impact are seldom analyzed in a coordinated fashion (SEMARNAT, 2006).

Due to this political and regulatory disarticulation, several irregularities have been committed such as the authorization of nineteen changes in soil use and the appearance of the so called STH permits (Special Touristic Hotel) that did not exist and that allow the construction of skyscrapers which has contributed to the over densification of the area and to the modification of the landscape (Ugalde, 2008). This situation is only one indication of the differences existing in the interpretation regarding environmental management and touristic development planning among the different actors involved in the sector. Nevertheless, the conception of its application has proven the consolidation of tendencies where investors understand planning considering only resources object to be taken advantage of at the level of the property legislation, and rarely the ecological processes which define the environmental quality of the ecosystem they belong.

5.2 The social aspect

One aspect that aggravates Cancun's environmental situation is undoubtedly the strong migration which has been generated from its creation.

Three years after the beginning of the project almost 6000 people were already living in irregular campsites. People from all over the country have arrived into the area, people without families, who do not know the medium, who do not have sense of belonging; most of them live on their own since they are housed in the facilities that hotels offer to their personnel, or because they believe they will be there temporarily (Ugalde, 2008).

Quite differently to what was originally planned, the touristic zone is a space where constructions limit in a natural way the access to the population, which reduces its possibility to get identified with the territory (Jiménez, 1993). Cancun is a zone where most hotels have their “own” beaches, where electric and telephonic facilities are underground not to interfere with the landscape, where there is a certain control on the architectonic style of the construction and an image of modernism and luxury is seek. “When one walks through the hotel zone, one feels as if one were in any city or amusement park in the United States such as Las Vegas or Disneyland” (Fernández de Lara, 2009: 198). It is said that the Mexican tourist feels as a foreigner in his own country suffering from discrimination from the touristic service operators versus the foreign tourists who pay in dollars.

With rising hotel construction and beach concessions beginning in 1990, the inhabitants of Cancun can only enjoy two beaches: Delfines y Langosta; this has caused the feeling in the local population that “they have been stripped and segregated from development and from the best opportunities. Additionally, their rights in their roles of natives are not respected, and on the contrary, those who come from outside are benefited” (Campos *et al.* 2008:1). Cancun has kept on transforming itself in an accelerated way; changes take place before the very eyes of the population provoking a psychological answer which gives place to irritability, fatigue and depression. The city the original Cancun inhabitants knew is not the same they know today. The population gets used to this unmeasured growth and the problem with this adaptation is that the quality of human life decreases progressively (García, 2010).

Another factor which has worsen the lack of social cohesion amongst the inhabitants of this resort is the competition regarding better paid jobs whose number is more limited due to the fact that some international hotel chains fulfill their job positions with foreign employees. There is social inequity in Cancun; one can see a strong discrepancy between people who live in luxury residential complexes and those who live in areas of high marginality. In the case of those who work in hotels, Morales Barbosa (Ugalde, 2008) refers there is a contrast between work in the opulence and luxury and subsist within the minimum food and housing conditions.

On that regard, García (2010) comments that people in Cancun have passed from the rural system or the way they used to live in small towns to a city middle class where work in the big hotel chains incorporates them to a different social and economic rhythm. This is also shown by the tension in their family relations for they abandon their origins, leaving behind their former way of life and form of relating to one another which increases their level of stress and anxiety. In addition, tourism paired with low salaries generates a great number of social problems such as prostitution, child abuse, crime, alcoholism, drug dealing and drug addiction amongst others. The worst victims of the huge hotel complexes in Cancun are the Mayans since job policies do not allow them to benefit from these positions due to the fact that they do not have the minimum height required. Strong touristic investments have stripped the Mayans from their lands; however, contrary to others, they do not receive labor or economic benefits. During high season, hotel workers are forced to fulfill long shifts with low salaries; the population is also hired in a temporary fashion that may be weekly or monthly.

5.3 The consequences

The arrival of big companies to operate in these resorts has increased the price of the land and the value generating corruption, stockpiling and middleman’s businesses which are taken advantage of by real estate firms that are already defining the local rules for offer and demand.

Due to the great concentration of hotels in Cancun, there is a high competition that has led companies to establish a price discount policy, operating under the scheme of *all included* (Torres, 2002). Even if at the beginning this scheme was used by Spanish companies, the rest of the hotels (including the small and independent) have emulated it in order to stay in the market and improve their income. Economic crises and high dependence on the U.S. and Canadian tourism have resulted in the fact that these tourists do not have the same expense capacity that they formerly had; in this way, buying these *all included* packages benefits tourists but damages restaurant and bar owners and other businesses that operate inside the hotels.

Figures reflect that affluent tourists are now seeking for more sophisticated and under populated destinations in the Caribbean. *Evenspring breakers*(who for many years were one of the main income sources in Cancun) have moved to other destinations such as Cuba. Additionally, hotel investment has diversified, and both foreign and national investors are looking for new market segments attracted by the turquoise sea and the white beaches. As a result, many hotels have been built in destinations such as the Bahamas, Punta Cana and the Dominican Republic under the same *all inclusives* schemes.

The diagnostic of the TWO (Tourism World Organization) is that touristic destinations in the Caribbean will consolidate in the following years, but Cancun has a high possibility of being left out.

6. Conclusion

The model of touristic development of the 70's was based on the argument of an effective coordination of the efforts of all parties involved towards an integral development. Nevertheless, four decades after, it can be observed that this model had no other intention than that of generating foreign currency based on the mobility of high consumption tourists. It was based on the idea of the multiplying effect which would lead to job creation and income increase, stimulating other economic sectors in the region and improving the life condition of the population. However, the perspective of attracting huge capitals, generating big infrastructure construction and offering job positions predominantly operative brought severe ecological and social consequences.

The analysis of Cancun's touristic development shows that its everyday reality is not that optimistic, especially by the conditions in which the activity has and will keep on manifesting. The development model has taken in account economic values as its main guidelines. The participation of the government in this process has answered to the conception of the big capital. Under this scheme, tourism has been considered a high level business thus susceptible of making a profit.

There is no doubt that during several decades Cancun achieved a stage of definite consolidation becoming the leading touristic destination in the country when a series of important projects allowed an increase in the quality of its services through a major demand oriented to attract new market segments. The sustained growth of the touristic activity for almost three decades attracted foreign capital without precedent, and an important job generation catalogued Cancun as a successful destination. However, the reality of the last decade has uncovered the contradictions and conflicts that have lain there since its beginnings related to the availability of natural resources, the quality and number of job positions and the inequitable richness distribution among the local residents who were always segregated from the great benefits.

The conditions of this touristic development have been sustained on a perfectly outlined production and consumption system resulting in touristic goods and services offered to satisfy the foreign tourist mainly. This started with an overexploitation of natural and cultural touristic resources, control in the offer/demand participation of the national market, and the handing out of all types of facilities to the big corporations.

7. References

- Arnaiz, S. y Dachary, A. (2008). Cancún del auge turístico a la crisis ambiental. Paper presented at the Décimo Encuentro Internacional Humboldt. Rosario, province of Santa Fe, Argentina: 13-17 October 2008.
- Barómetro Turístico de Cancún (2010). web.qroo.gob.mx/siac. Accessed the 10th of November 2010, at 15:10.
- Campos, B. et al. (2008). La actividad turística internacional y su repercusión en la población de Quintana Roo. In J. Fraga, G.J. Villalobos, S. Doyon y A. García (Coord.), *Descentralización y manejo ambiental Gobernanza Costera en México*. Mexico: Centro Internacional de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo CINVESTAV-IPN.
- Castillo, M. (2005). *La modernización de las políticas turísticas: Tendencias y perspectivas*. PhD thesis. Mexico: UAEM.
- Córdoba, J. y García, A. (2003). Turismo, globalización y medio ambiente en el Caribe mexicano. *Investigaciones Geográficas. Boletín del Instituto de Geografía, UNAM*, 52, 117-136.
- Dachary, A.C. y Arnaiz, S.M. (1998). *El Caribe mexicano. Una frontera olvidada*. Mexico: Universidad de Quintana Roo.
- De la Torre, R. (1990). *Ecología urbana de Cancún*. Primer Foro Nacional de ecología y Turismo. Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Ecología.

- Fernández de Lara, A. E. (2009). Cancún. Las contradicciones socio-ambientales de un desarrollo turístico integralmente planeado: 1970-2000. In: C. Macías y R. Pérez (Eds.), Cancún: Los avatares de una marca turística global, Mexico: Universidad de Quintana Roo-CONACyT.
- Fondo Nacional de Fomento al Turismo. (1994). La modernización de México a través del turismo, Cancún, Evolución de los centros FONATUR. Mexico: FONATUR.
- Fondo Nacional de Fomento al Turismo (2010). Estadísticas de ocupación hotelera Cancún. www.fonatur.gob.mx. Accessed the 7th of October 2010, at 19:36.
- García de Fuentes, A. (1979). Cancún: turismo y subdesarrollo regional. Mexico: UNAM.
- García, A. (1992). La planificación de centros turísticos de México. Mexico: Limusa.
- García, E. (2010). Estudio para la detección del síndrome depresivo en el servidor turístico en establecimientos de alimentos y bebidas en Cancún, Quintana Roo. Cancún: Centro de Estudios Turísticos, Universidad La Salle.
- García, H. (2009). Turismo y planeación urbano-ambiental en el corredor Cancún-Tulum. *Topofilia: Revista de Arquitectura, Urbanismo y Ciencias Sociales*. I (3).
- Grupo Achipáuac (2004). Presente apocalíptico: buscando agua limpia en el siglo XXI. In: J. Peña (Coord.) El agua, espejo de los pueblos, Mexico: FESA Acatlán, Plaza y Valdés Editores.
- Instituto de Planeación de Desarrollo Urbano (2007). Plan estratégico de desarrollos sustentable. Mexico: Municipio de Benito Juárez.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática. (2009). Anuario estadístico de Quintana Roo 2009. Mexico: INEGI- Gobierno del estado de Quintana Roo.
- Jiménez, A. (1993). Turismo, estructura y desarrollo. La estructura funcional del turismo internacional y la política turística de México. Desarrollo histórico 1945-1990. Mexico: McGraw Hill.
- Jiménez, A. (2010). Cadenas Hoteleras, estrategias y territorio en el Caribe Mexicano. Mexico: Universidad del Caribe-Porrúa.
- Macías, C. y Pérez, R. A. (Comp.). Cancún: Los avatares de una marca turística global. Mexico: Universidad de Quintana Roo-CONACyT.
- Martoccia, H. (2005). Wilma: la enseñanza, la crisis y las mañás. Cancun, *Voz del Caribe*. [On line] Available in: www.expresionlibre.org/site2/opinion/martoccia_03.php (14 November 2005).
- Méndez, C. (2007). Contribución de la inversión extranjera directa en la conformación del desarrollo económico local: caso sector hotelero en Cancún, Quintana Roo. Master's degree thesis. Mexico: UAEM.
- Moncada, P. (2009). Desastres y turismo. *Boletín turístico de Cancún*, 2(2), 2-14.
- Mora, M. y Moncada, P. (2008). La industria hotelera de Cancún en 2008. *Boletín turístico de Cancún*, 1(2), 2-6.
- Paz, S. (1994). Tendencias Mundiales del Turismo: La Zona del Caribe. *Paper presented at Foro de Análisis: Cancún: El Auge y La Crisis*. H. Ayuntamiento de Benito Juárez, Cancun: 18 y 19 de abril 1994.
- Pérez, G. y Carrascal, E. (2000). El desarrollo turístico en Cancún, Quintana Roo y sus consecuencias sobre la cubierta vegetal, *Investigaciones Geográficas*, 43: pp. 145-166.
- Romero, R. (2009). Política municipal y desarrollo urbano de un modelo turístico. Cancún: 1975-2002. In: Macías Richard, Carlos y Pérez Aguilar, Raúl A. (Coords.) Cancún. Los avatares de una marca turística global, Mexico: Universidad de Quintana Roo-CONACyT, Secretaría de Turismo.
- Suverza, A. (2005). El fantasma del desempleo en víspera de temporada alta. *El Universal*, [On line] Available in: www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/131343_3.html (28 October 2011).
- Torres, R. (2002). Cancun's tourism development from a Fordist spectrum of analysis. *Tourist Studies*, 2, 87-116.
- Varillas, A. (2010). Cancún reinicia recuperación de playas. <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/649816.html>
- Wiese, P. (2000). Impacto medioambiental del desarrollo turístico e industrial. Un Caso de Estudio: Cancún, Quintana Roo, México. Medio ambiente y desarrollo en regiones costeras e islas pequeñas. México: UNESCO.

Endnotes

- (1) Touristic development poles are “sites of great beauty which have been studied to create urban touristic complexes” while megaprojects are a development concept consisting in the preparation of a massive land offer proposed to investors to be developed according to a master plan. IPC's are touristic projects whose function develops around factors such as attractions, the potential use of the land and its relationship with the environment, the target market, the availability of infrastructure, workforce and its remuneration, the socioeconomic level of region, the promotion policies valid in these areas, the federal, state and municipal political willpower to support the project and the estimated investment to support the project (García, 1992:41-70).
- (2) Hotel fare that integrates accommodation, meals, beverages, and leisure activities, all of them within the hotel facilities.