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Citation:

WINTER, Theres, KIM, Seonyoung and PALMER, Nicola (2025). Tourism-driven inclusive growth – insights from Brazil's Northeast. Tourism Planning & Development. [Article]

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To cite this article: Theres Winter, Seonyoung Kim & Nicola Palmer (10 May 2025): Tourism-Driven Inclusive Growth – Insights from Brazil’s Northeast, Tourism Planning & Development, DOI: [10.1080/21568316.2025.2499520](https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2025.2499520)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2025.2499520>



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Published online: 10 May 2025.



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Tourism-Driven Inclusive Growth – Insights from Brazil’s Northeast

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ABSTRACT

The concept of inclusive growth focuses on the relationship between economic growth, poverty and inequality and has started to receive greater attention in tourism research. Bakker, presents a Tourism-driven Inclusive Growth Diagnostic Framework (T-DIGD) to systematically analyse factors that constrain tourism’s ability to drive inclusive growth and identify policy priorities at national level. Using a mixed-methods approach, this study applies the T-DIGD to a local destination in the Northeast of Brazil to assess its practical applicability, identify any gaps, and enhance its value as a diagnostic tool for tourism-driven inclusive growth. Findings confirm the framework’s strength in analysing constraints for tourism-driven inclusive growth in a systematic manner. It is argued that governance, power in terms of access to networks and connections, as well as the political economy should be more explicitly incorporated into the T-DIGD, and further attention should be given to equality in non-monetary outcomes of tourism opportunities.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 7 November 2024

Accepted 18 April 2025

KEYWORDS

Inclusive growth; inequality; tourism development constraints; diagnostic; Brazil

Introduction

Tourism’s contribution to economic growth has received great attention from international and national organisations particularly in the context of low-income countries. Tourism development, however, has also highlighted poverty and inequality in accessing tourism opportunities and sharing its benefits. Tourism scholars have measured the impacts of tourism-generated economic growth either on reducing poverty or on inequality (Bianchi, 2018; Bwalya-Umar & Mubanga, 2018). Rather than focusing on the relationship between tourism and poverty, or tourism and inequality, this study is centred on the concept of inclusive growth, which combines economic growth, poverty, and inequality analyses. Despite the increasing emphasis on the concept in development studies and international policy agendas, it has received limited attention in tourism research (Bakker, 2019).

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This paper explores tourism-driven inclusive growth at local level in the Northeast of Brazil. Using Bakker's (2019) Tourism-driven Inclusive Growth Diagnostic Framework (T-DIGD), it examines potential constraints to growth and equal access to tourism opportunities and analyses equal outcomes of these opportunities. By applying and testing the T-DIGD in a local Brazilian context, the paper seeks to assess its practical applicability and identify any gaps, and therefore, aims to enhance its value as a tool for diagnostic analysis for tourism-driven inclusive growth.

Literature review

The concept of inclusive growth

There has been increased international interest in how inclusion of all parts of society in economic growth can be used not only to increase the productive capacity of the economy but also to enhance wellbeing and societal progress more broadly (Congreve et al., 2020). Inclusive growth has been defined as "economic growth that is distributed fairly across society and creates opportunities for all" (UNWTO, 2021, p. 1).

However, the concept of inclusive growth is not without debate or contestation (Hay et al., 2022; Scholte, 2020). Measurement of the extent to which economic growth is inclusive remains hindered by inconsistencies in data availability between countries. Additionally, there has been a lack of concept clarity between "inclusive growth" and 'inclusive development' (Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2022). It is important to underline the narrower focus of inclusive growth which restricts itself to economic growth.

In this paper, given the specific interest in the T-DIGD, the focus on inclusive growth presented by Bakker and Messerli (2017), Bakker (2019), and Bakker et al. (2023, pp. 416–417) is noted:

[growth that] deals with policies that allow people from different groups ... to contribute to, and benefit from economic growth (de Haan, 2015, p. 612)", "sustainable growth that (i) will create and expand economic opportunities, and (ii) ensure broad access to these opportunities so that members of society can participate in and benefit from growth (Lee, 2019; McKinley, 2010)" and "growth coupled with equal opportunities. (Rauniyar & Kanbur, 2010, p. 457)

Collectively, these ideas draw particular attention to inclusive growth and equality.

Inclusive growth and equality

The promotion of inclusive growth in recognition of the diverse experiences and living conditions of people has been championed by the OECD. Essentially, inclusive growth acknowledges interrelationships between economic growth, poverty, and inequality, and recognises that "diminishing inequality is not a by-product of the growth process [per se]" (Tsapko-Piddubna, 2021, p. 234). Agarwal (2024, p. 8) sees inclusive growth as being focused on the creation of a level playing field and sitting at "the heart of the debate on what it means to be a free and equal society" in that it offers opportunities "to boost national wealth and well-being while reducing poverty, ensuring equity across generations, and preserving economic freedoms."

The IMF (2024) describes inclusive growth as “making the economic pie bigger and sharing those slices more widely.” Accordingly:

[this notion of] inclusive growth is predicated upon broad-based growth across all sectors of an economy, includes low- and middle-income groups and has a distributional aspect that aims to reduce income inequality. (Hampton & Jeyacheya, 2013, p. xv)

Yet, the potential incompatibility of economic efficiency and equity has been noted. For example, Rabby et al. (2018) have argued that developing countries, in particular, need to ensure that equal opportunities and participation in the economic growth process extend beyond focusing on people below the poverty line (pro-poor growth) to include both people below and above the poverty line if income inequality is to be addressed and leave no-one behind (UNDP, 2018).

Inclusive growth, as conceived by Bakker and Messerli (2017), should be part of a long-term agenda to increase the size of the economy alongside employment opportunities rather than equating simply to redistribution of resources to the poor; the focus is on economic growth for everyone including any growth that benefits the poor. In this respect, it extends beyond pro-poor growth to consider growth sustainability and that requires a focus on how growth is generated and not only employment growth but productivity growth (Ianchovichina & Gable, 2012; Ianchovichina & Lundström, 2009). This holds implications for the measurement of inclusive growth beyond the challenges noted by Jeyacheya and Hampton (2022) because it necessitates consideration of both the pace and distribution of economic growth across all sectors (Anand et al., 2013).

Achieving inclusive growth

Challenges to the achievement of inclusive growth amidst local realities, the role of government, individual values, and trust in political actors should not be overlooked (Agarwal, 2024). There are relationships between inclusive growth, governance, and political economy that are worth highlighting. For example, Khan (2012, p. 15) has argued that significant market failures need to be addressed in policies to support inclusive growth and specific institutional solutions are required, relating to “the ‘political settlement’ or social order in which policies and institutions are embedded.” Mitullah et al. (2017) in seeking to understand employment and employment creation have emphasised links between politics, economic, and business sector performance. Scheyvens and Bidulph (2018, p. 591) challenge that the agenda of inclusive growth supports a neoliberal model of economic growth and contest that inclusive business approaches often do not address “a political agenda such as efforts to overcome structural inequalities which are barriers to development for the poor.” This criticism is shared by Bianchi and de Man (2021, p. 363) who argue that the UNWTO’s SDG agenda for inclusive growth is grounded by literal market pragmatism and “inclusiveness is envisaged in terms of facilitating access of producers to global markets and increasing employment opportunities for the poor without challenging existing hierarchies of wealth and power.” The macro socio-economic and political environment should not be overlooked in the context of tourism where structural injustices “entrench inequalities and reproduce exploitative labour practices” (Bianchi & de Man, 2021, p. 220).

Inclusive growth in tourism research

In tourism studies, the concept of inclusive growth has often been used without conceptual scrutiny and there are relatively few studies which have explicitly addressed the concept. Bhatt et al.'s (2024) recent systematic literature review of 27 tourism inclusive growth studies in emerging and developing economies finds that there is only marginal evidence that tourism drives inclusive growth despite its potential for (low-skilled) job creation and foreign exchange. It is, therefore, necessary to identify what prevents tourism-led inclusive growth.

Jones (2013) adopts the concept of inclusive growth to identify the most binding constraints to tourism development in Nepal. These were found to be grounded in political economy and included: a lack of concerted actions to manage and develop areas at the destination level; poor management and public investment in tourism at the national level; and poor relations between government and business hindering innovation, the enforcement of quality standards, and delivery of high-value tourism products and services. Tourism-led inclusive growth should maximise economic linkages to the local economy and minimise economic leakage by increasing local ownership and local supply connections (Hampton & Jeyacheya, 2020). However, many economically less developed countries experience challenges related to reliance on foreign investment, complex supply chain issues, exclusion of participation of small local businesses, denial of local landowners' and indigenous communities' rights to justice, precarity of tourism jobs, and lack of transparency and accountability in governance (Hampton et al., 2018; Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2022).

Governance issues are pertinent to the achievement of inclusive economic growth through tourism. This is supported by researchers of tourism-driven inclusive growth in African, Asian, European, and Latin American contexts. Dossou et al. (2024, p. 687) observe "good quality of institutions or governance could complement tourism development to promote inclusive growth, as positive synergies are apparent from the role of governance in moderating the incidence of tourism on inclusive growth." Furthermore, in Latin America, the geographical context of the research study presented in this paper, Dossou et al. (2023) emphasise the statistically significant negative effect of governance quality on poverty alleviation in contrast to the positive effect of tourism on poverty reduction.

Tourism-driven inclusive growth diagnostic framework

Bakker's (2019) T-DIGD is designed as "a diagnostic to assess and prioritize the different constraints in a systematic way" (p. 584) to identify constraints to tourism-driven inclusive growth at national level. It is built on previous work by Hausmann et al. (2005), who created their own Growth Diagnostics Framework, which identifies the most binding constraints on economic growth and, in return, helps governments set policy priorities by addressing these constraints. It should be noted, however, that inclusiveness was not considered in Hausmann et al.'s (2005) original framework but was introduced later by others, such as, Ianchovichina and Lundström (2009) who carried out benchmarking tests against a set of comparator countries, which enabled them to identify constraints for Zambia's inclusive growth. Hausmann et al.'s (2005) and other diagnostic framework applications

are acknowledged to be for macroeconomic analysis, not focusing on a particular sector. Bakker's (2019) work is different because it adopts previous existing frameworks to develop an inclusive growth diagnostic tool for the tourism sector.

The T-DIGD (Figure 1) is based on three central pillars. The combined impact of these pillars is proposed to determine the tourism sector's ability to drive inclusive growth successfully, i.e. how the tourism sector creates "productive employment opportunities that are accessible for everyone in the country and that have equal outcome" (Bakker, 2019, p. 583). Using a review of literature on tourism and inclusive growth and existing growth diagnostic models, Bakker (2019) identifies constraining factors for each pillar and argues that overcoming the constraining factors will enable inclusive and productive tourism employment opportunities, contributing to inclusive growth. Economic, social and environment sustainability of the tourism sector is seen as key to the success of the three pillars in line with a long-term approach required to achieve inclusive growth.

Bakker (2019) recommends using a mixed-methods approach for the implementation of the framework, which involves combining quantitative methods to analyse benchmark

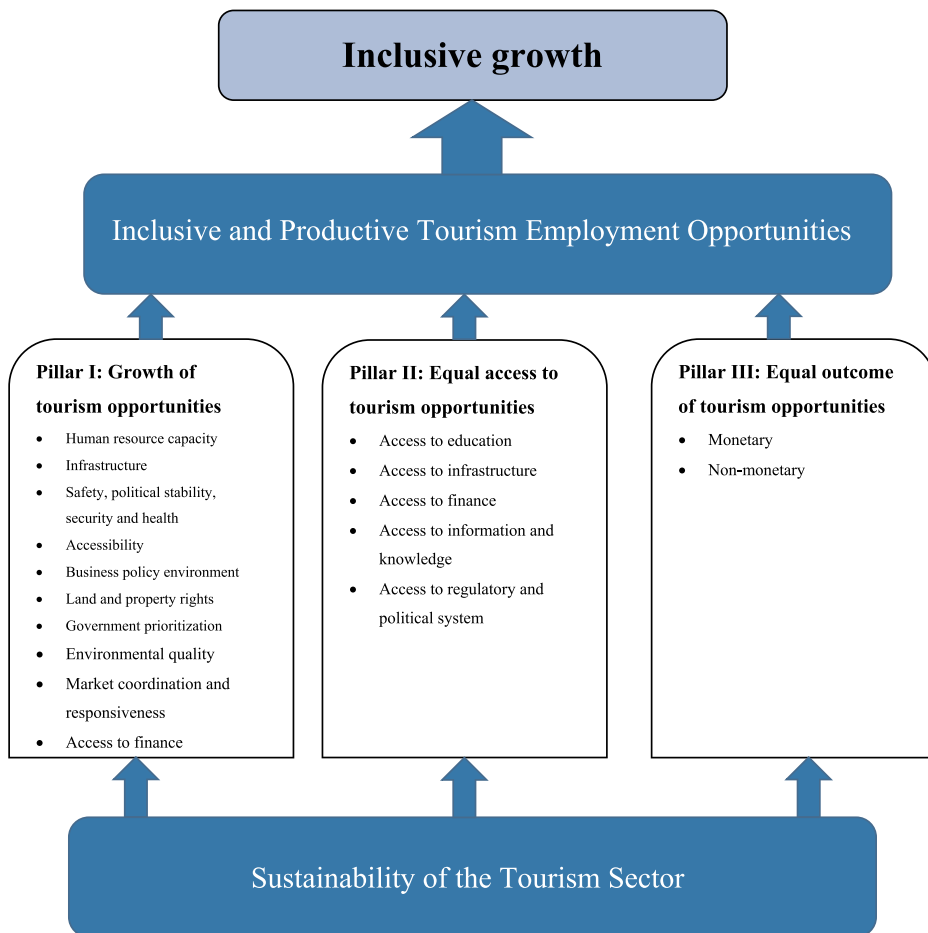


Figure 1. Tourism-driven Inclusive Growth Diagnostic Framework (T-DIGD). Source: Bakker (2019) [written permission].

indicators with comparative countries and qualitative methods to gain deeper understanding of underlying issues. More recently, using this approach, Bakker et al. (2023) applied the T-DIGD to the case study of North Macedonia and identified key barriers for the tourism sector to contribute to inclusive growth, including: human resource capability; quality and access to education; infrastructure; political instability and safety; government prioritisation of tourism; and market coordination and responsiveness. Notably, inequality was observed regarding access to education; people living in rural areas, minority ethnic groups and lower socio-economic groups were found to hold lower education qualifications. Geographical inequality also existed as rural areas had less developed road infrastructure, affecting connectivity and physical access to employment opportunities.

Based on this application, Bakker et al. (2023) offer detailed commentary on the T-DIGD's strengths and weaknesses. The key strength is the framework's ability to systematically assess binding constraints using multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative data. However, the application of the framework to North Macedonia could not identify the most binding constraints, which hampered the framework's potential to prioritise a policy area and "to formulate a context-specific development strategy in the presence of limited resources" (Bakker et al., 2023, p. 416). Other challenges relate to interconnections and mutual causal relationships between the first two T-DIGD pillars and underlying factors that create and shape potential constraints in both pillars. Bakker et al. (2023) also identify a lack of tourism sector-specific and inclusiveness data, discrepancies between different international benchmarking indicators, and differences between quantitative and qualitative data as challenges.

Study location

The study location was Imbassaí, which is a small coastal tourist destination in the municipality of Mata de São João in the state of Bahia in the Northeast of Brazil (Figure 2). Since the Brazilian government employed tourism as a tool for economic, social, and inclusive development in the 1990s, it continues to emphasise the importance of tourism for Brazil's economic development, with a strong focus on increasing international tourist arrivals and foreign exchange (Plano Nacional de Turismo, PNT 2013–2016, 2021–2023, 2024–2027). The latest National Tourism Plan (PNT 2024–2027) envisions Brazil to be recognised for its diversity and authentic and sustainable tourism experiences, and particularly seeks to support regional development with a focus on the Amazon and the Northeast (EMBRATUR, 2024).

With the launch of the large-scale investment programme "Programa de Desenvolvimento do Turismo" (PRODETUR-NE) focused on mass tourism development along the coastline of the Northeast, tourism has grown rapidly in the Northeast. The main programme objectives were to reduce poverty through employment in tourism and to support the region's wider economic, social, and environmental development (e.g. transport, sanitation, education, conservation) by using domestic tourism as a tool for transferring wealth from the richer South to the poorer North (Pegas et al., 2015; Siegel & Alwang, 2005).

Sun, sea, and sand tourism has become one of the most important economic sectors and a main income source for coastal communities in the Northeast, particularly in the municipality of Mata de São João, where more than 50% of the population work in tourism (IBGE, 2011, cited in Pegas et al., 2015). The municipal government has sought for sustainable tourism development focusing on generating jobs and income, enabling

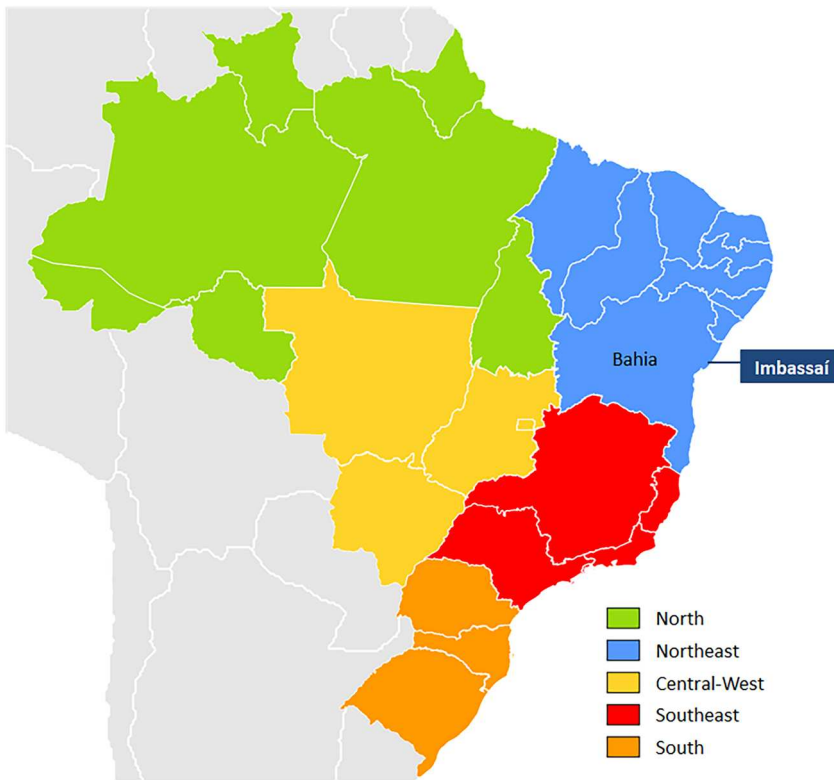


Figure 2. Study location in Bahia, Northeast of Brazil. Source: Winter (2018), adapted from Menegaz (2007) to indicate location of Imbassaí.

social inclusion, and enhancing the overall quality of tourism. It supports the development of tourism products and services and national and international marketing activities (Mata de São João, 2019). The municipality is currently finalising a new tourism strategic plan for 2025–2028 through consultation with public, private, and third-sector representatives (Mata de São João, 2025).

The rapid growth of tourism has become evident in Mata de São João and specifically in Imbassaí which underwent “profound socio-spatial changes” (de Oliveira Santana et al., 2020, p. 68). With one large-scale luxurious all-inclusive hotel and resort (more than 600 rooms), one hotel (52 rooms), and many pousadas (six with less than 20 beds and 13 with more than 20 and less than 50 beds), tourism in Imbassaí is characterised by both large-scale and small-scale tourism development attracting predominantly domestic, but also international travellers. Accordingly, large-scale and small-scale tourism development co-exists in Imbassaí with a high dependency on the domestic market (Pegas et al., 2015).

Methods

The T-DIGD was applied retrospectively to data collected in 2017 as part of a larger research project that focused on exploring the relationship between tourism, poverty and inequality (Winter, 2018). It needs to be acknowledged that both the framework and the data do not take account of Covid-19 implications. Data collection was based

on a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative and qualitative research as recommended by Bakker (2019) and Bakker et al. (2023). The first author collected data in two separate visits to Imbassaí: quantitative data was collected using value chain analysis (VCA) in February 2017 and qualitative data was gathered through in-depth interviews between June and August 2017.

Value chain analysis

Initiated by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Netherlands Development Organisation SNV, VCA has been extensively applied in pro-poor tourism studies since 2005 to map the local tourism sector and its actors, track revenue flows and income and therefore to examine the economic impact of tourism on local communities (Ashley & Mitchell, 2008; Mitchell & Ashley, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2015). In this study, VCA was considered an appropriate method as there was only limited and outdated tourism data available for Imbassaí, despite the growth and economic importance of tourism. The purpose of VCA was therefore twofold: to measure tourism-related revenue flows and income at local level, and to determine different socio-economic groups based on their tourism-related income to assist with interview sampling. The employed VCA methodology followed a standard VCA framework developed under the guidance of the International Trade Centre and involved two surveys: the first with 57 tourism businesses representing all sectors of the local tourism value chain (accommodation, food & drink, shopping, entertainment/activities) to collect financial information and the second with 75 tourists to understand tourist characteristics and spending. From these surveys, the total revenue for the local tourism sector was estimated, and the amount of tourism income for people participating/employed in tourism was calculated.

Salaries and income from tourism were assessed against two benchmarks: the 2017 international poverty line for an upper middle-income country of USD5.50 per day per person (=USD165 per month = BRL527.76 per month) (Ferreira & Sánchez-Páramo, 2017) and the 2016/2017 minimum salary for Mata de São João of BRL931.20 per month (=USD291.13) as defined in the “Convenção coletiva de trabalho” (Collective Labour Agreement). Accordingly, individuals earning less than BRL527.76 (=USD165) per month were categorised as the poor-income group; people receiving between BRL527.76 (=USD165) and BRL931.20 (=USD291.13) per month were considered in the low-income group; people with more income than BRL931.20 (=USD291.13) per month were described as the higher-income group. Details about the VCA methodology, its application, and analysis can be found in Winter et al. (2021).

Qualitative interviews

Using the VCA data set, 37 purposefully selected participants representing different income groups, different sectors of the local tourism value chain, and locals without direct tourism income and people with expertise in tourism and tourism development, participated in in-depth interviews (Table 1).

The first author conducted all interviews in a semi-structured way. All interviews were face-to-face and lasted on average 45 min: 0–30 min ($n = 12$ interviews), 31–60 min ($n =$

18 interviews), 60+ min ($n = 7$ interviews). The interviews started with checking the participants' income level against the VCA findings and then drew on pre-defined questions focused on key topics (i.e. tourism development, tourism employment, tourism impacts on different socio-economic groups, tourism actors and power relations) and allowed flexibility for additional questions to gather insights on emerging themes from participants. To ensure the reliability of participants' responses, their answers were triangulated. For example, if a perspective on a specific issue was shared, this perspective was further investigated in other interviews to analyse whether participants' perceptions corresponded or differed. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Using parallel translation, quotes were translated to English by the first author and compared with a native speaker's translation.

All interview transcripts were uploaded to NVivo to facilitate focused analysis. The process of analysing the data was both data- and theory-driven and involved two main cycles: the first cycle was aimed at getting a better overview of the data and in the second cycle, reoccurring topics were identified using the method of "descriptive

Table 1. Sample of participants by income level and tourism sector.

| ID | Tourism income | Tourism sector |
|-----|----------------|----------------------------------|
| P1 | No direct | Not (directly) in tourism |
| P2 | Poor-income | Shopping |
| P3 | Higher-income | Accommodation |
| P4 | Poor-income | Food & Drinks |
| P5 | Poor-income | Food & Drinks |
| P6 | Low-income | Food & Drinks |
| P7 | Low-income | Accommodation |
| P8 | Low-income | Food & Drinks |
| P9 | Higher-income | Accommodation |
| P10 | Higher-income | Food & Drinks |
| P11 | Higher-income | Activity |
| P12 | Poor-income | Food & Drinks |
| P13 | Higher-income | Accommodation |
| P14 | Higher-income | Accommodation |
| P15 | Low-income | Accommodation |
| P16 | Higher-income | Accommodation |
| P17 | Higher-income | Accommodation |
| P18 | Low-income | Accommodation |
| P19 | Low-income | Accommodation |
| P20 | Low-income | Food & Drinks |
| P21 | Low-income | Food & Drinks |
| P22 | Low-income | Accommodation |
| P23 | Higher-income | Accommodation |
| P24 | Higher-income | Accommodation |
| P25 | Poor-income | Shopping |
| P26 | No direct | Not (directly) in tourism/expert |
| P27 | No direct | Not (directly) in tourism |
| P28 | No direct | Not (directly) in tourism |
| P29 | No direct | Not (directly) in tourism/expert |
| P30 | Higher-income | Accommodation/expert |
| P31 | No direct | Not (directly) in tourism |
| P32 | Poor-income | Activity |
| P33 | Higher-income | Accommodation |
| P34 | No direct | Not (directly) in tourism |
| P35 | Low-income | Food & Drinks |
| P36 | No direct | Not (directly) in tourism |
| P37 | Low-income | Shopping |

Source: Authors.

coding.” The factors of the T-DIGD were used for guidance, but the analysis was not limited to these factors, which allowed for the identification of wider constraints for tourism-driven inclusive growth. Applying the T-DIGD in this way enabled firstly, analysis of constraints to tourism-driven inclusive growth in a systematic manner and secondly, assessment of the value of the T-DIGD as a tool for diagnostic analysis for tourism-driven inclusive growth.

Findings

The (constraining) factors for tourism-driven inclusive growth in Imbassaí are presented following the structure of Bakker’s (2019) T-DIGD.

Pillar 1. Growth of tourism opportunities

Human resource capacity

Insufficient human resource capacity was considered a key challenge affecting not only tourism development but also employment opportunities more broadly (P16; P24; P26). Public schools are accessible, but participants viewed public school learning conditions and quality of education as poor (P1; P13; P14; P18; P26; P30; P31).

To improve human resource capacity to work in tourism, large-scale hotels and resorts operating in the area founded the “Instituto Imbassaí” in 2005. P26 stated:

it is very important that local communities manage to improve their lives by working in regional businesses (i.e. hotels and resorts). The idea is not to transform these resorts into “fantasy islands” surrounded by poverty and misery on all sides. The strategic vision [of the Institute] is that people are involved in development processes and get jobs, so that they can improve their lives and develop themselves. The ‘Institute Imbassaí’ was created with the intention of using tourism as a strategy for social inclusion of people who live here in the region.

Many participants (P18; P19; P26; P37) agreed that without the Institute, there would not be any form of enabling young people to gain access and work in tourism. The key professional development programme “Jovem Aprendiz” (Young Apprentice) offered by the Institute enabled young people to gain employment as maids, waiters, and cooks in large-scale hotels and resorts in the region. However, despite facilitating access, education offered by the Institute was argued to be superficial, in that it only trained people for basic “low skilled” jobs (P18; P19).

Inefficient human resource capacity was thought to be related to a lack of tourism awareness among the local population as P29 highlighted:

They [local people] know that they have work and earn money because of tourism. But they do not have consciousness of the wider importance of tourism. So, they do not empower themselves, they do not prepare themselves, to provide a good experience for tourists and further develop Imbassaí as a tourist destination.

Raising awareness and improving knowledge of tourism and associated benefits and costs among the local population is crucial for the community’s informed participation in tourism planning (Cárdenas et al., 2015; Reid et al., 2000). In fact, participants (P24;

P29; P30) felt that the community's lack of awareness mirrored government lack of prioritisation for tourism development.

Infrastructure

Although tourism development has improved local infrastructure (P11; P13; P9), participants agreed that there was insufficient infrastructure to meet tourism demands, impacting the destination's attractiveness (P14; P16; P17). Limited transport options, power outages, lack of water supply, particularly during the summer season, and an inadequate sewage system were issues frequently raised, and these relate to the failure of government planning. The importance of careful and integrated tourism planning to reduce negative impacts and ensure sustainable destination development is widely acknowledged (Rahmafitria et al., 2020) and participants shared this view:

Imbassaí grew extensively. However, planning did not happen alongside. The municipal government did not plan the growth ... I do not see any attempt to improve the sewage system, to improve safety, to improve lighting and to improve the streets. Today, the government, the municipal government, does not take care for these things. I think there should be better planning that is in line with the growth of the place. (P24)

Safety, political stability, security and health

Participants shared their concerns about safety and security as tourism has led to increases in violence, drug trafficking, and prostitution in Imbassaí (P12; P13; P11; P26; P34). They argued that tourists and locals alike needed to be constantly vigilant (P7; P16; P23). Overall, participants doubted that security would improve in Imbassaí:

Tourism has been growing, exploding, and infiltrating everything. But at the same time there has been a mismanagement of tourism that will cause chaos in the future. There is no long-term thinking and planning by the public administration. There is no security. There is much violence here. (P19)

Healthcare services have also improved with tourism development but, there was scepticism about the quality of the healthcare services in Imbassaí as P24 remarked "If you need an x-ray, they cannot do it here. They do not have anything here. They need to transport a person to another hospital that is far away from here." Participants noted that the healthcare centre in Imbassaí was "not good enough" as "any tourist, if he has any issue and goes there [to the health care centre in Imbassaí], is sent to Praia do Forte or elsewhere – even if he has only a little problem" (P18).

Accessibility

Poor accessibility is a constraint for tourism development and destination competitiveness of Imbassaí as Salvador, the hub airport for the region, has limited connectivity as a result of political economy events. P17 explained that "domestic tourism has collapsed because of the economic crisis. We feel that. You can see an enormous impact on international tourism [after] Salvador has lost the international flights, has lost the cruise ships." Limited transport options to Imbassaí from Salvador also hindered tourism development. For example, P29 stated "transport to Imbassaí is a nightmare. If I didn't know this place, I wouldn't like it very much. Tourists from other countries might never return here, because they do not want to have such hassle again."

Access to land

It was found that land has been made available for tourism development. However, often development took place without considering the environmental impact, which can impact the destination's attractiveness and tourism growth in the long term. In Imbassaí, increasing second home development was seen to have adversely affected the environment. P33 observed that "they built at places, where we thought that it was forbidden to build. Just in front of the beach. A very large condominium." Other participants (P13; P17; P33) felt that these developments were illegal, and that the municipal government's corruption and incompetency allowed them to happen:

Municipal government is the hands of the real estate mafia. [...] The politicians receive more money from constructions because they are involved in these development companies. It's a triangle game. One person has land, the second builds and the third one operates the condominium. (P17)

Tourism prioritisation & business policy environment

Lack of tourism prioritisation by the municipal government seemed to hamper tourism development in Imbassaí. P15, for example, reported "they [=the politicians] do not do anything" and "tourism is not of interest for them." P19 further emphasised that "The taxes from tourism are not used to maintain the city. ... we have to deal with the mismanagement of politicians." Because of disinterest and mismanagement of politicians at the municipal level, it was described that tourism development lacked initiative:

And it [tourism development] needs incentives provided by the municipal government for businessmen, incentives to do things differently. However, the municipal government does not do this. The municipal government is very rigid and strict; it stops initiatives, instead of providing space to do something differently. (P22)

Participants considered that lack of tourism prioritisation extended to public institutions at state level (P13; P14; P17; P23; P24; P30). Public institutions and programmes for tourism development have been decreasing (P24; P33):

the government stopped to put policies regarding tourism development in place. The politicians who succeeded the President did not touch existing projects and pushed them further. For example, in Bahia, for each region, there was a specific working plan in place to foster tourism development. However, today, this does not exist anymore. (P24)

Bahia had sizeable development in tourism in comparison to many other states in Brazil, because, for many years, there was a focus on tourism but "now things are different, because this government does not spend any money on tourism. So, there is almost no investment" (P30).

Environmental quality

There was a perception that environmental quality in Imbassaí is decreasing due to the environmental impact caused by tourism businesses and tourists. P26 commented that the "environmental impact of big businesses in the region is a fact. A resort with 2000 apartments built without having an environmental impact – this does not exist. The environmental impact is obvious." Many participants believed that this impact could be managed; however, they drew attention to government's failure in environmental

management (P1; P8; P13; P17; P19; P26; P29). Overall, it was noted that there seems to be a lack of environmental care among the Brazilian population as P21, for example, explained “unfortunately, it is like this: the people here, our whole country, we value money more than we respect the nature. So, I think the nature in Brazil will disappear, not only in Imbassaí.”

Market coordination and responsiveness

Lack of tourism prioritisation combined with a lack of responsible institutions to support tourism policy and plans were believed to hamper market coordination and responsiveness. Nonetheless, in the absence of institutional support, private sector actors collaborate to push tourism development. A Commercial Association was founded 20 years ago by tourism business owners (mainly pousadas and restaurants) to develop tourism by focussing on increasing demand through marketing and communication and to preserve Imbassaí (P30; P9). There were different perspectives on the effectiveness of the Association: while some (P6; P9) believed it was influential, others (P13; P24) doubted that. Participants commented that short-term solutions were enacted, and long-lasting change was not facilitated (P14; P24). Indeed, members of the Association felt that to be more influential, greater participation of influential accommodation owners, in particular the large-scale hotels and resorts, was needed (P3; P30).

Access to finance

As mentioned before, the T-DIGD was applied retrospectively to data collected in 2017 as part of a larger research project. Access to finance was not integrated into the semi-structured interview schedule and was not raised by participants in this study.

Pillar 2. Equal access to tourism opportunities

This section presents (constraining) factors to equal access to tourism opportunities. These factors were examined for different socio-economic characteristics including tourism income level, tourism sector and employment position, origin and race (Table 2).

Patterns in respect to access to tourism opportunities emerged:

- people who receive poor-income are often micro-entrepreneurs who are Brazilians with a “Preto” (Black) background;
- people with low-income frequently work in unskilled and semi-skilled positions in the tourism sector and are Brazilians with a “Preto” (black) or “Pardo” (Mixed) background; and
- higher-income individuals are mainly Brazilian and international business owners and managers in superior positions with a “Branco” (White) background.

People with poor- and low-income from tourism mainly originated from Brazil’s North and are viewed as “locals or ‘natives’ by participants; people with higher-income are mostly from the South of Brazil and European countries and are considered as “foreigners” by participants.

Table 2. Sample of participants by socio-economic characteristics.

| ID | Tourism income | Tourism sector | Tourism position | Origin | Race |
|------|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|
| P2 | Poor-income | Shopping | Micro-entrepreneur | International | Preto (Black) |
| P4 | Poor-income | Food & Drinks | Micro-entrepreneur | Brazil | Preto (Black) |
| P5 | Poor-income | Food & Drinks | Micro-entrepreneur | Brazil | Preto (Black) |
| P12 | Poor-income | Food & Drinks | Micro-entrepreneur | Brazil | Preto (Black) |
| P25 | Poor-income | Shopping | Micro-entrepreneur | Brazil | Pardo (Mixed) |
| P32 | Poor-income | Activity | Micro-entrepreneur | Brazil | Preto (Black) |
| P6 | Low-income | Food & Drinks | Waiter | Brazil | Preto (Black) |
| P7 | Low-income | Accommodation | Cleaner | Brazil | Pardo (Mixed) |
| P8 | Low-income | Food & Drinks | Waiter | Brazil | Pardo (Mixed) |
| P15 | Low-income | Accommodation | Receptionist | Brazil | Pardo (Mixed) |
| P18 | Low-income | Accommodation | Waiter | Brazil | Pardo (Mixed) |
| P19 | Low-income | Accommodation | Receptionist | Brazil | Preto (Black) |
| P20 | Low-income | Food & Drinks | Waiter | Brazil | Preto (Black) |
| P21 | Low-income | Food & Drinks | Micro-entrepreneur | Brazil | Pardo (Mixed) |
| P22 | Low-income | Accommodation | Receptionist | Brazil | Pardo (Mixed) |
| P35 | Low-income | Food & Drinks | Waiter | Brazil | Preto (Black) |
| P37* | Low-income | Shopping | Micro-entrepreneur | Brazil | Preto (Black) |
| P3 | Higher-income | Accommodation | Owner/manager | Brazil | Branco (White) |
| P9 | Higher-income | Accommodation | Owner/manager | Brazil | Branco (White) |
| P10 | Higher-income | Food & Drinks | Owner/manager | Brazil | Pardo (Mixed) |
| P11 | Higher-income | Activity | Owner/manager | Brazil | Preto (Black) |
| P13 | Higher-income | Accommodation | Owner/manager | International | Branco (White) |
| P14 | Higher-income | Accommodation | Owner/manager | International | Branco (White) |
| P16 | Higher-income | Accommodation | Owner/manager | Brazil | Branco (White) |
| P17 | Higher-income | Accommodation | Owner/manager | International | Branco (White) |
| P23 | Higher-income | Accommodation | Owner/manager | Brazil | Branco (White) |
| P24 | Higher-income | Accommodation | Owner/manager | Brazil | Branco (White) |
| P30 | Higher-income | Accommodation/expert | Owner/manager | Brazil | Branco (White) |
| P33 | Higher-income | Accommodation | Owner/manager | International | Branco (White) |
| P1 | No direct | Not (directly) in tourism | n/a | International | Branco (White) |
| P26 | No direct | Not (directly) in tourism/expert | n/a | Brazil | Branco (White) |
| P27 | No direct | Not (directly) in tourism | n/a | Brazil | Preto (Black) |
| P28 | No direct | Not (directly) in tourism | n/a | Brazil | Preto (Black) |
| P29 | No direct | Not (directly) in tourism/expert | n/a | Brazil | Branco (White) |
| P31* | No direct | Not (directly) in tourism | n/a | Brazil | Pardo (Mixed) |
| P34 | No direct | Not (directly) in tourism | n/a | Brazil | Pardo (Mixed) |
| P36 | No direct | Not (directly) in tourism | n/a | Brazil | Preto (Black) |

*used to work in tourism accommodation

Source: Authors.

Access to education

Although access to education in Imbassaí improved due to tourism development, as demonstrated in other studies (Bowden, 2005; Manwa & Manwa, 2014), it was argued that quality education, defined as private by participants, is not accessible for all socio-economic groups. For example, P18 stated:

only natives [=locals] go to public schools and people who just cannot pay for a private school at all. Here it is normal that the middle class takes their children only to private schools, because they offer a better education in contrast to state schools.

P30 made clear that this is “what happens to most of the young population: either they go out to study, even to public schools in Salvador, or they have to study in these terrible schools here [=public schools in the region]”.

Access to infrastructure and land

With tourism development, infrastructure in terms of roads, public services as well as electricity and water supply and sanitation, generally improved in the destination, which was appreciated by participants from all socio-economic groups. However, this improvement led to price increases and gentrification and lower socio-economic groups were forced to leave Imbassaí to live in surrounding areas, which limited access to improved infrastructure for those groups.

In the context of Brazil, it is a common phenomenon that local residents are “displaced from coastal homes by tourism development” along the Northern coastline and “the prime coastline is being filled with exclusive second home and resort developments patronised mainly by ‘whites’, while the near littoral is being increasingly mobilised as a mainly ‘non-white’ low-wage labour reservoir” (Pegas et al., 2015, p. 761). Imbassaí was not an exception as participants confirmed that “there are not many natives [=locals from ‘Preto’ (Black) and ‘Pardo’ (Mixed) backgrounds] here anymore” (P5). P36 elaborated:

the natives left, because they could not sustain to live in a place where they were born, where everything is expensive. So, they had to sell their houses in order to survive. This is not good. The natives left and people from outside came and opened businesses.

P1 also agreed that foreigners took the “living space, the place, existence” from locals and “where the locals lived, there are now tourists or a pousada or a gringo [=foreigner]” and thus, because of tourism development, locals lost access to their small amount of land in the destination.

Access to finance

As mentioned before, the T-DIGD was applied retrospectively to data collected in 2017 as part of a larger research project. Access to finance was not integrated into the semi-structured interview schedule and was not raised by participants in this study.

Access to information and knowledge & access to regulatory and political systems

In general, tourism development was also reported to improve access to information and knowledge for the wider public. P17 observed that “a good thing: tourism has brought information to people. People cannot say that they do not know about things. They have much information.” P18 stated that because people have better access to information to gain knowledge, they have started to “make their voice heard.” For example, it was reported that tourism employees have much better awareness and understanding of their rights and ensure that these were met.

However, lower socio-economic groups felt that access to knowledge regarding tourism policy and planning, and access to regulatory and political systems was only available to tourism business owners. Tourism business owners were allied in the Commercial Association and had greater influence in accessing information and systems. They were also seen as superior due to their economic power, which extended to political power. Participants argued “Who has money, can order” (P36) and “they have more influence. I have no influence at all. I am small and they are big. I do not have any power to give orders” (P5).

Participants from lower socio-economic groups felt that they lacked the resources to participate and influence decision-making whereas higher-income participants had connections to influential people at the municipal government who implement rules and regulations. In other words, people from lower socio-economic groups felt that they lacked networks and connections to be involved in tourism development decision-making.

Pillar 3. Equal outcome of tourism opportunities

Monetary outcomes

The monetary impact of tourism along the local tourism value chain was approximately USD67 million annually (Figure 3). Most of this was generated in the accommodation sector (USD64.5 million) – which mainly resulted from the large-scale hotel and resort, and the hotel. A monetary impact of USD2.5 million was generated by the three remaining sectors together (food & drinks, shopping, entertainment/activities). 2% of the revenue generated in the accommodation sector contributed to the low-income group; in contrast, 30% of revenue from food and drinks supported that group. The impact on the low-income group resulted from employment at minimum salary in the large-scale hotels and resorts and in smaller direct accommodation service providers as well as in bars and restaurants. The impact of tourism on the poor-income group resulted mainly from micro-entrepreneurship (i.e. individual self-employed sellers) in food and drinks, shopping, and entertainment/activities.

With access to tourism opportunities being unequal for different socio-economic groups, outcomes of tourism opportunities were found to be unequal too. Accordingly, tourism in Imbassaí mirrored existing inequalities between “foreigners” with a “Branco” (White) background who owned tourism businesses and “Preto” (Black) and “Pardo” (Mixed) locals who had to accept foreign dominance to gain employment and income. This disparity found in Imbassaí seems to be a characteristic for the Northern Brazil coastline and is consistent with the classic development patterns found in developing destinations in the Caribbean and South Pacific (Pegas et al., 2015).

Non-monetary outcomes

Non-monetary outcomes of tourism differed for each socio-economic group (Table 3). Additionally, this study emphasises that being involved in tourism does not only bring non-monetary benefits, but also drawbacks.

Poor-income and low-income participants valued communication, cultural exchange and establishing relationships and friendships as benefits of being involved in tourism. One participant (P12) stated that “tourism brings happiness through getting to know other people. For me, this is wonderful. For me, this is superb. I was learning a lot, and I created friendships. So, tourism is happiness and communication with people. It is everything” and another one (P35) explained “I like working in tourism. Working with people. For me, this is very important. The cultural exchange. Because you have access to people from various cultures. From various nationalities.” Participants emphasised that through communication and exchange, they had access to and contact with “a world” outside their local community.

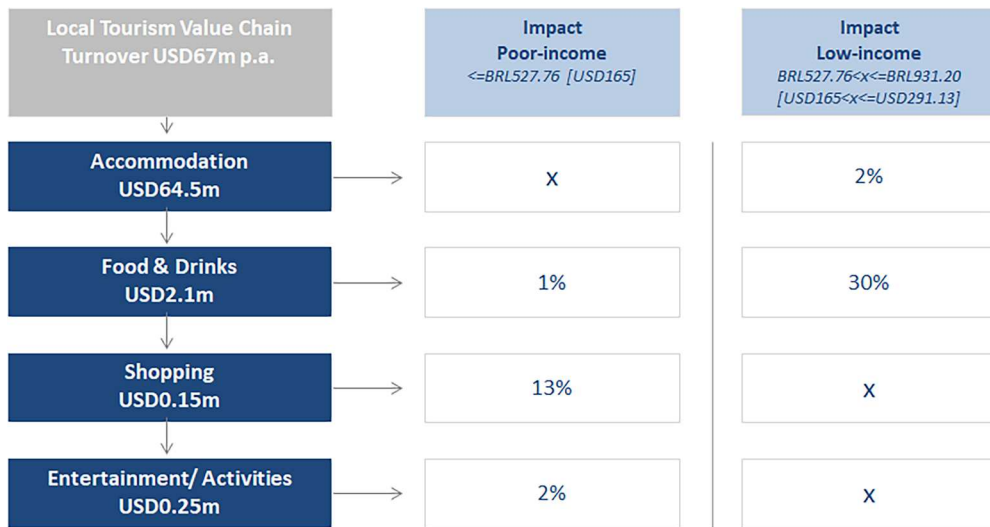


Figure 3. Monetary outcomes of tourism. Source: Authors, adapted from Winter (2018).

Despite the benefits from working in tourism, participants explained that it was difficult to combine work and private life due to working conditions including long and irregular working hours, working at weekends, and working during the peak seasons. This was further intensified by a lack of relevant knowledge and training, and absence of personal development opportunities (P6; P18; P19; P22; P31; P37). P37 remarked:

the hotel does not want to know whether a person attended a course or a training, ... whether the person speaks English, or Spanish. The hotel wants you to come, show up for work, give your name, give your work permit and work. Many people I know ... here, they do not have any experience.

P22 added the employer “does neither provide funding nor helps you to cover the cost [for a training course]. It’s a pity.” In addition to challenging working conditions, P31 stated “you are treated like an outlaw. Every day, two to three times, people are scanned to check if they stole something from the hotel. That’s really ... I felt very, very

Table 3. Non-monetary outcomes.

| Poor-income participants | Low-income participants | Higher-income participants |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>Tourism benefits</i> | | |
| Communicating with tourists | Communicating with tourists | Living in a natural environment |
| Having cultural exchange | Having cultural exchange | Having a relaxed lifestyle |
| Establishing relationships | Establishing relationships & friendships | |
| <i>Tourism drawbacks</i> | | |
| Not having a good work–life balance | Not having a good work-life balance | Not being able to have access to high-quality education, culture, diverse leisure activities and good health care close by |
| | Not having personal development opportunities | |
| | Not being treated with respect | |

Source: Authors.

bad.” Some participants (P6; P7; P8; P22) revealed disrespectful and racist behaviour of tourists, particularly domestic tourists, towards tourism staff:

I see people who are educated, people who are less educated, people who have patience, people who do not have patience, people who humiliate the waiter. [...] In the restaurant, where I work, I encounter these things very often. Clients who shout at me and who are angry with me, they get agitated and furious. I experience such behaviour as a waiter. (P8)

Today, in this time, you can see that racism still exists. For many years, racism has existed. And until today, it exists. And until tomorrow, and until later, it will still exist. It won't change. These are things that do not change. (P6)

Benefits and drawbacks of being involved in tourism articulated by poor-income and low-income participants were not shared by higher-income individuals. Instead, for the latter group, benefits and drawbacks were strongly related to participants' lifestyle choice of living in Imbassaí. P1 observed “most of the pousada owners here came with money. They don't need the money from running the pousada. The pousada is more like a hobby for them.” P23, a pousada owner, confirmed:

when I was 40 years old, I decided to change my life and then I built this place. And since then, for 20 years, I have my business here. And the impact for me has been very good, because I live in this paradise. My life has changed very much. It is much calmer. More tranquil. No stress. I like to live like this. Imbassaí is perfect for that.

Thus, owning a business in Imbassaí enabled them to have a relaxed lifestyle in a natural environment. On the other hand, some participants also expressed that this lifestyle confined their access to culture and leisure activities, as well as high-quality education and health care:

Everybody says: “you live in a paradise!” Yes, all good. But I gave up a lot. I do not have a cinema, I do not have a theatre, and I do not have a shopping centre ... things like that ... a medical clinic, things that are needed, a hospital. I do not have these here. (P3)

These findings indicate that different socio-economic groups experience unequal outcomes from tourism employment, in both monetary and non-monetary aspects. The negative non-monetary outcomes that low-income and poor-income groups experienced were rooted in racism in Brazilian society and broader political economy.

Discussion

Applying the T-DIGD to data collected in the Brazilian context enabled the assessment of its value as a tool for diagnostic analysis for tourism-driven inclusive growth. This discussion focuses on the strengths and weaknesses of the T-DIGD.

The T-DIGD has been presented by Bakker (2019, p. 584) as “a diagnostic to assess and prioritize the different constraints in a systematic way.” This study supports the T-DIGD's ability to analyse constraints to tourism-driven inclusive growth in a systematic manner. Applying the framework in Brazil's Northeast highlighted that the local tourism sector was faced with considerable constraints that hamper tourism's ability to support inclusive growth in the destination. Growth in tourism opportunities was revealed to be limited due to poor accessibility and infrastructure and lack of tourism prioritisation. Additionally, access to tourism opportunities was found to be unequal for all socio-economic groups

due to existing, broader inequalities in access to quality education, infrastructure, and tourism policy and planning information and knowledge.

Despite the T-DIGD's value in analysing constraints in a systematic manner, challenges in prioritising constraints were experienced similar to Bakker et al. (2023). To overcome these challenges, it is suggested that future studies adopt a two-step methodology that combines: (1) data collection and analysis and (2) presentation and sharing of findings with tourism stakeholders. Step 2 would enable raising awareness of existing constraints for tourism-driven inclusive growth in the study location to assist definition and implementation of key policy priorities.

The T-DIGD is based on three pillars that each contains a set of factors describing constraints in tourism's ability to support inclusive and productive employment opportunities. Factors listed under the T-DIGD pillars provide useful guidance for analysis; however, they lack clear definitions. While there is benefit in not having "overly stringent rules" (Bakker, 2019, p. 585), clear definitions of factors and consistent use would be beneficial to enhance the framework's practical applicability, avoid confusion during diagnosis and analysis, and support the validity of outcomes.

This study supports the assertion that "the three pillars are closely linked to each other" (Bakker, 2019, p. 583). Bakker (2019, p. 583) explains how Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 depend on each other with the consequence that "the effects of these constraints to growth of tourism opportunities, and access to these opportunities needs to be analysed jointly." However, it was found that, in its current form, the T-DIGD does not fully represent the interrelationships between growth and equal access to tourism opportunities. For example, in this Brazilian case study, quality education was not accessible to all socio-economic groups with the consequence that human resource capacity in tourism was insufficient to support the growth of tourism opportunities. In particular, the lack of accessibility of quality education for local people from Brazil's Northeast with a Preto or Pardo background meant that they often had to accept lower-skilled positions and received poor- or low-income from tourism. Therefore, it is argued that an equal outcome of tourism employment opportunities (Pillar 3), should be seen and visualised as an outcome of both Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 – as shown in the revised T-DIGD (Figure 4).

The importance of considering the political economy context for achieving inclusive growth has been commonly accepted (Agarwal, 2024; Khan, 2012; Mitullah et al., 2017). This study also indicated that the growth of tourism opportunities and equal access to tourism opportunities were grounded in the wider political economy context. For example, both international and national economic crises had a substantial impact on the region's accessibility, and lack of political interest and investment in tourism limited the growth of tourism opportunities. Furthermore, existing structural inequalities between socio-economic groups (e.g. access to quality education, infrastructure, information and knowledge) also presented key challenges for inclusion in tourism. Bakker (2019, p. 585) acknowledges that "most of the barriers to increased inclusion are grounded in long-standing causes including economic, cultural, and political conditions," but the political economy context is not explicitly reflected in the T-DIGD. It is argued that the focus on the sustainability of the tourism sector should be expanded to the wider political economy. Sustainability cannot be achieved by the tourism sector alone and relies on relationships between market and non-market mechanisms of the broader society and

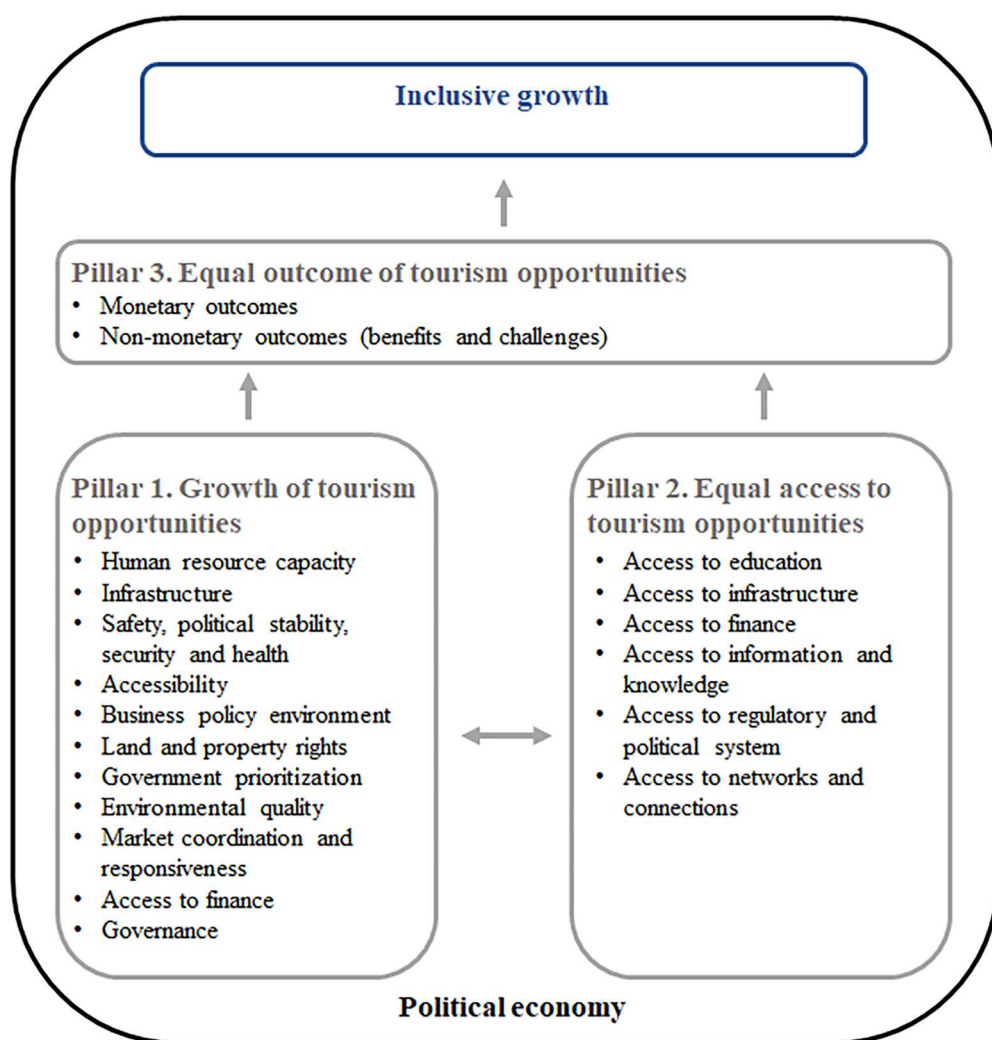


Figure 4. Revised T-DIGD. Source: Authors, adapted from Bakker (2019).

economy. With this in mind, it is recommended that the T-DIGD should be amended to explicitly acknowledge the influence of a wider political economy environment.

“Governance” is central to achieving inclusive growth through tourism as shown by various studies around the globe (Dossou et al., 2023; Dossou et al., 2024; Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020; Jones, 2013). Similarly, in this study it was found that tourism governance or lack thereof, represented a considerable constraint for growth of tourism opportunities (Pillar 1). In the case of tourism in Imbassaí, key elements of effective tourism governance were missing: lack of community awareness of tourism (see: Human resource capacity); integrated planning (see: Infrastructure); long-term vision (see: Safety, political stability, security and health); lack of government initiative and funding (see: Tourism prioritization & business policy environment); and lack of monitoring (see: Environmental quality).

Therefore, governance should be integrated as a constraining factor under Pillar 1. Growth of tourism opportunities.

Lack of access to networks and connections was described as a constraint for people from lower socio-economic groups. This impacted on access to information and knowledge and (equal) involvement in tourism policy and planning. It was found that lack of access to network and connections was rooted in existing inequalities in society. As Bianchi and de Man (2021, p. 363) emphasise, there is a need to consider the role and impact of “existing hierarchies of wealth and power” on the achievement of inclusive growth. Other tourism studies have identified that unequal distribution of power among societal groups hampers (equal) access to and outcomes of tourism opportunities. This presents a significant challenge to achieving inclusive growth through tourism and therefore access to networks and connections should be highlighted as a constraining factor under Pillar 2.

Conclusions

This paper applied Bakker's (2019) T-DIGD to data collected in a local tourist destination in Brazil's Northeast in 2017 to assess its value as a diagnostic tool for tourism-driven inclusive growth. This was achieved; however, there were limitations in the application of the T-DIGD in this study. Firstly, as the framework was retrospectively applied to previously collected data, it was not possible to examine all factors identified by Bakker (2019), namely access to finance in Pillars 1 and 2. Secondly, by adopting the framework designed for national-level analysis to a local-level analysis, benchmarking with other countries was not possible. Benchmarking can be useful even at local or regional level, if comprehensive and equivalent sets of data are available for comparators and if the quantitative data are supported by qualitative research that facilitates a deeper understanding of underlying issues. Unfortunately, due to lack of regional and local tourism data, benchmarking was not viable in this study. VCA was applied to collect local tourism data in a time- and cost-efficient manner and provided useful insights into the tourism value chain, its actors and wider issues and challenges. By combining quantitative VCA and qualitative interviews, this study followed Bakker's (2019) proposed shift in focus from a purely quantitative approach to a mixed-methods approach and the findings offer more in-depth and nuanced understanding of constraining factors for tourism-driven inclusive growth.

Applying the T-DIGD to the Brazilian case study identified gaps in the framework. Governance and power relations (access to networks and connections) are introduced as additional constraining factors, and it is argued that constraining factors cannot be disentangled from the wider political economy environment. These findings correspond with existing critiques of the concept of inclusive growth and emphasise the relationships between inclusive growth, governance, and political economy. Additionally, new insights are offered into non-monetary outcomes of tourism by examining benefits and drawbacks for different socio-economic groups, to which Bakker's framework (2019) and previous applications (Bakker et al., 2023) pay little attention.

This paper offers a revised version of the T-DIGD to enhance its value as a tool for diagnostic analysis for tourism-driven inclusive growth. It reconceptualises the relationships between the three pillars and articulates the importance of governance, access to networks and connections and political economy. Although the methodological approach

may vary across levels of analysis, this reimagined framework can be applied to different geographical scales – national, regional and local – and different tourism development contexts, and contribute to advancing the application of the concept of inclusive growth in tourism research.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Ethics approval

Prior to the study, ethics approval was obtained through Sheffield Hallam University.

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