

# Ecotourism in Bolivia

An ethnographical study of ecotourism impacts in Madidi National Park

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*This master's thesis is carried out as a part of the education at the University of Agder and is therefore approved as a part of this education. However, this does not imply that the University answers for the methods that are used or the conclusions that are drawn.*

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## **Abstract**

The concepts of ecotourism are widely defined but it is often used as a marketing instrument in order to promote tourism businesses related to nature. Ecotourism experience a fast growth in world tourism industry and many developing countries are trying to use ecotourism as a tool to achieve sustainable development. Ecotourism provides many beneficiaries to local environments, economies and socio-cultural lives. However, ecotourism may as well have harmful effects on those involved. Still, ecotourism conserves and protects local areas and its people. Madidi National Park in Bolivia has been estimated to be one of the world's most biological diverse areas. Due to this, the park has an abundance of potentials for ecotourism activities. Clarifying what kind of perceptions people have of ecotourism in this park, what they see as positive and negative effects of ecotourism, will provide answers of whether ecotourism can be sustainable. However, ecotourism in Madidi National Park meets many governmental challenges that can jeopardize sustainable development. However, if ecotourism is handled and utilized responsibly by all stakeholders directly and indirectly involved, it is possible to harmonize environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects and achieve real sustainable development.

Keywords: ecotourism, Bolivia, Madidi National Park, rainforest, tourism impacts, potentials, challenges, sustainable development, indigenous communities.

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

ANMI	Natural Area of Integrated Management
BOLTUR	<i>Empresa Estatal Boliviana de Turismo</i>
CBE	Community-Based Ecotourism
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIDOB	Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Eastern Bolivia
CONISUR	Indigenous Council of the South
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IWGIA	International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs
LT&C	Linking Tourism & Conservation
Madidi National Park	<i>Parque Nacional y Área Natural de Manejo Integrado Madidi</i>
MAS	Movement towards Socialism ( <i>Movimiento al Socialismo</i> )
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RQ	Research Question
SERNAP	<i>Servicio Nacional de Areas Protegidas</i>
TCO	Origin Community Territory ( <i>Tierra Comunitaria de Origen</i> )
TIES	The International Ecotourism Society
TIPNIS	<i>Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro-Sécure</i>
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
USD	United States Dollar
WB	World Bank
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WHO	World Health Organization
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The origins of tourism have long historical roots. Humans have travelled since ancient people used to move from one place to another. The purposes of travel were trade, religious obligations, economic benefits, war, migration etc. However, the history of modern travel and tourism is only about a century old (Cooper, 2012, p.7-10). Tourism has experienced continued growth over the decades and it has become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Since it is possible for humans to travel to most corners of the world, tourism has become a key driver for socio-economic progress. Moreover, the growth of tourism has also become the major source of foreign exchange earnings and employment for many developing countries (UNWTO, 2015a).

Tourism brings together many interrelated issues such as society, nature, and environment. It is also true that studying tourism means relating its different components and analyzing its outcomes – both positive and negative. However, many scholars have come to agree that the mass-tourism of 21st century is becoming unsustainable. It is clear that the trends of tourism have contributed to considerable impacts on local communities and the natural environment of the host destinations. Problems introduced by mass-tourism of this age include overcrowding and disrupting of local communities, massive commercial exploitation of cultural heritage, social conflicts, disturbance of natural heritage and wildlife, increased economic dependency, the emergence of black markets and increased illicit trade in every item from exotic pets to drugs and sex (Stronza, 2008, p.3; Honey, 2008, p.9-13).

The rapid growth of tourism during the last three decades has led to an increasing concern related to its impacts. The great environmental movement of 1970's and 1980's contributed to critical attitudes towards mass-tourism. These have been the major components which forced people to consider the possibilities of a more responsible tourism, which has become known under different names like sustainable tourism, ecotourism, nature based tourism, cultural tourism, wildlife tourism, educational tourism, agro-tourism, scientific tourism etc. (Wearing and Neil, 2008, p.1-6). These alternatives differ from the mass-tourism in different ways. The alternative tourism is usually labelled like 'eco', 'responsible' and 'sustainable' tourism to check the negative impacts of mass-tourism and support sustainable development by maximizing the positive contributions to destinations where there are a number of social and

environmental challenges. In this way, ecotourism has been very popular in many developing countries where it is believed that it might be proved as the best way of practicing tourism in the time of modern age when traditional tourism has been losing its charm and its core values (Wearing and Neil, 2008, p.1-6; Stronza, 2008, p.4). Ecotourism is regarded as tourism directed towards exotic natural environments, intended to support conservation efforts and observe wildlife (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016). Furthermore, ecotourism is often related to sustainable tourism where people experience nature in a way that does not impact the natural environment (Nature Conservancy, 2016). Therefore, ecotourism is regarded as responsible tourism which contributes to the balance between conservation and development. It also provides maximum incentives for local people and tourists. In addition, it promotes local culture and economy and it increases the maximum of local participation. However, these guidelines can seem to be difficult to fulfill. Still, it is a fact that tourism can only be made more responsible and sustainable through the genuine implementation of ecotourism which will surely provide environmental, economic and socio-cultural benefits for the local people directly involved in ecotourism.

This research project will explore how ecotourism is being practiced in Madidi National Park, Bolivia and also analyze its positive and negative impacts. Moreover, the research project will discuss the potentialities but also the challenges ecotourism is facing currently and in the future. It is believed that ecotourism in this park can be the best solution of achieving sustainable development if all stakeholders involved implement its principles.

## **1.2 Brief Contextual Overview**

Bolivia is a land-locked country situated in South America, and has approximately 11 million inhabitants. The country is very diverse with around 36 recognized indigenous ethnic groups where each group has its own language or dialect. After Bolivia's independence in 1825, the country went through many political shifts of e.g. an agrarian revolution, a military regime, a re-establishment of democracy and to a left turn in politics. Bolivia is a country that struggles with poverty, income inequalities and issues regarding health and sanitation.

In the context of tourism, Bolivia is well known due to the Andes Mountains, Lake Titicaca, The Salt Flats and the Amazonian Rainforest. Madidi National Park is located in northwest of

Bolivia and it consists of several indigenous groups. Moreover, the park has also been declared as one of the most biologically diverse places on Earth due to its abundance of different species of fauna and flora.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Indigenous peoples worldwide have been oppressed for centuries, and need additional protection of their rights. The Bolivian indigenous peoples have been recognized by the United Nations, ILO Convention 169 and by the New Bolivian Constitution from 2009. However, indigenous peoples struggle and fight for equal rights, and for keeping and protecting their land or territory. For example, indigenous peoples living in the Amazon Basin are threatened by illegal logging and by activities of gold, gas and oil companies (IWGIA, 2015). Since Madidi National Park is an area of very rich fauna and flora, conservation and environmental concerns become important for the indigenous communities in the park (Chalalan, 2016a, Live Science, 2012). Ecotourism has therefore become a way to protect and preserve indigenous territories inside the park. In addition, it has also become an alternative economic income for the local indigenous peoples living in and around the national park.

Based on this background, the research project explores the following problem statement: What kind of perceptions do indigenous peoples, eco-tour operators, environmental and indigenous organizations, the government and tourists have towards ecotourism in Madidi National Park? In what ways does ecotourism benefit or harm the environment, economy and socio-cultural life? What are the main potentials and challenges of further developing the park as an eco-touristic destination?

### **1.4 Main Objective**

The main objective of this study is to analyze the environmental, economic and socio-cultural effects of ecotourism in Madidi National Park, Bolivia.

The following are some sub-objectives:

- To present literature and theories on ecotourism as a red thread for sustainability.
- To study how ecotourism is practiced in Madidi National Park.

- To study different perceptions of ecotourism from stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in ecotourism in Madidi National Park.
- To study potentialities of ecotourism in Bolivia and in Madidi National Park.
- To analyze and discuss ecotourism challenges in the case of Madidi National Park.
- To examine the role of ecotourism to support sustainable development.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The following research questions have guided this study:

RQ1: What kind of perceptions do local indigenous peoples, eco-tour operators, environmental and indigenous organizations, the government and tourists have towards ecotourism in Madidi National Park?

RQ2: In which ways can ecotourism strengthen or negatively impact environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects for indigenous peoples living in Madidi National Park?

RQ3: What are the potentials and challenges of developing Madidi National Park as an eco-tourist destination; currently and in the future?

### **1.6 Methodology in Brief**

This master thesis is based on qualitative research methods and it is a result of data collected during fieldwork in Bolivia from October to December 2015. The researcher has conducted qualitative interviews, focus groups and participant observations throughout 11 weeks of fieldwork in La Paz, Rurrenabaque, Madidi National Park and Santa Cruz de la Sierra. The respondents of this field study have been stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in ecotourism in Madidi National Park. Examples are local indigenous peoples, owners of eco-tour operators, directors of environmental and indigenous organizations, tourists, etc. After conducting the fieldwork, all empirical data were analyzed and presented. In addition, the collected data has been compared with literature and theories gathered before and after the fieldwork.

## **1.7 Thesis Outline**

**Chapter 1** starts with an introduction to the thesis and study area, and gives a brief presentation of research methodology as well as problem statement, main objectives and research questions.

**Chapter 2** provides contextual information on the study area. The presentation of the study area contains an overview of Bolivia's geography, economy and politics. Moreover, it will also describe the current situation of Bolivia's indigenous population. Information upon ecotourism in Bolivia and Madidi National is also a part of this chapter.

**Chapter 3** is a literature review and outlines the theoretical framework for this research. It explores previous research done on ecotourism. Literature upon environmental, economic and socio-cultural impacts of ecotourism will also be presented. Furthermore, literature on current and future potentials and challenges of ecotourism will be discussed. Finally, a theoretical framework is presented and it will connect with the analysis of empirical findings.

**Chapter 4** discusses the methodology employed for this research. The research strategy is outlined, and a discussion of methodological choices such as research design, sampling, data collection methods and analysis is provided. Ethical considerations and reflections on limitations and challenges is also a part of this chapter.

**Chapter 5** presents the empirical findings and discusses and analyzes these according to the selected literature and theories. The chapter is organized according to the research questions. The first section presents the findings on stakeholder's perceptions of ecotourism in Madidi National Park. The second part explains how ecotourism affects both positively and negatively the environment, the economy and the socio-cultural aspects in Madidi National Park. Then, the third part highlights the potentials of the park, but also discusses different types of challenges ecotourism is facing and will be facing in the future. After the presentation of each section, analysis and discussions will lead a discussion to compare with the literature and theoretical framework.

**Chapter 6** offers a conclusion and recommendations based on the analysis of empirical findings in the light of the theoretical framework.

## Chapter 2: Contextual Overview

This chapter will give a contextual overview of Bolivia by presenting selected aspects of Bolivian geography, economy, indigenous peoples and tourism.

### 2.1 Contextual Overview of Bolivia

#### 2.1.1 Geography

The country of Bolivia has its name after the independence fighter Simon Bolivar which contributed to Bolivia's break out of Spanish rule and the proclamation of its independence in 1825. Bolivia is located in the central part of the South American continent with neighboring countries such as Chile, Brazil, Paraguay and Peru. Bolivia consists of approximately 10.8 million people and it has approximately a size of 1.1 million square kilometers. In addition, Bolivia is a land-locked country. This is because Bolivia lost its coastline to Chile in the war of the Pacific in 1883 (CIA, 2016a).



Picture 1: Picture of South America in grey and Bolivia in green (CIA, 2016b).

La Paz is considered to be the seat of the government. However, Sucre is the constitutional capital of Bolivia. With an altitude of approximately 3600 meters, La Paz becomes the highest administrative capital in the world. This is because the Andes Mountains stretches through the

western part of the South American continent. This makes Bolivia a country with huge differences in topography. For example, the western part of Bolivia, called the *altiplano* (high plateau), has an average altitude of 3600 meters above sea level. The eastern part of the country – the lowlands – forms a part of the Amazon rainforest and the Chaco grasslands southeast of the country. As a result, the climate changes from semiarid in the highlands to tropical in the lowlands. One should think that there are more inhabitants in the warmer climatic zones of Bolivia. However, almost half of the Bolivian population lives in the *Altiplano* in the cities of Oruro, Potosí and La Paz (Bolivian Information Forum, 2016a; Infoplease, 2016).



Picture 2: Map of Bolivia (CIA, 2016c).

### 2.1.2 Economy

The recent statistical data from the World Bank states that Bolivia is considered as one of the poorest countries in Latin America, where 50 percent of its population are living below the national poverty line (World Bank, 2011) and 7.7 percent live at 1.90 dollars a day (World Bank, 2013). Moreover, Bolivia has a gross domestic product (GDP) of 33.00 billion USD (World Bank, 2014), and a human development index (HDI) of 0.662 (Country Economy, 2014). In addition, Bolivia has also one of the highest income inequalities in Latin America (CIA, 2016a). Furthermore, Bolivia is also ranked close to the bottom among Latin American countries when it comes to health and development. The lack of clean water and a sufficient sanitary system, especially in the rural areas, is contributing to the health problems (WHO, 2015).



Even though Bolivia is considered as a poor country, it still has an abundance of natural resources like different sorts of minerals and hydrocarbons. Natural gas is most important to the Bolivian economy, since Bolivia gains a lot of income from the exports of the natural gas and it has become the main props of GDP growth. Moreover, Bolivia is the world's third largest producer of coca. The income from the production of coca has been and still is significant for the Bolivian economy. However, Bolivia faces difficulties to be a part of international trade due to it is a land-locked country. According to Morales (2008), Bolivia needs to take fully part in patterns of international trade and attract flows of foreign capital to finance the investment needed for future growth (Morales, 2008, p.217).

### 2.1.3 Politics

As other countries in Latin America, Bolivia has an interesting history that includes many different economic and political shifts. The Bolivian politics since 1952 include an agrarian revolution, a military regime, a re-establishment of democracy to a left turn in politics (Bolivian Information Forum, 2016b). In recent years, the Bolivian economy has been characterized by a shift between first interventionist state-led development and then free-market neoliberalism (Morales, 2008, p.218-225).

Juan Evo Morales Ayma has been the President of Bolivia since he was elected with more than 50 percent of the votes in 2006 and in the reelection of 2009. Through different events such as Cochabamba's water revolt in 2000, Morales showed a great leadership and gained more political power in Bolivia (Bolivian Information Forum, 2016b). When he was elected to the presidency of Bolivia in 2005, it showed a critical and historic moment of political and cultural transformation. "At the head of a party called the Movement Towards Socialism (*Movimiento al Socialismo*, MAS), Morales, coca farmer, peasant union leader, and Aymara Bolivian, became the first indigenous president of the country" (Fabricant and Gustafson, 2011, p.1). Some of Morales' goals have been to nationalize the natural gas production and give the indigenous peoples the same rights as every citizen by changing the constitution of Bolivia (The Guardian, 2009). Since Morales second term of presidency from 2009, Bolivia has been defined as the Plurinational State of Bolivia (*Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia*) (Bolivia Information Forum, 2016b).

## **2.2 Bolivia's Indigenous Peoples**

Bolivia is a country where the majority of the population is indigenous origin. It is estimated that 60-70 percent of the Bolivian population is indigenous. As a result, Bolivia becomes the country with highest percentage of indigenous peoples in South America (Kohl & Bresnahan, 2010). However, in the last census from 2012, only 41 percent identified themselves as indigenous origins (IWGIA, 2015).

In Bolivia, there are 36 recognized indigenous groups, where the largest groups are Quechua (49 percent) and Aymara (40 percent), which are situated in the western highlands of Bolivia. The rest of the indigenous groups, like Chiquitano, Guaraní, Moxeño and other small indigenous groups are situated in the lowlands of Bolivia (IWGIA, 2015). Madidi National Park is home to indigenous peoples of Quechua, Aymara, Tacana, Esse, Ejja, Leco, Mosten, Chiman, and Araona origins. Each of these groups maintains a unique native language and has vastly differing traditions and knowledge arising out of many centuries inhabiting these lands (Ruíz, 2003, p.9).

### **2.2.1 Rising Struggles for the Indigenous Population**

The indigenous peoples of Bolivia have been going through a crucial time in its history. Until about 30 years ago, the indigenous peoples were not taken into account in the political, economic and cultural life in Bolivia. After long and ongoing battles and social mobilizations, the indigenous peoples achieved visibility and subsequently the vindication of their rights. Indigenous peoples in Bolivia started to mobilize already from the late 70's and early 80's in response to threats to their lands, human rights and ethnic identities. However, it was from the 1990's that the indigenous social movements really emerged in Bolivia. The Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Eastern Bolivia (CIDOB) has been one of the principal organizers of series of national resistance movements and marchers in Bolivia (Bolivian Information Forum, 2016c).

In recent years, CIDOB has organized two marches against the government's plans of building a road through *Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro-Sécure* (TIPNIS). In 2011, CIDOB and several hundreds of indigenous peoples, gathered to protest the government's plans to build a road that would cut through their indigenous territory and national park (McNeish, 2013).

When these people were going to march to La Paz for the defense of TIPNIS, they were raided by the government's armed police in an encampment in Chaparina, a town situated in TIPNIS. Even though the marchers were met by violence and repression from the government, the marchers continued their march to La Paz. When they arrived La Paz, the President Evo Morales held a press conference where he apologized for the violence and later following a series of meetings between the indigenous marchers and Morales, the government agreed to pass a legal decree (*ley corta*) that guaranteed that the road would not cut through the national park (McNeish, 2013, p.224-228).

The other indigenous march in the defense of TIPNIS in 2012, started when Evo Morales promulgated a new law of consultation to decide if the road through TIPNIS should be build or not, after that Indigenous Council of the South (CONISUR) arrived La Paz and demanded that the road should be constructed. In the same day, CIDOB announced that a new march in the defense of TIPNIS already had started. When the indigenous peoples were marching to La Paz, they were met with several road blockages and some authorities from the political party MAS tried to prevent the growing number of marchers to enter several territories on their way to La Paz (McNeish, 2013; Sanchez-Lopez, 2015, p.25).

After the event of the TIPNIS-conflict, the government of Evo Morales managed to internally divide and to weaken indigenous organizations. The government used all its power, in addition to the control of the police, to divide indigenous organizations into two parallel groups (Página Siete, 2014). The reason for the internal divisions is mainly because of CIDOB's opposition to the road. Therefore, with creating a parallel CIDOB, the government could continue their campaign to promote the road (Carwill, 2013).

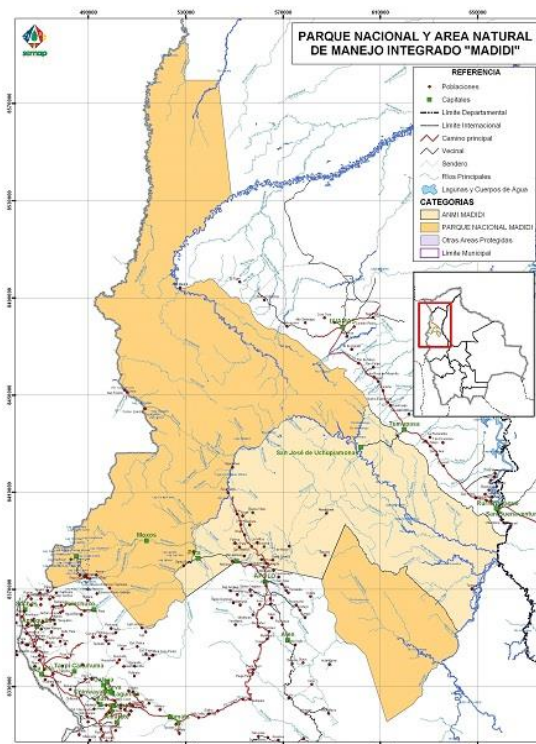
This case illustrates the lack of respect the government has for indigenous peoples. Since the TIPNIS-conflict, there has been rising issues between the government and indigenous peoples. Those issues make it difficult for indigenous peoples to maintain sustainability where they live. For many indigenous peoples, ecotourism has become an alternative way to continue preserving territories that are vulnerable in relation to the government. Even though ecotourism makes people directly and indirectly involved to follow certain environmental laws, there are many challenges for ecotourism in Bolivia. This will be discussed in both chapter three and in chapter five.

## 2.3 Madidi National Park



Picture 3: Map of Bolivia showing the location of Madidi National Park (LT&C, 2016).

*Parque Nacional y Área Natural de Manejo Integrado Madidi* (Madidi National Park) was created in 1995 due to local community support for a creation of a park. The park is situated in northwest of Bolivia in the Department of La Paz, in the provinces of Franz Tamayo, Abel Ituralde and Bautista Saavedra. Municipalities involved are Apolo, San Buenaventura, Ixiamas, Curva and Pelechuco. The park is divided into three areas under two different categories. The national park has two sections of total 1,271,500 hectares of protected forest. The Natural Area of Integrated Management (ANMI) has 624,250 hectares where the main purpose is to conserve and sustain the local communities in this area (Fleck, Amend, Painter and Reid, 2006a, p.27-28).



Picture 4: Map of Madidi National Park. The national park has dark yellow color and ANMI has light yellow color (SERNAP, 2016a).

Madidi National Park has been declared as one of the most biologically diverse areas on Earth. This is because the park is characterized by its exceptional variety of ecosystems and species. This is due to that the park's altitude ranks from Andes Mountains at 6000 meters above sea level to lowland Amazonian forests at 200 meters above sea level (Fleck et.al, 2006). The park has registered 1,800 species of plants, almost 200 species of fish, 84 species of amphibians, 71 species of reptiles, 156 species of mammals and 1,196 species of birds (SERNAP, 2016b). It has been estimated that Madidi has the highest number of bird species in the world (Live Science, 2012).

As mentioned above, Madidi National Park also maintains a population of indigenous peoples. There are in total 3,714 inhabitants and 31 indigenous and peasant communities. The origin community territory (TCO) San José de Uchupiamonas is one of the communities in Madidi National Park (WCS Bolivia, 2015a).

The entry to the park is through Rurrenabaque, located on the banks of Beni River, facing the town of San Buenaventura. Rurrenabaque is not only the entry door to Madidi National Park, but it is also a distribution center for tourists travelling to Madidi or other parks in the area (Fleck et.al, 2006, p.37). There are a lot of enterprises to choose from when being in Rurrenabaque. Many of these enterprises support communities and the conservation of the park (Høyme, 2016).



Picture 5: The cities of Rurrenabaque (closest) and San Buenaventura (across the river)



Picture 6: The entrance to Madidi National Park

(Photos: Author, 2015).

## **2.4 Tourism in Bolivia**

Bolivia is not yet very popular as a tourist destination compared to its neighboring countries. Still, Bolivia has a lot of attractions like the ruins of Tiwanaku, Lake Titicaca, the salt flats in Uyuni, the *altiplano*, the lower valleys of Yungas and Chapare, and national parks like Madidi (Peaty and Portillo, 2009, p.111; Lonely Planet, 2016). According to touristic data collected by World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Bolivia does not attract as much international tourists compared to its neighboring countries. The numbers from 2012 and 2013 show that while Bolivia has had 798,000 international tourists, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Peru have all had above 3,164,000 international tourists (UNWTO, 2015b, p.10).

There are various reasons why Bolivia does not manage to attract international tourists in the same way as its neighboring countries. Firstly, Bolivia's attractions are not yet widely known compared to e.g. Macchu Picchu or Galápagos. Secondly, another reason might be the political and social instability in the country. There are frequent demonstrations and highway blockades. Thirdly, Bolivia has a poor infrastructural level. Over half of Bolivia's roads are in poor condition. In addition, there are only three airports which handle international flights (Peaty and Portillo, 2009, p.112).

## **2.5 Tourism in Madidi National Park**

Madidi National Park faces the same issues. It is evident that the infrastructure is relatively poor. In the touristic low-season from December to March the roads are extremely poor due to the rain season. In addition, there is only one flight company offering flights from La Paz to Rurrenabaque (personal communication, 2015). This might be the reason why Madidi National Park does not have as much international tourists compared to e.g. Lago Titicaca (Peaty and Portillo, 2009, p.111-112). Still, there are approximately 7000-8000 tourists each year that travel into Madidi National Park (Scherl and Edwards, 2007, p.78). The majority of tourists travelling to Madidi National Park choose an eco-friendly enterprise. Ecotourism in Bolivia and in Madidi National Park has become a solution to the damages caused by mass-tourism. There is a possibility that ecotourism can save Bolivia's biodiversity from the many threats it faces, including energy companies, cattle barons and the coca industry. Therefore, local community members in the park have created ecotourism initiatives to protect the land and territory they live in (Peaty and Portillo, 2006, p. 112-115). The Madidi National Park offers ecological and cultural tour experiences to visitors. Many local tour operators offer boat

transportation, accommodation, meals and local guides to visitors wishing to enter the park. Moreover, the eco-lodges in the park are created and managed by the local indigenous population. Below are two examples of successful community-based ecotourism projects. Both Chalalán Ecolodge and San Miguel del Bala are enterprises offering touristic eco-tour packages where tourists can both experience the fauna and flora of the park and the indigenous culture.

#### 2.5.1 Indigenous Community-Based Ecotourism Enterprises

Chalalán Ecolodge is considered to be the first eco-business in Bolivia which is entirely community-owned and managed. The eco-lodge is one component of a broader programme that aims to connect ecotourism with sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, and organizational strengthening of San José de Uchupiamonas community which is home to the Quechua-Tacana ethnicity (Scherl and Edwards, 2007, p.79; Peaty and Portillo, 2009, p.113-115). Chalalán Ecolodge is located at about 5 hours from Rurrenabaque and 3 hours from San José de Uchupiamonas community (by motorboat) (Chalalan, 2016b).

San Miguel del Bala is also a community-based ecotourism enterprise. Many people that work for San Miguel del Bala come from a community called San Miguel, which is home to the Tacana ethnicity. To get to San Miguel, it is necessary to travel by boat 40 minutes upriver from Rurrenabaque. As a consequence, the San Miguel community is not situated inside the Madidi National Park. However, it is close to the doorstep of the park. San Miguel del Bala offers tourists to visit the community San Miguel and to spend some time at their two lodges, where one is close to the community and the other inside Madidi National Park (San Miguel del Bala, 2016; Høyme, 2016).

As a researcher, I traveled with both of the enterprises. Chalalán and San Miguel del Bala are enterprises that take great care to avoid causing damage to the environment. Both enterprises want to be perceived as sustainable. They do this for example by giving information to the tourists on how to save energy and water while being at the eco-lodge. Furthermore, both enterprises help their community and support their families financially. For example, the standards of health and education in the communities of San José de Uchupiamonas and San Miguel have improved. In addition, many local people from the two mentioned communities are grateful for ecotourism because it somehow maintains their tradition and cultures. When





## **Chapter 3: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

The following chapter will provide a literary foundation and present concepts and theories that will form the theoretical framework for the thesis. The literature review will split into three parts. The first part focuses on the concepts of ecotourism. Part two discusses the environmental, economic and the socio-cultural consequences of ecotourism. The last section describes current and future potentials and challenges of ecotourism. Finally, the theoretical framework will discuss sustainability within the tourism industry.

### **Part One: The Concepts of Ecotourism**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

A great deal of the global growth in tourism occurs in developing countries. However, even though tourism produces economic growth to these countries, there are several obstacles that must be overcome. Mass-tourism has created a sense of dissatisfaction and various negative impacts in environmental and social realms. The conventional tourism always focuses on income and growth instead of conservation of environment and culture at the destination. Due to tourism, massive forest destruction, various pollutions, cultural decay and many other problems have emerged all over the world. Many countries have been facing serious environmental and social disorders due to mass-tourism which only insists on quantity rather than quality tourism, quantity rather than sound economic benefits to the place and people of the destination (Honey, 2008, p.9-13).

In this way alternative tourism hopes to lead tourism towards more responsible ways. Unlike the mass-tourism, alternative tourism, albeit various in types, is in small scale, with low impacts and it is community and local based. There are so many existing types of alternative tourism. There are nature-based tourism, responsible tourism, adventure tourism, green tourism, village tourism, culture tourism, and others regarded as better tourism than mass-tourism that has already caused various undesirable impacts (Wearing and Neil, 2008, p.1-6). According to Wearing and Neil (2008), in general sense, alternative tourism can be broadly defined as a form of ecotourism that sets out to be consistent with natural, social, and community values that contribute to more conservation, understanding, and appreciation of the environment, culture and also maximum satisfaction to both guests and hosts. Some important forms of alternative tourism are described below:

- *Nature-based Tourism*: Tourism entirely based on nature such as trekking, mountain climbing, surfing, rafting and other many activities including adventure tourism are known as nature-based tourism in which tourists should respect the intrinsic value of nature.
- *Cultural Tourism*: Tourism based on various cultural elements such as arts, music, dance, language, songs, cultural and religious heritages, traditional customs, skills and handicrafts of indigenous and local people that visitors enjoy with them and promote them.
- *Wildlife Tourism*: Tourism based on various wild-species which tourists recognize the real value of these biological assets in ecosystems of the planet.
- *Educational Tourism*: Tourism educates tourists about the importance of nature, culture, ecosystems and also the support for nature conservation.
- *Agri-tourism*: Tourism run basically by natural attraction on private farms comprising various traditional and indigenous farm activities like cattle herding, cowboy activities, sheep shearing, dairy farming, gardening, horse riding and much more.
- *Scientific Tourism*: Tourism primarily based on scientific research and other various study purposes which help to collect scientific information to the current state of the field and support for the betterment (Wearing and Neil, 2008, p.1-6).

Since the late 1990s, ecotourism has become a major subject of discussion at many conferences and in professional journals, books and project reports. Also at the same time in both the developed and developing countries, the realization came that ecotourism could be a means of sustainability in tourism and fulfill both conservation and development goals (Wearing and Neil, 2008, p.6-8). This will further be discussed in the theoretical framework.

### **3.2 What is Ecotourism?**

Definitions of the term ecotourism have already been introduced. Ecotourism cannot be easily defined because there is a wide range of literature that defines ecotourism. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education” (TIES, 2015). Furthermore, according to Buckley (2004) ecotourism is travel to minimally impacted natural areas and associated to cultural locales.

Eco-tourists enjoy nature and cultures that coexist harmoniously with the natural environment; they are conscious of minimizing their impacts on nature and local cultures and they aim to improve socio-economics of local populations (Buckley, 2004, p.xi). Furthermore, Mercer (1996) states that ecotourism can be defined as a way that promotes the conservation of an area as a positive option to other alternative land-uses that could have more serious environmental impacts (Mercer, 1996).

However, Lisse (2015) states that ecotourism is sometimes confused with sustainable tourism because it is considered to be one aspect of sustainable tourism. While ecotourism is the act of visiting a location and leaving very little impact, sustainable tourism is a concept of visiting places as tourists and trying to make only positive impacts on the environment, society and economy (Lisse, 2015). Therefore, Mercer (1996) argues that the participants and the tour-operators within ecotourism are expected to follow environmentally responsible practices. For example, it is important that tourists have responsible behavior towards the environment when being on an eco-tour. The behavior and attitudes of tourists might change because ecotourism can be a way of learning experience for tourists. Similarly, the tour-operators need to follow environmentally responsible practices in all phases of their operations like with e.g. energy and water consumption, waste disposal, responsible marketing, transportation and education, as well as sensitivity towards native fauna and flora (Mercer, 1996).

The distinctive demands for ecotourism listed in *Essentials of Tourism* (Cooper, 2012) are as follow:

- is purposeful
- is poorly documented
- desires first-hand experience/contact with nature/culture
- has the motive to study, admire and/or enjoy nature/culture
- is tempered by the need to consume tourism responsibly and offset carbon emissions
- can be segmented in many ways including by level of commitment, level of physical effort, motives
- comes from those who are more likely to be well educated, have a higher income and be slightly older than the average tourist (Cooper, 2012, p. 22).

Although there is lack of common definition of ecotourism, ecotourism basically emphasizes the integration of three key goals of sustainability - environmental, economic and social goals.

Therefore the destinations for ecotourism are places that normally are not the most visited places on Earth. Tourists get inspired by experiencing beautiful nature, while learning about history and culture (Høyme, 2016). Therefore, the destinations for ecotourism are:

- relatively natural areas which are undisturbed and/or uncontaminated
- attractions of scenery, flora, fauna and/or indigenous culture
- allow ecotourism to deliver economic and conservation benefits to the local people, including employment
- develop ecotourism with a view to conserve/enhancing/maintaining the natural/cultural system
- apply integrated planning and management techniques
- apply environmental impact and auditing procedures to all elements of the tourism destination
- attempt to be carbon neutral
- encourage local ownership of facilities (Cooper, 2012, p.23).

In conclusion, ecotourism is often an activity where the local people of the tourism destination areas are involved in the management and planning of ecotourism. This is called community-based ecotourism.

### **3.3 Community-Based Ecotourism**

Community-based ecotourism (CBE) management refers to ecotourism programmes, which take place under the control and active participation of the local people who inhabit or own a natural attraction. These natural attractions are often referred as communities (WWF, 2001, p.2). However, deciding if there is a community or not is difficult due to that they can be measured at different scales. According to James, Nadarajah, Haive and Stead (2012), a community is “a group or network of persons who are connected (objectively) to each other by relatively durable social relations that extend beyond immediate genealogical ties and who mutually define that relationship (subjectively) as important to their social identity and social practice” (James, Nadarajah, Haive and Stead, 2012, p. 14). However, this definition reflects on universal beliefs. Local people living in different communities might have other perspectives of a community. Therefore, the community is defined by the people living in a space, area, territory or place (WWF, 2001; Pike, Rodrigues-Pose and Tomaney, 2006). CBE

is thus local people within a community that are involved in the tourism industry. CBE is managed and run by the community itself, management decisions are made by local people and profits go directly to the community (WWF, 2001, p.2).

The tourism conducted is an activity at the grass-root level. Since CBE is on a small-scale level, it will not be possible to conduct mass-tourism. However, the desire for mass-tourism is not the reason communities want to be involved in the tourism industry. Local people living in communities have decided to operate within tourism, and particularly with ecotourism due to different reasons. Firstly, ecotourism is an alternative economic activity of the communities' existing economic activity. In developing countries, many communities are isolated. This means that they might manage their economy through agricultural economy. Conducting agriculture is perhaps the only income source communities have. In addition, much of the agriculture conducted is based on self-sufficient farming. Therefore, to develop people within communities, ecotourism has been created as a second source of generating income. Furthermore, another reason local communities get involved in ecotourism is because they want to protect the land and the territory they live in. Being part of ecotourism can be a way for communities to ensure and to achieve a sustainable environment for future generations. In many places, communities are particularly inhabited by indigenous peoples. Therefore, indigenous peoples are highly involved in managing and planning ecotourism (WWF, 2001; Moscardo, 2008, p.1-12). As argued, locals decide to be involved in ecotourism because it will create many beneficiaries for community members. This will further be discussed in the next part.

### **3.4 Indigenous Community-Based Ecotourism**

According to Zeppel (2006, p.1), indigenous peoples are becoming more involved in the tourism industry, and particularly with ecotourism. The use of indigenous knowledge in ecotourism is important because it encompasses the skills, experiences and insight of people, applied to maintain or improve their livelihood. This brings economic and social progress within communities themselves. Furthermore, indigenous peoples have an intimate understanding of their environments, which always passes on to the new generations (Gorjestani, 2000; Briggs, 2005). Therefore, the use of indigenous knowledge in CBE is

important because they have more knowledge of the area or the territory. In addition, their cultural values are also an additional attraction for CBE.

Ecotourism enterprises controlled by indigenous peoples include cultural eco-tours, eco-lodges, hunting and fishing tours, cultural villages and other nature-oriented tourist facilities or services. Indigenous ecotourism is defined as nature-based attractions or tours owned by indigenous peoples, and also indigenous interpretation of the natural and cultural environment including wildlife. Indigenous tourism enterprises are largely a response to the spread of tourism into remote and marginalized areas, including national parks, nature reserves, and tribal territories that are traditional living areas for many indigenous groups. Indigenous cultures and lands are frequently the main attraction for eco-tours visiting wild and scenic natural regions (Zeppel, 2006, p.1).

Madidi National Park in the Amazon Basin is such a region. The communities of San José de Uchupiamonas and San Miguel in Madidi National Park are both indigenous communities involved in ecotourism.

<b>Mass-tourism</b>	<b>Ecotourism</b>
Large scale	Small scale
Mass-building of infrastructure	Small building of infrastructure
Formal relation with people and place	Informal relation with people and place
Insensitive to local people and cultures	Sensitive to local people and cultures
Hedonistic	Responsible
Dominant economic activities (capitalistic)	Social and environmental welfares
Unspecific in location	Specific in location

Table 1: Major differences between mass-tourism and ecotourism

## **Part Two: Impacts of Ecotourism**

The impacts of ecotourism are diverse and an attempt is made to describe the impacts from more than one perspective. There are both positive and negative impacts relative to mainly three aspects of sustainability – environmental, economic and socio-cultural.

### **3.5 Environmental Impacts**

The prime goal of ecotourism is to preserve environment and improve the welfare of local people. That is why it is believed that ecotourism is encouraging the conservation of areas of natural beauty. World Heritage Areas, national parks and similar reserves all benefit economically from tourism because they are major destinations for tourists.

In contrast to mass-tourism - where tourists often hold little responsibility in the impact they have on the environment – ecotourism gives the tourists a greater stake in conservation efforts because of their involvement in the local culture. Normally, most tourists are not environmental advocates. Giving tourists environmental education is a way of raising awareness of environmental values. Visitors learn about the unique characteristics of their destination and can, in turn, be moved to protect it, and often police it. This is because the environmental education given from e.g. guides in protected national parks and areas teach tourists about the biodiversity of flora and fauna. Ecotourism has initiated changes in the relationship between humans and the environment in terms of knowledge, attitudes and behavior. Moreover, ecotourism generates money from natural environments by encouraging tourists to visit and during their stay, pay for items like entrance fees, concessions and licenses for remitting money for conservation long after the visit (Buckley, 2004, p.5-13; Cooper, 2012, p.79-80).

Whilst there are many beneficial effects of ecotourism for the environment, there are also some negative consequences. There is a considerable variation between enterprises in the efficiency of conserving the environment. Not all enterprises meet the targets of mainstream tourism eco-certification. If enterprises do not improve in environmental management of e.g. waste management, water supply and energy use, these enterprises will indeed represent a reverse contribution to the sustainability of the tourism industry (Buckley, 2004, p.5-13). Moreover, the influx of eco-tourists can degrade the natural environment the tourists have come to see. Letting tourists loose in a delicate ecosystem can lead to pollution and impact on the environment in unforeseen ways. For example, ecotourism depends on the water resources of lakes, the oceans, rivers and canals for managing its several activities. Therefore,

ecotourism can have an adverse effect on water quality as the movement of boats containing petrol and oil harms the aquatic ecosystems. Polluted water will cause negative effects for the life that depend on clean water. Furthermore, the energy use associated with ecotourism has also negative impacts on the environment. Direct transport associated with the ecotourism experience, travel between various ecotourism sites and transport from home location to the destination are all contributors to high energy use and carbon dioxide emissions. Moreover, another dominant consequence of ecotourism is on the destination's flora and fauna. Through the process of tourists walking in areas of vegetation, tourists will crush and damage it. Building places for eco-lodges and camping has the same effect of destroying different kinds of plants and trees. When it comes to the fauna, ecotourism can have an impact upon the wildlife through activities such as wildlife observation. Even though tourists do not tend to have a harmful impact upon wildlife, there are species that migrate further away from the noises being made due to the activities of ecotourism. Therefore, observing wildlife can be difficult in popular eco-tourist destinations (Buckley, 2004, p.5-13; Cooper, 2012, p.81-82).

### **3.6 Economic Impacts**

The economic impacts of ecotourism are more readily measurable than environmental and social impacts. Economic data from tourism is available as they are collected at the national level. For mass-tourism, the tourists spending have direct, indirect and induced economic effects. Direct economic effects can be e.g. tourist spending at hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, transport and entertainment. Indirect economic effects can be e.g. tourist spending from other sectors such as agriculture, manufacture and services. Induced economic effects can e.g. be wages in terms of income, jobs and government revenue (Lejárraga and Walkenhorst, 2008, p.417-418). As a consequence, the economic benefits of tourism to a destination are income, employment and regional development. Likewise, CBE is also a tool for capital flow, employment and development of community members. These encourage entrepreneurship for local members to organize the community in implementing and running successful CBE enterprises. This creates a variety of jobs and positions for those who want to be involved in CBE. With this, the community receives both financial and social capital, which will further drive enhancements of the community ecotourism programme. The incomes gathered from CBE can then be used to e.g. help the development of infrastructure, water supply, education and health assistance (Coria and Califucura, 2012, p.49-51).



However, ecotourism initiatives do not necessarily lead to increased economic opportunities for local people. In some cases, an expansion in ecotourism reduces the opportunity for local people to participate in its development. Even though local people benefit financially from ecotourism, the benefits are limited because local people outside the community have better paid jobs. Therefore, ecotourism can create a financial inequality between community members (Duffy, 2002, p.47-49). Moreover, since ecotourism focuses more on preserving the environment, it might damage the ability of local people to develop sustainably and lift themselves out of poverty. The environment might be effectively prioritized above the needs of local people (Buckley, 2004, p.5-13). Also, there are challenges such as risk of economic leakage and inflation. Leakages occur when earnings are spent outside the local economy, e.g. lost via import or spent by government on other projects or areas than those related to the tourism industry. Inflation occurs when a period of above-normal general price increases. This is due to the tourist spending exceeds that of the locals and lead to the inflation in the price of goods, property and land. Hence, the local community might be unable to afford local housing or to purchase local goods (Trejos and Chiang, 2009; Todaro and Smith, 2015; Cooper, 2012).

### **3.7 Social and Cultural Impacts**

Like impacts of ecotourism on environment and economy, there are also socio-cultural impacts. In contrast to economic and environmental impacts, socio-cultural impacts occur slowly and therefore it has been given less attention than other impacts. However, when the impacts do occur, there is little opportunity to reverse the impacts once they have taken place. When tourists travel to a destination and choose the activity of CBE there will be a contact between tourists (guest) and the community members (host). This has both positive and negative impacts on socio-cultural issues.

Ecotourism can support communities economically through income flow and employment. Furthermore, when the two groups meet it can create a greater interest in conserving traditional languages, local religion, traditional arts, traditional lifestyles, and values and behavior. In addition, ecotourism also advocates for other issues like human rights, animal rights, labor justice, gender and democracy. Furthermore, local people adopt positive aspects of tourists and tourism since ecotourism allows them to be involved in decision-making. This empowers locals as a community in the sense that ecotourism might reduce depopulation due

to the economic advantages. Those are considered as important parameters for social sustainability (Swarbrooke, 1999, p.69-77).

However, there are also negative social and cultural impacts of ecotourism. This is because ecotourism often involves seeking out the most pristine, uncharted, and unpenetrated areas of the planet and these are often home to isolated and fragile human civilizations (Honey, 2009, p.11-13, 71). The consequences of ecotourism happen when the guest and the host encounter. There are visible contrasts between the guest and the hosts. The hosts are exposed to the tourists' behavior because tourists can demonstrate the differences between the two groups through artefacts, language, culture, costumes, religious values etc. For example, local people involved within ecotourism initiatives are introduced to foreign languages. Tourists can put pressure on local languages if tourists are unable or unwilling to converse with staff in these languages. Furthermore, the contrast of cultures can lead to a loss of religion and traditional spirituality. Indigenous peoples are especially in danger of losing traditional culture. Tourism in isolated indigenous communities can introduce subtle changes into the traditional society. And more due to ecotourism, there might be some serious social problems like illegal businesses, crime, murders, prostitution and drugs. Moreover, since ecotourism is operated in a small-scale level, it does not generate income and/or employment for all community members. This can lead to migration from the community. Especially, young local people migrate to find other opportunities than the existing opportunities in the community. These impacts demonstrate that a community and its culture change due to tourism. Therefore, it is very essential to handle ecotourism responsibly (Swarbrooke, 1999, p.69-77; Cooper, 2012, p.104-107, 110).

<b>Types of impacts</b>	<b>Positive impacts/benefits</b>	<b>Negative impacts</b>
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Responsible for nature</li> <li>- Provides maximum incentive for conservation of natural areas</li> <li>- Gives awareness of environmental values</li> <li>- Educate both tourists and locals about the environment</li> <li>- Creates a good relationship between the nature and people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not all enterprises meet environmental targets</li> <li>- Pollution (air, water, waste)</li> <li>- Damage on flora</li> <li>- Disturbance of wildlife</li> <li>- Direct transport</li> </ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides income</li> <li>- Gives employment</li> <li>- Enhance regional development (improvement of infrastructure, water, education, health)</li> <li>- Capital flow (both financial and social)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can create unhealthy economic competition and economic gap among locals</li> <li>- Risk of economic leakage and inflation</li> </ul>
Socio-cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exchange of cultures</li> <li>- Tourists support locals with income flow and employment</li> <li>- Conserve traditional languages, religion, arts, lifestyle, values, behavior etc.</li> <li>- Involvement in decision-making</li> <li>- Empowerment of locals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visible contrasts between tourists and locals</li> <li>- Risk of cultural degradation due to tourists and globalization (loss of traditional language, religion, spirituality etc.)</li> <li>- May create various social problems</li> <li>- Migration</li> </ul>

Table 2: Summary of positive and negative impacts of ecotourism

## **Part Three: Potentials and Challenges for Ecotourism**

### **3.8 Potentials of Creating Ecotourism Destinations**

There are many areas in the world which can be developed as ecotourism destinations. Many of them have much potential due to their destination sites like national parks, areas, coastal areas, mountains etc. However, these destinations need to be better planned and managed and show more concern and respect for the environment and host community. In addition, people involved in tourism will have to take increased responsibility for social and environmental issues. Moreover, strategic ecotourism policy and scientific research, political stability and strong economic and social integration are important tools for countries that want to develop this activity. Ecotourism needs to adopt planning, management, techniques to provide both a welcome and a rich experience for the tourist while at the same time ensuring protection of the resources itself. Adopting these practices are effective ways to achieve real sustainable ecotourism that can be more beneficial to local communities, to natural and cultural environments, and advantageous to tourists and other stakeholders (Isaacs, 2000).

Costa Rica has been one of the pioneers of ecotourism. This is mainly due to that Costa Rica is well-known for its biodiversity. 25 percent of the country's land area is in protected national parks and protected areas. Those parks and areas contain 5 percent of the world's biodiversity. The reason why ecotourism is well-functioning in Costa Rica – which is lacking in many developing countries – is due to its good democracy, political stability, the abolition of its army, respect for human rights, and a welcoming attitude toward foreigners (Honey, 2008, p.160-162). Therefore, Costa Rica becomes an example of lessons learned for other developing countries that want to achieve well-functioning destination sites for tourists.

### **3.9 Some Potential Ecotourism Sites in Bolivia**

According to *Servicio Nacional de Areas Protegidas* (SERNAP), Bolivia has 22 national parks which covers 16 percent of the country. This gives huge potentials to operate ecotourism initiatives all over the country. There are many examples of ecotourism projects in Bolivia going from the *altiplano* in the west to the grasslands in the east (SERNAP, 2016c). However, many are not yet developed or well-known as Madidi National Park. As mentioned, Madidi National Park is one of the world's most biologically diverse national parks. This

might be due to that the park ranks from 200 meters above sea level to 6000 meters above sea level. Therefore, the park has potentials to develop more ecotourism activities. In addition, the park has a huge diversity of fauna and flora and yet, there are still many species that have not been found. Creating and developing new ecotourism initiatives in the park will strengthen the chance for tourist to visit other areas of the park and to see different kinds of wildlife due to the geographical and climatic diversification. Since this paper already has presented the eco-destination of Madidi National Park, it will now rather give an overview of some of the eco-destinations in Bolivia.

SERNAP has highlighted some major sites as potential ecotourism initiatives:

- *Pilon Lajas: Reserva de la Biósfera y Tierra Comunitaria de Origen Pilón Lajas* is located southwest of the Beni Department and east of La Paz Department. This area is Madidi's neighboring park. Likewise, this area has an abundant of spectacular natural and cultural sites. It has also a vast repository of biodiversity due to geographical and climatic diversification. The area has attractions of indigenous peoples of *mapajo*, valleys of Cascada and Quiquibey. In addition, the Laguna Azul has reported presence of archeological sites and ruins (SERNAP, 2016d).
- *Carrasco National Park*: This Park is situated east of the Cochabamba Department. The north end of the park is best known as El Chapare, a humid rainforest with the highest rainfall in the country, and the second highest in the continent. This amount of water added to the multiple ecosystems that range from 4700 meters above sea level to 300 meters above sea level offer great initiatives for ecotourism (SERNAP, 2016e).
- *Noel Kempff National Park*: The Noel Kempff Park, covering over a million hectares, is one of the largest in the country. The area houses a diversity of ecosystems which has become one of the best places of observing unspoiled natural wildlife. Some of the attractions are the Ahlfeld waterfalls and the plateau of Caparuch (SERNAP, 2016f).
- *Amboró National Park: Parque Nacional y Área Natural de Manejo Integrado Amboró* is a huge park covering about 637.600 hectares. The park borders the Cochabamba Department and the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra. The park has marvelous topography full of ranged hills, rivers and waterfalls with rich flora and fauna. The principal tourist attractions are e.g. the cloudy forest of Siberia, Mucuñucú, Saguayo, La Chonta, La Yunga, and Laguna Verde (SERNAP, 2016g).

Even though ecotourism has the potentials to develop eco-destinations, the potentials are limited because ecotourism is facing many challenges and issues that have considerable impacts upon ecotourism destinations.

### **3.10 Challenges for Ecotourism Current and Future**

The future of ecotourism is exciting since it is yet unknown. However, ecotourism is facing and will be facing some challenges to be further developed. Many natural sites around the world are under threat from a combination of globalization, security risks and climate change.

#### **3.10.1 Globalization**

Eriksen (2006) states “that the world has become increasingly more interconnected” (Eriksen, 2006, p. 105). It is in fact, that the world has changed drastically since the end of the World War II. In addition, the population on the planet emits more greenhouse gases than ever. The interconnected world has led to easier and increased ways to travel to other countries. The use of transportations such as planes, buses, boats/ships and cars make it easier for the world’s population to go from one place to another. Therefore, globalization is definitely a part of our consumerism as it leads to increases of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and other greenhouse gases. Furthermore, it is evident that globalization also leads to spreading of diseases. For example, the outbreaks of Ebola in western countries of Africa spread overseas due to people travelling from these countries to other countries e.g. United States. Tropical epidemics spreading to other areas of the World can be a future concern due to globalization (Eriksen, 2006; Cooper, 2012, p.343). Globalization will have the same impacts upon tourism because the human contact between the guest and the host can encounter challenges like security risks and climate change.

#### **3.10.2 Security Risks**

For tourists, safety will always be the paramount consideration. However, as the world has become increasingly more interconnected, travelling to other destinations has led and will lead to security risks for not only the guest but also for the hosts. Ecotourism is vulnerable to natural crisis and natural hazards like tsunamis, earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions etc. However, there are also man-made crises such as terrorism, acts of war, political and/social instability in terms of armed police, protests, etc. As mentioned, both tourists and the host

country take the risk of exposing each other to infectious diseases. There is also a risk of introducing alien flora and fauna into other countries (Cooper, 2012, p.341).

### 3.10.3 Climate Change

Climate change has become a big issue of our time because it has tremendous consequences for all living beings on Earth. One of the ways that tourism contributes to climate change is through carbon emissions from tourism-related activities such as transportation. The main consequences of globalization and increasing emissions are rising temperatures, sea-level rises, precipitation changes, loss of biodiversity, and extreme events such as natural disasters, which occur more often (IPCC, 2014, p.56-58). Unfortunately, developing countries are especially vulnerable to environmental changes. Because of poverty and inadequate technological development, it reduces the ability of individuals to respond and adapt to environmental changes (UNEP, 2012, p.36-41). Also, the extreme climate events are large expenses for developing countries. These countries also deal with costs of more spreading and new outbreaks of diseases. The costs from climate change and global warming will make developing countries poorer and more vulnerable (The Economist, 2009). As a consequence of climate change, globalization and security risks, tourism destinations might face challenges of attracting tourists due to these issues.

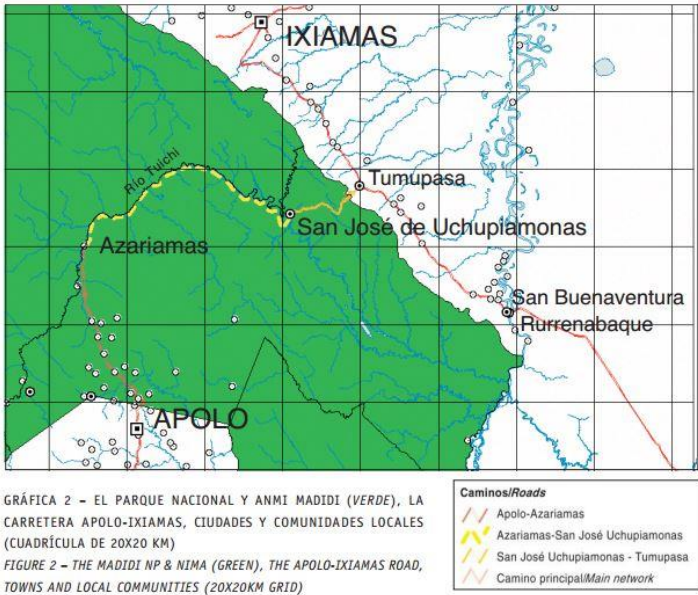
### 3.10.4 Challenges for Ecotourism in Madidi National Park

In spite of Bolivia's contribution to the development of ecotourism, the researcher has observed that the move for forest and biodiversity conservation is threatened by different stakeholders. These either singly or in combination stand as a barrier to its development or forest resource conservation. The size of the forest reserve continues to make way for the multiplication of depleting land use activities. The presence of these threats manifests through the multiplication of political decisions, unsustainable agricultural practices and, hunting and fishing activities. These further degrade the eco-touristic potentials of Madidi National Park, and they do not only impede ecotourism development and forest conservation in the area, but they have also resulted in a significant drop in the number of tourist visits and incomes realized from the sector. This will especially increase if the government goes through with their decisions of building a hydroelectric dam and the Apolo-Ixiamas road. Building the dam will be a threat against nature and the indigenous peoples as it will cause flooding of a huge area. In addition, the road is planned to cut the park in half and it will go through the

community of San José de Uchupiamonas. Moreover, building of the road will bring new settlements for timber and agricultural exploitation. As a consequence, the projects will induce significant deforestation. The environmental losses caused by the hydroelectric dam and the road projects could threaten current and future conservation and tourism activities in this protected area (Página Siete, 2015; Fleck, Painter, Reid, Amend, 2006b, p.35,37).



Picture 10: Main height proposals of the dam and power generation (La Pública, 2016).



Picture 11: The planned road of Apo-Ixiamas (Fleck et al., 2006, p.38).

Cognizant of the desire to preserve the pristine areas and to promote the development of ecotourism, the theoretical framework will give an evaluation of sustainability as a possible solution that suggest ways of improving the conservation of the forest and the consequent development of sustainable tourism.



## **Theoretical Framework**

The researcher finds no direct theory that discusses ecotourism. However, one theory was found related to the topic. As mentioned in the literature review, ecotourism is a sub-component of the field of sustainable tourism. Therefore, ecotourism is rooted in the concept of sustainable development. There is increasing recognition of the fact that the development of ecotourism could be very instrumental in the drive towards sustainable development, since it involves the improvement of livelihoods and the conservation of nature. In addition, an intricate relationship exists between ecotourism and forest conservation. Forest conservation that includes the preservation of biodiversity within a forest entity transforms an area into a haven for ecotourism.

### **3.11 Sustainable Development**

The introduction of sustainable development can be traced back to the 1970s when the need for conservation of environment was felt prominently for the first time. Further attention towards sustainable development was presented at the first environmental meeting in Stockholm in 1972. However, it was not until 1987 that the concept was defined. The concept of sustainability first appeared in the public scene in the report put out by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (Brundtland Commission) in 1987. The commission report advances the idea of sustainable development by noting that economic growth and environmental conservation are not only compatible but they are necessary partners. One cannot exist without the other (Hunter, 2002, p 36; Adams, 2009, p.75-81). Sustainable development is high potential for any community within economic, social, cultural ecologic and physical constraints (Adams, 2009). Sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definition is from *Our Common Future* (1987). “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p. 43). The formulation contains two key concepts. Firstly, “the concept of “needs”, in particular is the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given” (WCED, 1987, p. 43). Secondly, “the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs” (WCED, 1987, p. 43). Strange and Bayley (2008) add that sustainable development is about integration, meaning that sustainable development is developing in a way that benefits the

widest possible range of sectors, across borders and even between generations. In other words, sustainable development should take into consideration potential impact on society, the environment and the economy, while keeping in mind that human actions will have impacts elsewhere and the actions will have an impact on the future (Strange and Bayley, 2008, p.24). However, subsequent definitions have often been much more carefully phrased. *Forum for the Future*, e.g. defines it as a “dynamic process which enables all people to realize their potential and improve their quality of life in ways which simultaneously protect and enhance the Earth’s life support systems” (Chambers, Porritt, Price-Thomas, 2008, p. 3). As seen, there are many discussions in which all try to put in practice of real principle and theory of sustainable development. However it is argued that a complete sustainable development cannot be achieved without solving all three pillars of sustainable development.

#### 3.11.1 The Three Pillars of Sustainable Development

- *Environmental Sustainability* is “the maintenance of the factors and practices that contribute to the quality of environment on a long-term basis” (Business Dictionary, 2016a).
- *Economic Sustainability* is “the use of various strategies for employing existing resources optimally so that a responsible and beneficial balance can be achieved over the longer term” (Business Dictionary, 2016b).
- *Social Sustainability* is “the ability of a community to develop processes and structures which not only meet the needs of its current members but also support the ability of future generations to maintain a healthy community” (Business Dictionary, 2016c).

The three pillars of sustainable development are intertwined together like a triangle. If one side of the triangle breaks, the whole triangle will fall apart. As a consequence, development becomes unsustainable. The three pillars of sustainability is important for thinking about the future in which environmental, societal and economic considerations are balanced in the pursuit of an improved quality of life (Strange and Bailey, 2008, p.27; UNESCO, 2016). Therefore, it is argued that the most important pillar is environmental sustainability. If environmental sustainability cannot be achieved, the other two will also be unsuccessful. However, if economic and/or social sustainability breaks, it is still possible to achieve sustainable development as long there is environmental sustainability (Bjørke, 2015).

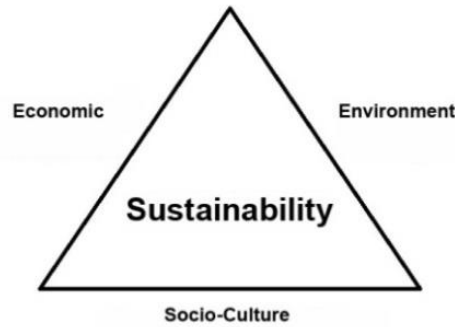


Figure 1: A model of the three pillars of sustainable development (IBU, 2016)

### 3.12 Sustainable Tourism

Tourism is a key player in each of the three pillars of sustainability. Tourism is a very beneficial industry in various ways if it is managed carefully. As discussed above, tourism and ecotourism will support economic growth and improve standards of life if it is managed properly. If it is not carefully handled, it will become a major cause of various hazards within the destination. Therefore, UNWTO has been influential in shaping the sustainable tourism agenda. Tourism can be sustainable if development meets the need of tourists and local residents while protecting future opportunities (UNWTO, 2013). Sustainable tourism has many similarities with ecotourism. For example, sustainable tourism needs to make sure to “make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity” (UNWTO, 2013, p. 17). Moreover, sustainable tourism also needs to “respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance” (UNWTO, 2013, p. 18). In addition, sustainable tourism needs to “ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation” (UNWTO, 2013, p. 18). The concepts of sustainable tourism can be complex as sustainable development because it is a way to manage all kinds of resources carefully to meet the need of ecological, social, economic, and aesthetic imperatives with encompassing other various life support systems. Ecotourism has shown to have equal qualities as sustainable tourism. Therefore, ecotourism can be the path towards sustainability:

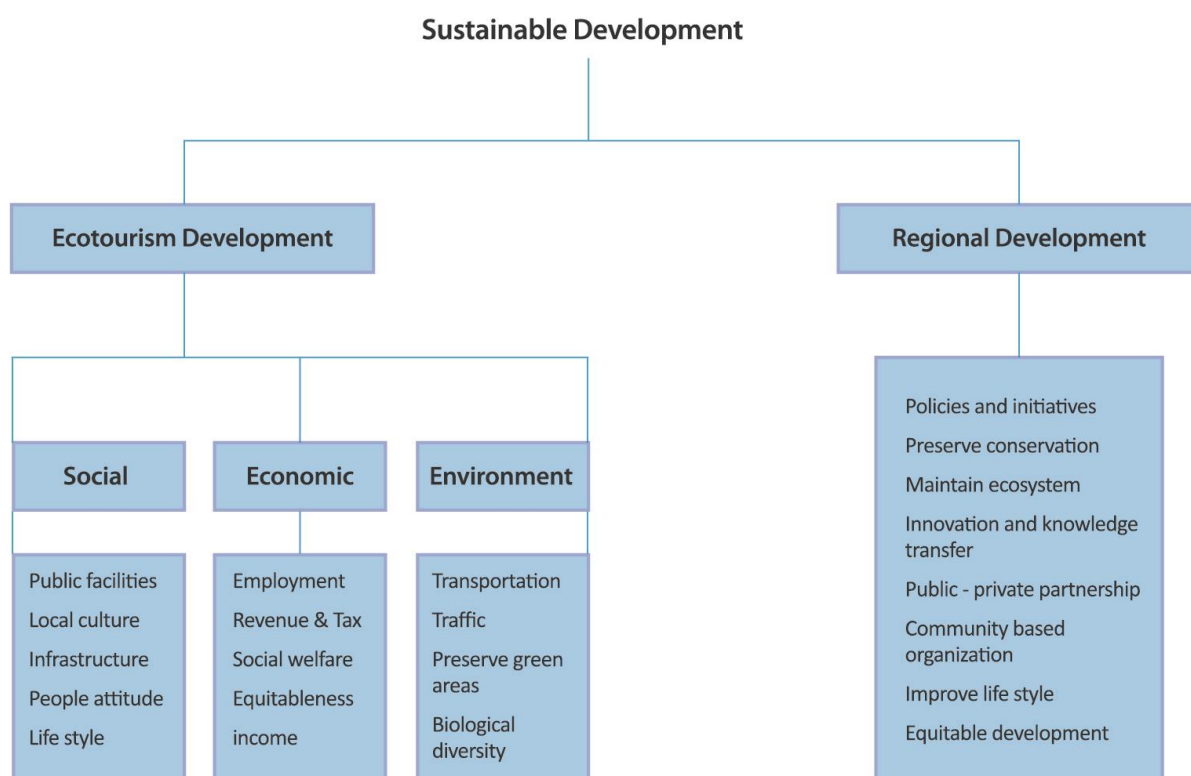


Figure 2: Sustainable development through ecotourism (Bhuiyan, Siwar, Ismail and Islam, 2012, p.55).

### 3.13 Sustainable Forests

Achieving sustainability is a challenge for the forests because tropical rainforest around the world are under threat from multiple causes. Tropical forests like the Amazon, Congo and Indonesian Rainforest are uniquely precious but still experience threats to some degree. The problems include deforestation, agriculture and mining, which all cause changes to their environment and are ultimately unsustainable. These threats occur even though there are many people and species living there and being dependent on the rainforests (Adams, 2009, p.242-245). For example, the South-East Asian rainforest disappear at a higher rate compared to other rainforests. 70 – 80 percent of the rainforest logging in Indonesia is illegal, and this happens while there are 60 million habitants living there. When it comes to Bolivia, almost half of the country is covered with rainforest. 22 out of 34 recognized indigenous groups in Bolivia live in the rainforest. The people are threatened every day by loggers and oil companies searching for oil (Nature Conservancy, 2016; WWF, 2016).

The rainforests are considered to be very important due to their ecosystems, biodiversity of species and the people living there. In addition the rainforest has been linked up to be a pharmacy, because much of the medicines come from the rainforests. Furthermore, it is evident that the forests prevent climate change when absorbing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Therefore, continuing increases of emissions like greenhouse gases is threatening the species that depend on the rainforest. The majority of species can go extinct and the population living in the rainforest might need to adapt to the changes in environment (Adams, 2009). Due to tropical deforestation, it is not easy to maintain sustainable forests. However, there are many environmental organizations and/or groups that work with preventing deforestation. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and the Rainforest Alliance are examples of organizations that pressures governments towards sustainability and sustainable forest development (United Nations, 2016; Rainforest Alliance, 2016).

To conclude, there are many threats to achieving sustainability. Deforestation, illegal logging and oil companies searching for oil are all threats for sustainable forest management as they cause tremendous impacts on the environment. Whether ecotourism might be an aspect of achieving sustainability will be further explored in the empirical research study.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

This chapter presents the research strategy chosen for this research. It also represents its method and techniques used in the collection and analysis of the data from the field of study. The choice of research design and sampling is also discussed. Ethical considerations and limitations and challenges encountered during the fieldwork are also discussed.

### **4.1 Research Strategy: Qualitative Research**

According to Bryman (2012), there are two different research strategies: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research can be constructed as a research strategy that emphasizes quantification in the collection and analysis of data. By contrast, qualitative research can be constructed as a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2012, p.35-36). Moreover, qualitative research often conducts a close relationship between a researcher and those people the researcher studies, often through observations and interviews. The data that gets collected is textual information, which the researcher has observed from the field, or they are answers to questions from interviews (Bryman, 2012, p.380-384).

The ethnographic field study of ecotourism in Madidi National Park has been based on qualitative research methods combining interviews (semi-structured), focus groups and participant observations.

#### **4.1.1 Challenges of Qualitative Research Method**

There is a debate whether qualitative research has the same criteria for high quality in the same sense as quantitative research and there is also a debate about how valid qualitative research is compared to quantitative research. Some people might argue that qualitative research is not really “hard” science because information presented does not necessarily contain numbers, figures and facts, which the quantitative research does. At times, qualitative research (and quantitative research) in the field of social science might not give the same data twice, meaning that it is not possible to produce the same study. In that case, it is difficult to assess the quality of the qualitative research if another researcher does the same study but get different results. Social science is after all the study of people and how people interact.

Therefore, it is not uncommon that researchers may obtain somewhat different results from the field.

According to Bryman (2012) a research has high quality if it has reliability, meaning that the result of a study is repeatable. Reliability “is commonly used in relation to the question of whether the measures that are devised for concepts in the social sciences (such as poverty, racial prejudice, and deskilling, religious orthodoxy) are consistent” (Bryman, 2012, p.46). However, as mentioned above, achieving reliability is an issue as researchers experience different results from same social research. Furthermore, another important criterion of research is validity. Validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research. The four main types of validity described are measurement validity, internal validity, external validity and ecological validity. Normally, validity applies primarily to quantitative research. However e.g. ecological validity for qualitative research can be an important criterion as it want to question whether social scientific findings are applicable to people’s every day, natural, social settings. If a researcher has reliability in the sense that some topics are repeatable and it has validity, the qualitative research will meet the criteria for a high quality research (Bryman, 2012, p.48, 389-391; Thaagard, 2013).

#### 4.1.2 Research Design

Due to the chosen research topic, it has been decided that the best research design is to use the case study design. According to Bryman (2012), the case study design entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case. Furthermore, some of the best-known studies in sociology are based on this kind of design. An example of case study design is to include a research on a single community study. This can be linked up to anthropological studies where researchers go to the field and study a single community over time (Bryman, 2012, p.66-67). Yin (1994) states that case studies are very appropriate when focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context when ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are being posed (Yin, 1994). Ecotourism in Madidi National Park is one such contemporary phenomena and it therefore became the case in this study.

#### 4.1.3 Sampling

According to Bryman (2012), a sample is the segment of a population that is selected for research. As this research project is investigating the ecotourism industry, the aim was to

interview people directly and indirectly involved in ecotourism. Thus, a purposive sampling was used as it implies that some units in the population are more likely to be selected than others, not using a random sampling method (Bryman, 2012, p.416, 418). In line with this, stakeholders related to ecotourism in Madidi National Park were chosen. Examples of such stakeholders are local indigenous peoples in and around Madidi National Park, eco-tour operators, governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGO) involved in environmental and/or indigenous issues in Madidi National Park, the governmental department of tourism and its national tourism bureau. Tourists visiting the park were also a part of the sampling. However, within sampling stakeholders, a probability sampling was made. This is a sample that has been selected using random sampling and in which each unit in the population has a known probability of being selected (Bryman, 2012, p.714). This means that random people were selected within the different categories of stakeholders. However, this method was not widely used, as the respondents proposed other respondents relevant to the research. This is known as the snowball sampling. With the use of snowball sampling, the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others (Bryman, 2012, p.424). Examples of such snowball sampling are one respondent, a director of an environmental organization, contacted the governmental department of tourism to let this person be included in the data collection. Another respondent, a local indigenous person working as a guide, helped establish contact with potential stakeholders in San José de Uchupiamonas.

A list of stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in ecotourism in Madidi National Park was attempted during the process of planning and conducting interviews before and throughout the fieldwork. However, one of the issues of conducting qualitative research is to know how many people will be interviewed (Bryman, 2012, p.425). Throughout the fieldwork, the sample size of potential respondents always differed. Firstly, due to the snowball effect, the sample size arose. Secondly, some things turned out to be different than one was able to prepare for. Some information available online about potential respondents was lacking, meaning that the list of stakeholders had to be changed. Examples of these issues are elaborated below. Even though there were some challenges to make contact with all stakeholders, the researcher was able to conduct 27 interviews throughout 11 weeks of fieldwork.



## **4.2 Data Collection**

The chosen data collection associated with qualitative research of the study of ecotourism in Madidi National Park has been: qualitative interviews, focus groups and participant observation.

### **4.2.1 Qualitative Interviews**

When it comes to the qualitative interview, its purpose is to collect information about how other people experience their life situations, and the views and perspectives they have on topics that are addressed in the interview situation. An advantage of qualitative interviews is that a researcher easily can collect the data he or she is searching for (Bryman, 2012, p.469).

There are different ways how a researcher can do his or her qualitative interviews. One way of interviewing is to do an unstructured interview, which can be seen as a conversation between the researcher and the respondent, where the main topics are decided in advance. The respondent is free to bring up topics and tell his or her stories during the interview. In that case, the researcher can go deeper in the topics the respondent brings up and collect additional, more valuable data (Bryman, 2012, p.471; UK Data Service, 2016a). The other way of interviewing is to do a structured interview, which involves asking each interviewee the same set of topics and standardized questions. In that case, the researcher will get the advantage to compare all of his or her interviewees and interviews (Thaagard, 2013, 98; UK Data Service, 2016b).

The third way of interviewing, which the researcher chose to do in the field study, is to do a semi-structured interview. This is the most common in qualitative interviews. Semi-structured interviews can be viewed as a mixture of unstructured and structured interviews. According to Bryman (2012), semi-structured interviews often consists where the researcher has some established general topics for investigation, but also allows for exploration of emergent themes and ideas rather than relying only on concepts and questions defined in advance of the interview. In a semi-structured interview the researcher can bring up so called follow-up questions and the interviewee is free to bring up additional topics (Bryman, 2012).

One advantage of conducting semi-structured interviews instead of the other methods was that the researchers could make an interview guide that was adapted for the different stakeholders. Furthermore, some of the interviews turned out to be unstructured interviews as the

respondents spoke freely about the topic. Sometimes, this led to that the respondents replied to several questions in the interview guide. Due to this, it was not necessary to ask respondents all questions, but instead either bring up additional topics or ask for more explanations of some questions. However, a disadvantage of conducting semi-structured interviews was that they were time consuming and difficult to code as the majority of respondents spoke a lot and quickly in Spanish. Therefore, a solution to the language barriers and the time consumed was to hire a person that could transcribe all interviews in Spanish.

#### 4.2.2 Focus Groups

Without it being a plan, focus group interviews occurred as respondents suggested it. According to Bryman (2012) it is possible to interview more than one interviewee at the time because it can be an effective way to collect data. The researcher will develop an understanding of why people feel the way they do and the researcher is able to get different perspectives from the interviewees (Bryman, 2012, p. 503).

Two different respondents encouraged the researcher to conduct a focus group interview. Therefore, it was necessary to be flexible and allow focus groups as a collection method. The respondents encouraged a focus group interview because another person was present and this person was also a candidate for answering the questions. One focus group interview occurred at an ecotourism enterprise in Rurrenabaque where both respondents ran the place. The other was held at an eco-lodge inside Madidi National Park where both respondents were tourists travelling together into the park along with the researcher.

However, there are some disadvantages of focus groups. For example, the researcher gets too much information at once, and therefore it can be difficult to collect what the respondents are saying in the focus group (Bryman, 2012, p. 504). This became an issue in one of two focus groups conducted, as this interview was in Spanish. To solve this problem, the use of a digital recorder became the solution. In this focus group interview it was difficult to write down exactly what the two respondents said and who was saying it. However, the digital recorder managed to record the whole interview. A challenge of the use of a recorder in this focus group interview was to structure the interview. As the researcher had hired a transcriber of interviews held in Spanish, it was necessary to have a structure of the respondents, so that the transcriber would know who was speaking at all time (Bryman, 2012, p. 504).

#### 4.2.3 Participant Observations

Participant observation means that a researcher within his or her fieldwork, both participates as well as observes in the field, often with moving between these two roles (Bryman, 2012, p. 432). According to Bryman (2012), there are two different ways of doing participant observation: covert or overt. Covert means that the researcher is not giving information about the reasons of his or her presence and the research is kept secret to the people the researcher is studying. Overt means that the researcher is being open about his or her presence in the field and the researcher has been given permission by the people the researcher is studying (Bryman, 2012, p.433). In the field study of ecotourism in Madidi National Park, the researcher chose to do overt participant observation. This is due to that the researcher wanted to be open and obtain permission by stakeholders in the field.

One advantage of conducting participant observation was the assistance from several sponsors. A sponsor is a person in the field, who can give the researcher the access or blockage to the field (Bryman, 2012, p. 435). Several sponsors that were also respondents gave access to several occasions in the field. An example is the local guide described above that used the snowball effect to give access to more respondents in San José de Uchupiamonas.

Participant observation was conducted to some extent. Examples are that the researcher participated in social settings and observed people's behavior in the field. While travelling into Madidi National Park with two different ecotourism enterprises and visiting two communities, one participates in many different settings and observes a great deal. Therefore, another advantage of conducting participant observations was to know the language spoken by people in the field. As the researcher speaks Spanish, it gave valuable data as it was possible to have and follow conversations. However, this became to some extent a disadvantage. At times, it was difficult to have conversations with people and observe what was happening in the field at the same time. This made it difficult to know what kind of information received were valuable data and not. Moreover, cross-cultural differences were also a challenge as there were clear differences between the researcher and the people being studied e.g. inside Madidi National Park. This will be elaborated below.

### **4.3 Data Analysis**

The most frequently used method for analyzing qualitative data is grounded theory (Bryman, 2012, p. 567). The process of grounded theory is to break down data into component parts, which are given names and it begins soon after the collection of initial data (Bryman, 2012, p. 568). However, as most data was in the hands of a transcriber, the analysis started after the fieldwork was finished. However, during the fieldwork all interviews, participant observations and field notes were hand written in a note book. All hand written notes were then typed on a laptop with a backup on a flash stick. Furthermore, during the process of data collection, it was important to categorize the respondents. On one occasion of data analysis, respondents were categorized as either directly or indirectly involved in ecotourism. However, throughout the whole fieldwork, respondents were also categorized into five different categories: local indigenous peoples, eco-tour operators, environmental and indigenous organizations, the government and tourists (see table 5 and 7). Furthermore, the coding of data has also been in relation to grounded theory. All relevant data has been treated as potential indicators that can answer a research question. In addition, all data has been compared continuously to assess which research question they best fit with (Bryman, 2012, p. 568). Open coding has been the coding practice for analysis of data. To manage the large process of open coding, all data was coded in separate colors presenting different categories that answered the three different research questions (Bryman, 2012, p.569).

### **4.4 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations in social research tend to revolve around certain issues that recur in different guises. The researcher needs to be aware of four different issues that usually appear in research ethics. They are: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception (Bryman, 2012, p. 135). Regarding this research project, all ethical considerations were made.

When it comes to informed consent, it was important that all respondents contacted in the field agreed to be interviewed about their perspectives on ecotourism in Madidi National Park. In addition, the researcher let the respondents decide time and place for an interview. This approach was followed to respect their privacy and time management. Furthermore, invasion of privacy was also an important consideration. For example, while visiting the community of San José de Uchupiamonas inside Madidi National Park, the local guide presented a general presentation of me and the research to fellow community members. This

was to mitigate the informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception issues. All participants in this community were explained by the guide that the research project was by a Norwegian student writing a master thesis about ecotourism in the park. Furthermore, the guide encouraged several community members involved in ecotourism to be interviewed. Since the researcher was conducting overt research, being presented by a local guide and participants agreeing to be interviewed, the researcher felt no invasion of privacy of these participants.

Regarding anonymity, it has been important that the anonymity and privacy of those who participate in the research process should be respected. Moreover, personal information concerning research participants should be kept confidential (Bryman, 2012, p. 143). During the data collection, no participants asked for a confirmation of anonymity. However, one respondent asked the researcher to turn off the digital recorder in order to protect the information told by the researcher.

All respondents included in the empirical findings are made anonymous. This is an ethical decision that has been made due to the confined geographical area and to protect outspoken respondents. For example, it has been important to make this decision particularly for respondents who have political statements in order to not expose them.

There was never, under any circumstances a situation in relation to this project or the data collection itself that could cause harm to the participants. In any case, some sort of personal exposure, embarrassment or similar integrity issue may occur if the thesis were to be made available for the participants. However, the content of the answers does not concern sensitive issues or information subject to secrecy.

#### **4.5 Limitations and Challenges**

Limitations and challenges for researchers being in the field vary. In this case, limitations and challenges include lack of information, poor infrastructure, language and culture barriers, time management, and how it was to be a woman in the field where the majority of respondents are male. However, limitations and challenges in the field were easy to handle as the researcher already has the advantage of knowing the country and the issues of indigenous peoples.

### *Lack of information:*

As mentioned above, there were some challenges in making contact with all stakeholders. One example is an environmental organization. There was good information available online about this potential respondent. However, updated information about this organization was lacking. It was not possible to make contact on phone, neither on e-mail. Therefore, the researcher decided to make direct contact by visiting the office. However, it turned out that the organization no longer had its office at this location and no one there knew its new address. Therefore, the researcher had to change the list of potential respondents.

### *Infrastructure:*

As mentioned, the infrastructure in Bolivia is quite poor. The roads are in poor condition and there are only a few flight companies travelling nationally. When it comes to travelling to Rurrenabaque, there are two ways of reaching the city. *Amazonas* is the only airline that has regular flights to Rurrenabaque. The flight from La Paz takes about 45 minutes. The trip can also be done by land, in a bus or in a shared taxi service. This trip takes between 18 – 22 hours. As long as there is good weather and dry roads, the transportation methods are considered safe. However, as the researcher wanted to travel to Rurrenabaque and into Madidi National Park in November, there were some issues regarding changes of weather. November is the beginning of the rain season in the Bolivian Amazon basin. When there is rainy weather, the flight gets cancelled and travelling by land is considered dangerous. While being in the field, the researcher both experienced one day-cancellation of flight to Rurrenabaque, and later a strike when wanting to go back to La Paz. This caused some delays of conducting fieldwork.

### *Language and cultural barriers:*

During the fieldwork, the researcher met some difficulties when it comes to language. Even though the researcher knows the Spanish language, there are some differences on how *bolivianos* speak in contrast to standard Spanish. Most of the stakeholders met in the field spoke often fast and had in addition a dialect. As a result, it took some time to get a good feeling of their way of speaking Spanish. A solution to the language barrier was to have some Spanish lesson courses at the beginning of the fieldwork. Due to spending long time outside Hispanic countries, it was necessary to repeat Spanish. Another challenge occurred due to languages was that the majority of the respondents preferred to be interviewed in Spanish instead of English. This was surprising because the researcher thought that most people

involved in tourism knew how to speak English. In that case, the language barriers were a greater challenge for tourists that did not know how to speak Spanish and instead had to use body language to be understood. Moreover, as the majority of interviews were conducted in Spanish, it was time consuming to translate them from Spanish to English. Therefore, a limitation of translating one language into another is that it can lead to that important information is being missed out in the empirical findings.

Culture barriers and what some refer to as culture shock did not occur in any significant way. This might be due to that the researcher has visited the country several times on a previous research project and was familiar with the cultural surroundings. However, some challenges were present. For example, some stakeholders were skeptical to the researcher's presence in the field. Others were more curious and wanted to know why the researcher was at the location and why the researcher was studying the topic of ecotourism. Still, these did not offer any kind of challenges of data collection.

*Time management:*

One of the first challenges encountered in the field study was respondents' relationship to time management and appointments. This made limitations for the data collection as time management was an issue throughout the whole fieldwork. On several occasions interviewees showed up late to interviews or they rescheduled the appointment for being interviewed. This caused some delays and challenges considering the number of interviews planned in different parts of Bolivia. To some extent, this affected the data collection negatively as delays made it difficult to conduct all planned interviews. Still, a representative sample of data collection was made and these make an overall understanding of ecotourism in Madidi National Park.

*Being a woman in the field where the majority of respondents are men:*

Another challenge met in the field was the difference between the researcher and the majority of respondents. It turns out that the majority of stakeholders involved in ecotourism at Madidi National Park are men. At times this caused some difficulties while interviewing male respondents. For example, they often asked personal questions. In one occasion, the researcher had to stop contacting one male respondent due to non-proper behavior towards the researcher.

To conclude, all research projects have its limits, but they are a part of the learning outcome – functioning within the boundaries that exist.

## **Chapter 5: Empirical Findings and Analysis**

This chapter will present the empirical findings gathered through the fieldwork, and analyze and discuss them according to the chosen literature and theory. The chapter is organized in accordance with the research questions. Thus, the chapter is divided into three different parts. The first part will start by presenting the findings aimed at the different perceptions of ecotourism in Madidi National Park. The next section will present the findings relating to the strengths and negative impacts of ecotourism, aiming to explain how ecotourism affects the environment, economy and socio-cultural life in Madidi National Park. The following section will present the findings aimed at highlighting what kind of potentials the park has and what kind of challenges ecotourism will face, currently and in the future.

Before presenting the empirical findings, the researcher will revive the research questions. It will also give an overview and an explanation of the respondents from the fieldwork.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: What kind of perceptions do local indigenous peoples, eco-tour operators, environmental and indigenous organizations, the government and tourists have towards ecotourism in Madidi National Park?

RQ2: In which ways can ecotourism strengthen or negatively impact environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects for indigenous peoples living in Madidi National Park?

RQ3: What are the potentials and challenges of developing Madidi National Park as an eco-tourist destination; currently and in the future?



## 5.1 Overview of Respondents

### 5.1.1 Categories of Total Interviews

The total number of interviews conducted in this study was 27. The researcher has interviewed 11 indigenous peoples from Madidi National Park (San José de Ucupiamonas and San Miguel del Bala). Some of these interviews were conducted in the two communities and some were conducted in Rurrenabaque. 5 interviews are eco-tour operators. All of them operate in Rurrenabaque. 6 interviews are environmental and indigenous organizations. These are organizations that are concerned with environmental and/or indigenous issues in Madidi National Park and throughout Bolivia. The majority of these interviews were conducted in La Paz. Moreover, the researcher managed to have 2 interviews with the government. Both of the respondents are working in tourism industry. In addition, there were 3 interviews with tourists. These tourists have been on an eco-tour in Madidi National Park.

Categories	Frequency
Local indigenous peoples from Madidi National Park	11
Eco-tour operators	5 (1 focus group interview)
Environmental and indigenous organizations	6
The government	2
Tourists	3 (1 focus group interview)
<b>Total</b>	<b>27 interviews</b>

Table 3: Categories of total interviews

### 5.1.2 Sex

A total number of 20 males and 9 females respondents were involved in the study. The male respondents formed approximately 69 percent of the total number of respondents whilst the female formed approximately 31 percent. This gender disparity is in no way based on any biased assumptions about gender equalities or inequalities. However, it may show that there is a difference between males and females when it comes to the working sector. Throughout the fieldwork, the researcher observed if there could be more females related to ecotourism. Most of the females are community members of San José de Uchupiamonas and San Miguel. Most

of these women were at home taking care of children and other household chores. Some females do work in ecotourism, but they mostly do not have high working positions. However, it is interesting to note that there were some females working in higher positions of eco-tour operators. They have a strong relation to ecotourism and Madidi National Park. Some are even regarded as a local authority in the community (see table 6). It was these females that were interviewed.

The above information on the sex composition of the respondents reflects that there are more male than female involved in ecotourism. However, the reason why there are more males than females in this study can be seen in table 6 where the majority of respondents are directors.

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Male	20	69
Female	9	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>29 respondents</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4: Sex

### 5.1.3 Age

The research findings indicate that the majority of the respondents were between 31-50 years whilst there was less above 51 years. For no special reason, no one below 20 years of age was interviewed. Table 4 indicates that all respondents were adults. This might be due that there are adults that are involved in ecotourism. The researcher has observed that the younger generation (below 20) is not as much involved in ecotourism as the adults. This is because they still attend schools or universities. However, the age bracket, (20-30) was the third highest category of respondents. These are the youngest respondents in the study and these young people show an interest in ecotourism. Therefore, it is possible that those below 20 years of age might later be more involved in ecotourism. However, as seen in table 5, there are more adults than young people. This might be due to that the adults have a higher working position in ecotourism, which is presented in table 6.

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Below 20	0
20 – 30	7
31 – 40	11
41 – 50	8
51 – 60	1
61 – 70	1
Above 70	0
Not responded	1

Table 5: Age

#### 5.1.4 Job Titles

It has been important to especially interview people directly involved in ecotourism as they have more knowledge to the field. Therefore, the research findings indicate that the majority of the respondents are either directors at an eco-tour operator or an organization. In addition, there are also many respondents working in ecotourism. Some of these respondents are local indigenous peoples living in Rurrenabaque. Respondents that were interviewed in the two communities are self-sufficient farmers. Some of these are even regarded as a local authority in the community. It has been important to interview them as well based on the background that both communities have created ecotourism initiatives.

<b>Job title</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Self-sufficient farmers	2
Local authorities (also self-sufficient farmers)	3
Directors (eco-tour operators and organizations)	9
People working in eco-tourism sector	8
People working in organizations	2
Other (the government and tourists)	5

Table 6: Job titles

## Part One: Perceptions about Ecotourism

### 5.2 Perceptions about Ecotourism

There are many tourists travelling to Bolivia and into Madidi National Park annually and the majority of these choose to travel eco-friendly. Ecotourism has become an important industry for many *bolivianos*. This is because it allows for travelling while caring for the environment. The respondents are either directly or indirectly involved in ecotourism. Therefore, when asking about respondent's perceptions about ecotourism, there were many different types of replies.

The following table shows that the researchers has categorized the respondents as either directly or indirectly involved in ecotourism. Directly involved are local indigenous peoples and eco-tour operators. These are stakeholders that have been involved in the creation of a national park and they have also been the pioneers of ecotourism. Indirectly involved are environmental and indigenous organizations, the government and tourists. These are stakeholders that in different levels are involved in ecotourism. Environmental and indigenous organizations are concerned about environmental and indigenous issues in the park. The government is e.g. involved in promoting the national park. Tourists are people that have chosen to travel eco-friendly.

Directly involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Local indigenous peoples</li><li>- Eco-tour operators</li></ul>
Indirectly involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Environmental and indigenous organizations</li><li>- Government</li><li>- Tourists</li></ul>

Table 7: Categories

### 5.2.1 Directly Involved

When the researcher interviewed local indigenous peoples in Rurrenabaque, San José de Uchupiamonas and San Miguel, there were many different perceptions about ecotourism in Madidi National Park. However, the similarities are that the majority of these respondents have positive perceptions. For them, ecotourism has become an important initiative. This is because local people previously were hunters, fishers, collectors, etc. Local people wanted to start conserving the environment and therefore became interested in ecotourism:

*San José de Uchupiamonas is one of the pioneers of ecotourism in Bolivia. The history of tourism in San José de Uchupiamonas is long and challenging, but today Chalalán is the best-known enterprise in Madidi National Park. This is e.g. due to the transport of tourists from Rurrenabaque to the lodge, due to the training of guides and due to the management of the lodge. If tourists want to visit San José de Uchupiamonas it requires many services and demands. An issue is that there is a lack of basic services in the community. That makes it hard to serve tourists. However, a lot of progress in services is being made.*

*Ecotourism has changed the lives of many community members in San Miguel. It has improved the quality of life of some since our lives previously consisted of agriculture, hunting and fishing. Ecotourism has changed our conditions of life. If we would not have worked in ecotourism, we would have continued to make this activity of hunting and fishing. In addition, the schools have improved. Before, community members only went to basic school. Local people have learned a lot because our environmental education has developed. Ecotourism has made people understand that a live animal is worth much more than a dead animal. It is the same with trees. In addition, Madidi National Park is one of the parks which have the most biodiversity in the world. The government has declared it a protected area. Therefore, local people are working with ecotourism and improving the conditions of life of the community and at the same time we protect the resources that we have. Jeeps, cars or things that use gasoline are not ecotourism. Ecotourism instead uses some local materials that do not need gasoline. Ecotourism means that locals do not use things that may damage the environment. Furthermore, ecotourism is an echo where locals can show tourists their uses, costumes, their identity and culture.*

*Ecotourism generates activities for local people and it has been interesting for the locals. It has given enough strength to the communities. Chalalán Ecolodge and San Miguel del Bala have also demonstrated the ability of management and good services. Our communities are improving due to ecotourism and it creates more jobs for people. (Summary)*

However, some negative perceptions were also mentioned by the locals:

*“The issue for local people is that there are few job opportunities in the communities. Ecotourism is the only currently good alternative found. These people and our ancestors have always lived in harmony with nature. Therefore, ecotourism should be a good initiative.” (Local authority III)*

*“Another negative effect for the communities is that there are many undertakings that are not genuine. Some companies say they do ecotourism, but they are not. Therefore, Chalalán and San Miguel del Bala need to show and prove tourists that they are doing ecotourism.” (Local guide II)*

Moreover, locals also experience that tourism in the communities is not stable throughout the year:

*“Sometimes, tourists can come every day and sometimes only few come within a month. There are more tourists from April – October. The rest of the year there is little tourist activity. This is due to the rain season. As a consequence, some locals leave the community to find better opportunities during this season.” (Local woman, San Miguel)*

It seems that ecotourism has been a good initiative for people in Madidi National Park as they are mostly positive towards it. Eco-tour operators in Rurrenbaque have also positive perceptions:

*“Ecotourism might be defined in various ways. Some eco-tour operators focus on the importance of energy-saving, water- and garbage management and with efforts in resource management. Most companies are careful in managing energy and they generate awareness of ecological issues and environmental issues. Our guides are well trained to explain about the environment and the relationships between living*

*beings, land and nature. For the people in protected areas, the quality of life is very important. Community members of San José de Uchupiamonas and San Miguel have a social responsibility with nature. Within the community, locals work with business capabilities and they work with environmental management. Their main goal is to be sustainable. Ecotourism can be the tool for sustainability. However, the park is a fragile place because not all locals have respect for conservation. Ecotourism can be sustainable, but it has to be managed well.” (Eco-tour operator I)*

Ecotourism benefits not only eco-tour operators, but also local people in the park:

*Ecotourism has not always been an activity for generating income. Before ecotourism, locals were doing logging, hunting, fishing and agriculture in the communities. These activities have now decreased, but they still remain in the communities. Ecotourism generates employment opportunities; it allows locals to have an income and at the same time incites them to preserve natural resources and cultural areas. Ecotourism allows locals to teach tourists about their knowledge of forest. They can teach them about the trees, the plants and explain that ecotourism helps to preserve their area. Moreover, the tourists who choose ecotourism help to improve the communities with e.g. the education for children in the communities so they can have a future. Ecotourism has therefore the potential to generate a sustainable economy in the whole country as ecotourism benefit local people and the eco-tour operators. However, it has been hard for the communities to get involved in tourism. Ecotourism requires that people involved has the knowledge to serve tourists with e.g. language skills, guiding skills, cooking skills, management skills, infrastructure skills etc. (Summary)*

Ecotourism has been a good initiative for eco-tour operators as it gives income and also preserves their national park. However, some eco-tour operators are concerned that other operators are not credible:

*“There are some businesses that claim to be eco-business, but they are not. Some badly managed enterprises are destructive to the park. Destroying nature and animals is not sustainable. Unfortunately, there are some operators that are getting well paid for bringing tourists to the park for hunting wild animals. When being inside the park, tourists and guides always touch the natural flora when they walk and throw garbage. Ecotourism can be extremes, but it is still an important tool for maintaining flora and fauna.” (Eco-tour operator IV)*

Locals and eco-tour operators have stated that bad ecotourism is when guides and tourists go hunting for animals. Hunting animals is not always a bad activity. Sometimes, it is necessary due to overpopulation of species. However, it can be difficult to decide which species can be hunted and not. For example, the researcher has observed that one eco-tour operator is extremely against hunting of jaguars. This is due to that they are overhunted and in near threat of extinction (Panthera, 2016). However, hunting of wild boar is considered legal. Ecotourism is an activity that might have negative impacts on flora and fauna when tourists and guides are on an eco-tour. The researcher is not convinced that ecotourism can be intact to the environment because it is hard to prevent that guides and tourists touch the flora and fauna in the national park (Buckley, 2004, p.5-13; Cooper, 2012, p.81-82).

### 5.2.2 Indirectly Involved

The researcher has interviewed different environmental and indigenous organizations that are in different levels involved in ecotourism in Madidi and throughout Bolivia. It has been important to know their perceptions because they are working on environmental and/or indigenous issues:

*Ecotourism is the most important structure. This is because ecotourism is a way to conserve natural resources through recreation, by tourists and that at the same time this tourism allows to generate income to the communities. Ecotourism is important for the local communities because it has a significance of money and market. Ecotourism gives money to the local people and it supports the communities. This improves better living conditions for the communities. Furthermore, ecotourism benefits from conservation since it give a good and healthy forest. In addition, ecotourism is important because it is a way of showing and sharing natural heritage with people from all around the world. People begin to visit national parks which are really important in terms of sharing the natural heritages in the country with the broader Bolivian public. However, it is important to find a balance between nature and activities for people and indigenous communities.*

*Indigenous peoples have much interest in ecotourism and they are very accessible to develop this activity. There are locals who manage this activity and connect mainly*



*people outside the country. Chalalán Ecolodge has been a pioneer when it comes to ecotourism. Their territory San José de Uchupiamonas is an indigenous territory and it is local indigenous peoples who are managing ecotourism. Most of the enterprises work with the topic of community-based ecotourism. In Bolivia, ecotourism has a huge potential because Bolivia has a beautiful landscape and it has a great and attractive biodiversity. Madidi National Park is the gate for the ecotourism. (Summary)*

However, according to environmental and indigenous organizations, ecotourism is also facing some challenges:

*“Madidi National Park needs to promote and strengthen ecotourism. There are some operators that begin to worry because they see that there are fewer tourists coming. What the park has to achieve is to improve a little what is the quality of the service of these operators and a little more work with communities. Madidi National Park is generating income for communities, which is what the locals want. People should feel that the conservation of the park benefit them and the way of doing that is through ecotourism”. (Environmental office)*

Moreover:

*Many indigenous peoples in Madidi National Park now work in terms of tourism. However, this is not necessarily good tourism. There are some bad enterprises which are offering cheaper prices so that backpackers can explore Madidi National Park. In this sense, it is better to choose an operator which offers good packages for tourists like seeing the forests with the opportunity that tourists are involved in the monitoring of the biodiversity. In addition, the activities include living with nature, caring for the forest, respecting the potential of local natural resources and indigenous territory. That is ecotourism. The others are not. Ecotourism should be a sustainable activity in the area. (Summary)*

The government has also some perceptions about ecotourism:

*“Ecotourism is a good activity that increases nationally and globally. In 2013, Bolivia created the general law of tourism where it gives priority to the activities of ecotourism. Ecotourism is an activity involving regions and communities, in natural areas, national parks or protected areas.” (Government II)*

*“Ecotourism in Bolivia is a real segment. It is a form of tourism respecting nature, respecting the sustainability, seeing that future generations benefit from what they are benefiting now. Biodiversity, environment and ecotourism makes it possible to achieve sustainability. Madidi National Park as a region is very important because of what it offers of nature, culture and adventures.” (Government I)*

The tourists who have visited Madidi National Park claim that ecotourism is an important activity:

*“Ecotourism is tourism that is socially responsible and sustainable. Ecotourism is harmony with the natural environment.” (Tourist III)*

*The eco-tour operators have goals and missions to treat nature and animals well. However, ecotourism does not always function well because some tour-operators do not meet the promises of being ecofriendly. (Summary)*

### **5.3 Perceptions of Community Visits**

Within the activity of community-based ecotourism, operators can allow tourists to visit a local community. Tourists travelling with Chalalán Ecolodge or with San Miguel del Bala may give such opportunities. Therefore, the researcher asked the respondents what kind of perceptions they have about tourists visiting San José de Uchupiamonas and/or San Miguel del Bala.

It has been especially important to get to know the perceptions of local indigenous peoples about tourists visiting their community. Both San José de Uchupiamonas and San Miguel del Bala are communities that cannot be easily accessed. Moreover, ecotourism is considered as a newer activity. Therefore, for some locals, seeing tourists in their community is still a new experience:

*It is important that tourists visit the communities. It is important because we can share our culture. We are proud of our culture and like to show how our life is and how we live it. Tourists come to the communities to learn more about the way of life of local*

*persons, to know the history and really verify where people belong. We can also demonstrate our knowledge and the tourists can tell about their lives in other countries. Tourists and community members then do a valuable exchange of culture. Therefore, tourists should come more often to spend time with the communities so they can share their customs. Tourists will learn different things from the locals and locals will learn different things from the tourists. This is because tourists come to see the community and to see each family. Tourists can bring new experiences that we are going to receive with open arms. Therefore, tourists can feel at home when they come. Tourists do not feel like outsiders in the communities, because we want to eager any passengers arriving. (Summary)*

One respondent has even claimed that:

*“People from the lowlands, from Madidi National Park are more curious on other people. The guests that come say that we are friendlier”. (Local guide I)*

Receiving income from tourists has also been mentioned:

*“Tourists bring more money into the communities when tourists e.g. buy handicrafts. The money that they pay within the community support education to children, to the family, in one way or another the money always is distributed in the community.” (Local man, Rurrenabaque I)*

However, some locals are a bit skeptical to tourists:

*The number of tourists visiting communities depend on how the enterprises sell the package of both doing an eco-tour and a visit to the communities. It depends on how enterprises sell the cultural theme and how well the enterprises can do the administration. It is important to show tourists culture, but it depends on how much enterprises need to explain so that tourists can report that they are interested to get to know the communities. When tourists visit the communities, it is mostly the younger generations in the communities who are interested in them. This might be due to that they get a vision of how other people live beyond their community. Moreover, it is difficult to reach e.g. San José de Uchupiamonas by boat since there is a high cost of transportation. If the road from San Buenaventura to San José de Uchupiamonas improves, it would be cheaper for tourists to visit the community. However, when tourists do so, they will notice that the communities lack basic services. There is also*

*no communication and there is no Internet. This depends on the touristic interest of visiting communities that do not have the service tourists need. (Summary)*

Eco-tour operators share similar perceptions about tourists visiting communities like San José de Uchupiamonas and San Miguel del Bala. They claim that there might be a win-win situation for both guest and host as an eco-tour brings both environmental and cultural experiences for tourists and locals:

*It is a business advantage to offer visits to communities like San José de Uchupiamonas or San Miguel. However, the communities in Madidi National Park need to have influence on this. Some communities do not want tourists. However, the communities that are more open to tourists may gain experiences by interacting with people from all over the world. Tourists visiting a community will see that locals live in a community and they will see the reality of how people live. In addition, locals will also show tourists the effort they are doing to preserve nature and culture. It is the locals who are doing tourism services and therefore tourists need to understand that their money is not being badly used. E.g. locals from San José de Uchupiamonas do not perceive tourists as a threat because they provide an income and new perspectives from the outside world to the community. (Summary)*

However, there are some challenges when tourists visit the communities:

*“Tourists visiting the communities might find their experience less than excellent because there are always limitations and sometimes there is bad service. Tourists report to the operator what has been good and not when visiting communities. Tourists always evaluate e.g. food, lodging, transport, guides etc. It is important for us to have a good service and we always improve from the recommendations from the tourists. The hardest is the language, to be able to want to share local history, local culture etc. However, we are happy with the activity we do even though it does not generate lots of money. It is more important to share knowledge. All this knowledge that locals have gained from generation to generation is used to transmit to tourists that visit. That is something that motivates us to keep preserving the forest.” (Eco-tour operator III)*

*“At some levels, it is not good that tourists visit a community because tourists can observe local life and act in the way that looks like they are visiting a zoo. When tourists are taking photos of the community, locals can act theatrical. However, tourists visiting local communities can go well, but it is sincere and it can be an exchange.” (Eco-tour operator IV)*

Environmental and indigenous organizations share these perceptions about tourists visiting communities:

*If local people are interested, it is positive that tourists visit local communities. If locals are not involved as partners, self-determination of indigenous peoples can become an issue. Many indigenous peoples live in Madidi National Park and the park has a cultural potential for tourists. Tourists visiting a community could be important for the exchange of knowledge and people can get an experience of the exchange.*

*Ecotourism activities in Bolivia need to improve this offer because there is a huge potential in the area. Ecotourism needs to provide good experience for the tourists. However, the actual infrastructure available and the number of tourists arriving are so low that they are still very incipient. Ecotourism needs to be a concerted effort in terms of investing in the future of tourism of the area because in terms of attraction, it is outstanding since it is the world’s most biodiverse park. Local culture and diversity is extraordinary and there are significant historical aspects important in terms of recent post-colonial history. (Summary)*

However, there are some effects from tourists visiting the communities:

*“The communities should be careful of what kind of people is entering the communities. Some tourists are alcoholics and they sometimes consume drugs that may also cause harm to the communities.” (Environmental office)*

*“San José de Uchupiamonas and San Miguel are indigenous communities but they are changing rapidly towards other cultures due to tourism and globalization. However, visiting communities should still be considered, since it could help make an exchange of culture between the locals and the tourists. In addition, it contributes to the protection of its people who live there and the environment. However, this activity*

*should have clear rules of what kind of people can enter, how long they can stay etc.”*  
(Environmental and indigenous organization)

The government has also some perceptions regarding this topic:

*“There are some operators that offer quality services. Anyone who studies ecotourism and wants to be introduced to the activity knows that is very important that tourists get to know these places so that they have the experience. Tourists can experience the activity, the service and the warmth of the local people.”* (Government II)

None of the tourists interviewed visited a local community in Madidi National Park while they were on an eco-tour. Still, they showed an interest in visiting and getting to know the indigenous culture. They assume it would be a great experience, but they are a bit concerned about the impacts tourists might bring into the communities:

*“It depends on the individual tourist and it also depends if the community wants visitors.”* (Tourist III)

*“It is very important that tourists can see the culture and experience how indigenous peoples take care of the nature. Local people are concerned about the environment. However, Tourists visiting local communities might be negative in the sense if tourists only observe locals from an outside perspective like a zoo. It is better if tourists take part in inside life in the community.”* (Tourist I)

*“The community does not have to prepare something special for the tourists; the experience will then be false. Furthermore, increasing tourism might lead to that local people push tourists to buy e.g. handicrafts so they can make a profit.”* (Tourist II)



Picture 12: The community of San José de Uchupiamonas (Photos: Author, 2015)



Picture 13: The community of San Miguel

#### 5.4 More Positive or Negative Towards Ecotourism

The researcher has asked all respondents if they are in general more positive or negative towards ecotourism in Madidi National Park. The majority of the respondents are certainly more positive than negative to ecotourism.

Table 8 shows that there are approximately 83 percent of total respondents that is more positive than negative towards ecotourism. Approximately 7 percent are negative. Ecotourism has both be viewed as positive and negative in the way that it can strengthen and harm the local environment, the local economy and the local socio-cultural life in Madidi. This will be further explained in the next part.

Positive or negative	Respondents	Percentage (%)
More positive	24	83
More negative	2	7
Both positive and negative	1	3
Uncertain	2	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 8: Positive or negative

### **5.5 Analysis and Discussions of Part One**

There are many different types of perceptions about ecotourism in Madidi National Park. However, there are also many similarities between those who are directly and indirectly involved in ecotourism. Respondents and the literature review consider ecotourism as an activity that benefits local environment, economy and socio-cultural life of the destination. As TIES claims it, ecotourism is “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education” (TIES, 2015). Since San José de Uchupiamonas and San Miguel are both indigenous communities in Madidi National Park, it becomes important that ecotourism also protect and minimize the impacts on their local nature and culture (Buckley, 2004).

As seen in table 8, almost 83 percent of all respondents have a positive perception of ecotourism. This is due to that ecotourism allows local people to be involved with an activity that generates income flow, protects and conserves the environment and moreover, empower local people to keep and to develop their traditional cultures. Furthermore, the literature and the empirical findings suggest that ecotourism is a good way for tourists to visit communities that are different from their own. It can be both interesting for the guest and the host community to exchange cultures. In general, the local people are positive to having visitors. However, it has been argued that tourists can have an influence on the younger generation in the communities. Visits from the “modern world” show a different way of living and it can have an impact on the younger generation in terms of clothing, cellphones, attitude, smoking, alcohol, drugs etc. Not all tourists are good tourists unfortunately and it can therefore challenge the local socio-cultural lives in the two communities. This issue will be further discussed in the next part.



## **Part Two: Environmental, Economic and Socio-Cultural Effects**

As discussed in the literature review, ecotourism is an activity that may have both positive and negative effects. It can strengthen as well as harm the local environment, local economy and local cultures and traditions. Therefore, the researcher has asked the respondents what they see as positive and negative impacts of the ecotourism activity in Madidi National Park.

### **5.6 Environmental Effects**

#### **5.6.1 How Ecotourism Enhances Local Environment**

For the local people in San José de Uchupiamonas and San Miguel there are many kinds of positive effects from ecotourism that strengthens the local environment:

*Ecotourism helps to protect and preserve the environment, the nature and the biodiversity of the park. Ecotourism helps to keep the natural life, to protect the animals and the forest. Ecotourism also helps to maintain the education where locals and guides learn about recycling, garbage treatment and more that could affect the environment. In addition, community members have also learned to value the trees and to show this to the tourists. We have also learned to conserve and to protect all kinds of nature. Today, the nature is recovering. Therefore, ecotourism does not allow locals and guides to all the time use a chain saw or some other types of tools that uses gasoline that can affect the environment. Therefore, ecotourism is very healthy for the community members since it allows preserving the nature we have around us. This is because ecotourism manages the environment. It is an income or an industry that does not let it become a large industry. And it also creates many rules for the environment.*

*Ecotourism has contributed to creating territories of indigenous peoples of San José de Uchupiamonas and San Miguel. The communities receive an economic benefit and this economic benefit can preserve this activity, positively. The tourists who visit the park are often conservationists as they have the same types of goals as the enterprises when it comes to the environment. Therefore, when tourists choose ecotourism, the community activities help the conservation of the natural life and the communities. It is another extra to keep preserving the natural life since ecotourism still retains around nature and animals. (Summary)*

*“So far, ecotourism does not have many negative effects since San José de Uchupiamonas does not have much technology and electricity. The local people of San José have the ideology to conserve the nature and they get help from the operators.”*  
*(Local man, Rurrenabaque I)*

To conclude, local people claim that ecotourism is a good alternative for conservation and protection of the local environment. It also benefits families in the two communities.

Eco-tour operators have also some perceptions of this:

*Ecotourism has given the opportunity to both be involved in tourism and at the same time caring for the environment. This is done by that the Madidi National Park charges a fee from every visitor. This helps to sustain the work of the national park. Therefore, all eco-tour operators must be aware of environmental issues. All operators have to be sustainable and we have to make sure that we do tourism in the right way. Therefore, ecotourism is an activity that has been good for the operators in the sense that we have changed the activities of hunting, fishing and cutting trees. Now, we have become more aware since we no longer do these activities. In addition, we have a better treatment of garbage. We are not throwing bottles or plastics into the nature and especially into the rivers which can affect the local people. Eco-tour operators care for nature, we care for the environment and we care for water and the vegetation.*

*Ecotourism is an alternative that preserves and maintains indigenous territories. Now our work, our responsibility is to keep and protect it like that. It is important to conserve and preserve the habitat. The forest and the animals need to live and they are living in that same forest where they always have lived. Trees live longer and use longer time to grow than humans. It is important to protect the trees. If many trees are cut down, species will start to compete to have access to the forest. Trees give food, habitat and it protects many species. Therefore, the trees have much more respect since locals also depend on them. The environment does not only depend on the fauna and flora, but also on the locals because local people live in the park. The Amazonian areas are the most vulnerable ecosystems that depend on each other. If one affects the other, it will affect the entire system. There have been some areas in Bolivian Amazon that have been damaged by lumber men and by personal companies. (Summary)*

One of the eco-tour operators has even managed to recover a damaged area due to ecotourism:

*“It took us many weeks to clean up the mess since it was very destroyed due to cutting the forest, by over-hunting in the forest and fishing. There were also massive amounts of garbage. Right now it is much easier to see animals in this area, due to ecotourism in Madidi National Park.” (Eco-tour operator IV)*

Eco-tour operators are also educating local people about conservation:

*“We are trying to educate local people by raising awareness of the importance of the conservation of Madidi National Park and on the importance of preserving what we have. We train young people and empower people so that they can better understand and handle not only ecotourism, but also help to preserve the environment.” (Eco-tour operator V)*

*“The local people are now defending the park. They want to keep the green nature of fauna and flora. They respect the environment. It hurts to kill animals because it is a living being and therefore they have no longer the habits of hunting. We exist as a company because this is what we want to do, trying to keep conservation and saving some of the area. Ecotourism is a highly positive activity that helps people with improving the quality of life. It also improves protection of their land.” (Eco-tour operator III)*

For environmental and indigenous organizations it is important that ecotourism is handled with responsibility:

*Local actors involved in ecotourism are trying to keep some standards to preserve the environmental conditions and to reduce the environmental impacts from ecotourism. The impacts e.g. lie in how actors control the management of waste. Still, the environmental impacts from ecotourism are low. Ecotourism continue conserving Madidi National Park. The main capital is the forest. Therefore, the forest is more important to protect than people working within ecotourism since it can be the key of sustainability in the park. (Summary)*

*“Ecotourism needs to be regulated. Madidi National Park has gone through the process of controlling all of the different eco-tour operations. Any agency can operate,*

*but it has to meet the environmental standards. It is important that local people know how to make ecotourism in a good way, so it can have a positive effect. Good quality of services and environmental standards will allow to keep and to continue preserving especially natural heritage.” (Environmental organization II)*

Some respondents also shared their reflections on the probability of tourism increase:

*It is important that ecotourism can be a tool for the park's protection. However, if ecotourism develops, it can be difficult to take care of the environment. However, the development of ecotourism will be no problem for Madidi National Park because it is classified and it will have its areas of strict protection. In addition, ecotourism is giving some utility to the area and that is enabling locals to take care of that area because they are taking advantage of caring of the environment. It is an activity of local people who tries to maintain their territory, the forest, the biodiversity and the different wildlife. (Summary)*

The government has also some perception on how ecotourism enhances the environment:

*Ecotourism has positive effects on the environment. Ecotourism has the function that it cares for environmental and natural structures. Driving a green tourism is a form of tourism that requires no pollution. Ecotourism mitigates the negative impacts in terms of pollution from infrastructure, landscape pollution, noise pollution etc. Therefore, ecotourism is sustainable and it is positive for both the tourist and the receiver. (Summary)*

This is what tourists consider as positive:

*Ecotourism does not damage the nature since ecotourism makes people interested in the environment and it educates tourists about protecting the environment. It is a better activity for the animals and for the environment. (Summary)*



The jaguar is not easy to spot in Madidi National Park. However, there are great chances of seeing jaguar prints. Ecotourism does not allow hunting for jaguars as they are threatened by extinction (Panthera, 2016).

Picture 14: Jaguar prints (Photo: Author, 2015).



For locals, it is important that ecotourism especially conserve the primary forest in the national park. "Primary forest refers to untouched, pristine forest that exists in its original condition. This forest has been relatively unaffected by human activities (Butler, 2012).

Picture 15: Large tree in primary forest (Photo: Author, 2015).



This monkey frog (*Phyllomedusa bicolor*) is easier to spot at nighttime as these frogs are nocturnal. The males come out at night from their hiding places to call loudly and hunt for food (Warren-Thomas, 2008).

Picture 16: Frog at nighttime (Photo: Author, 2015).

### 5.6.2 How Ecotourism Harms the Local Environment

Even though ecotourism bring many positive effects to local environment, there are also some impacts that may harm the environment. The majority of local indigenous peoples have told that there are either no or almost no negative environmental effects from ecotourism. However, there are still some minor environmental impacts:

*The eco-tour operators are sending more people in and out of Madidi National Park. When a place is much visited there is an overload of the capacity which will affect the region and the area. This can affect the animals and they can go away because of tourists. If more tourists visit places in Madidi National Park, the operators have to do more lodging and they will increase the use of machetes. There are some tourists who are brought to the lodge that make noise and produce garbage. The staff has to clean the lodge and transport the garbage back to Rurrenabaque. Therefore, if the garbage and the environment are not managed well, ecotourism will affect the environment.*  
(Summary)

There are some locals who dislike ecotourism:

*“Some locals claim that ecotourism does not benefit them and it does not bring any conservation” (Local authority III)*

*“Ecotourism is not always allowing locals to achieve a sustainable development, which is supposed to be the ideal of ecotourism.” (Local man, Rurrenabaque II)*

However, one respondent claim that the negative effects are not because of ecotourism:

*“The environment is already affected by pollution like smoke and gas.” (Local woman, San Miguel)*

There are also some negative and challenging impacts for eco-tour operators:

*There are some tour operators calling themselves ecotourism but they are destroying the nature instead. There are many people who are not aware or do not understand that is important to preserve. They are still working with wood, and those forests are being uninhabitable for animals since they are cutting trees which give food to birds,*

monkeys, and mammals. This extreme has nothing eco about it but they use ecotourism to get income. It can feel like that these companies are stealing tourists and income from us. Therefore, what is missing is good information on what ecotourism is. (Summary)

*“There are problems with garbage management, poison in the water, hunting animals, overfishing, overuses of trails and destruction of amazon tropics where animals are gathered to eat salt. There is a destruction of things the animals need for survival. There is a destruction of their habitat.” (Eco-tour operator IV)*

*Some of the local population can harm the environment. In the area of “Parque Nacional y Área Natural de Manejo Integrado Madidi”, local people are allowed to do agriculture, extraction of some kind of natural resources that they need for their subsistence, for the construction of their homes, even for their own food like subsistence fishing or some kind of hunting to survive. This can have an impact on the environment. The forest vegetation can become dense since locals eliminate important plants and animals. (Summary)*

Environmental and indigenous organizations share the same perceptions as eco-tour operators:

*There are some operators that are not legal, they are not legally authorized and these have a negative impact on environment because they allow tourists to hunt and eat wild animals in the forest. These other activities, the cheaper activities do not care about the biodiversity and they treat garbage very poorly. Some tourists seek the cheapest offer to see the nature in these areas. The local guides need money but the tourists try to reduce the price. In addition, these operators do not support other alternatives like the Tacana culture. They just use the biodiversity and the landscapes to see some wildlife and that is all. If there will be build e.g. a highway into Madidi National Park, there will be more people coming in and out of the area. More traffic of tourists wanting to travel to the park can have an environmental affect because the roads will lead to cutting of forests and there will be more garbage in the park.*

*If tourism or ecotourism disappear, people that live inside the park will return to working with agriculture, cutting wood, hunting and fishing, which will have a negative impact on the environment. This can happen since there are more tourists visiting Peru and Ecuador instead of Bolivia and Madidi National Park. There needs to be more promotion of ecotourism in Bolivia so that local people can preserve the environment. (Summary)*

The government has also some perception on this issue:

*“If the projects or operators are not carried in the right way, it can generate environmental problems. There is an issue of the practice of hunting or unsustainable practice with handling of animals or species in preservation. Enterprises which not take into account environmental aspects can generate a negative effect.” (Government II)*

One tourist also shared perspectives of negative effects:

*“There are some unserious tour-operators that claim to be ecofriendly but are not. They destroy the environment by letting tourists come close to animals. The animals are not used to be treated in certain ways. Tourists or tour-operators might even kill some animals. This is not good for the ecosystem. Furthermore, some tour-operators are not thinking of how to treat garbage. When garbage gets thrown in the jungle it will pollute. It should be clearer for tourists to know which tour-operator is ecofriendly. It should be easier for tourists to see certificates or licenses that claim that an eco-tour operator is eco-friendly. It can be difficult to separate tour-operators since there is no certificate system.” (Tourist I)*



When being on an eco-tour with an operator, it was possible to observe this impact on the environment. As seen in the photo, there is a trail made of wood. The ideal of this trail is to make tourists more comfortable by walking in the forest. However, this shows that trees have been cut for improving eco-tours. Trails like this may have a negative effect on flora and fauna by vegetation loss and loss of species. On the other hand, building these trails might have a smaller negative impact than when tourists walk and create new walking trails.

Picture 17: Building trails of wood for tourists (Photo: Author, 2015).



## 5.7. Economic Effects

### 5.7.1 How Ecotourism Strengthens Local Economy

Ecotourism benefits in many ways economically for local people. Local people that were interviewed in San José de Uchupiamonas and San Miguel seem to agree that ecotourism brings money to the communities:

*“The community-based ecotourism enterprises help the communities to develop, and they give employment opportunities for families and for the new generation.” (Local man, Rurrenabaque I)*

This has not always been possible:

*“For example, about 10-12 years back, everyone did agriculture. Now, ecotourism enterprises have changed the families and the communities. This is because most of the companies are formed by a community, and that is why there are community-based enterprises.” (Local woman, San Miguel)*

Ecotourism strengthens local economy because locals are involved in the activity:

*Since it is locals who are directly involved in ecotourism, ecotourism provides an income to people who are in the service. There are now many young people and females who have been trained as guides, chefs, or in administration required by this industry. When locals make these services, it gives profitability. In addition, the economy generated from ecotourism has improved living conditions for many families in the communities. Tourists that want to enter the park need to pay a percentage to the company and the company then pays a percentage to the community. About 50 percent of total income goes to the community. Moreover, when tourists enter the park, they will provide jobs to the locals. And if they visit our communities and buy things like handicrafts, it will also give an income for the community members. (Summary)*

However, some locals want ecotourism to generate more income:

*“Even though ecotourism might not generate much income, it is enough to support the communities. Ecotourism has helped when it comes to emergencies. The enterprise Chalalán helps sick people to get to hospital and they also pay for the transportation.”*

*The positive is that the eco-tour operators help communities with education and improving health.” (Local woman, San José de Uchupiamonas)*

*“Ecotourism could have helped more if there were more promotion or more participation from the communities. The benefits that reach the communities are interesting because in the end, it helps for survival and it finds the priority of needs of families.” (Local authority II)*

Eco-tour operators state that they now have something called economic tourism:

*“Before, the economy was a result in selling wood, fish and meat. Now, the communities receive some income from the companies.” (Eco-tour operator II)*

*“50 percent of the income from Chalalán Ecolodge goes to the community San José de Uchupiamonas and 50 percent to the families who have created the lodge. Chalalán Ecolodge also provides free service of communication and help with infrastructure. Also we help with medicines and basic services like electricity.” (Eco-tour operator I)*

*Ecotourism can give economic incentives to the activities in the community since it generates jobs like guides, chefs and helpers. Also, when locals are engaged in ecotourism, the percentage of deforestation and animal hunting decreases. Local people have better conditions, they are better fed and they have more opportunities. Therefore, ecotourism is serving to help communities and the people through the field of education and health. Locals now take classes in English, biology and tourism. This improves the knowledge in the community. Ecotourism improves and helps to grow awareness of environmental and economic issues. Furthermore, there is a new tendency to generate income. Some families have developed their own lodges. This is a good way to provide employment and products to families. (Summary)*

Environmental and indigenous organizations have these perceptions on how ecotourism strengthens the local economy in the park:

*Ecotourism provides money and income for the local indigenous peoples and for local operators. The towns of Rurrenabaque and San Buenaventura have huge economical movements because the towns are both entrances to the park. However, Rurrenabaque*

*is the distribution center of Madidi National Park and therefore gets more income than San Buenaventura. However, in both places, there is a good management of ecotourism as it brings benefits to the communities like education, health, knowledge and experiences. Moreover, 60 percent of the total population of San José de Uchupiamonas is involved in the ecotourism projects. Therefore, ecotourism has a huge impact on the local economy. The guides and the local people know the technique to support the tourists. There are also distributions of incomes which can support other alternatives like planning of electricity and improving the roads in San José de Uchupiamonas. (Summary)*

*“The activity of tourism is giving the possibility for people to work within this activity and get training in ecotourism. It is generating income and it is giving the possibility to protect their territory. Normally, young people in the communities go outside their communities to seek better opportunities. Now, with ecotourism young people can find an activity within their community.” (Environmental and indigenous organization)*

This is what the government mentioned regarding economic benefits:

*Ecotourism is an activity that can have a multiplier effect on all sectors. It will benefit many people, because everyone is going to participate in a value-added chain to give the final service to the tourists. Ecotourism is a form of development and a way of life for many of the communities in Madidi National Park. They feel part of the ecotourism development of the region. It is important to have inclusive management of ecotourism which are enabling local participation. Ecotourism is an alternative activity to generate income for their families and it improves quality of life. It can therefore be looked at as an activity that continuously is giving an improvement economically. It is a productive activity. In Bolivia there are e.g. 100 registered community tourism enterprises which are successfully operated. (Summary)*

Tourists had also some perceptions about this:

*Ecotourism will have a good effect on local communities if they are part of ecotourism. It will create more job opportunities for local people. The salary of people working in good companies might be better and local communities will then benefit from ecotourism. (Summary)*



*Casa Grande* is used as a local meeting house in the community. This is where the local authorities of the communities meet. *La Casa Grande* is provided with solar panels and tele-communication. This is the only locations where locals receive and make phonecalls.

Picture 18: The local meeting house in San José de Uchupiamonas (Photo: Author, 2015).



According to the respondents, ecotourism is giving money to support local schools. This is the local school in San José de Uchupiamonas.

Picture 19: Local school in San José de Uchupiamonas (Photo: Author, 2015).



In the communities of San José de Uchupiamonas and San Miguel, the local church had better materials than the houses of the locals. This church in San Miguel is the most important building in the community, and therefore it should have a good appearance.

Picture 20: Local church in San Miguel (Photo: Author, 2015).

### 5.7.2 How Ecotourism May Harm the Economy

For local people there are few if any negative impacts when it comes to the economic effects of ecotourism. However, there are still some impacts to be considered:

*“When San José de Uchupiamonas initiated ecotourism, there were too high expectations. Administration has disappointed, several managers and others involved in ecotourism know little of the ecotourism industry. They have another philosophy of what ecotourism is and that does not always give the same income as in other activities. Poor administration has led to that sometimes ecotourism has only benefited a few families more than others. They have a higher income than others. However, there is no other alternative to generate income.” (Local authority III)*

*When there are no tourists, we have to devote ourselves to other types of work. Generating income is especially hard in the rain season, when there are almost no tourists. As a consequence, many believe that ecotourism is not benefitting economically. And, there is no direct government support. If someone gets sick or requires an amount of money, the eco-tour operators give that to solve it. However, it is not sufficient. The ecotourism activity is not enough to satisfy the communities. There is never enough money and there is not enough tourism to give employment to the community members. Tourism has declined a lot. This is because there is more competition. When there is no tourist activity in the community, we probably have to look for another company to get work. This has negative effects in the community. Hence, ecotourism will harm the local communities economically if it disappears. (Summary)*

*“There might be about 30 percent of local people that state that ecotourism is not a good economic activity.” (Local guide I)*

Eco-tour operators are supposed to share income with community members. In that way, communities receive more money due to ecotourism. However, one eco-tour operator has told that there are difficulties to see if the communities get more economic growth from the incomes they receive:

*“People have failed to produce certain things within ecotourism. It can happen that someone takes the money and do not share with all locals. Therefore, some families are empowered over other families. Not everyone gets a profit from the eco-tour operator due to different reasons. There are some people that are excluded from ecotourism. This makes a difference in knowledge, income, capabilities, contacts etc. In this way the community loses its quality and ecotourism projects might increase risks of social problems. Corruption is also an issue. Some people do not have the capabilities to do their accounting. Then when someone else does their accounting they can be corrupt.” (Eco-tour operator I)*

Other eco-tour operators state that they are afraid that ecotourism will disappear:

*Local people have now got accustomed to ecotourism since it generates income. If tourism declines or will be removed, the operators need to seek other alternatives. There is a possibility that they will go back to the activity they did before ecotourism was created. Therefore, they will consider other alternatives for the future. The worst case scenario is that people leave the communities if ecotourism disappears. (Summary)*

Environmental and indigenous organizations have told this:

*The negative is that there is a need for better management of eco-tours. One challenge is to ensure that ecotourism benefits the local people. Another challenge is to ensure that locals get enough tourists so it can be an economically reliable business that provides benefits. Furthermore, there should be taxes for local people who break certain laws. Ecotourism should give better opportunities for having a currently and in the future. (Summary)*

The government has also some perceptions regarding negative impacts:

*“Any activity that goes to extremes can have negative aspects. Ecotourism taken to the extreme can generate less foreign exchange income.”(Government I)*

*“If ecotourism cannot be handled with the right measurements and correct guidelines, there are many communities that cannot manage their resources. There are many entrepreneurs of ecotourism in Bolivia who unfortunately have failed because they do not know the best way to manage and it becomes an irresponsible ecotourism. They are not given the optimum training so that they can take control of the business and be able to manage it on their own.” (Government II)*

Tourists might question that the money they pay for eco-tours really benefit the communities:

*“If there is one person that receives the money and gives it to the tour-operator, it will not benefit the local community but rather the tour-operator only.” (Tourist I)*

*“There are some operators that cost like 500 bolivianos. These are not good since they will have no effect on local economy. However, there are some good operators, but these cost a lot of money. Therefore, tourists choose the cheaper operators. Consequently, the more expensive operators may have difficulties in attracting tourists.” (Tourist II)*



Local women in San José are working at a shop (*tienda*). The incomes from ecotourism cannot give an income to all community members. Therefore, some locals need to find an alternative way to generate income.

Picture 21: A local shop in San José de Uchupiamonas (Photo: Author, 2015).



Even though the communities are involved in ecotourism, they still need to work with agriculture. Self-sufficient farming is the way of getting food on the table for households in the communities. This is a woman in San José de Uchupiamonas who is going to prepare swine for dinner.

Picture 22: Self-sufficient farming in San José de Uchupiamonas (Photo: Author, 2015).

## 5.8. Socio-Cultural Effects

### 5.8.1 How Ecotourism Enhances Socio-Cultural Life

The majority of local people in San José de Uchupiamonas and San Miguel have told that ecotourism does not have a negative effect on the socio-cultural life. They claim that it is either ecotourism that helps them to maintain their culture, or that it is the community itself that has managed to keep their culture:

*Ecotourism helps the communities to keep traditions and to revive what was before. Ecotourism unites people, supports and make the children aware of how we lived before to preserve and maybe revive the culture. Before, an indigenous was just a poor person. Ecotourism, the ILO Convention 169 and the United Nations help to carry indigenous demands outside Bolivia. Our rights in the New Constitution are also reflected that the Nation and indigenous peoples have all the support from other countries to preserve, to keep, to be able to be respected before any other identity. As a consequence, locals are today recovering and learning the native languages in schools. Each community has its traditional language. Thanks to ecotourism, it expands our culture and our way of life. Moreover, it is a joy for locals when someone comes to visit. The community members want to show culture. When tourists talk about a culture, the communities become sort of famous. Furthermore, there is also an exchange of culture and knowledge between locals and tourists. There are open discussions, experiences, and an exchange of positive things. Locals learn much from the people who come to the lodge and to the community. We interact to create new experiences both with other countries and also of Bolivia. In brief, it is important that we preserve our culture because tourists come to see the culture. (Summary) ‘*

However, one local believe that it is themselves who have managed to keep the culture and their way of life.

*“The communities have survived e.g. colonization and Spanish speaking settlers. The communities have decided to keep the Tacana culture. There are families that have kids and they have to tell the new generation to keep the culture. They share and they show their life and culture. Therefore, the socio-cultural life does not change much.”*  
(Local guide I)



Eco-tour operators agree that ecotourism has in many ways benefited local people living in San José de Uchupiamonas and San Miguel:

*“Ecotourism has made indigenous peoples proud to be indigenous. They speak the local language and it has also increased their self-esteem. Thanks to this activity, locals can make an exchange of knowledge and culture. Only the ecotourism activity manages to keep the local knowledge. Locals can guarantee that the guides rescue, preserve and transmit knowledge, because knowledge is the life of the forest that locals teach. Locals share this with the tourists who are coming. The knowledge is handed over from generation to generation. It is therefore ecotourism is a success. The most important thing is to keep the knowledge of the locals. Knowledge of how to walk in the forest, knowledge of trees, birds, animals, culture, and construction of houses made of bamboo - and palm trees, etc. Knowledge is power. Local people also still value their culture, language and the relationships between humans and animals.” (Eco-tour operator III)*

*Communities involved in ecotourism show their culture to tourist. With ecotourism locals are trying again to learn how to make crafts and other customs which were forgotten to show tourists and to teach tourists. It is important that locals want to rescue their culture and that they want to show what they have. (Summary)*

Environmental and indigenous organizations see ecotourism as a tool of maintaining and keeping culture:

*“Before there was ecotourism in Madidi National Park, sharing traditions and using traditional masks were not that important. Today, due to ecotourism, the local people show their traditions and they sell handicrafts to gain more income.” (Environmental organization I)*

*Tourists visiting the communities are going to see a healthy environment which can attract more people from the outside. Ecotourism preserves the culture and the biodiversity in the area. Ecotourism also tries to keep the cultures in the park. It tries to show the Tacana culture, and to show the Quechan-Tacana culture. With ecotourism, tourists have the opportunity to see the relationship of indigenous peoples and the nature. The people in Madidi National Park are proud of their culture.*

*However, some are curious on how the communities retain their culture in the face of a changing world in general. (Summary)*

For tourists, economic benefits will also cause social enhancement:

*“Ecotourism can benefit local people by economic growth and improve living situation which will give a better life quality for local people. It is good that tourists and local people unite and that the indigenous peoples inform the tourists about the environment.” (Tourist I)*



When San José de Uchupiamonas is celebrating Independence Day of the community, the locals are wearing traditional clothes. They are also celebrating by doing traditional dances.

Picture 23: Quechua-Tacana ethnicity in San José de Uchupiamonas (Chalalan, 2016c).

### 5.8.2 How Ecotourism Harms Socio-Cultural life

As mentioned above the majority of local people state that ecotourism does not affect the culture. Still, there are some things that might be harmful to their culture:

*“There needs to be a balance between culture and economy. If there is created more ecotourism activities the balance might collapse. It is important to balance community, natural resources management and economy. Too much of one thing can make a collapse.” (Local man, Rurrenabaque I)*

*“The harms are that some tourists bring alcohol or drugs into the communities.” (Local authority II)*

*“People have thought that when working within ecotourism, the most important thing is to speak English instead of the natural language. It is possible that almost half of the community members have forgotten the culture, the language and the knowledge of nature.” (Local woman, San Miguel)*

The majority of locals agree that it is the new generation that are mostly affected by ecotourism:

*An example is that children can get used to that tourists give them small gifts. When they are accustomed to this, the children might begin to say to tourists to give them things. Therefore, ecotourism must teach tourists to accept people’s standards of living. Another negative impact is when tourists visit the community and locals learn to speak the English language. They have also the same technology and clothes as the tourists. Young people in the community will search for better conditions when it comes to work, education and health. Furthermore, the new generation is not going to ever handle the same knowledge as the older generation. It is difficult to keep culture because some people already have other knowledge and other concepts. Maintain the culture is difficult because it is coming a new generation. Some locals know the culture but they will never practice it. Then how will locals keep the culture if older people already have disappeared? At some point, the culture will disappear. All countries have experienced that people no longer want to dance traditional dances because they have no longer the time for doing that and that resulted in lost culture. However, it is not only ecotourism that has affected people. The topic of globalization*

*has made that the social impacts has been the most notable change in the communities. (Summary)*

For eco-tour operators, ecotourism has changed the communities.

*Ecotourism has changed our way of life, our way of being, our way of talking etc. The language has been changed. There are almost no locals who speak traditional language. Our language has been lost due to the imposition of Spanish and English language. (Summary)*

*“It is very important to speak English and then sometimes there are many that prefer to speak English and they are forgetting their mother tongue a bit. Also, the people are already using another type of clothing that is similar to the tourists.” (Eco-tour operator IV)*

*Another side of ecotourism is that it pushes people to handling the trend of globalization process. There are for example cell phones and communication in the communities. Some people in the communities have also moved out. It is hard to find people who still live like they did before and therefore there is a lost culture. (Summary)*

Environmental and indigenous organizations have also shared their perceptions of negative socio-cultural impacts:

*The negative impacts are that local people are in contact with foreign cultures all the time. There are even some tourists that use drugs. This has a negative impact on the locals. When locals begin to interact with other people from outside, it will adapt them to new cultures. Their way of dressing has changed and people listen to other types of music. People are not what they were before. Their culture will always be changing and people need to take care of it. For example, local guides are now speaking a little different. Local people get new habits that are similar to the life in the cities, not like the habits in the communities. Some local people have also forgotten some traditions like cultural dances and ritual offerings. Locals might feel embarrassed because they feel that the traditions do not belong to them anymore. There are especially young*

*people and children who are influenced by the tourists. Maybe they will in some years prefer other kind of stuff and things from other cultures. Many of them will leave the community to obtain new ideas. Hence, the culture will reduce and the population reduces in the communities. (Summary)*

The government has told this:

*“A negative effect is that communities and families that now are managing tourism are losing more and more the issue of the languages. Younger people have also lost the native lexicon of their place. Ecotourism should instead maintain culture and traditions of the communities.” (Government II)*

Tourists have told that there are some negative effects when the guest and the host encounter:

*“Local people should not act and behave differently when tourists visit. It is not necessary to make special dances and show culture when in their normal way of living does not include this. Local people should behave like they are used to live.” (Tourist II)*

*Furthermore, mass-tourism will have a negative effect on the lodge and the communities. Especially, communities can get affected by tourists that are not ecofriendly. (Summary)*

Most cultures do change over time. Ecotourism might give incentives for keeping and enhancing parts of the culture rather than discard own culture or maybe rather integrate new impulses into the traditional culture.

## **5.9 Analysis and Discussions of Part Two**

The consequences of ecotourism have been described as both positive and negative by the literature review and by the respondents. They discuss the impacts on the local environment, economy and socio-cultural life in the national park.

Firstly, the literature review and the respondents state that there is an abundance of environmental strengths from ecotourism. Ecotourism has the prime goal to conserve the environment and improve the welfare of local people. In addition, ecotourism in Madidi National Park is also encouraging local people to preserve their area and to further enhance the knowledge of biodiversity. It has also become important to transmit this knowledge to the tourists. However, not all local people involved in ecotourism behave sustainably. There are some enterprises that claim to be eco-friendly, without being so. There are many eco-tour operators that are not licensed to operate in the park. These ventures often feed and hunt animals and cut trees. Eco-tour operators claim that these enterprises are a threat to conservation and sustainability in the park. Therefore, it is important that all enterprises operating in the park follow the same environmental guidelines that strengthen conservation and protection of the park and its indigenous peoples.

Secondly, when it comes to the economic impacts, there are also both positive and negative effects. The literature review states that ecotourism is an activity that has both direct and indirect economic benefits. This is also the case for those involved in Madidi National Park. For example, when tourists visit the park it generates income, employment, and it gives development to the communities. When tourists pay to the enterprises of Chalalán and San Miguel del Bala, they both give half of their incomes to the community. This can improve e.g. education and roads. However, ecotourism cannot provide as much economic effects as mass-tourism. Since ecotourism is at a small-scale level, it is not possible for all local people to be directly involved in ecotourism as e.g. guides, managers, cooks etc. Some families need to do self-sufficient farming even though the community itself receives remittances from the enterprises. The literature does not solve this issue. However, according to the respondents there are some family-based ecotourism enterprises. These enterprises focus on giving remittances to their own family within the community. As it might seem like a good idea, this might create or is creating inequality between the community members. Families involved in the ecotourism industry have a higher income than the self-sufficient farmers. One example of

an inequality between locals is that those who have a higher income have a stronger possibility of owning either a generator or a solar-panel to get electricity to their household.

Thirdly, like impacts on environment and economy, the socio-cultural aspects have also positive and negative effects. On one hand, ecotourism gives incentives to local people within a community to remember and to maintain their culture and traditions. This is because when the guest and the host encounter, the host often shows their culture e.g. by doing a traditional dance or a ritual. Moreover, as the guest visits a community, there will be possibilities of exchanging culture where the guest and the host learn different values from each other. As a researcher visiting both San José de Uchupiamonas and San Miguel del Bala, the cultural traditions were not shown as it was not high-season for tourism. However, the researcher got to experience how indigenous peoples live in rather isolated communities inside the park. On the other hand, ecotourism also harms the local people. When the guest and the host encounter, it can threaten cultural traditions like languages and costumes. It seems like that the younger generation rather wants to learn English than the traditional language of Quechan or Tacana. In addition, ecotourism together with the challenge of globalization might lead to migration because local people move from the communities to find better opportunities.

### **Part Three: Potentials and Challenges**

For the respondents, it is important that the national park has much potential. The potentials make it possible to find out if ecotourism can become a more attractive activity in the park. Madidi National Park is one of the national parks that have the most biodiversity in the world. Therefore, there are huge potentials. Even though the park has much potential for ecotourism, the park faces many challenges that all are a threat to the locals, the park and ecotourism.

#### **5.10 The Potentials of Madidi National Park as an Eco-Tourist Destination**

##### **5.10.1 Directly Involved**

When asking local people about what kind of potentials Madidi National Park has currently and in the future, there were many different answers:

*Madidi National Park is rich in potentiality because Madidi National Park has a large area and it is extensive. Madidi National Park has nearly 17 years of creation. Before, it was not a park. It was rather an area where all locals cut hardwoods. Today there is no cutting of woods. For us, the park is very good and therefore we help to protect and conserve Madidi National Park. Madidi National Park has a lot of biodiversity. It is perhaps the best park of fauna, flora, cultures and customs. (Summary)*

*“Some areas like Chalalán Ecolodge have perhaps more biodiversity compared to other areas. Chalalán Ecolodge has e.g. primary forests. It is possible to find many kinds of natural life. There is also a lot of different species of fauna and flora. There is plenty of species that has not been found.” (Local man, Rurrenabaque I)*

*Madidi has protection of its fresh water, rivers, streams, headers, sheds etc. There is a lot of diversity of attractions. The park has areas for forestry, for scientific studies and for ecotourism that all show the potentials of the park. Therefore, ecotourism will be improving since the park has lots of information. It has much to give to nature and to the environment. There is a strong promotion and improvement of services and knowledge of the park. (Summary)*

However:



*“The park needs much work and much investment. It would be interesting to make some books about the fauna and flora in the park. The government should start to support the area and be interested in the environment. Those things would help ecotourism in Madidi National Park.” (Local guide I)*

Eco-tour operators seem to be proud that the park they operate in is very rich in fauna and flora:

*“Madidi National Park is an area that has the most biodiversity in the world. The potentials are therefore enormous and the potentials of the park mean everything. The potentials are not just for ecotourism. There are also potentials in the varieties of species in the park.” (Eco-tour operator IV)*

*“The park has much potential to exploit by ecotourism. It is possible to create other alternatives inside the Madidi National Park because it is possible to find many very interesting things to show tourists. The tourists come to relax, to enjoy the park and to see wild animals.” (Eco-tour operator V)*

*“Some of the potentials in e.g. San Miguel community are the natural water fall and there is a canyon. It is also possible to enjoy sports, local handicrafts and local typical food.” (Eco-tour operator II)*

*“The potentials of Madidi are low if there is no more willing to help with preserving the nature. Tourism investments will help in local communities. Middle income tourism and high income tourism will increase the money to preservation and to the communities. However, the government does not help enough. Tourists need to pay more for preservation, conservation and to local communities.” (Eco-tour operator I)*

#### 5.10.2 Indirectly Involved

Environmental and indigenous organizations also think that Madidi National Park has a potential because it has more biodiversity compared to other parks:

*The Amazon jungle has a large potential in terms of genetic resources, wildlife of animals and birds, forests, vegetation, clean air and culture. Madidi National Park will always be interesting to visit because it is the most preserved park in South America. Madidi National Park has also a diversity of indigenous and peasant communities. Therefore, the potentials of Madidi will increase. (Summary)*

*“The biggest selling point is that it is in fact the only park in the world that has almost 6000 meters altitude grading from 170 meters to 6020 meters. If there are more offers for tourists, people will visit different places of the park. This makes it possible for tourists to observe more of fauna and flora since tourists can chose to go to the mountain, to the valleys, or to the grasslands etc. Madidi National Park can be a major destination for natural tourism in the future.” (Environmental organization II)*

The government can also see that there is much potential in the park:

*The park’s biodiversity makes it a special destination. The protected area is a unique resource in the world and in this part of the Bolivian Amazon. This is because the variety and the number of species of flora and fauna can be enhanced. It is more the community tourism ventures in the protected area that are increasingly giving greater potential. The national park offers a lot of activities. It offers many possibilities for the future in order to continuously develop and preserving the integrity of the protected area. (Summary)*

Tourists that have visited the park appreciate that they got the opportunity to experience ecotourism in this national park:

*“The potential of Madidi National Park as a tourist destination is good if the park is able to continue as a sustainable tropical rainforest that preserve and protect the ecosystems.” (Tourist I)*

*“The park is good as it is. It can be detrimental for the environment to expand enterprises in the park.” (Tourist III)*

*“Sharing information to tourists about the area is important. It seems like there are more people that are curious about tropical rainforests and therefore want to explore it.” (Tourist II)*



This Andean bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*) is very rare to spot in the tropical area of Madidi National Park. There is higher potential to see this bear in the upper cloud forest and in humid Andean grasslands (WCS Bolivia, 2015b).

Picture 24: Andean bear in Madidi National Park (WCS Bolivia, 2015c).

### **5.11 Challenges of Developing Ecotourism in Madidi National Park**

When asking all stakeholders what kind of challenges Madidi National Park faces, there were many kinds of responses. These challenges will not only be a threat towards ecotourism, but also for the local people and the conservation of the park. The majority state that the biggest challenge and threat of them all is the government's plans to build a dam in the rivers of the park. Furthermore, other challenges and threats are exploitation of oil, building of new roads, mining, logging, etc.

#### **5.11.1 Directly Involved**

Local indigenous peoples share same perceptions on several challenges they face in the park:

*The dam will especially be a threat because it will damage the place we live in. It will have an effect on all locals, the environment and for ecotourism. The electricity made from the dam will not be for Bolivia. The government will rather sell electricity to Brazil. The dam will cause flooding of many hectares of forest. This will affect and kill animals and plants. Our territories are going to be displaced and local people will be moved. This dam is going to force people to migrate. We are born in the park, we live here and we want to finish our lives here. (Summary)*

*“Some years ago, some people were looking for petroleum and they found it. They think it could be interesting to find oil, but this is not good for the natural life. This can contaminate the rivers and the animals that drink from the water and the rivers can*

*die. This will kill natural life. With the oil company, we can do nothing because they have an agreement with the government.” (Local guide I)*

*“The government wants to make a road that will cut Madidi National Park in half, like the plans of TIPNIS-road. The road Apolo – Ixiamas will also pass through San José de Uchupiamonas.” (Manager of eco-lodge)*

*The President wants Madidi National Park to disappear. Some locals will be fighting against these projects, because these will not make us able to do tourism in the future. The threats will affect very much of the environment of the Madidi National Park and of the indigenous territory. However, it will be problematic to go against the mega-projects of the State because it is difficult to control it. We are uncertain on how we are going to defend our rights as peoples, and as territory. We have to find a way to negotiate with the government. (Summary)*

*“There is a challenge to offer new places in Madidi National Park to get economy for the local communities. Investments in the park are complicated because operators and the park have a different ideology when it comes to conservation. The park does not want to offer more lodges because they have environmental concerns. Madidi National Park wants to conserve nature 100 percent. This can make it hard for local people to get benefits to the local community. It is very important for us to have the possibility to create a company, but it has to be regulated and it is hard to get licensed.” (Local man, Rurrenabaque I)*

*“There should be a study of a management plan for the park. E.g. many local people say that Madidi National Park is one of the parks with most biodiversity in the world. However, there are no clear studies of that. The plan should consist on how many species of fauna and flora Madidi National Park has.” (Local man, Rurrenabaque II)*

Also for eco-tour operators, the biggest challenge is to keep and to preserve Madidi National Park. This is because the government wants to make a dam and to make oil exploitation:

*“The natural system for parks service is in danger. 70 percent of the budget for national parks depends on European funding. The government is not much interested in taking care of economic responsibility for the park. The European Union has decided to stop funding because they mean that every country should take care of their protected areas. The project of the dam in San Miguel del Bala will also be a threat in*

*this area and it will create flooding. There are 9 communities in this area and 5 will be under water. There are 8 ecolodges in the Tuichi River and half of them will be under water. The dam will cause that the fish will swim upstream. This will cause that the fish production will go down. The dam will cut the river for transportation of products and for people. San José de Uchupiamonas will also be cut out from society. In addition, the government now builds a bridge from Rurrenabaque to San Buenaventura. This bridge will be a threat to these places as the bridge will be close to the main square in Rurrenabaque and very close to a school in San Buenaventura. They want to make this bridge so they can get the lumbers faster and sugar from the sugar cane plantations. The local indigenous peoples want to fight against the projects that will harm them. However, indigenous movements have been damaged. Indigenous peoples are afraid of the government and to get hurt and sued for any reason. If any NGO does not want to do what the government says, they will be kicked out of the country. Some indigenous peoples are afraid, because the government has split people and indigenous organizations.” (Eco-tour operator I)*

*“Both San Miguel and San José de Uchupiamonas have invested a lot of money to do ecotourism. The planned dam will be built where there is tourism. Therefore, the government will take away tourism from the enterprises. Another challenge is that there are almost no flights that reach Rurrenabaque. Many flights get suspended due to weather conditions, mechanical issues and even with no reason at all. Tourists do not come because they do not have security for their return. Rurrenabaque needs a good airport and planes reaching the town to get more tourists. The government has also made stricter rules for tourists that need visa. E.g. they have closed the visa for people from Israel, which are many of our tourists. Another challenge is that sometimes eco-tour operators are missing enough staff to be able to do ecotourism activities.” (Eco-tour operator II)*

*“There are other projects that are challenging like the opening of a road that will pass through the park. This will be detrimental to nature since the road will bring new settlements, logging, hunting and other negative effects. It is like the TIPNIS-conflict. Another threat is the oil. The government has given authorization for these activities. The government does not appear to be interested in preserving the park. The government itself is not supporting the park with much money.” (Eco-tour operator III)*

### 5.11.2 Indirectly Involved

Environmental and indigenous organizations are especially concerned about the environmental and indigenous impacts these challenges will bring:

*“If the National State and the government do not have an interest in protecting the area, ecotourism will not exist in the future.” (Environmental organization I)*

*“The challenges to developing ecotourism are threats like the Bala-dam, agriculture, agro-industry, oil - and hydroelectric exploitation. Those are especially disruptive for the local people. There are series of mega projects like hydrocarbons, roads, the bridge on the Beni River, sugar mills etc. These projects will have serious environmental impacts on nature.” (Indigenous and environmental organization)*

*There is a big concern that the government wants to build a dam close to the community of San Miguel. If this dam is build, it will have a tremendous downturn. The Bala-dam is a potential threat not just for the biodiversity in the area but also for the ecotourism activities. It will not be nice for tourists to see a big dam in the park. Moreover, it will cause flood and many hectares will be under water. The Bala-dam project and oil explorations will harm the locals and their communities. The history of projects tells us that the incomes from this kind of business do not necessarily benefit to the local population. The mega projects will change tourism economy to something else like agricultural economy. Madidi National Park rangers and the protection team need to meet the park directors to find the way to show the big offer in this kind of economy against the big project like the dams, roads, sugar cane plants, which all imply the destruction of many species in the park. (Summary)*

*“The government wants to open a road that will cut Madidi National Park in half. This road will bring new settlers, timber loggers, miners and coca crops. The government appears indifferent to massive destruction of Madidi, but there is still hope that they do not implement their projects.” (Environmental office)*

However, some of these respondents disagree. They claim that infrastructure like roads needs to be coordinated:

*“It needs more collaboration in terms of figuring a route so that tourists can visit more than one location. Furthermore, Rurrenabaque or San Buenaventura needs to offer an area to build a new airport. Moreover, it needs to be a lot more work in terms of promoting ecotourism. The market in La Paz needs to be worked and promoted better.” (Environmental organization II)*

*“BOLTUR’s campaign called “Bolivia Te Espera” needs to promote Madidi National Park. They rather promote other sites of Bolivia or other countries. It is important that Madidi National Park gets more promotion. If the park does not get support, tourism will decline.” (Environmental office)*

However, the indigenous organization states that the real challenges are how people can take action to protect their territories:

*“This work is now difficult to do because local governments or the government of indigenous peoples have fallen into political issues. The division of indigenous organizations makes it difficult for people to work for protection of their territories. If the government wants to implement such large projects, they should inform the people and take measures to protect these people in its territory. If the government does not do that, they are exposing the people, and territories to these issues. These threats are going to endanger the tourism activity these people have which makes a pressure to change activity. Tourism will decrease and it will not be attractive for people to go to Madidi.” (Indigenous organization)*

The government considers that the challenge for Madidi and Bolivia in general is that tourism has decreased:

*There is a real challenge to make proper marketing that make tourist go visit Madidi National Park instead of other parks in neighboring countries. It is difficult to convince tourists to choose Bolivian Amazon instead of the Brazilian Amazon. This is because there is a challenge with the arrival to the park. It is still difficult to reach the park by land. We also have to make sure that Madidi is not overloaded with tourists, which can affect the environment. (Summary)*

Tourists find it difficult to reach Madidi National Park:

*“The infrastructure should improve. It is a long way to come and it is also expensive. It is very difficult to go by plane to Rurrenabaque and there are a lot of delays. Tourists can be stuck in Rurrenabaque for days till a week. As a consequence, tourists choose to go elsewhere. There should be investments in bus-systems and roads so it is safe and comfortable for tourists to come to Rurrenabaque. There are a lot of tourists that miss out of a great opportunity. Furthermore, for tourists it might be a challenge to secure that tour-operators are ecofriendly and that they are willing to take care of the area and the ecosystem. There are some tour-operators that do not have certificates to prove that they are ecofriendly. Also, from a touristic perspective, the expectations of tourists are too high. Tourists want to see e.g. jaguar but this rarely happen.” (Summary)*



Locals are concerned about the building of a bridge between Rurrenabaque and San Buenaventura. This bridge will make it easier to access Madidi National Park.

Picture 25: Building of a bridge in San Buenaventura (Photo: Author, 2015).



For tourists, the infrastructure becomes a challenge when going to Madidi National Park. There is only one plane going to Rurrenabaque and it has only capacity for 19 passengers.

Picture 26: The plane from La Paz to Rurrenabaque (Photo: Author, 2015).



### **5.12 Analysis and Discussions of Part Three**

The literature review and the empirical findings have discussed the potentialities of creating ecotourism activities in the national parks of Bolivia. They state that Madidi National Park is one of the national parks that have the most biological diversity in the world. Therefore, the park should be further explored to find new species of fauna and flora and find new places to further develop ecotourism initiatives. It can e.g. be possible to develop new tourism activities in *Alto Madidi* (higher area) if tourists are interested. In this area, there is a greater chance to observe different wildlife (like bears) that cannot be found at the other eco-lodges.

The literature and the empirical findings agree that many parks around the world have an abundance of potential to create ecotourism initiatives. However, some respondents are concerned when it comes to expanding this activity. Creating more eco-lodges in the future can be an environmental hazard to the park. Therefore, these respondents consider that the park already has achieved its potential and that the park should be maintained as it is.

As discussed in the literature review, Bolivia does not have the same potentials of developing ecotourism initiatives as Costa Rica. The case of Costa Rica shows that ecotourism has high potential due to good governance, political stability, and respect for human rights and friendliness towards foreign tourists (Honey, 2008). Unfortunately, these requirements are lacking in Bolivia. There is not a good relationship between lowland indigenous peoples and the government. There has been rising issues between the government and indigenous peoples after the TIPNIS-conflict. These indigenous peoples have previously told that the indigenous people's rights are not being practiced. This is even when they have several rights from the New Constitution, United Nations and the ILO Convention 169 (Høyme, 2014, p.37). Therefore, the biggest threat for Madidi National Park and its indigenous peoples is the government itself

For the local respondents, the most challenging is the government's plans to build a hydroelectric dam close to the San Miguel community. This will bring many environmental hazards without that the locals benefit economically in any way from the project. This dam will not only cause that tourism might disappear in Madidi, but it is also a huge threat to communities and to the park itself. The dam will cause floods which will make the communities and many hectares of the park to disappear. Moreover, the Apolo-Ixiamas road is also a threat. The indigenous peoples do not want roads and bridges being built so that different companies can get easier access to the park. Accessibility to the park is a threat for

the local people. Firstly, this is because roads are a threat to the environment as they cause deforestation. This will have a negative impact on the wildlife. Secondly, forest loss will have an effect on ecotourism. If there are less forest and wildlife to see, the fewer tourists will come.

Furthermore, many respondents have told that they would like to protest against these issues, especially the effect of the dam. They consider protesting in the same way as the march of TIPNIS. However, as the government has managed to internal divide indigenous organizations it will be difficult for indigenous authorities to fight against these projects. As the government continues to threaten and blackmail indigenous authorities and activists, it is difficult to rise for social mobilization in the country (McNeish, 2013; *Página Siete*, 2014; Carwill Bjork, 2013). As a consequence, it will not be possible to achieve total sustainability in the park as the environmental, economic and socio-cultural sustainability is in danger due to the government's projects. However, multinational NGOs have repeatedly entered and addressed indigenous people's rights in relation to governmental injustice and violations of indigenous rights. Therefore, indigenous issues are heard in much greater extent than before much due to those above and due to current technology and information flow (Kearney, 1995). The best-case scenario is that Bolivia learns from ecotourism initiatives of Costa Rica; starts listening to indigenous peoples; and starts using indigenous knowledge. This might become the solution to sustain all three pillars of sustainability in Madidi National Park.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

In many destinations throughout the world, ecotourism has become an alternative to mass-tourism. This is because mass-tourism has led to many negative impacts for tourists as well as the host destination. As a consequence, ecotourism has become a very fast growing sector in the world tourism industry due to its concerns to environmental, economic and socio-cultural issues. Ecotourism principles basically focus on increasing local community involvement in the planning mechanism that can support economic development, environmental conservation, and social and cultural awareness. Because of these effects, ecotourism in Madidi National Park has become the best alternative activity for rural development and social empowerment for indigenous peoples in and around the park. According to the informants, the activity of ecotourism preserves and conserves the park, it gives income and employment opportunities and it is a way of maintaining local culture and traditions. However, at the same time it is also necessary to consider critically that ecotourism also creates many problems such as environmental and cultural degradation and even economic inequality and imbalance in local scenarios.

Even though there are some ways ecotourism can harm local environment, economy and socio-cultural aspects in Madidi National Park, the advantages of ecotourism can be measured as more positive towards the local people and the fauna and flora in the park. Since Madidi National Park is perhaps the most biodiverse park in the world, it is important to protect it, and ecotourism can be the way. The park is unique and it has an abundance of tourism resources due to its large area and differences in topography. Therefore, there should be a great potential to further develop ecotourism in this park as a way to both protect and explore new areas. Ecotourism can be a promising industry in this park, if the Bolivian government is committed to develop integrated and innovative ecotourism policy and planning that must address all the existing problems and challenges for better implementation. However, ecotourism in Bolivia has difficulties to follow Costa Rica's success as the park faces many challenges due to the government. The majority of informants, especially local indigenous peoples are concerned about the government's plans of constructing a hydroelectric dam in the park. This dam will flood many hectares of rainforest, destroying its fauna and flora. The indigenous peoples will have no choice but to leave their homes and to adapt to modern ways of living.

As a consequence, ecotourism in Madidi National Park might also disappear. This will have tremendous negative effects for achieving sustainability as the challenges will rather cause

unsustainability. However, ecotourism is a way to achieve sustainable development. But, this can only be done if all stakeholders directly and indirectly involved, together with the government, respect the strengths of ecotourism. Thus besides various challenges and problems in the field of ecotourism, it can be a great opportunity if all tourism resources are handled and utilized responsibly. Ecotourism can be a phenomenal instrument to achieve real sustainable development by promoting different aspects of sectors – environment, economy, and culture. These will lead to firstly, environmental sustainability – as there is no more logging, overhunting of animals etc. Secondly, economic sustainability – as it is generating income and enhances regional development. Thirdly, socio-cultural sustainability – as it helps local indigenous peoples to keep culture and traditions, and exchange knowledge about fauna and flora with tourists. When all these three pillars of sustainability is merged, there is no doubt that ecotourism is the way to achieve real sustainable development in Madidi National Park.

## **6.2 Recommendations for Future Research**

As discussed in chapter four, there is always a challenge for other social researchers to conduct the same research and come up with the same result because societies always change. However, it is possible to explore this topic and get different results if the researcher compares it with different national parks that have ecotourism. To conduct a research on ecotourism, the researcher needs to be aware of some issues relating to ecotourism. Firstly, it is recommended to have an interest of indigenous peoples, biodiversity and rainforest. Secondly, a researcher needs to fully understand and know at least the current issues between indigenous peoples and the government, e.g. the TIPNIS-conflict and the issues indigenous peoples face in the Amazon Basin of Bolivia. Therefore, a recommendation for future research is to link the issues of Madidi National Park with other parks situated in the Bolivian Amazon Basin. The researcher can go further in depth with the issues regarding ecotourism in the rainforest - e.g. to find out if there will be any changes in the government's plans of constructing the dam. To conduct this research, case studies of various ecotourism sites in the rainforest should be compared. Moreover, the researcher should also find out if ecotourism is the way of achieving real sustainable development in the rainforest or if there is another way of achieving environmental, economic and socio-cultural sustainability.

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# **Appendix I: The Interview Guide**

## **Interview guide – Ecotourism in Madidi National Park**

### **1. General Questions**

#### **Demographics**

Name / Age / Job/ Role / From

How long have you been involved in X?

### **2. About Ecotourism in Madidi National Park**

1. Have you heard about ecotourism?  
(Follow up: Do you have any opinions about ecotourism?)
2. In which ways do you think ecotourism may affect the local environment?
3. In which way do you think ecotourism may affect the local economy?
4. And in which way do you think ecotourism may affect the local socio-cultural life?
5. What positive effects have ecotourism had so far?  
Is it more positive on environment, economy or socio-cultural life than ordinary tourism?  
(Follow up: how. ...on you.)
6. What negative effects have ecotourism had so far?  
Is it more negative on environment, economy or socio-cultural life than ordinary tourism?  
(Follow up: how. ...on you.)
7. Overall, are you more positive or negative to ecotourism than ordinary tourism?
8. Do you think it is important that tourists can visit communities like San José de Uchupiamonas and to learn from their way of living?  
(Follow up: For what purposes is this important?)
9. Could you please explain the potentials of Madidi National Park as a tourist destination?  
(Follow up: - What can be offered to tourists visiting Madidi in the future?  
- For what purposes are they important? )



10. What are the challenges of developing ecotourism in Madidi National Park?  
(Follow up: - What are the challenges with attracting tourists, current and future,  
- Are there anything missing and if so what?)
11. Do you have anything else you want to share?
12. Do you have a question for me?

### **3. Interview Guide for Tourists Who Have Visited Madidi National Park**

1. What is the name of the tour-operator you chose to travel with to Madidi National Park?
2. What do you think is special with X as a tour-operator?
3. What kind of expectations did you have before travelling to Madidi National Park?
4. About Ecotourism in Madidi National Park:

### **4. Interview Guide for People Not Directly Involved with Ecotourism**

1. For Environmental Organizations:  
- Why is X concerned about environmental issues?  
(Follow up: - And for what reasons are you (personally) concerned with environmental issues?)
2. For Indigenous Organizations:  
- Why is X concerned about indigenous issues?  
(Follow up: - And for what reasons are you (personally) concerned with indigenous issues?)
3. About Ecotourism in Madidi National Park: