Revista Cuadernos Administracion | Vol. 42 | Issue 84 | Jan. – Apr. | 2026 | e20613451
https://doi.org/10.25100/cdea.v42i84.13451
Article of Scientific and Technological Research

The penetration of Airbnb and its relationship with the tourism destination life cycle in Mexico's *Pueblos Mágicos*

La penetración de Airbnb y su relación con el ciclo de vida de los destinos turísticos en los Pueblos Mágicos de México

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Abstract

The Tourism Destination Life Cycle Model (TDLCM) has been widely used to analyze the evolution of tourism destinations based on demand. However, the expansion of accommodation platforms such as Airbnb introduces new variables for its interpretation. This study examines the relationship between the time elapsed since a destination was designated a *Pueblo Mágico* (Magical Town) and the growth of accommodation supply on Airbnb. A quantitative and correlational approach was adopted using secondary data from AirDNA corresponding to 177 *Pueblos Mágicos* in Mexico. Correlation coefficients and hypothesis testing were employed to analyze the data. The results reveal a significant relationship between the two variables, suggesting that the supply offered through digital platforms may constitute a complementary indicator for analyzing the life cycle of tourism destinations.

Keywords: Collaborative Economy; Airbnb; Tourism Destination Life Cycle Model; *Pueblos Mágicos*.

Resumen

El Modelo del Ciclo de Vida del Destino Turístico (TDLCM, por sus siglas en inglés) ha sido ampliamente utilizado para analizar la evolución de los destinos turísticos con base en la demanda. Sin embargo, la expansión de plataformas de alojamiento como Airbnb introduce nuevas variables para su interpretación. Este estudio examina la relación entre el tiempo transcurrido desde que un destino fue designado Pueblo Mágico y el crecimiento de la oferta de alojamiento en Airbnb. Se adoptó un enfoque cuantitativo y correlacional, utilizando datos secundarios de AirDNA correspondientes a 177 Pueblos Mágicos en México. Se emplearon coeficientes de correlación y pruebas de hipótesis para analizar los datos. Los resultados revelan una relación significativa entre ambas variables, lo que sugiere que la oferta ofrecida a través de plataformas digitales podría constituir un indicador complementario para el análisis del ciclo de vida de los destinos turísticos.

Palabras clave: Economía colaborativa; Airbnb; Modelo del Ciclo de Vida del Destino Turístico; Pueblos Mágicos.

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Thematic lines: Management and Organizations.

JEL code: M130, L110, H320

Submitted: 13/12/2023
Reviewed: 15/03/2025
Accepted: 03/02/2026
Published: 07/10/2026

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How to cite this paper?
Millán-García, C. H., Sánchez Valdés, A., & Marenzana, G. V. (2026). *The penetration of Airbnb and its relationship with the tourism destination life cycle in Mexico's* Pueblos Mágicos, *42*(84), e20613451. https://doi.org/10.25100/cdea.v42i84.13451

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Introduction

One of the most widely used models for studying the evolution of tourism destinations is the Tourism Destination Life Cycle Model (TDLCM) developed by Richard Butler in 1980. The model seeks to describe the stages through which a tourism destination evolves over time based on the number of visitors. According to the model, there are six stages: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, and decline. The decline stage may be reversed through destination repositioning, the development of new tourism products, or the attraction of new market segments (Diez, 2019). It is during the involvement stage that the model incorporates agents and processes, recognizing that governmental efforts and private actors, particularly entrepreneurs, can redefine the direction of the destination (Domínguez-Mujica, 2008). Traditionally, this process was closely linked to investments made within the geographic space.

Measuring destination evolution through Butler's model became standard practice for at least three decades. However, technological advances and the COVID-19 health crisis transformed the way tourism is conceived, especially in small destinations.

The dematerialization and digitalization of society made it possible for organizations to reach far beyond traditional markets (Oskam & Boswijk, 2016). For Moreno-Izquierdo et al. (2016), the case of Airbnb represents one of the most paradigmatic examples of the collaborative economy, evolving to the point of becoming one of the most disruptive business models in the tourism sector. Airbnb is a startup founded in 2008 that facilitates accommodation in private homes. Its creators identified a business opportunity characterized by a low-cost structure for renting, managing, and controlling third-party properties through a website. The platform's function is to list and advertise properties and act as an intermediary for payments and security deposits.

Airbnb's exponential growth is explained by the platform's continuous innovation, ease of use for both hosts and guests, modern and attractive philosophy, and relatively low commissions compared with traditional accommodation providers. Currently, Airbnb has "more than four million hosts who have shared their accommodations with 1.4 billion people in nearly every country in the world" (Airbnb, 2023b), consolidating itself as an efficient system for offering and renting rooms at competitive prices.

This business model has affected virtually all destinations, creating a group of tourism entrepreneurs that is often difficult for authorities to identify, especially in less visited locations where local governments may lack the capacity to register, quantify, regulate, organize, or plan for these accommodations. Nevertheless, the number of listings and certain market behavior indicators can be accessed through information provided by the platform itself. This is particularly relevant considering that accommodation infrastructure, especially hotels, was traditionally a fundamental element in destination growth and evolution because it conditioned the

number of tourists that a destination could receive. Today, however, lodging capacity can be expanded through private real estate investments, potentially redefining the destination's life cycle.

In some cases, such as Mexico's *Pueblos Mágicos*, Airbnb has been argued to help satisfy tourism accommodation demand without the need to build additional hotels or tourist apartments, thereby reducing pressure on the natural environment (Moreno-Izquierdo et al., 2016). Another positive economic impact identified by Rebollo-Sanz and Rodriguez-Planas (2020) is that tourists tend to spend more money near their accommodations, contributing to the revitalization of the destination.

This is especially important for the *Pueblos Mágicos* program, which is the result of a strategy implemented by Mexico's Federal Ministry of Tourism in coordination with state and municipal governments. The program has a dual purpose: preserving cultural and natural identity based on unique attributes, and strengthening domestic tourism by expanding regional tourism offerings and stimulating local economies. This is particularly significant given that domestic tourism represents approximately 80% of tourism consumption in Mexico (SECTUR, 2021). Collaborative accommodation practices also provide an effective means of delivering the cultural and social authenticity of the region to visitors.

However, Airbnb also has a negative side, existing legal gaps create problems regarding taxation and legal responsibility within destinations, contributing to the expansion of the informal economy and illegal employment (Rivera-García et al., 2023; Morales-Pérez et al., 2022; Pastor & Rivera-García, 2020; Herrero Suárez, 2017). Another negative effect concerns the relationship between Airbnb's success and tourism-driven gentrification. Tourism gentrification, a concept introduced by Gotham (2005), refers to the process by which the production of space for tourist consumption leads to the displacement of local residents to other neighborhoods.

Empirical studies have shown that in mature urban destinations, Airbnb can increase the number of tourists beyond the destination's carrying capacity by expanding the availability of apartments, houses, and rooms (Morales-Pérez et al., 2022). This situation has intensified since the COVID-19 pandemic, which promoted remote work and encouraged longer stays in cities around the world, as has occurred in Mexico City. In cities such as Barcelona, Airbnb has fostered the development of creative tourism, promoting authentic experiences that facilitate interaction with local residents (Aguado-Moralejo et al., 2021; Singh & Azevedo, 2021). Airbnb also offers an alternative for tourists with limited budgets by providing accommodation options in destinations where hotels are expensive, thereby extending stays or enabling more frequent travel (Tussyadiah & Pesonen, 2015). Furthermore, Airbnb's presence is positively associated with destinations characterized by higher levels of technological adoption and a stronger tourism sector within the local economy (Heo & Blengini, 2019).

In small destinations such as the *Pueblos Mágicos*, relatively little research has examined the effects of Airbnb. This is important because these destinations have

traditionally experienced slow growth due to limited investment and their dependence on the economic and political conditions of their respective states (Sánchez Valdés et al., 2017). Global hotel corporations generally show little interest in these markets because they are not considered sufficiently attractive. Nevertheless, the platform has already contributed to rising housing prices in small tourism destinations (Ioannides et al., 2018), expanded accommodation options beyond traditional lodging with differentiated experiences (Rivera-García et al., 2023), and demonstrated the potential to transform tourism spaces (Aguado-Moralejo et al., 2021; Ioannides et al., 2018).

Accordingly, the objective of this study is to determine whether the growth of accommodation supply through Airbnb is related to the Tourism Destination Life Cycle Model and whether it should be considered a variable in the evolution of Mexico's *Pueblos Mágicos*. This article is organized into five sections. The first presents the theoretical framework addressing the collaborative economy and the Tourism Destination Life Cycle Model, followed by the methodology and results. The discussion section is then presented, and finally the conclusions are provided.

Collaborative Economy, Platform Economy, and the Tourism Destination Life Cycle Model

The concepts of collaborative consumption and the collaborative economy refer to a set of practices and activities carried out through digital platforms that facilitate the exchange of goods and services between individuals. This concept encompasses new business models in which direct relationships are established between consumers and businesses, reducing or eliminating traditional intermediaries (Algar, 2007). According to Owyang et al. (2013, p. 4), *"the collaborative economy is an economic model in which ownership and access are shared among corporations, start-ups, and individuals, creating market efficiencies by generating new products, services, and businesses."*

The fundamental principles of the collaborative economy include collaboration, connectivity, direct peer-to-peer interaction, and continuous feedback throughout the transaction process. Its primary objective is to generate economic value from underutilized or idle assets by connecting them with customers—whether final consumers or intermediaries—who seek access to these resources (Wallsten, 2015). Among its principal advantages are lower prices resulting from reduced operating costs, more efficient use of existing resources, the emergence of innovative business models such as ride-sharing services, and an expansion of available products and services. Conversely, its principal drawbacks include limited regulation, unfair competition with traditional businesses, and the absence of comprehensive legal and environmental frameworks (Pastor & Rivera-García, 2020; Owyang et al., 2013; Dervojeda et al., 2013).

Collaborative economy models have experienced rapid growth in professional services, financial services, and particularly in tourism, where they have significantly transformed the accommodation and transportation sectors (Santucci de Oliveira et al., 2019; Rodríguez-Antón et al., 2016).

Among these platforms, Airbnb is widely regarded as the clearest example of the collaborative economy due to its extraordinary growth, global expansion, and the controversies arising from its disruptive business model (Heo & Blengini, 2019; Sousa Lobo, 2020).

Nevertheless, the literature also highlights several positive impacts associated with short-term tourist rentals. These include stimulating tourism and local economic growth, reducing seasonality, and expanding accommodation capacity in destinations facing lodging shortages, provided that appropriate regulatory frameworks are in place (Silva & de Azevedo Barbosa, 2020).

Likewise, this form of accommodation facilitates access to destinations for new market segments, contributes to a more balanced spatial distribution of tourism activity, and generates additional income for local residents by enabling them to capitalize on underutilized assets (Rebollo-Sanz & Rodriguez-Planas, 2020).

Conversely, numerous authors argue that Airbnb's rapid expansion has not been accompanied by adequate regulation. This situation has created legal gaps regarding taxation, labor conditions, and business oversight, encouraging informality while weakening consumer protection (Rivera-García et al., 2023; Herrero Suárez, 2017). Moreover, Airbnb has been associated with unfair competition against the traditional hotel industry, potentially affecting room rates, demand, and employment.

Finally, the literature consistently links Airbnb's expansion to processes of tourism gentrification, including the displacement of local residents, conflicts within host communities, and the deterioration of destination sustainability and image when accommodation growth is not properly managed (Yrigoy, 2017; Herrero Suárez, 2017).

Overall, existing evidence suggests that Airbnb's impacts cannot be generalized. Rather, they depend on each destination's characteristics, its level of tourism development, and most importantly, the regulatory and institutional framework within which the platform operates. This reinforces the need for context specific analyses and differentiated public policies (Oskam & Boswijk, 2016).

Platform Economy

Parallel to the development of the collaborative economy, changes in the way goods and services are promoted and commercialized have given rise to the concept of the platform economy. This refers to the use of digital platforms as mechanisms for communication, commercial transactions, collaboration, and content consumption to support business activities (Ibarra-Fretell & Grijalva-Salazar, 2025). Beyond automating business processes, digital platforms transform organizational culture by

creating value through the facilitation of interactions among users (Torres-Cierpe et al., 2024).

According to Kassem (2023), digital platforms have evolved through three major generations: The emergence stage (1990s), The consolidation stage (beginning in the early 2000s), The hegemonic stage (2008 to the present). The current hegemonic stage is characterized by the dominance of digital platform infrastructures and their profound economic and social influence.

Hall et al. (2022) report that Airbnb supply tends to be greater in mature destinations experiencing rapid tourism growth than in emerging destinations. Such expansion has the potential to significantly modify destination development trajectories. Nevertheless, Airbnb's penetration has become so widespread that it has reshaped accommodation supply across virtually all geographic contexts.

Tourism Destination Life Cycle Model (TDLCM)

Since Butler introduced the model in 1980, tourism destination evolution has been understood as a sequence of developmental stages (Agarwal, 2002). During the exploration stage, the first visitors arrive at the destination. In the involvement stage, private businesses and destination management organizations respond by developing an initial tourism infrastructure. During the development stage, the destination becomes widely recognized, and its tourism supply reaches a mature level. In the consolidation stage, tourist demand reaches high levels while growth begins to slow, eventually leading to stagnation. From this point onward, different trajectories may emerge depending on how effectively public and private stakeholders manage the destination.

Traditionally, beginning in the involvement stage, the expansion of tourism infrastructure, particularly hotels depended on external investment, public policies, and access to financing. However, collaborative accommodation platforms have fundamentally altered this process. By optimizing existing housing resources, Airbnb facilitates increased tourist flows through the expansion of available lodging capacity (Adamiak, 2020). Unlike hotels, Airbnb listings often require only minor modifications before they can be offered to visitors. Consequently, accommodation supply can expand not only in city centers but also in rural and suburban areas, thereby influencing destination evolution.

Adamiak (2020) was among the first scholars to explicitly relate the Tourism Destination Life Cycle Model to the collaborative economy. His central hypothesis proposes that the number of Airbnb listings directly affects tourist flow dynamics. His findings demonstrate that Airbnb listings tend to concentrate in destinations undergoing the development and consolidation stages of the life cycle. Furthermore, Airbnb generally complements rather than replaces traditional accommodation by expanding lodging capacity where hotel infrastructure is limited or insufficient (Adamiak et al., 2019). Accordingly, it is necessary to analyze how this accommoda-

tion model has transformed tourism markets and how its effects vary across each stage of the Tourism Destination Life Cycle Model (Figure 1).

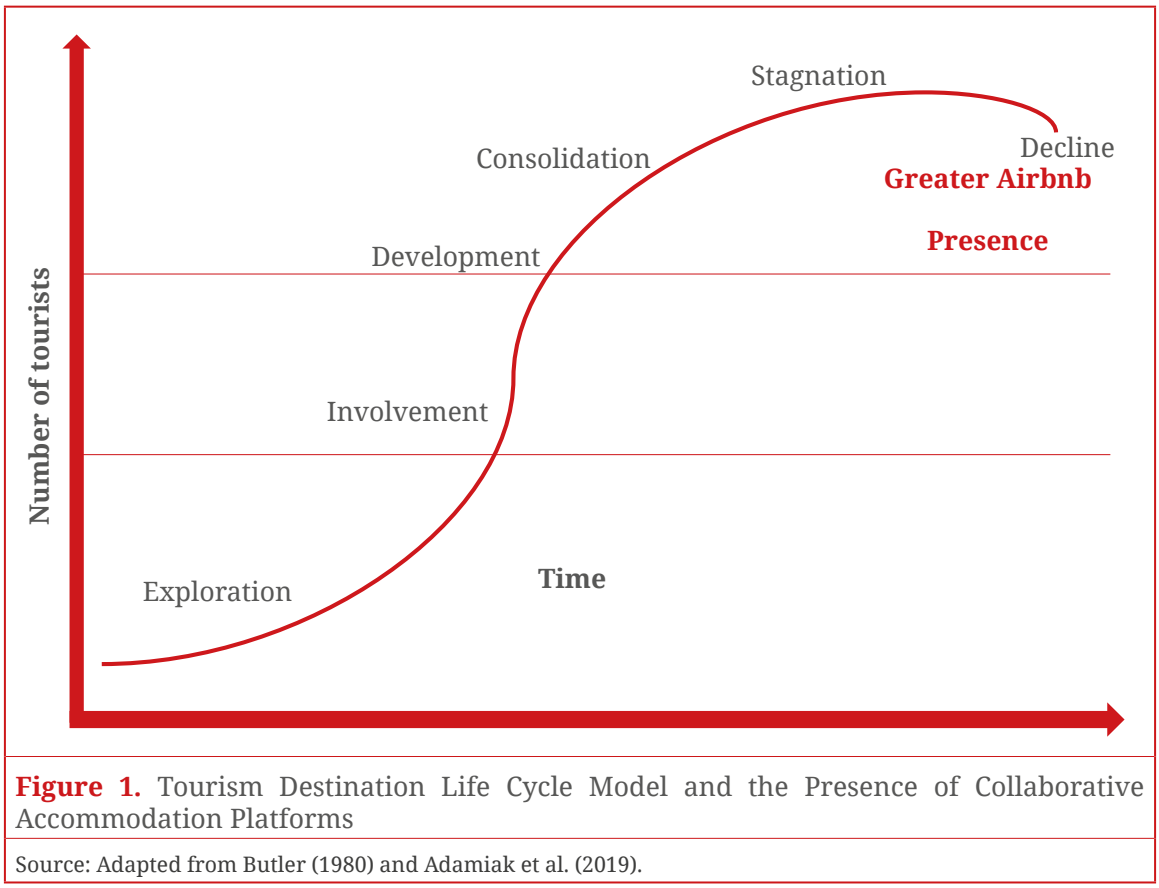


Figure 1. Tourism Destination Life Cycle Model and the Presence of Collaborative Accommodation Platforms

Source: Adapted from Butler (1980) and Adamiak et al. (2019).

Based on Figure 1, destinations would be expected to exhibit a greater Airbnb presence during the consolidation stage, corresponding to the number of years elapsed since receiving the *Pueblo Mágico* designation.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative, correlational research design using secondary data obtained from the AirDNA platform (Airbnb, 2023a). AirDNA is widely used to analyze Airbnb markets because it compiles information from properties listed on the platform and provides comprehensive indicators regarding destination performance. Among the available data are the total number of accommodation listings by property type (entire homes, private rooms, and shared rooms), occupancy rates, average daily rates, average destination revenue, the most frequently offered amenities, and the highest-rated listings.

Data were collected between february and july 2023. Initially, the study included the 132 *Pueblos Mágicos* officially recognized at the beginning of 2023. Subsequently, the 45 destinations designated in June 2023 were incorporated, resulting in a total sample of 177 *Pueblos Mágicos* distributed across 31 states of Mexico.

As a first step, destinations with the largest Airbnb accommodation supply were identified, together with those presenting inconsistencies that could potentially bias the statistical analysis. Table 1 presents the ten *Pueblos Mágicos* with the largest number of Airbnb listings. Particular attention was paid to destinations such as Tulum, Zihuatanejo, Cozumel, Sayulita, and Isla Mujeres, whose tourism dynamics differ substantially from those of most *Pueblos Mágicos* because they are well established sun and beach destinations with significant hotel infrastructure prior to receiving the designation. Given the extreme disparity between Tulum and the remaining destinations, it was excluded from subsequent analyses to achieve a distribution closer to normality.

Table 1. Ten *Pueblos Mágicos* with the Largest Airbnb Accommodation Supply

Pueblo Mágico	Number of Listings
Tulum	9,260
Zihuatanejo	2,626
San Cristóbal de las Casas	1,859
Cozumel	1,834
Valle de Bravo	1,786
Mazamitla	1,449
Sayulita	1,277
Isla Mujeres	1,121
Tepoztlán	1,092
Mazunte	856

Source: Author's elaboration based on Airbnb (2023a).

Among the data retrieved from the platform, destinations were identified where *Pueblos Mágicos* do not appear individually but are grouped with the entire state to which they belong. The state of Hidalgo falls into this category; it lists 2,088 available spaces, but this figure includes both the *Pueblos Mágicos* (nine designated towns) and other localities, most notably the capital, Pachuca, which is not a *Pueblo Mágico*. A similar situation occurs in San Luis Potosí, where only Xilitla is reported individually, while the remaining destinations are grouped together.

Another methodological consideration concerns Teotihuacán, whose *Pueblo Mágico* designation encompasses two municipalities: San Juan Teotihuacán and San Martín de las Pirámides. Although they constitute a single designation, accommodation data from both municipalities were incorporated into the analysis.

Finally, several *Pueblos Mágicos* represent only a portion of larger municipalities. In these cases, AirDNA reports accommodation statistics for the entire municipality rather than for the designated locality itself. Examples include: Mexcaltitlán (Nayarit), Bernal (Querétaro), Creel (Chihuahua), Jalpa de Cánovas (Guanajuato), Ajijic (Jalisco), Santa Rosalía (Baja California Sur).

To evaluate the relationship between destination maturity and Airbnb development, a correlation analysis was conducted between two variables; the number of years elapsed since the *Pueblo Mágico* designation; and the number of Airbnb listings. Subsequently, hypothesis testing was performed to determine whether statistically significant differences existed among the identified development stages.

Results

After taking the aforementioned conditions into account, a list of 45,618 spaces offered within the country's *Pueblos Mágicos* was obtained. It is evident that the state of Quintana Roo offers a higher number of spaces than the other states analyzed, while some states show no significant offering (see Figure 2).

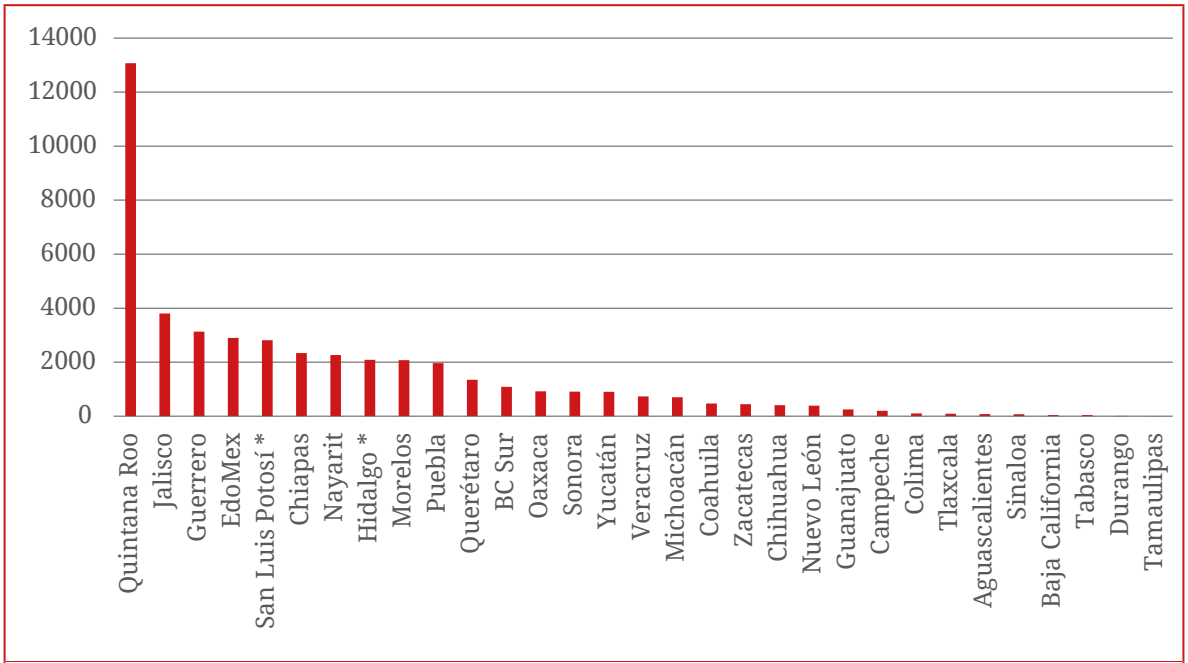


Figure 2. Airbnb Listings in Mexico's *Pueblos Mágicos* by State

Source: Author's elaboration based on Airbnb (2023a).

Analysis of the accommodation types revealed that; 71.8% corresponded to entire properties; 27.4% were private rooms; and only 0.8% were shared rooms. This distribution is illustrated in Figure 3.

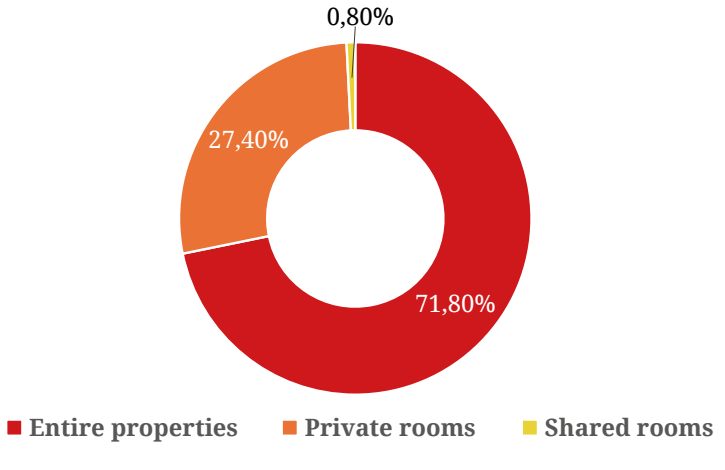


Figure 3. Distribution of Airbnb Accommodation Types

Source: Author's elaboration based on Airbnb (2023a).

Across all 177 *Pueblos Mágicos*, the average number of Airbnb listings was 257 properties. However, substantial outliers were identified, particularly Tulum: 9,260 listings and Zihuatanejo: 2,626 listings. Because Tulum represented an extreme statistical outlier, it was excluded from subsequent analyses.

Zihuatanejo, although the second-largest market, was retained because its inclusion did not substantially affect the normal distribution of the remaining data. Next, destinations were grouped chronologically according to the year they received the *Pueblo Mágico* designation, and the average number of Airbnb listings was calculated for each cohort (see Table 2).

Table 2. Number of *Pueblos Mágicos* Designated by Year

Year	Number of Designations
2001	2
2002	9
2003	2
2004	2
2005	6
2006	8
2007	5
2008	0
2009	0
2010	4
2011	10
2012	34
2013	0

Table 2 continues on next page

Number of *Pueblos Mágicos* Designated by Year (Cont.)

Year	Number of Designations
2014	0
2015	27
2016	0
2017	0
2018	9
2019	0
2020	8
2021	1
2022	0
2023	49

Source: Author's elaboration based on SECTUR (2021).

The correlation coefficient was calculated for these two variables; this metric assesses the relationship between two variables and is measured on a scale of 0 to 1, where a value closer to 1 indicates a stronger correlation, and the sign (+ or -) determines the direction of that correlation. When considering all *Pueblos Mágicos*, the correlation coefficient was -0.46, indicating a moderate, negative correlation (see Figure 4) between the number of listings offered and the year the designation was received.

Nevertheless, an inverse relationship between the variables is evident: when a *Pueblo Mágico* receives the designation, they have a limited number of Airbnb listings available, but as time passes and they retain the designation, the number of listings increases.

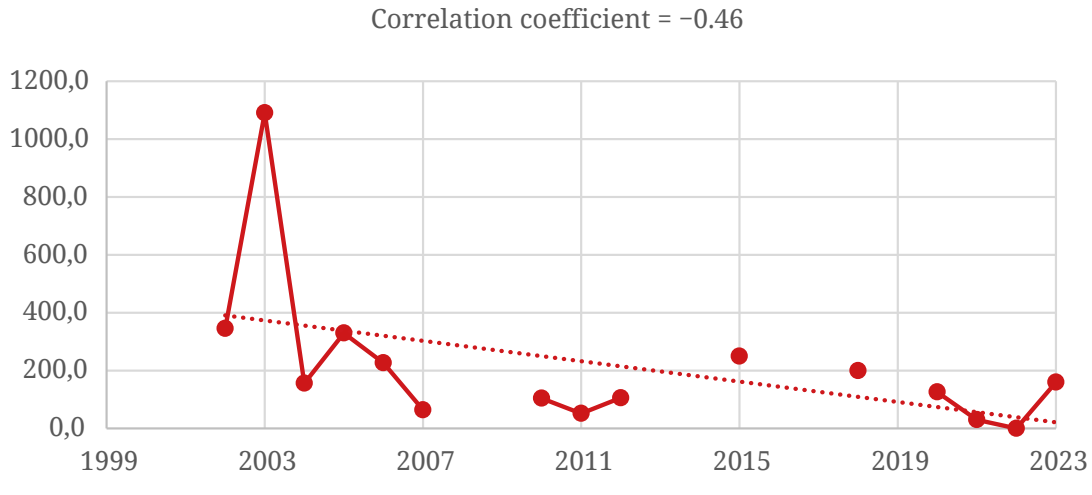


Figure 4. Average Airbnb Supply by Year of *Pueblo Mágico* Designation

Following the chronological sequence of the *Pueblos Mágicos* designations, three distinct periods can be identified. The first stage (2001–2007) corresponds to the initial implementation of the program, during which designation criteria were applied rigorously. During this period, 34 destinations received the *Pueblo Mágico* designation. The second stage (2010–2015) included 76 designations and was characterized by the incorporation of destinations that already exhibited substantial tourism activity before joining the program. These destinations include Sayulita, Isla Mujeres, Teotihuacán, Xilitla, Cholula, Mazunte, Valle de Bravo, and Tulum, all of which had already established themselves as important tourism destinations within their respective states. The third stage (2018–2023) comprised 67 new designations. Unlike the previous stages, many of these destinations possessed only limited tourism infrastructure at the time of designation. This period also coincided with a reduction in federal funding allocated to tourism infrastructure and destination development.

When destinations designated during the first stage were analyzed, the trend is more pronounced with the coefficient standing at -0.55 (still within the range of a moderate correlation). Both the first and third stages exhibited negative correlations, indicating that the number of Airbnb listings increased as more time elapsed after designation. Furthermore, destinations designated during the first stage presented substantially higher average Airbnb supply than those designated during the third stage. These findings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation Coefficients and Average Airbnb Listings by Designation Stage

Designation Stage	Designation Period	Correlation	Average Airbnb Listings
First Stage	2001–2007	−0.55	360
Second Stage	2010–2015	0.88	430
Third Stage	2018–2023	−0.46	217

Source: Author's elaboration based on Airbnb (2023a).

The results presented in Table 3 confirm that destinations designated during the first stage currently offer a substantially larger number of Airbnb accommodations than those designated during the third stage. When interpreted through Butler's Tourism Destination Life Cycle Model, most first-stage destinations appear to be in the consolidation stage, whereas those designated more recently remain primarily in the involvement and development stages.

The stronger correlation observed during the first stage ($r = -0.55$) reinforces the notion that Airbnb accommodation supply tends to increase progressively as destinations mature (see Figure 5). From the perspective of this study, these findings suggest that the number of years elapsed since a destination received the *Pueblo Mágico* designation is moderately associated with the expansion of Airbnb accommodation.

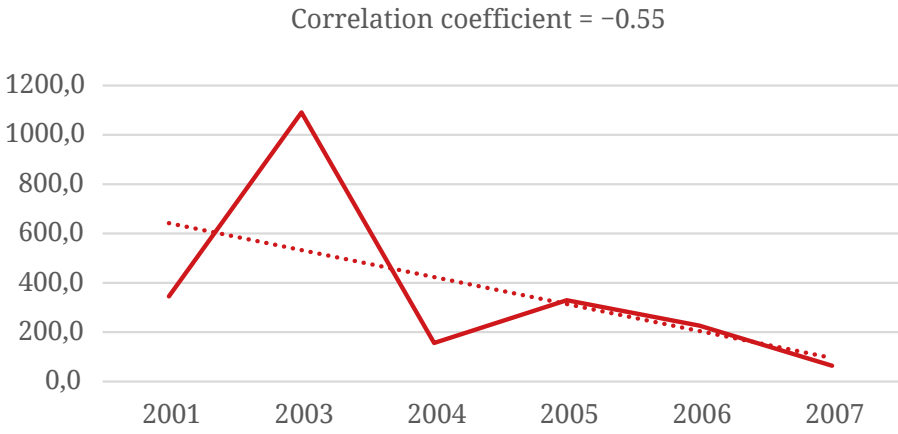


Figure 5. First Stage Correlation (2001–2007)

During the second stage, however, the relationship between designation year and Airbnb supply changed substantially. Because many destinations included in this period already possessed considerable tourism infrastructure before joining the *Pueblo Mágico* program, the relationship became positive rather than negative. As illustrated in Figure 6, the correlation coefficient reached 0.88, indicating a strong positive relationship.

This finding suggests that, for destinations that already had well developed accommodation sectors before receiving the designation, the *Pueblo Mágico* program itself did not significantly stimulate additional Airbnb growth.

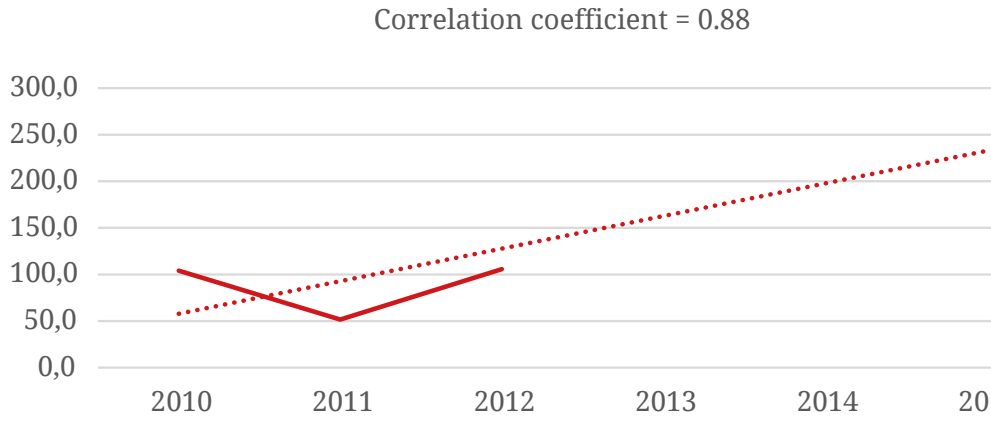


Figure 6. Correlation Between Designation Year and Airbnb Listings: Second Stage (2010–2015)

In contrast, the third stage once again exhibited a moderate negative correlation (r = −0.46) (see Figure 7). These destinations generally lacked even basic tourism infrastructure at the time they were designated as *Pueblos Mágicos*. Although

recently designated destinations consistently displayed fewer Airbnb listings than older destinations, the relationship was less pronounced than that observed during the first stage.

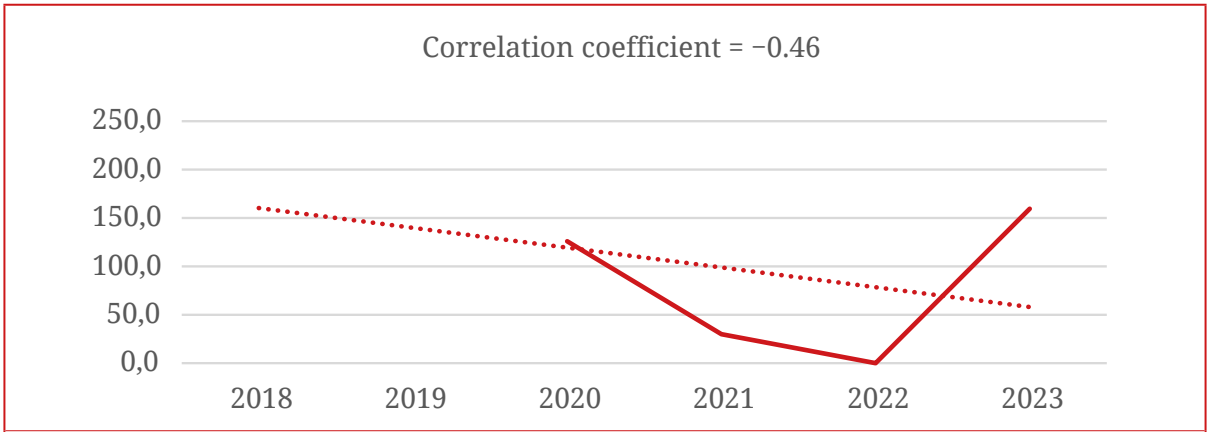


Figure 7. Correlation Between Designation Year and Airbnb Listings: Third Stage (2018–2023)

Subsequently, a hypothesis test was conducted to determine whether there is a difference between stages 1 and 3, which illustrate the relationship between the variables year of appointment and listings offered based on the assumption that, on average, PMs appointed during stage 1 offer more Airbnb listings than those appointed during stage 3.

$$\mu 1 = 360$$
$$\mu 3 = 217$$

Working hypotheses were established based on the assumption that there is a greater number of spaces in the first statistically significant stage:

$$H_0: \mu_1 \geq \mu_3$$
$$H_1: \mu_1 < \mu_3$$

The obtained p-value was 0.015, a statistically significant figure providing strong evidence, as hypothesized, that a greater number of spaces were offered in stage 1 than in stage 3.

AirDNA Performance Indicators

Occupancy rate is widely recognized as an indicator of market performance because it reflects consumer preference for a destination or accommodation establishment (Millán-García & Gómez-Díaz, 2018). At the national level, Mexico's hotel occupancy rate averages 59.4%, by comparison, the average Airbnb occupancy rate across

all *Pueblos Mágicos* is only 26.9%. Only four destinations exceeded the national hotel occupancy average (see Table 4).

Table 4. Top Ten *Pueblos Mágicos* by Airbnb Occupancy Rate

Pueblo Mágico	Occupancy Rate (%)
Sayulita	71
Mazunte	69
Todos Santos	65
Cozumel	64
Sisal	59
Loreto	57
San Pedro Tlaquepaque	55
Valladolid	53
Bacalar	52
Ajijic	47

Source: Author's elaboration based on Airbnb (2023a).

Another widely used indicator of financial performance is Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR) (Millán-García & Gómez-Díaz, 2018; SECTUR, 2015). Although no official national RevPAR statistics are available for all tourism accommodations in Mexico, AirDNA provides this information for Airbnb listings. Across all *Pueblos Mágicos*, the average RevPAR reached US$98.40 per day. However, the highest-performing destinations recorded average daily revenues exceeding US$200, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Top Ten *Pueblos Mágicos* by Average Daily Revenue (RevPAR)

Pueblo Mágico	State	Average Daily Revenue (US$)
General Cepeda	Coahuila	488
Nombre de Dios	Durango	261
San Ignacio	Sinaloa	233
Valle de Bravo	State of Mexico	230
Malinalco	State of Mexico	227
Espita	Yucatán	222
Santiago	Nuevo León	206
Todos Santos	Baja California Sur	201
Cosalá	Sinaloa	197
Ixtapan de la Sal	State of Mexico	187

Source: Author's elaboration based on Airbnb (2023a).

No statistically significant relationship was identified between RevPAR, the year of designation as a *Pueblo Mágico*, or the different development stages. Likewise, no significant relationship was found between average daily revenue, years since designation, and tourist's evaluations of accommodation quality.

Discussion

According to Adamiak (2020), the Tourism Destination Life Cycle Model (TDLCM) and Airbnb become particularly relevant during the exploration and involvement stages of destination development, serving as a precursor to the arrival of chain hotels and larger accommodation investments. The findings of the present study indicate that obtaining the *Pueblo Mágico* designation enhances a destination's tourism visibility and significantly influences the expansion of accommodation supply on Airbnb. In the case of Mexico's *Pueblos Mágicos*, local residents appear to respond to the designation by adapting their own properties for tourist accommodation, thereby increasing the supply of lodging available through the platform.

Adamiak (2020) also argues that, during the consolidation stage, destination growth is generally accompanied by an expansion of hotel infrastructure. This phenomenon is less evident in most *Pueblos Mágicos* because they primarily cater to domestic tourism markets and often lack the demand required to attract large-scale hotel investments. Exceptions include established beach and sun destinations that already possessed consolidated tourism infrastructure prior to receiving the *Pueblo Mágico* designation.

This distinction represents one of the principal differences between the traditional destination development process characterized by large capital investments and collaborative accommodation platforms, which enable destinations to increase lodging capacity through existing residential properties. Consequently, Airbnb has the potential to influence destination evolution, particularly during the early stages of the tourism life cycle.

Furthermore, collaborative accommodation should not be viewed as a substitute for traditional lodging infrastructure. Rather, it complements and strengthens existing accommodation capacity, especially in destinations that lack a diversified tourism supply. For many small destinations, Airbnb may represent the only accommodation alternative capable of meeting existing demand. This is particularly true for destinations serving primarily local and regional markets and accessed predominantly by road transportation.

From this perspective, the collaborative and platform economy facilitates commercial exchange while enabling residents to generate value from previously underutilized assets. These findings are consistent with those reported by Adamiak (2020).

In contrast, only one circumstance was identified in which Airbnb exhibited a negative relationship with traditional accommodation. Specifically, previous research has shown that Airbnb may reduce occupancy rates among four-star hotels, a finding also reported by Gómez Aguirre et al. (2021).

Although this study identified three distinct stages in the evolution of the *Pueblos Mágicos* program and observed statistically significant relationships between years since designation and Airbnb accommodation supply during the first and third stages, these findings alone are insufficient to establish Airbnb as a definitive indicator of the Tourism Destination Life Cycle. Nevertheless, the evidence presented here strongly suggests that Airbnb accommodation supply deserves consideration as a complementary variable within destination life cycle analyses.

Previous studies have primarily examined the spatial distribution of Airbnb listings relative to major tourist attractions, historic centers, or tourism corridors (Adamiak, 2020, 2022; Adamiak et al., 2019; Braga de Souza & Viana Leonelli, 2021; Singh & Azevedo, 2021; Heo & Blengini, 2019; Santucci de Oliveira et al., 2019; Sousa Lobo, 2020). Such analyses were not feasible for many *Pueblos Mágicos* because numerous destinations possess only a limited number of Airbnb listings.

Conclusions

The findings of this study reveal a significant relationship between the variables analyzed, suggesting that accommodation supply provided through digital platforms, specifically Airbnb, may serve as a complementary indicator for examining the Tourism Destination Life Cycle, particularly in destinations oriented toward domestic or regional tourism markets.

From the perspective of tourism development, three distinct stages were identified. These stages correspond not only to different periods during which destinations received the *Pueblo Mágico* designation but also to changes in the program's operational rules over time. During both the first and third stages, destinations generally experienced tourism activity before designation but lacked sufficient accommodation infrastructure. Consequently, collaborative accommodation platforms represented an effective mechanism for reducing the imbalance between tourism demand and lodging supply. In contrast, destinations designated during the second stage already possessed consolidated tourism infrastructure and relatively mature visitor flows prior to entering the program.

The analysis also demonstrates a substantial increase in Airbnb accommodation over time. This trend may reflect both increased tourism demand resulting from the visibility associated with the *Pueblo Mágico* designation and the growing acceptance of collaborative accommodation platforms among travelers.

These findings support an association between Airbnb accommodation supply and the Tourism Destination Life Cycle. Unlike major tourism destinations that attract large hotel chains and significant private investment, most *Pueblos Mágicos* do not constitute sufficiently attractive markets for traditional hotel development. This situation is consistent with the original objectives of the program, which seeks primarily to promote local and regional tourism.

Although the *Pueblos Mágicos* program has now operated for more than two decades, continuous monitoring of its evolution remains necessary. Such monitoring should extend beyond accommodation supply to include visitor profiles and changing consumption patterns associated with the emergence of new tourism business models. Airbnb has transformed the way tourism destinations develop and may accelerate certain stages of the destination life cycle. Nevertheless, many questions remain regarding its broader economic, social, and territorial impacts.

Among the principal findings of this research is the demonstration that Airbnb accommodation supply increases as more years elapse following designation as a *Pueblo Mágico*. This opens several lines for future research, including analyses of the relationship between Airbnb growth and traditional hotel supply, the types of employment generated by collaborative platforms, and their broader impacts on destination development.

One important limitation of this study is the absence of detailed information regarding visitor numbers and visitor profiles for individual *Pueblos Mágicos*. Future research should determine whether Airbnb influences these variables, as they directly affect the types of tourism products and services that destinations develop. Longitudinal analyses examining the evolution of collaborative accommodation across multiple regions are also needed.

Finally, no comprehensive, standardized database currently exists containing visitor statistics for all *Pueblos Mágicos*, despite such information being essential for evaluating program performance. The absence of consistent tourism demand data considerably limits future analyses of destination evolution.

Article funding information

This work received no funding from any organization, presents no conflicts of interest.

Ethical Implications

This work adhered to the institutional codes of ethics of the authors affiliated institutions.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in the writing and publication of this article.

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Declaration of the Use of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence was utilized solely for the partial refinement of the translation.

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