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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

San Salvador, one of the southernmost islands in The Bahamas, is best known for its culture and heritage sites and touted as one of the first landing spots for Christopher Columbus in 1492 (Simms, 2017). Visitors to this island will undoubtedly fall in love with the endless, almost deserted beaches, the rustic charm and pleasant customer service of the residents and are likely to return for the cuisine. San Salvador's culture and heritage sites, rich Lucayan history and sparse population (just over 1,000 people call this island home) makes it ideal for a community-based tourism (CBT) development.

CBT is an approach that strives for community participation in the tourism industry (Caribbean Tourism Organization, 2008). With the backdrop of the rich history and the island's almost exclusive nature, a comprehensive CBT initiative is being proposed for San Salvador. The initiative proposes the development of an almost all-inclusive community-driven tourism project that encapsulates the ambience of San Salvador while showcasing the uniqueness of the island through local displays of culture, product and services. Hence, there is an opportunity for the visitors to the island to participate and appreciate these community-driven activities, while the community benefit from the alternative income that these visitors bring. In short, these initiatives will support the government's overarching mandate, which is one of diversity of the tourism economy in San Salvador.

Thus, the major objectives of this proposed study were to:

- a. Create a tangible community-based environment outside of that which is presently being offered to tourists visiting San Salvador;
- b. Provide opportunities for local entrepreneurs and those involved in the local cottage industries to participate in the diverse economy derived from the development of this community-based initiative; and
- c. Create a model of a community-based initiative that can be transported to other small island destinations throughout the islands of The Bahamas.

A qualitative approach was adopted in this study. Several interviews were conducted with key stakeholders on the island. The main thrust of the study was to determine, in the first instance, whether such a development would work in San Salvador and, in the second instance, whether San Salvadorians would likely participate in this initiative. Questions about the kinds of projects to be rolled out in the first instance were also explored.

The results of the interviews showed that high on the list of suggestions and priorities for San Salvadorians was the development of proper infrastructure to accommodate this concept. Other priorities were the provision of ancillary services such as additional entertainment, eateries, retail spaces, tours and other cultural activities for guests while in the village. A SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunities and threat) analysis along with a competitive profile matrix (CPM) were also completed. As expected, the CPM revealed that there were no other competitors on the island and that adding this particular initiative to the already existing tourist attractions strengthened the overall tourism product of San Salvador.

The implications of creating a community-based tourism product in one of the southernmost islands of The Bahamas are far-reaching and can only prove in the end to boost overall numbers of visitors to this part of the country. More importantly however, creating entrepreneurial opportunities for Bahamians would assuredly make them less dependent on government interventions to make ends meet. Concomitantly, the government can redirect resources elsewhere or on other islands.

Keywords: *Community-based tourism development, Competitive Profile Matrix, San Salvador, Tourism economy*

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Shadrica Johnson is presently a senior studying Tourism Management at The University of The Bahamas. She is currently also a Senior Clerk at the Ministry of Education, Directors Office. While working at the Ministry of Education she has had the opportunity to be involved in two Primary Schools (E.P. Roberts Primary and Cleveland Eneas Primary) where she was able to assist teachers, administrators and parents within the community of both schools. She was rewarded as Team Player of the Year for her excellent team work and organization skills. She obtained her Associate of Arts Degree at The Bahamas Baptist Community College in 2012. She is pursuing her studies at The University of The Bahamas currently to fulfil her passion to travel, understanding different languages and meeting new people all over the world.

Shadrica is passionate about her country and her goal is to one day become an Executive in Cruise and Maritime Development. The research at San Salvador had led her to do even more studies on Community Based Tourism and introduce this type of niche tourism to other family islands in The Bahamas. In her spare time she enjoys writing, reading, traveling and learning new languages.