

The Growth of Nature Tourism in Brazil

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ABSTRACT– Nature tourism has gained prominence since the 1970s, when it was realized that unrestrained economic growth caused numerous negative consequences to the environment, since growth was prized over conservation. From then on, environmental issues were the focus of many debates, which defended its preservation, conservation and recovery. In Brazil, nature tourism began in the 1980s, and since then it has grown in all regions of the country where there are beautiful natural landscapes, the traditional aspects of culture are striking, being possible to find agencies, hotels and inns that offer tourism and ecotourism packages. This tourism sector has grown significantly throughout the world. During the pandemic period, this growth was even greater, due to people's need to feel close to nature, in open environments, in the face of a home office and home school scenario, social distancing and other restrictions. In this way, through a bibliographic research, it was concluded that nature tourism had a sharp growth, presenting itself, even, as a new tendency in the tourism sector that tends to grow gradually. With this, Brazil, due to its countless natural beauties, biodiversity and ecosystems, should invest in nature tourism, seeking to harmonize this activity with sustainability.

Keywords: Nature Tourism; ecotourism; Pandemic.

I. INTRODUCTION

The world's concern for the conservation of the environment dates back to the relatively recent times. From the Industrial Revolution, in the 18th century, the way of production, consumption and social relations changed significantly. Companies are increasingly seeking economic growth, profit and competitive advantage. In this scenario, the environment was significantly harmed, natural resources suffered degradation and devastation, affecting life on the planet, and causing social inequalities.

From the 1970s on, the concern with environmental issues has been observed all over the world, due to the crisis caused by the scarcity of natural resources resulting from the unbridled, unending, and illogical use of these resources, which, in turn, is caused by the uncontrolled pace of global growth.

From this movement, nature tourism began to gain prominence, through debates, studies and research on the need to preserve the environment, through sustainable techniques. Linked to this, there is a growing search by travelers for destinations that contemplate natural landscapes, open air environments, biodiversity, fauna and flora. This is because the routine of individuals nowadays is mostly marked by the lack of time and the absence of places with natural environments in metropolises.

In recent years, the activity has been growing and consolidating. This can be attributed to society's need to connect with nature, which makes it look for tourist destinations that have natural landscapes, biodiversity, diverse ecosystems. Currently, society is almost always lacking contact with nature in its daily life, and is deprived of the opportunities for personal experiences and spiritual growth that come from this connection.

This growth was even more accentuated during the Coronavirus pandemic period and even after the flexibilizations made by the governments. In the first year of the pandemic, when the scenario was extremely critical all over the world, it was identified that individuals demanded trips in regions close to tourists' residence, that can be made with their own vehicle, often seeking open air environments, mostly natural and/or rural.

As a result, trips with more authentic and meaningful experiences that promote self-care and self-knowledge present themselves prominently in the contemporary scenario, as well as longer stays provided by the consolidation of remote work, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even after the flexibilizations measures adopted by countries around the world, nature tourism continues to grow significantly.

In this sense, this article seeks to analyze the growth of nature tourism in Brazil, as well as the way in which the Coronavirus pandemic has further encouraged this tourism, and the reasons for this fact. It is also intended to verify the relevance of nature tourism being in tune with sustainability, so that it can be characterized as a true ecotourism, adopting principles and guidelines for the development of the sector, considering the socio-environmental management of natural resources, the preservation of ecosystems and the reduction of negative impacts.

Thus, from a bibliographic research, it was possible to analyze the origins of nature tourism, the growth of this sector in Brazil and in the world, the reasons for this growth, and Brazil's posture in this scenario.

II. THEORETICAL REFERENCE

Since the Industrial Revolution, which took place in the 18th century, a significant change in the world economy scenario is observed, which became based on mass production and consumption, continuous and rapid advances in technology and broad market competitiveness. Since then, the aim was to generate wealth at the expense of the environment.

The utilitarian instrumental rationality based on the ethics of immediate benefits ruled for a considerable time – if it is possible to affirm its disappearance – the economy and the accumulation process, with the purpose to provide economic growth. In this process, natural resources suffered deterioration and devastation, compromising life on the planet, and causing social inequalities and a misunderstanding of environmental conservation translated as isolated niches. This situation provoked a crisis and a counter-reaction, driving a new social posture different from the prevailing scientific rationality (Bruhns, 2009).

At that time, there was no talk of nature tourism, since there was no concern with environmental preservation, conservation of natural beauties and biodiversity, since the concern was with the generation of wealth and economic growth, even if this meant deforesting and destroying natural spaces.

In this way, based on the idea of progress, prior to the environmental crisis unleashed in the 1950s and 1960s, the contamination of lakes and rivers was embedded as a necessary cost for economic growth, guarantee of employment and quality of life, defended by the large companies. (Bruhns, 2009).

However, the 1970s and 1980s changed this scenario, given that several segments of the economy were partially or fully contested, requiring the search for alternatives. Terms used in literature and today's society were coined at that time, such as the alternative agriculture movement, alternative tourism, and others. These were terms used in the media, in academic circles, in public policy documents, in the daily lives of certain groups of private entrepreneurs and in the discourse and practice of organized civil society (Dale, 2005).

In this scenario, one can notice that the concern with environmental issues arose due to the crisis caused by the scarcity of natural resources, resulting from the uncontrolled, incessant and irrational use of these, which, in turn, is motivated by the unbridled and frenetic pace of global growth. Biodiversity becomes the target of interests and interventions, characterizing itself as a bargaining chip, but its importance and meanings are ignored, often for the sake of a supposed technological and scientific progress and development of nations (Poles & Rabinovici, 2010).

Until that time, pollution was associated with progress, an idea that became completely inconceivable after the movement that took place between the 1970s and 1980s, when the urgency for sustainable economic development, as well as the survival of the planet, was no longer contested (Bruhns, 2009).

From this movement, in the tourism sector, nature tourism started to gain prominence, due to the debates about the need to conserve the environment, through sustainable techniques. Over the years, the activity has been developing and gaining strength amidst the discussion of a more responsible tourism model (Brasil, 2010). In this way, the natural landscapes were raised to a level that until then non-existent, recognizing the need for their protection, conservation, preservation, deserving to be visited and appreciated.

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This is because natural spaces have come to be seen as suitable environments for the execution of ecotourism and related activities, which are linked to travel as a necessary displacement for its practice and, therefore, to allow these activities, it is necessary the environment be conserved (Bruhns, 2009).

According to Zysman Neiman (2005), nature tourism began in Brazil in the 1980s and, since then, there is a growth in this segment in all regions of the country where there are beautiful natural landscapes, and where the traditional aspects of the culture are remarkable, being possible to find in these locations agencies, hotels and inns that offer tourist and ecotourism packages.

Tourism as a contemporary phenomenon is expressed as a movement, as a translation of dreams and imaginaries, but also as a potential way to "religare" with nature itself in the face of the recognition of human diversity and the real possibility of "meeting" in difference, through otherness (Irving, 2016). This way, today, natural landscapes have gained prominence in the international scale of the interests of the tourist sector, an economic activity that organizes, regulates, selects, fragments and gives a new dynamic to the use of the territory (Paes, 2016).

For Bruhns (2009), this search by subjects for natural spaces in tourist destinations triggers relevant movements, which can provoke, for example, the demand for these types of places in urban space, through the search for parks, woods and similar, encouraging public policies, projects and programs.

Tourism consumer behavior has been changing and, with it, new travel motivations and expectations that need to be met are emerging. In a globalized world, in which differentiation becomes more important every day, tourists increasingly demand tourist routes that adapt to their needs, their personal situation, their wishes and preferences (Brazil, 2010). In view of this, it is possible to verify that nature tourism has its growth even more accentuated in a scenario where people live in large cities, which often do not have natural beauties or spaces in which it becomes possible to connect with nature. .

This is because, from the second half of the 20th century on, the city began to be seen by planners and urban planners as a whole formed by houses, factories, streets, squares, parks, all endowed with a symbolic charge, as a diverse living space. With the emergence of industrial capitalism, which took place in the 18th century, the relationship between leisure and work became more evident and dichotomous, given the priority given to long workdays, marked by breaks that respected the need for production and not a natural rhythm of work and production (Raimundo & Sarti, 2019).

In the same sense, says Neiman (2005), for whom contemporary society, as it is organized, is almost always lacking in contact with nature, being deprived, therefore, of the opportunities for personal experiences and spiritual growth resulting from this connection. For the author, this contact is necessary, since it allows experiencing emotions, feelings and experiences that were forgotten in the process of development of our society.

Therefore, the growing search for natural spaces as tourist destinations can be attributed to the feeling of abstinence generated in cities, places in which cement prevails along with all the gaps resulting from the indiscriminate growth in urban centers, causing numerous problems that generate stress in individuals, such as congestion, noise, air pollution, scarce supply infrastructure, among others. Thus, the desire for adventure and the search for a certain lifestyle are also present in this process (Bruhns, 2009).

Given this, many individuals live in places where natural spaces are scarce or even non-existent, presenting only a completely urbanized structure, such as buildings, companies, shops, streets, which makes them, when choosing their travel destinations, opt for environments where nature is present. Thus, the growth of nature tourism can be associated with the growing demand for natural spaces by urban populations who enjoy these spaces less and less in their day-to-day activities (Bruhns, 2009).

In Brazil, the Ministry of Tourism recognizes these new trends in the tourism sector as opportunities to value the country's diversity and particularities, which are conducive to nature tourism. For the segmentation of tourism to be effective, it is essential to deeply know the characteristics of the destination: the offer (attractions, infrastructure, services and tourism products) and the demand (the specificities of the tourist group that already visit or will visit in the future). (Brazil, 2010).

According to Rodrigues (2018), nature tourism is developed based on the principles of sustainability and the enhancement of nature, which shows significant growth worldwide and plays a relevant role in the economic, cultural and social development of destinations.

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Rich in biomes such as the Amazon, Pantanal, Cerrado, Atlantic Forest and an extensive coastal strip, as well as great biodiversity and diverse ecosystems, Brazil has great potential for nature tourism (Brasil, 2021). Figure 1 demonstrates the diversity of existing biomes in the various regions of the country.

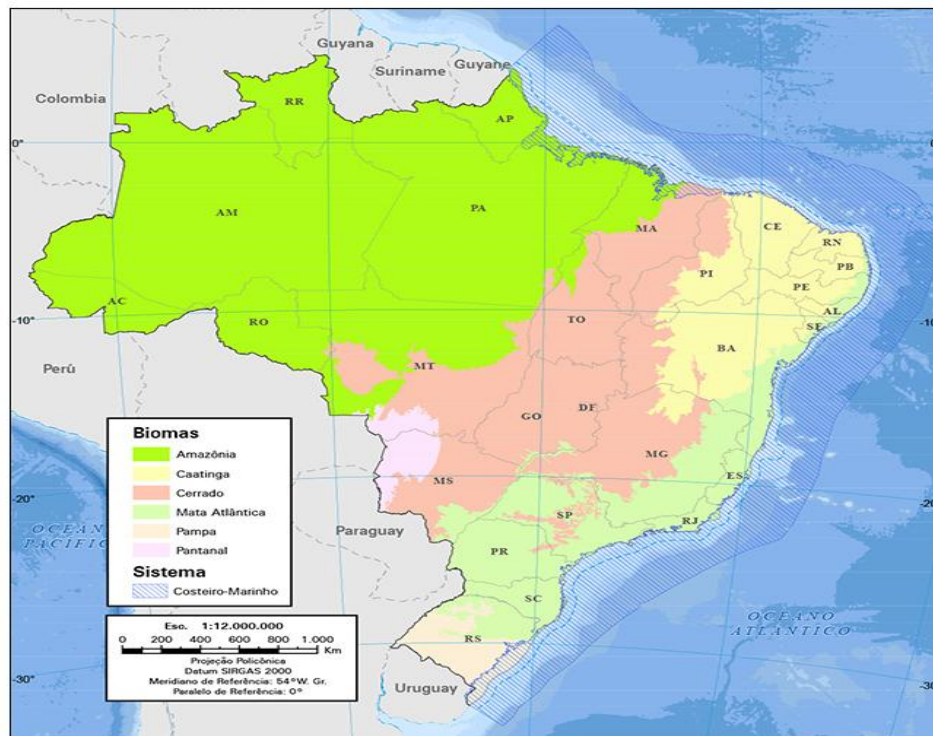


Figure 1 – Brazilian biomes distributed by region

Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, 2019

In addition, Brazil has the greatest biodiversity on the planet, distributed over several ecosystems with different characteristics, of which the Amazon Forest stands out, the largest in the world, occupying practically 40% of the national territory. In addition, in each of the Brazilian regions, there are populations that, through their customs and traditions, preserve very unique ways of life and that can serve as a model for the search for a harmonious coexistence with natural resources (Neiman, 2005).

In a survey carried out by the Ministry of Tourism, published in 2010, it was found that the main reason for choosing a tourist destination was 33.9% natural beauty, 21.2% beaches, 13.2% local culture and 1% observation of fauna and flora. Still, the most striking aspect of the tourist destination was 33.6% natural beauty, 17.5% beach, 14.5% local culture and people, 14.4% local profile, 5.8% gastronomy (Brazil, 2010) .

Nature tourism was responsible for motivating 18.6% of international tourists to travel in 2019, registering the highest rate of the last five years. In the same year, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics pointed out that around 1.5 million Brazilian tourists traveled within the country motivated by adventure and nature, which represents 26% of trips carried out for leisure. Among the most popular destinations currently for Nature Tourism are: Foz do Iguaçu (PR), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), São Paulo (SP), Angra dos Reis (RJ) and Florianópolis (SC) (Brazil, 2022) .

In this sense, nature tourism plays an important role in the country, due to its natural beauty, exuberant landscapes, biodiversity, and the diversity of ecosystems and natural areas.

There are countless tourist destinations in Brazil where it is possible to observe natural landscapes, which have been the target of numerous tourists, both national and foreign. Destinations like Chapada dos Veadeiros - Goiás, Foz do Iguaçu - Paraná, Bonito - Mato Grosso do Sul, are examples of nature tourism sites, due to their numerous landscapes of exceptional and unique beauty, biodiversity, outdoor areas.

According to information from the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio), the Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park, created in 1961, protects an area of approximately 240,611ha and is inserted in the Cerrado

biome. It was declared a Natural World Heritage Site in 2001 by the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

The Falls are located in the Iguaçu National Park, which is a Federal Conservation Unit (UC) that aims to preserve one of the most significant remnants of the Atlantic Forest in South America. According to ICMBio, the Iguaçu National Park is the object of preservation of natural ecosystems of great ecological significance and natural scenic beauty, contributing to scientific research and the development of environmental education and interpretation activities, recreation in contact with nature and ecological tourism. Public visitation subject to specific restrictions is authorized.

According to information provided on the website of the Municipal Secretariat of Tourism, Industry and Commerce of the city of Bonito, this place is inserted in the Serra da Bodoquena National Park, and belongs to the cerrado biome, with its limestone massifs, being these rocks that provide the waters with an unmatched transparency, making the rivers, true sanctuaries of underwater life, with a wealth of plant and fish species. The site also informs that tourism occurs in a harmonious way with environmental conservation.

From the information and figures shown, it is possible to observe some examples of nature tourism in Brazil, a country composed of a wealth of biomes, ecosystems, biodiversity and scenic natural landscapes.

However, the year 2020 was marked by the coronavirus. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization - WHO elevated the contamination status to a pandemic. In macroeconomic terms, Brazil was heavily impacted by the pandemic situation, which was marked by political differences. The exchange rate analysis highlights the challenge, with an accumulated increase in 2020 of 30.69%. The exchange rate flow, according to data from the Central Bank, closed with a negative result of US\$ 24.52 billion. The appreciation of the foreign currency, and the consequent devaluation of the real, has a direct impact on the travel sector, making the Brazilian market more attractive to foreigners, and valuing the domestic market. On the other hand, it makes traveling abroad more expensive and less accessible to Brazilians (Braztoa, 2021).

The health, social and economic emergency caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has practically stopped the tourism sector, especially the international one. Borders were closed and movement between countries was prohibited. Thus, the year 2020 regressed tourism to the levels of 30 years ago (Braztoa, 2021).

As a result of this scenario, some travel trends were identified in several countries, noting that the first trips were demanded by regions close to the tourists' residence, which could be carried out with their own vehicle, often looking for outdoor environments, in their mostly natural and/or rural. Trips with more authentic and meaningful experiences that promote self-care and self-knowledge are on the rise, as are longer stays provided by the consolidation of the home office (Braztoa, 2021).

In addition, in that same year, domestic tourism, although it registered a drop as a result of the pandemic, continued to occur. The beaches kept the preference and the most sold cities were: Maceió, Natal, Salvador, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. the most sold region follows the trends and history of recent years, with the Northeast being responsible for almost 70% of operators' sales (69.96%), followed by the South (13.64%) and the Southeast (12.4%) (Braztoa, 2021).

In Brazil, in 2020, the Baleia Franca Environmental Protection Area, in Santa Catarina (3.3 million visitors), the Tijuca National Park, in Rio de Janeiro (1.2 million) and the Parque Nacional do Iguaçu, in Paraná (658 thousand visits), led the visitation ranking in the pandemic year (Brazil, 2021). It is noted that they are destinations that provide a direct contact between the visitor and nature.

The Coronavirus pandemic has only strengthened and allowed a significant increase in a worldwide trend that has been observed for many years. Nature tourism is a trend all over the world, and Brazil must adapt to encourage these activities, taking advantage of its potential, since it has significant potential, due to the numerous natural landscapes of the country (Brazil, 2021).

According to information provided by the Ministry of Tourism, Brazilian natural destinations had a record number of visits in 2021, after a year of gradual resumption of tourist activities, resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic. This is the case of the Jalapão State Park, in Tocantins, which received more than 55,000 visitors, the highest number since 2014. Another place that presented good rates was Bonito, in Mato Grosso do Sul. The city registered more than 205,000 visitors and had, in 2021, its best year in terms of number of visits to attractions (Brazil, 2022).

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In view of this, experts in the field believe that the trend is for the increasing growth of outdoor tourist activities, which provide contact with nature, with domestic tourism gaining more and more interest (Braztoa, 2021). This is because, when choosing tourist destinations, individuals seek an escape from their routines, a disconnection from their domestic and professional responsibilities, as well as a rest. Nature tourism, in this sense, is able to provide numerous benefits, due to the tourist's connection with nature, with outdoor spaces.

With regard to this segment of tourism, it is observed that, even after the easing of the measures previously imposed due to the pandemic, with the opening of borders between countries, the need to present a negative RT-PCR exam for entry into certain destinations, the opening of trade, nature tourism is still growing.

According to data from Braztoa (2022), while international tourism is recovering after a long period of recession in the tourism sector due to the Coronavirus pandemic, domestic tourism continues to drive the sector's recovery in many destinations. According to experts, domestic tourism and travel close to home, as well as outdoor activities, nature-based products and rural tourism are among the key travel trends that will continue to shape tourism in 2022.

Although nature tourism is extremely important for the economy of a country as well as for the personal development of an individual, this model of tourism faces major challenges, related to the need to make the growth of the nature tourism sector compatible with sustainability. There is even a term given to sustainable tourism, Ecotourism.

Ecotourism encourages a new way of experiencing and enjoying natural landscapes, forests, coastal regions, among other ecosystems, leading to a discussion about a new form of use and enjoyment of spaces by tourists. Visits to protected areas begin to gain space and become popular, even if initially with a more scientific character, playing an important role in this process (Brazil, 2010).

Corroborating this concept, Zysman Neiman (2005) states that the definition of ecotourism provides that individuals can come into contact with natural areas, guaranteeing their economic and ecological sustainability, including their traditional populations who assume the responsibility of caring for and, through their culture, to integrate into these areas in order to preserve their balance.

For the author, ecotourism can be interpreted as an activity that acts as an instrument to bring human beings and the wild environment closer together, especially in Conservation Units, incorporating some assumptions, such as the questioning of values, learning through experience and the search for restructuring for the undesirable aspects of daily life.

Thus, although all forms of ecotourism are nature tourism, the opposite is not reciprocal. At the theoretical level, the concept of ecotourism, when compared to the concept of nature tourism, has a greater commitment to education and the preservation of the environment (Rodrigues, 2018). For this reason, it is necessary to make the two concepts compatible, so that nature tourism is carried out in a sustainable way, with certain limits and adequate supervision.

Thus, Dale (2005) argues that there is a great need for planning actions aimed at the sector, which then appropriate nature and cultures as motivations for the consumption desires of a population that is increasingly eager for travel or the feeling of travel. In other words, nature tourism has seen a significant growth worldwide, which requires active attitudes on the part of Public Authorities, in order to establish actions, policies, methodologies and practices that allow the nature tourism segment to be exercised in an appropriate manner, valuing sustainability, preservation and conservation of the environment.

In this scenario, to encourage this activity, the Ministry of Tourism launched a campaign that intends to reposition the country in the segment. The advertising pieces with the motto "Travel through Brazil. Giant by nature itself" focus on the traveler's experience and portray the importance of practicing conscious, sustainable and safe tourism at this time of resumption of tourism, after a pandemic period (Brazil, 2021).

Thus, the purpose is to encourage nature tourism in the national territory, highlighting its unique beauties, so that it is possible to make this activity compatible with the sustainability and preservation of these places.

Thus, according to the Ministry of Tourism, public tourism policies in Brazil are guided by the principles of sustainability, based on the Brazilian Constitution, which reserves the right to the environment for all, imposing on the public power and the community the duty to defend it and preserve it for future generations. Public authorities are also responsible for establishing legal instruments for the protection and conservation of natural resources and their rational use (Brazil, 2010).

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In this sense, the aim is to incorporate sustainability into nature tourism activities, with the aim of protecting natural landscapes, ecosystems, biomes and existing biodiversity in each destination.

It is therefore necessary to adopt strategies and actions to minimize possible negative impacts of tourist visitation through the use of a sustainable management model of the activity, through activities planned, organized and managed in a systemic way, which are able to provide the conservation, recovery, preservation and management of the area in question, in line with other activities in the territory (Brazil, 2010).

The Ministry of Tourism, considering this scenario, has been employing efforts and measures in the concession of national parks and in the implementation of RedeTrilhas, joint initiatives with the Ministry of the Environment, which will be able to guarantee adequate infrastructure for tourist visitation, in a sustainable way. , since the investments and actions resulting from these measures will improve the conservation of units in the country (Brazil, 2010).

From the above, it is observed that nature tourism is growing, both in Brazil and in the world, an extremely relevant fact, given that it provides benefits both for travelers and for the economy of the destination and the country. For tourists, contact with nature is essential for personal development, leisure, rest and experiencing experiences, feelings, emotions, sensations. This is because, currently, cities have less and less green and natural spaces, able to allow this contact of the individual with nature. On the other hand, this tourism segment allows the development of the economy, considering that it leads to the generation and circulation of wealth, providing the generation of employment, tax collection, opportunity for the development of new companies and segments, among other benefits.

The characteristics of Brazil are favorable to provide the growth and development of nature tourism, considering its richness in biomes such as the Amazon, Pantanal, Cerrado, Atlantic Forest and an extensive coastal strip, as well as great biodiversity and diverse ecosystems. Therefore, research data show that destinations with natural landscapes are growing, such as Jalapão, Bonito, Foz do Iguaçu.

Parallel to this growth, it is essential that nature tourism is developed considering the sustainability of the environment. Thus, the government must establish actions, public policies and methodologies that are able to ensure the preservation of natural tourist destinations.

III. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article analyzed the growth of nature tourism in Brazil, as well as the way in which the Coronavirus pandemic encouraged this tourism even more, and the reasons for this occurrence. Still, it was intended to verify the relevance of nature tourism being in tune with sustainability, so that it is characterized as a true ecotourism, adopting principles and guidelines for the development of the sector, considering the socio-environmental management of natural resources, the preservation of ecosystems and the reduction of negative impacts.

In this way, it was possible to verify that the growing search for natural spaces as tourist destinations can be attributed to the scarcity of these spaces in urban centers, places in which cement prevails along with all the gaps resulting from the indiscriminate growth in urban centers, causing numerous problems that generate stress on individuals, such as congestion, noise, air pollution, scarce supply infrastructure, among others. Thus, individuals who live in urban centers lack contact with nature, being deprived of the opportunities for personal experiences and spiritual growth resulting from this individual-nature connection.

It was also seen that Brazil is a country with enormous wealth of biomes such as the Amazon, Pantanal, Cerrado, Atlantic Forest and a vast coastal strip, as well as great biodiversity and diverse ecosystems, a fact that makes it suitable for tourism of nature, presenting numerous tourist spots that have this characteristic, such as Foz do Iguaçu (Paraná), Bonito (Mato Grosso do Sul, Ilha Grande (Rio de Janeiro), Chapada dos Veadeiros (Goiás), Chapada Diamantina (Bahia), Jalapão (Tocantins), among countless others.

Even before the pandemic, nature tourism was already showing steady growth. In 2019, nature tourism motivated the trip of 18.6% of international tourists and, in Brazil, around 1.5 million tourists traveled within the country, interested in adventure and nature, which represents 26% of trips performed at leisure.

With the pandemic, this trend continued. It was identified that the first trips during this period were demanded by regions close to the tourists' residence, which could be carried out with their own vehicle, often looking for outdoor environments, mostly natural. In Brazil, the Baleia Franca Environmental Protection Area, in Santa Catarina (3.3 million

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visitors), the Tijuca National Park, in Rio de Janeiro (1.2 million) and the Iguaçu National Park, in Paraná (658 thousand visits), led the visitation ranking in the pandemic year.

Even after the easing of the measures previously imposed due to the pandemic, nature tourism is still growing. The Ministry of Tourism considers that these new trends in the tourism sector are opportunities to value the diversity and specificities of the country, which are favorable for nature tourism, seeking to make tourism compatible activity with sustainable development.

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