

Analysis of rural tourism management based on local development

Análisis de la gestión de turismo rural en función del desarrollo local



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ABSTRACT

The work is framed in an increasingly complex global context, where undoubtedly the tourism sector plays an important role mainly in Cuba. Likewise, the practice of local development is also experiencing a moment of boom, and in line with this, in the country after the VI Congress of the Communist Party, the bases for achieving the interrelation between tourism and local development were registered. Hence the need to analyze the current situation of rural tourism management in terms of the local development of the territories due to the lack of exploitation of tourism potential in them, and to make a qualitative study of the costs and benefits of this modality. The sources of information were processed, in addition to the application of the SWOT matrix, which yielded results that will be useful for future methodologies.

RESUMEN

El trabajo está enmarcado en un contexto mundial cada vez más complejo, donde indudablemente el sector del turismo juega un papel importante, principalmente en Cuba. Asimismo, la práctica del desarrollo local vive un momento de auge. A tono con ello, luego del VI Congreso del Partido Comunista, en el país se registraron las bases para lograr la interrelación turismo-desarrollo local. De ahí la necesidad de analizar de la situación actual de la gestión del turismo rural en función del desarrollo local de los territorios debido al desaprovechamiento de las potencialidades turísticas en los mismos, y la importancia de hacer un estudio cualitativo de los costos y beneficios de esta modalidad. Fueron procesadas las fuentes de información, además de la aplicación de la matriz DAFO, lo que arrojó resultados que serán de utilidad para futuras metodologías.

Keywords: local development; management; rural tourism.

Palabras claves: desarrollo local; gestión; turismo rural.

INTRODUCTION

With the increase in recent years of ecological awareness due to the environmental crisis experienced, whether in developed countries or not, tourism in the early 90's sees the emergence of a new modality based on activities in the countryside or rural milieu. Starting from the different natural scenarios, people were looking for a healthy recreation that would provide them with a healthier lifestyle and different from the options of sun and beach and in line with the criterion of tourism as an activity that can both provide opportunities and generate risks, so it is relevant to apply to this activity the philosophy of sustainable development, as a harmonious concept of development (Jaula Botet, 2001; Marchena Gómez & Vera Rebollo, 1997).

Although the rural space was already the scene of recreational practices, today it is a tourist fashion that ranges from the simplest to the most elaborate in tourist services, taking into account that each of its expressions are different in some aspects. Rural tourism appears as a complementary economic activity to agriculture, which allows the small producer or productive unit to diversify and expand its source of income and, therefore, decrease its dependence on monoculture. Rural tourism also contributes to the articulation of different dimensions of development: environmental, social and economic and with the affirmation of the importance of preserving and promoting cultural identity, important for a harmonious coexistence with all production activities

present in the rural environment (Camargo Toribio, 2003).

Pinar del Río is a province that has all the basic requirements to become a worldwide option in the development of this type of tourism, since it is made up, in a large percentage, by rural territories or spaces, and other natural areas without exploitation, protected areas and biosphere reserves; however, the development of the modality of rural tourism is still very insipiente, so those responsible for managing tourism have little experience in the operation of this type of activity. Starting from the initial exploration carried out on this subject, it was found that there is a failure to take advantage of the province's potential for better exploitation of rural tourism: there is little articulation between this modality and the local development process (Hernández, 2007); there are no actions that allow the use of rural tourism revenues in the development of localities and there is a lack of systematicity on the part of local governments in following up on the recommendations of previous research on the subject.

For this research, the definition of rural tourism given by the World Tourism Organization (2011) stands out, which defines it as: "[...] the set of activities carried out by people during their trips to places other than their usual context, for a period of less than one year, for leisure, business and other purposes". The same organization adds: "Tourism includes any activity related to the temporary

movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live, as well as the activities they carry out in those destinations.

Many other authors could also be cited who made their theoretical contribution to the subject that is addressed as they are: Baena (1992); García (1996); Fernández (1985); Camargo (2003); Montiel, Estévez and Oliveros (2016), among others.

The variants of rural tourism that are developed in the Cuban rural milieu are far from the scope of local development, as well as from local entities. It is in the midst of this situation that local development emerges as one of the ways to strengthen the wealth that a given territory can have, reporting economic advantages for its population and giving the possibility of comprehensive development for each of its members and protecting the natural environment. This is why it is important to conceive strategic lines of local development with a marked focus on sustainability that allows a harmonious development of human society and nature (Ramírez & Pérez, 2016).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was carried out by means of a strategy, mainly explanatory in nature, since the aim is to explain with qualitative and quantitative data the need and relevance of carrying out an analysis on the management of rural tourism in relation to local development. The diagnosis was carried out in exploratory, descriptive and then explanatory order.

Secondary sources of information were used to determine the background and current trends linked to the object of study. In order to deepen the diagnosis of

the problem, primary sources of information were used, with the application of interviews to managers and surveys to workers of the non-state sector (rental houses) and clients.

The municipality of Viñales has been selected for the high income of tourists that it presents annually and for all the natural potential that it shows, in addition to the numerous landlords of houses linked to tourism.

In order to determine the sample of the surveys to be carried out to the tenants, the population constituted by the total of these in the municipality was valued, which amounts to 1358 rental houses that group a total of 2382 rooms. The SAMPLE program was applied for the population mentioned above and a margin of error of 10%; the result of the sample to be applied was a total of 90 surveys.

In order to carry out the survey to foreign clients, the municipality of Viñales was taken into account because it is the one that most operates rural tourism in the province. The population was estimated as the number of international tourists who arrived at the Viñales facilities of the Palmares extrahotel chain in the last five years, for an average of 367 852. The SAMPLE program was applied where, for a margin of error of 5%, the result of the sample to be applied was a total of 384. The data resulting from all the surveys were processed by the SPSS statistical program, version 22.0.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained after the application of the techniques for obtaining information, according to their registration and processing, are concentrated in a set

of general elements associated with the process of rural tourism management function of local development, such as the interview with the delegate of the Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR), the director of the Tourist Information Center (INFOTUR) and the Administrator of Finca San Vicente.

There are potentialities to develop rural tourism in the province because there is a peasant culture and vernacular construction, as well as agricultural practices that respond to that culture. Rural tourism as a modality exists basically in the region of Viñales and is offered by private landlords. Both sectors participate in this modality, although it is currently represented mainly by the non-state sector. There is a weak commercialization of rural tourism by travel agencies that do not operate with the rural tourism market segment. Tour operators need to be trained in this modality to disseminate the attractions that sustain it, especially with emphasis on agrotourism.

In the province there are different types of tourism (nature, city, sun and beach and rural), with nature being the most representative, although there are also rural tourism activities concentrated mainly in vineyards and some signs in the tobacco route. In the case of INFOTUR, which promotes all the tourist information of the province, rural tourism promotes it through stays in Vineyards and the practice of tobacco route, of which there are very favorable criteria of customers who enjoy it. It is considered that there are many potentialities with respect to this modality in the territory since a millenary culture exists around the rural peasant culture as way of life, performances and presence of peasant and vernacular culture. In reality, this form is not commercialized in correspondence with the existing potentialities in the territory. Some forces and criteria are required in

the design of rural tourist products and in the effort to market them through INFOTUR and travel agencies. The province is not seen as a rural tourism destination, nor does it have a portfolio of products that identify it as such.

The San Vicente farm belongs to the Palmares extrahotel chain and, according to the 2012 procedures manual, the facility is designed primarily to provide agro-tourism services to international tourism, although they also receive visits from national clients, which in smaller numbers. It has an area of eight hectares of land, which has eight huts and a renovated farmhouse, with a total capacity for 20 people. There is a reception service, provided by the same guide who operates the activity and a ranchón restaurant, bar, parking, national and international telephony. Mostly it is based on a demonstration of agricultural work, in its relationship with tourism, linked to the tradition and customs of the population. Taking into account the performance of the activities offered here, despite being one of the preferred cars by customers is still being developed and there are still many potentialities to exploit in the case of the municipality of Viñales.

Rural Tourism Clients

- Of the total number of tourists surveyed, 84.9% have visited Cuba only once, 11.2% have visited Cuba twice and 2.6% have visited the country three times.
- Of the total number of tourists who have visited Viñales, 91.9% have visited it for the first time; 6.5% have visited it twice and 1.3% have visited it three times.
- 72.1% of the clients surveyed stayed in houses for rent and 26.8% in hotels.

- 95.3 % of tourists like rural tourism; 4.7 % say they don't like it.
- 54.4 % of those surveyed prefer to carry out the activities with specialised guides; 37.8 % prefer to do them individually and the remaining 7.8 % combine these two options, depending on the activity to be carried out.

Non-state sector (rental houses)

In the survey of landlords of rental houses:

- 82.2% of those surveyed agree that both female and male clients predominate.
- 72.2% of those surveyed do not know if their clients know where to buy other products that are offered in the municipality.
- 93.3% of the landlords surveyed stated that their clients demand rural tourism.
- 86.7% reveal that their clients have issued favourable criteria on rural tourism activities in the municipality Viñales.
- 31.1% of lessors consider that it would be good to improve the offer of rural tourism in the region and 30% agree that it would be good to expand the current offer.

Surveys of foreign clients showed that their stay is pleasant, quiet, with spectacular scenery. They comment that the rental houses are in good condition and are very welcoming, but some want to be closer to the customs of the peasants, services in general should be improved and should offer a greater variety of activities related to rural, inviting to prolong the stay, the menu is repetitive and unrepresentative of the area and

there could be greater contact with the population and its culture.

The survey of national receptives showed that the offer must be consolidated and respond to the true customs of the locals in the region and include the typical dishes of the territory; it is also necessary to increase the agricultural activities that are carried out, to increase the average stay and be able to raise prices, since the offer is differentiated. Sometimes they need advice and guidance and do not know where to go. There is a lot of competition between tenants.

SWOT Matrix Analysis (Weaknesses, Threats, Strengths and Opportunities)

To determine the status of rural tourism management in Viñales, the SWOT matrix was applied. This analysis was carried out through a brainstorming session, in consultation with the board of directors of the entities related to the topic of study and the following specialists: delegate of the provincial MINTUR, director of INFOTUR, director of travel agency Cubanacan, commercial specialist of Horizontes Hotels and administrator of Finca San Vicente. After analyzing and evaluating all the criteria, the listings were reduced and the ideas that prevailed by voting formed the SWOT matrix. The analysis of Weaknesses, Threats, Strengths and Opportunities is presented below.

Weaknesses

1. Under-utilization of the territory's natural potential for rural purposes.
2. Absence of a defined rural product.
3. Inadequate distribution of the areas that make up the rural activities.

4. Advertising not designed for rural tourism in the province.

5. Inadequate and unattractive prices.

6. There is no qualified work force for this activity.

7. Weak preparation of workers in rural areas.

8. The collective attaches greater importance to the services provided by the concept of restoration.

9. Scarce provisions of work for the development of rural activity.

Threats

1. Increased competition.

2. Lack of a coherent strategy for the development of the modality.

3. Increase in the supply of rural tourism services in Europe.

4. Poor condition of some access roads.

5. Poor integration of tourism products.

6. Decrease in the number of farmers engaged in agricultural activity.

7. Marketing policy focused on conventional tourism.

Strengths

1. Have adequate resources for agro-tourism.

2. Existence of some options related to the product.

3. Existence of accommodation with vernacular architecture.

4. Customer satisfaction with the potential of the Viñales product.

5. The installation has ownership of the land.

6. Existence of real estate with conditions to develop rural activities.

7. Existence of resources for complementary offers that add value.

Opportunities

1. Presence of rural tourism market segment at the international level.

2. Provisions of regulations and laws that protect the environment.

3. Attractive growth of the agro-tourism segment in the world.

4. Progressive increase in the number of tourists visiting Cuba.

5. Existence of a peasant culture, of vernacular construction.

6. Agricultural practices that protect the development of this modality.

7. Zones with presences of category of Cultural Landscape of the Humanity that supports the image for the rural development.

SWOT matrix analysis

The current situation of rural tourism in the municipality, according to the SWOT analysis, places it in the survival position, not in the quadrant. IV (Weaknesses, Threats) (as shown in the figure), with a

score of 38 points, which represents 63.33% and means that very rapid action is required to mitigate the heaviest threats (1, 2,3). Efforts should be focused on minimizing weaknesses (1, 3, 4,5). Existing strengths must be strengthened

in order to improve the implementation of programmed activities, meet customer expectations and take advantage of the opportunities generated by the environment.

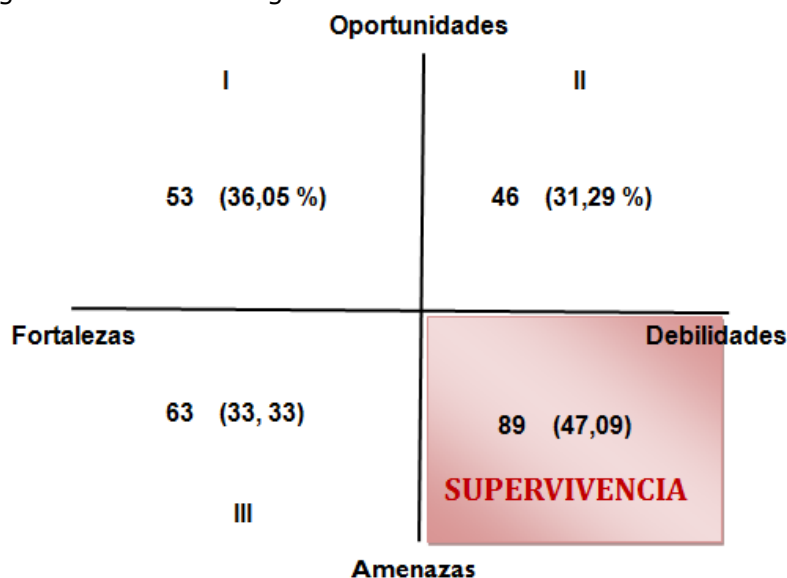


Fig. - SWOT matrix
Source: Own elaboration

The general analysis of all the instruments applied shows very little development of rural tourism in the province of Pinar del Río, despite the fact that the criterion of the interviewees emphasizes that it is a different product. The failure to take advantage of the strengths of the territory, the existing opportunities and the inadequate marketing policy have diverted the focus of the product and the efforts of the marketing mix towards the other market segments offered by tourism in the province.

Analysis of the commercial management of rural tourism in Pinar del Río as a management process

The beauty of the municipality's landscapes gives it great potential from

the tourist point of view, since it has abundant areas with a fairly preserved natural environment, intramontaneous valleys, exclusive mogotes, several points of relevant archaeological interest with exclusive vegetation and landscapes.

Historically, the tourist product of Pinar del Río has been commercialized in three modalities. The first of them: by means of excursions (more than 69.6% of the tourists that the province receives), which is called transit tourism, because it constitutes a journey of little time of stay, approximately 6-9 hours. To these are added historical-cultural elements and the known natural attractions: the Cave of the Indian, Viewpoint of the Valley of Viñales, Mural of the Prehistory, etc.). The other variants refer to the presence of a hotel

infrastructure of different category and type, linked to a variety of offers: nature, health, city, expression of the real potential of the province and mainly the municipality of Viñales for specialized tourism.

Tourism in the province, in the last 15 years, has experienced a statistically favorable growth, despite not exploiting all the potentialities to develop the diversity of tourism products. The main types of tourism in the territory are: sun and beach, city, health, diving, nature.

At the end of 2011, the MINTUR in the territory had 488 rooms, which adding the 87 belonging to Gaviota, located in Maria La Gorda and Cape San Antonio, reach a total of 575 state rooms, as well as 458

houses for private rent, very distributed in the different tourist poles, emphasizing the pole of Viñales, the most important of the province to possess a singular and incomparable beauty of its landscapes and valleys, endorsed by the category of Cultural Landscape of the Humanity, granted by the UNESCO, with four facilities: Los Jazmines, La Ermita, Rancho San Vicente and the Dos Hermanas Camp Site; as well as 421 tenant houses for the accommodation of visitors arriving at the site, which are not included in the total number of rooms in the province.

Below is a table that allows us to understand the costs and benefits of rural tourism at the economic, environmental and social levels.

Table - Qualitative analysis of costs and benefits of rural tourism

Levels	Benefits	Costs
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of employment and increase of local income. • Maintenance and improvement of local services and activities. • Diversification of activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congestion, creation of additional infrastructure and services • Danger of mono-activity.
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance, conservation, improvement of natural areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risks increasing of water, air pollution and visual contamination. • Risk of disturbance of flora and animal life due to excessive visitor flow. • Erosion.
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural exchanges. • Maintenance of local customs and traditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of conflict between local communities and the visitor, expressed in greater competition for

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the community's interest in leisure and cultural activities and greater facilities for this. • Support for small local enterprises. 	<p>accommodation and other resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adulteration and change in local traditions and culture. • Excessive visitor pressure leading to antisocial behaviour.
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Source: Own elaboration

The theoretical foundations that serve as a basis for understanding research allow us to conclude that local development in localities with tourist potential can be understood as a process through which tourist resources/attractions are incorporated that allow them to influence the dynamics of local development.

The analysis showed that in the municipality of Viñales there is a persistent need to manage rural tourism and thus take advantage of attitudes, disposition and capacities to generate positive impacts on the dynamics of local development of the territory.

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