

## **Sustainable local tourism: contribution to territorial development in Cuba**

### **Turismo local sostenible: contribución al desarrollo territorial en Cuba**

### **Turismo local sustentável: contribuição para o desenvolvimento territorial em Cuba**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The updating of the Cuban and social economic model is supported by the political will to give more autonomy, responsibility and authority to the municipal governments, aimed at the use of their endogenous and exogenous resources, according to local development. The tourist sector is one of the main engines of the economy with more expectations of growth in the medium and long term. The dynamics of this activity has provoked benefits and, at the same time, impacts in the spaces where the tourist facilities have been implanted. In the search for alternatives in this sector, with the purpose of stimulating local economies, this article aims to: design a model for the management of Sustainable Local Tourism, on a small scale, as a contribution to territorial development, which allows the development of tourism on that scale, in areas with a tourist vocation. Tourism services under this conception are managed by local enterprises, which start from premises based on respect for natural and cultural values, using tourism resources in a rational manner, preserving them and, at the same time, obtaining from them the necessary income that allows for the improvement of the quality of life of the local population.



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**Keywords:** quality of life; management; local development; tourist potential; sustainable local tourism; tourist vocation

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## RESUMEN

La actualización del modelo económico cubano y social está respaldada por la voluntad política de dar mayor autonomía, responsabilidad y autoridad a los gobiernos municipales, dirigida al aprovechamiento de sus recursos endógenos y exógenos, en función del desarrollo local. El sector turístico es uno de los principales motores de la economía con más expectativas de crecimiento a mediano y largo plazo. La dinámica de esta actividad ha provocado beneficios y, a la vez, impactos en los espacios donde se han implantado las instalaciones turísticas. En la búsqueda de alternativas en este sector, con el propósito de estimular las economías locales, el presente artículo tiene como objetivo: diseñar un modelo para la gestión del Turismo Local Sostenible, de pequeña escala, como contribución al desarrollo territorial, que permite desarrollar el turismo a esa escala, en zonas de vocación turística. Los servicios turísticos bajo esta concepción son gestionados por empresas locales, que parten de premisas basadas en el respeto a los valores naturales y culturales, utilizando los recursos turísticos de manera racional, preservándolos y, a la vez, obteniendo de ellos los ingresos necesarios que permitan elevar la calidad de vida de la población local.

**Palabras clave:** calidad de vida; gestión; desarrollo local; potencial turístico; turismo local sostenible; vocación turística

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## RESUMO

A atualização do modelo económico cubano e social é apoiada pela vontade política de dar maior autonomia, responsabilidade e autoridade aos governos municipais, visando a utilização dos seus recursos endógenos e exógenos para o desenvolvimento local. O setor do turismo é um dos principais motores da economia com as maiores expectativas de crescimento a médio e longo prazo. A dinâmica desta atividade tem provocado benefícios e, ao mesmo tempo, impactos nos espaços onde as instalações turísticas têm sido implantadas. Na procura de alternativas neste setor, com o objetivo de estimular as economias locais, este artigo visa: conceber um modelo de gestão do Turismo Local Sustentável em pequena escala como um contributo para o desenvolvimento territorial, que permita o desenvolvimento do turismo a essa escala em áreas com vocação turística. Os serviços turísticos sob esta concepção são geridos por empresas locais, que partem de premissas baseadas no respeito pelos valores naturais e culturais, utilizando os recursos turísticos de forma racional, preservando-os e, ao mesmo tempo, obtendo deles os rendimentos necessários para elevar a qualidade de vida da população local.

**Palavras-chave:** qualidade de vida; gestão; desenvolvimento local; potencial turístico; turismo local sustentável; vocação turística

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## INTRODUCTION

Cuba's National Plan for Economic and Social Development until 2030 is based on strategic axes and sectors. The axes express the main dimensions that conform the economic, political, social and environmental panorama of society. They are defined with the purpose of facilitating the study and determination of the fundamental interrelations among each one of them and, this way, ensuring the integral and systemic approach in the process of elaboration of the country's development strategy.

This strategy has implicitly the need to design a development approach able to face and solve, in an integral way, the main difficulties presented by Cuban society in the political, ideological, ethical, moral, juridical, institutional, social, economic, demographic, cultural, technological and environmental fields.

The design of the Development Plan is an exercise of participatory and conscious construction of the whole society, which guarantees the consensus about the objectives to be fulfilled in each stage, in order to reach and strengthen the nation we want to have and the integral and coherent transformations necessary to achieve it.

One of the specific objectives of the Plan, from the perspective of decentralization, is to achieve territorial development by strengthening the planning and management powers and capacities of the territories, the participation of social actors, and multilevel coordination with other State agencies, in order to enhance local resources and take advantage of the opportunities of international markets and import substitution.

Among the efforts made in some territories of the country to materialize the Plan, are the elaboration of the Municipal Development Strategy (EDM in Spanish) and the Provincial Development Strategy (EDP in Spanish). In the case of the former, it allows local governments to have a strategic vision of the path to follow, based on endogenous potentials and exogenous contributions that are captured and linked, leading to the dynamization of integral local development. The second allows the provincial structure of government to balance development through adequate oversight of local development, based on inter-territorial relations, avoiding imbalances in the municipalities under its jurisdiction (Flores Lóriga et al., 2017).

As part of the EDM, each location elaborates its own development lines and programs, in accordance with the characteristics and potential of each one of them. To this end, they take into account the strategic sectors prioritized for productive transformation and local problems, starting from the definition of suitable methodological criteria to be able to identify them and contextualize them to the locality.

Among the strategic sectors that can have a local expression is tourism, which, in addition to continuing to strengthen the macro economy, can and should be developed at that level in those spaces whose tourist vocation corresponds to the trends and demands of the market (Betancourt & Rugh, 2020). Local tourism projects should be designed with a low capital endowment, based on the management of micro, small and medium sized enterprises that contribute to productive chains with state and non-state economic actors of different levels of subordination.

Local Sustainable Tourism, of small scale (Betancourt & Rugh, 2020), approved by the Cuban State as one of the policies for the territorial development in Cuba, is considered an activity that can have an accelerated growth, as much in the state sector as in the private one, considering its international behavior, contributing to the local economies and complementing the macro products and Cuban conventional tourist offers that have prevailed until now in the management of the tourist activity, from the Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR in Spanish).

So far, the above constitutes the starting problem and challenge of the proposal, based on how to decentralize the small-scale tourist activity in Cuba. This approach is based on the need to give more dynamism and complementarity to the tourist activity in the country in the current circumstances, which lead to the readjustment of this activity after the pandemic and an increase in the arrival of tourists to local destinations, from the increase of the offer and, at the same time, the direct economic spill to the economies, on that scale.

To this end, each town designs its own tourism products according to its tourism heritage and its correspondence to market trends, generating income and employment for the actors and the community involved (Ramírez Pérez, 2018). The increase in the number of tourist products and their planning leads to the conformation of local tourist destinations that, depending on their quality, are highly competitive in the international market, if we take into account the richness of tourist attractions that Cuba has to offer, mainly, in modalities such as Nature Tourism and Rural Tourism, called to have significant growths, after the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the current Cuban context, the development of Local Sustainable Tourism is hardly perceptible from its conception. This is based on the problem that, until now, as has been reiterated, tourism management has been centralized for economic reasons. The verticalization of the activity has not contemplated the local initiatives, except for those in the private sector, which, although they have become more dynamic in the last decade, they suffer from a strategic and methodological thinking, with an anarchic growth that in not a few localities have violated the established regulations and have distorted the good tourism practices. The same has happened with entities that, without being within the MINTUR, have developed small-scale initiatives, but that respond to sectoral and not local interests, in addition to not starting from a strategic conception.

The progressive decentralization process that the country is undergoing, with the consequent empowerment of local government structures, allows tourism to be seen as a feasible activity to be decentralized, not by chance has been signed by the Cuban State as part of the policies of territorial development in Cuba. It is clear that the development of Sustainable Local Tourism, on a small scale, must be governed by regulations and concepts that do not violate the principles that govern sustainable tourism and the compliance with the policies and regulations established by the competent bodies in the country.

In this research, the process of tourism management is proposed as an investigative object, within which the management of small-scale Local Sustainable Tourism in Cuban municipalities has been defined as a field of action as part of their development strategies.

This allows to raise as a general objective: to design a model for the management of the Local Sustainable Tourism of small scale as contribution to the territorial development.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

For the development of the research, the historical-logical method was used, which analyzes the concrete trajectory of the theory in the different periods through which tourism has passed. The dialectical-materialistic method, which, according to its contributions, allows discovering the dialectic of tourism development through an objective and concrete analysis of which are the potentialities and deficiencies that exist today in the territory for its implementation. Once these elements have been addressed, we proceed to the use of empirical methods, in which bibliographical review and documentary analysis were essential, since they allowed a first approach to the problem.

As for the primary (group work) and secondary (document review) sources of information, several group work sessions were held, which made document analysis possible. Through the generation of ideas, the results were reconciled, which is described as very fruitful, since the cooperation of the MINTUR, agroforestry enterprises of Pinar del Río, Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, Flora and Fauna, Provincial Directorate of Physical Planning, Travel Agencies, professors of the Center for Management Studies, Local Development, Tourism and Cooperativism of the UPR and the Center for Strategic Management of Local Development, was very useful in identifying and evaluating the conceptual and methodological aspects and in their experiences related to the research.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Management process of Local Sustainable Tourism from the theoretical-methodological**

Since the introduction of the concept of sustainable development at the end of the 20th century, sustainable tourism has emerged as a concept that has been the subject of many debates over time. It has not been defined in precise terms, leaving a wide margin for interpretation. The evolution of the concept took place from the nineties of that century, where the tourist development achieved a priority character for the community institutions.

Based on the definition of sustainable development in the Brundtland Report, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) states that:

Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of today's tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing future opportunities. It focuses on managing all resources in such a way that all economic, social and aesthetic needs are met, while respecting cultural integrity,

essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems (OMT, 1993).

This concept was conceived on a universal scale, so it is required, for the management of Local Sustainable Tourism of small scale, to adapt it and link it to that level, which gives as a concept:

Small-scale Sustainable Local Tourism is the activity practiced by individuals in local destinations that admit to maintain a balance among the environmental, economic, socio-cultural and political-institutional dimensions, providing an optimal use of the local tourist heritage, respecting traditional values through adequate relations with the host communities, which, at the same time, are undergoing a process of transformation, based on local development strategies and policies specifically designed to overcome the factors responsible for the spatial, social, economic and institutional imbalances that prevent full local development and inhibit the effective participation of its population in the benefits (Ramírez Pérez, 2011).

This new vision implies a change of perspective that places the locality as the main center of attention, which acquires an active and key role in articulating the processes of tourist development, assuming that this is framed in more far-reaching approaches that have to do with its implementation within the so-called local development (Albuquerque, 2007; Guzón, 2006; Vázquez Barquero & Rodríguez Cohard, 2015).

Today, it is increasingly common to speak of local development, based on tourism (Alcívar Vera, 2018) and there are many territories in the world that have taken part in processes of economic recovery and expansion, thanks to the extraordinary evolution experienced by this sector. Tourism has shown great flexibility and versatility and has occupied relevant positions in local economies. In the same way, it has satisfied and adapted to the demands of the constant flow that has made the movement of people possible.

The concept of sustainable development of tourism, at the local level, is based on the adaptation of basic principles to the specific characteristics of each place (Gambarota & Lorda, 2017; Güidi, 2016; Rodríguez Martínez et al., 2020). The principles that define sustainable tourism, according to the World Tourism Organization (OMT, 1993), are:

- Natural and cultural resources are conserved for continued use in the future, while providing benefits
- Tourism development is planned and managed so as not to cause serious environmental or socio-cultural problems
- Environmental quality is maintained and improved; a high level of visitor satisfaction is sought and the destination retains its prestige and commercial potential
- The benefits of tourism are widely shared by all of society

It is locally that tourism embraces the principles of sustainability (Torres Cadena et al., 2019). As a space where social actors exercise their power, cultural identities are forged and relationships with ecological potentialities are generated. It is the place where sustainability and tourism activity converge. By its principles, tourism supports

a process of social improvement that meets the needs and values of all stakeholders, while maintaining future options and making rational use of natural resources. This can mean for the inhabitants of natural areas the creation of new jobs, increased income and a new impulse to local traditions and cultural creations.

In this sense, it is understood that the term "local" is not something small, localistic, but is the common condition of the population that shares a history of settlement, a daily life face to face with different nuances more or less unequal, problematic, with a sense of solidarity of reciprocity in a territorial space that is connected with other localities, regions, until reaching the national.

The local concept thus acquires the connotation of a socio-territorial element, and is then defined as a valid area of action. Shaped as an ongoing development process, it is thought, planned, promoted, induced and/or adapted to the reality of a space (Alburquerque, 2007; Guzón, 2006; Torres Páez et al., 2018; Vázquez Barquero & Rodríguez Cohard, 2015).

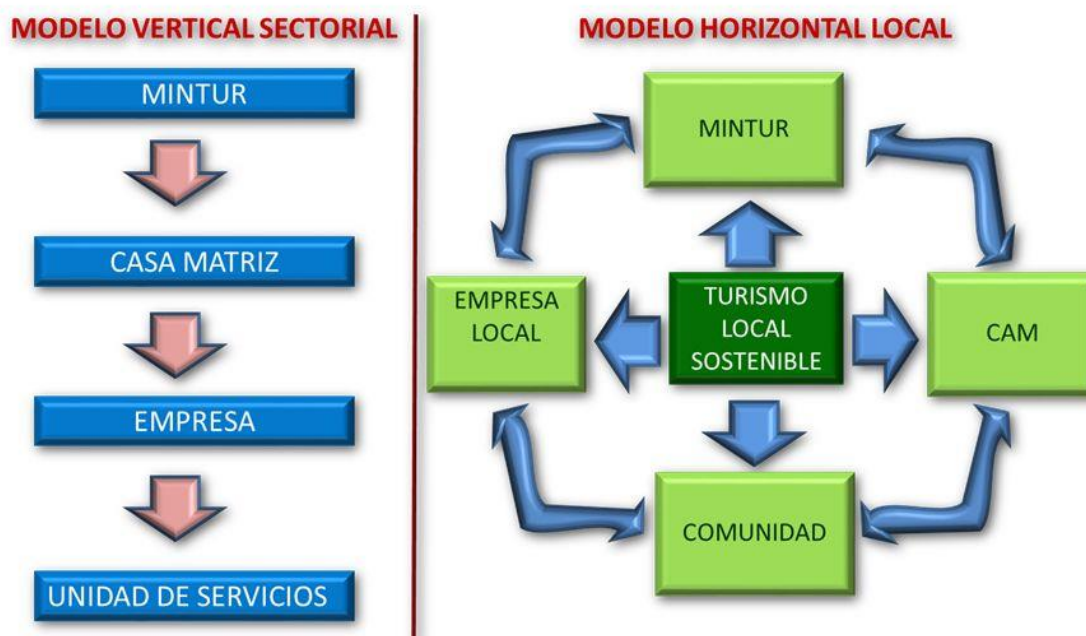
Therefore, when it is spoken of local development, we normally refer to development processes that occur in sub-national spaces and that may or may not coincide with regional or municipal territories (Gómez Prieto et al., 2020).

At the local level, various studies have diagnosed different causes and conditions of problems such as: the insufficient articulation of the objectives, interests and goals of local actors; their low perception of the importance of tourism for local development and the lack of key capacities and competencies to assume tourism management from the local level.

In the field of tourism, national and local governments play a preponderant role in strengthening tourism capacity. Without this support to the development of local tourism activity, it is impossible to undertake it in order to obtain results, so it is essential to have the firm decision of a political will to invest in tourism activity.

Therefore, achieving sustainable tourism development in terms of local development is beyond the management and competencies of the tourism sector and is only possible when it is conceived as a broader strategic objective, which is managed with the broad participation of all the actors involved, where the local population is key (Aguirre Bertel et al., 2018; Calle Iñiguez, 2015).

At present, there is a divergence between the two tourism management schemes, the conventional and the alternative on a sustainable basis (Fig. 1), which are not lost on all the world's tourist destinations, to a greater or lesser extent.



**Fig. 1** - Traditional tourism management schemes and alternative local management proposals

Source: Own elaboration

In the case of conventional tourism, it is based on demand pressure, which leads to high investment, intensive use of the tourist destination, rapid return on investment, very low local economic contribution and transformation of the local culture.

On the other hand, alternative tourism presents a low investment due to the small scale of its facilities, limited use of tourist resources and spaces; the return on investment is slower due to the low volumes of tourists handled, the local economic contribution is very high due to the retention of most of the profits and it is a way of life that protects local identity values.

There are no antagonisms between the two schemes; on the contrary, they complement each other from a multilevel, inter-territorial and multi-stakeholder perspective.

### **Current status of Local Sustainable Tourism Management in Cuba**

In the last decades, tourism in Cuba has gone through a process of acceleration, while it has assumed a leading role in Cuban economy, affected by conjunctural factors, which has required from this activity the maximum contribution.

In spite of the numerous obstacles that tourism management faces in Cuba, the sector has developed with remarkable increases in the number of arrivals and reception capacity in hotels, restaurants and other facilities. The Cuban tourist destination enjoys privileges that make it competitive in the world tourist market, such as: political and social stability, health guarantees, hospital population with a high educational level, high technical qualification of the work force related to the



tourist activity, road and airport infrastructure, accommodation and restoration service plant, and high potential of tourist resources.

The main challenges of tourist development in Cuba are summarized in: need to stabilize the supplies of different national products, which are destined to tourism and substitute imports; systematic supply of fruits, viands and vegetables to tourist facilities, optimization of the existing hotel capacities. In addition, to achieve a greater autonomy in the level of operation and commercialization decisions of the different tourist institutions, together with a control of supervision, to improve the quality of the services, to reach a greater efficiency in the investment process, related to the constructions of new hotels and the remodeling of the existing ones and to diversify the tourist products, with the incorporation of other modalities to the portfolio of offers that are presented in the tourist market.

The multiplying effect of tourism on the economy is affected by all the external obstacles imposed on the country, leading to the increase in the investment process and the management of tourism itself.

From the process of ordering the Cuban economic model, which took place in the last years, Cuban tourist activity has been favored for being a prioritized sector and the number of guidelines confirm it. In the same way, the Economic Plan until 2030 gives a substantial weight to tourist development, fact confirmed in the new constitution of the Republic.

The economic imponderables lead the tourist activity in Cuba to be centralized, of structure and sectorial management and of macroeconomic vision, although in the last decade the non-state sector in the tourist services has demonstrated its complementarity and reason of being, under another scheme and scale of management.

The progressive decentralization process of the government structures and the Cuban business system, endorsed in the new Cuban constitution, opens other ways to the country's development, such as the case of the Local Development, which is going through its childhood stage, where the perspectives it offers to the substitution of imports and to the search of solutions to local problems, from the own territorial capacities, are outlined.

Among the options that are explored in the current Cuban context, there is the Local Sustainable Tourism, which comes from the Strategies of Municipal Development (EDM), in which the line and program of tourism are defined, and once defined, they create the bases for the proposal of local tourist projects in correspondence with the vocation, potentialities and tourist tendencies of the market (Darias Fuertes et al., 2016, 2017; Ramírez Pérez, 2018).

Local Sustainable Tourism, in the economic conditions of Cuba, emerges as a palliative that can alleviate the burden on the state, as a dynamizer of local economies, so that the application of the proposed model is currently of capital importance and relevance.

## **Components of the model for sustainable local tourism management**

To implement Local Sustainable Tourism in Cuban municipalities, it is necessary to project a model for its management. This is the logical way to represent a certain process in a systematic and simplified way.

From this reason, the model is conceived with a sequential progression of system components as a solution to the posed problem. The qualified characteristics of the model are in the scope of its performance, for that reason it constitutes a tool that allows: to identify tourist activities, to design participative strategies, to execute and to control tourist activities, directed to the benefit of the locality.

On the other hand, the model adapts to the reality of the environment with a sustainable approach (Riveros Montiel & Olmedo de Ríos, 2020) and is flexible in accordance with the characteristics of each territory where it is applied and, in accordance with its tourist vocation, thus adjusts to present and future needs, derived from changes in the environment. In this sense, a model with this orientation contributes to the organization between actors, in such a way that these make viable goals directed towards the management of Local Sustainable Tourism on a small scale, by means of agile decision making. It is considered that the model should respond to the context of its territory, based on a process of adaptation and compatibility with the environment, the community and the local economy.

Therefore, we assume, as components of the model, those provided in its graphic representation, composed of elements and essential relations concatenated. It should be noted that the model is designed to solve complex problems in the management of small-scale Local Sustainable Tourism, through a harmonious process that integrates strategies and citizen participation, which is established as a tool aimed at local actors involved in the different municipalities.

### **Model design**

From the theoretical and methodological foundation, the management of Local Sustainable Tourism is analyzed. Simultaneously, the model is built with a sustainable approach and takes as a foundation the current Cuban context. In this logic, as it was already indicated, it is projected as a tool towards local actors, since it is forged as a systemic process of its elements, which contributes to the tourist development of municipalities. From its conception, it breaks with the sectorial, economic and commercialization paradigms of destinations that increase short term sales on tourist products, moving away from the sustainable approach.

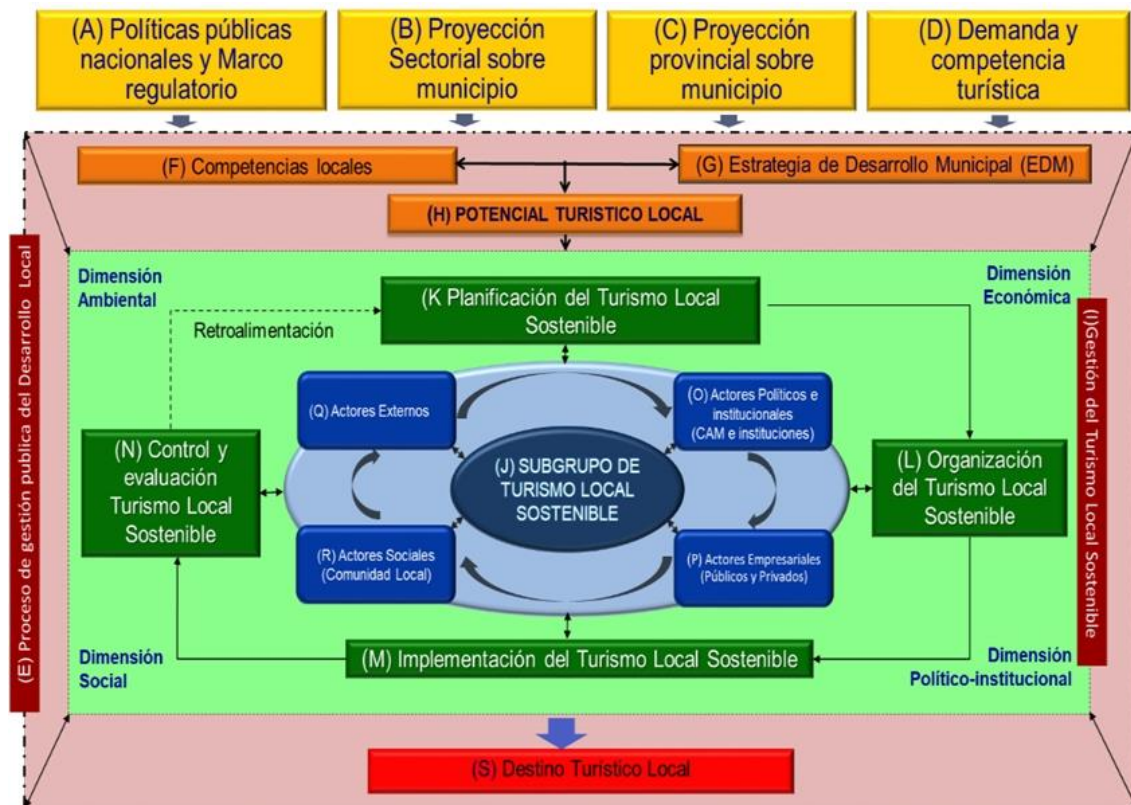
The model brings together conceptual elements and management contributions of previous models, in tourism, which are not managed from municipal development strategies and interactor synergies, based on the use of endogenous and exogenous resources based on sustainable development.

### **Components of the model and their relationships**

A model is constituted as a referential scheme for process management, it is supported by essential relationships that allow supporting its theoretical enunciation, structured from the identification of substantial elements such as: objective, premises, principles, processes, approaches, boundaries and feedback (Proaño Ponce

& Ramírez Pérez, 2017). In addition, in order to be implemented, it requires a procedure that responds to the demands and particularities of the same.

The proposed model (Fig. 2) aims to provide municipal governments with a tool for the conduct of Local Sustainable Tourism, based on the use of endogenous and exogenous resources and the articulation of local actors.



**Fig. 2** - Sustainable Local Tourism Management Model  
Source: Own elaboration

The model requires a series of premises that allow its orientation, which are listed below:

- Existence of mechanisms (agreements) that instrument and enforce the political will so that the Council of the Municipal Administration (CAM in Spanish) and the actors included in the Subgroup of Local Sustainable Tourism Development apply the procedure that assists the model for its implementation
- Willingness of the actors involved: political-institutional, public and private, social and external, to establish interactor synergy through processes, based on Municipal Development Strategies
- Exclusive or concurrent competencies so that the CAM can manage the development of small-scale Sustainable Local Tourism
- Tourism vocation of the municipality or part of its territory to be declared a Municipality or Tourist Destination, decreed by the representative body of the State (Ministry of Tourism, Study Center or Tourism Departments of the

University and Training Centers of MINTUR), which will strengthen the potential at local and national level

The premises allow to visualize, in a clear way, the situation of the factors, necessary bases for the application of the model. The conception of the model for the management of Local Sustainable Tourism starts from principles, laws and constitutional norms, which allows planning to be guaranteed in a territory.

The design of the model considers the following principles:

- **Integrity and communitarian participation.** To achieve an alliance of all forms of public, private, mixed, popular and solidarity-based economic organization, as an indispensable condition for success
- **Local financial autonomy.** Generate promotion and predictability mechanisms that allow medium and long term planning, as well as taking advantage of externalities
- **Equity and co-responsibility.** Mechanisms that articulate and involve in a co-responsible way public, community and private actors in the decision-making process, under the principle of maximum equity
- **Transparency.** The actors involved in the tourism sector promote a culture of transparency for the empowerment of the processes. This allows for greater involvement of the public sector and greater credibility for CAM in the eyes of the population

The management of Sustainable Local Tourism is considered a preferential management function, as it contains:

- **Local Sustainable Tourism Planning.** It results in the definition of objectives to be achieved by the CAM. This includes the actions and resources needed to achieve them, based on the creation of the Local Sustainable Tourism Development Subgroup.
- **Local Sustainable Tourism Organization.** Determination of the organizational structure and responsibilities that are necessary to ensure the coordination of activities by the Local Sustainable Tourism Development Subgroup.
- **Implementation of Local Sustainable Tourism.** Determination of actions carried out by the directors of the Local Sustainable Tourism Development Subgroup so that the staff complies with tourism strategies, as well as local tourism projects, approved for implementation. The type of trajectory to be adopted to manage local tourism in the municipalities is analyzed here.
- **Control and evaluation of Local Sustainable Tourism.** From the practical point of view, the Local Sustainable Tourism Development Subgroup develops actions to verify to what extent the local tourism development strategies are fulfilled, using a system of indicators.

The model is presented with a multidimensional approach, based on the articulation of the dimensions of sustainability, connected from the local to the national level, which allows the integration of the processes of management of endogenous and exogenous resources for the management of Local Sustainable Tourism, with interactor, interterritorial and multilevel synergy.

The Frontiers component feeds, among others, municipal development strategies, which are planned, integrated, participatory, and viable, where complex economic, social, environmental, and political-institutional relationships are produced, estimates that local actors take into account when presenting local sustainable tourism projects for these territories.

These strategies are strengthened by the actions issued in the process of managing Local Sustainable Tourism. In addition, at the borders of the model, there are national public policies, legal and regulatory framework, sectorial and provincial projections about the municipality, based on the Constitution and the Cuban Economic and Social Plan 2030, as well as tourism demands and competition.

Among the perceptible regulations that govern the model's actions are: strengthening national policies; fostering tourism awareness and culture; promoting small-scale sustainable local tourism in an integrated manner, within the framework of decentralization, and encouraging mechanisms for the sustainable use of local tourism areas.

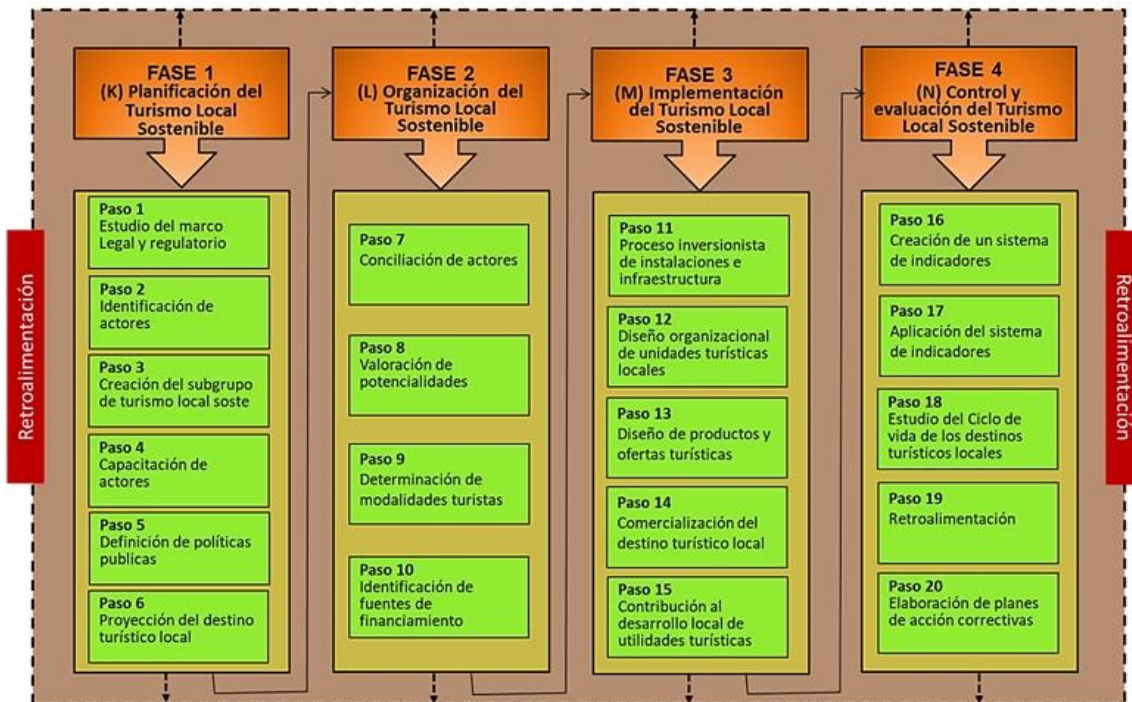
The impact of small-scale sustainable local tourism projects in Cuban municipalities considers a series of factors, such as: the type of tourism offer and its motivation towards the client in correspondence with the demand trends, the volume of tourism expenditure in the destination, the level of economic development that taxes the destination area, the local economic base, the seasonality of the demand, among others. In this sense, the implementation of these projects demonstrates that Local Sustainable Tourism, on a small scale, has a significant performance with respect to other sectors and its linkage, as well as its contribution to the strengthening of Municipal Development Strategies.

Each component defends identity, harmony, participatory equality in decision-making and the systemic interaction of the processes that occur in local sustainable tourism development.

With this model, projects are provided aimed at improving Municipal Development Strategies as a complementary instrument for development and territorial planning. It establishes measures adopted by the CAM to articulate the guidelines and orientations to which development plans conform. The areas of application of these strategies cover the entire municipality, with criteria of equity for its inhabitants and in relation to their demands.

### **Procedure for the implementation of the model**

For the implementation of the management model of Local Sustainable Tourism, a procedure is proposed (Fig. 3), which gives consistency to it, using it as a tool. Likewise, it facilitates its applicability in social practice in Cuban municipalities.



**Fig. 3** - Procedure for the implementation of the model  
Source: Own elaboration

The procedure for the implementation of the model has the following elements:

- I. Objective: to contribute to the implementation of the management model of Local Sustainable Tourism by the Council of the Municipal Administration, through the Local Subgroup of Local Sustainable Tourism.
- II. Purpose: process of managing Local Sustainable Tourism in Cuban municipalities
- III. Responsible for the implementation and control through the Local Sustainable Tourism Subgroup, represented by local actors.

#### Structure:

PHASE I: Local Sustainable Tourism Planning

PHASE II: Local Sustainable Tourism Organization

PHASE III: Implementation of Local Sustainable Tourism

PHASE IV: Evaluation and control of local sustainable tourism

#### PHASE I. Local Sustainable Tourism Planning

General objective. To create short, medium, and long-term plans that allow for the general projection of sustainable local tourism development.

In this phase, the starting point is the established legal and regulatory framework, the identification of actors, their training and, especially, the creation of the Local Sustainable Tourism Subgroup, which, once formed, verifies the fulfillment of the premises and proposes public policies on a local scale that contribute to the projection of the local tourist destination, where tourism trends, market behavior, competition, visitor projection and specific plans to attend to the disposition of the territory are evaluated.

### **Step 1. Regulatory and legal framework study**

This step allows for the legal contextualization of the proposal of Sustainable Local Tourism, on a small scale, based on the laws, resolutions and regulations established by the country for the operation and development of tourism activity, regulating the actions of all actors involved in local tourism development. This step constitutes a tool to be taken into account by the Local Sustainable Tourism Subgroup for the planning of tourism activity.

### **Step 2. Actors identification**

Local human resource capacities will be used to identify decision-makers, people with different complementary skills and knowledge, who will work in solidarity to achieve the expected objectives. They should be actors involved in tourism activity who demonstrate intention and capacity for the management of Local Sustainable Tourism.

### **Step 3. Creation of the Local Sustainable Tourism Subgroup**

In this process, meetings of local actors identified in the previous step, involved in the development of tourist areas and their area of influence, are arranged. Work is done on the change of paradigm on the conception of current tourism and focuses on Local Sustainable Tourism, on a small scale. The actors that make up the Local Sustainable Tourism Subgroup are selected by the members of the Municipal Group for Local Development, headed by the CAM, a technical body that promotes the use of endogenous and exogenous resources and the articulation of local actors, under the existing legal regulatory framework. This group preferably has municipal jurisdiction and governs its operation through the functions, duties and rights that each actor has.

The Local Sustainable Tourism Subgroup is made up of representatives of local stakeholders, including public, private, institutional, environmental management specialists, land planning and management specialists, cultural heritage specialists, and members of the Municipal University Center (CUM in Spanish), among others. It is presided over, preferably, by the Mayor of the CAM or a designated official. Its members are renewed whenever necessary and those who always show an adequate willingness to collaborate with local tourism development are kept.

### **Step 4. Actors training**

The training of actors is systematic, but includes, at first, the sensitization of them to the concept of small-scale Local Sustainable Tourism. This training includes the positive and negative impacts that the development of this activity brings from the ecological, social and economic perspective; in addition, it integrates all the actors

involved under a coherent concept of tourism development, creating a thought of development by and towards the locality.

#### **Step 5. Public policies definition**

The Subgroup of Local Sustainable Tourism, together with the concurrent actors, shapes the proposal of public policies that are presented to the CAM and submitted to the Municipal Assembly for approval; they govern the conduct of tourism development in the municipality where the use of endogenous resources, respect for local culture, a gender focus, the generation of jobs with priorities for the local population, the local economic contribution, the diversification of activities, as well as the local productive linkages.

#### **Step 6. Projection of the tourist destination**

In the projection of the local tourist destination, all the previous steps for the creation of the general development plan are derived. To do this, market and competition studies are taken into account, as well as the tourism trends of the market, the conformation of management plans for the conservation of resources in function of the tourism modalities that are developed under the concept of Local Sustainable Tourism of small scale. The projection of the visitors that will arrive is calculated, the income, costs and perceived utilities are estimated and the commercialization mechanisms are established, conceiving the marketing mix for the commercialization of a Sustainable Local Tourism destination.

### **PHASE II. Small-scale Local Sustainable Tourism Organization**

General objective. To determine the organizational structure based on the identification of processes by the Local Sustainable Tourism Subgroup for the management of small-scale, sustainable local tourism.

This phase is in charge of guaranteeing the organization and coordination of available resources towards activities around the management of Local Sustainable Tourism, of small scale. Interests are reconciled among the actors, determining the relevant modalities based on the evaluation of existing potentialities, and declaring the sources of financing taking into account the characteristics of the local tourism development in question.

#### **Step 7. Reconciliation of actors**

With the actoral conciliation, an adequate agreement among the participants is achieved, in the development of a local tourist activity in a coherent way, impregnating in all the participating actors the organizational responsibility, the creation of a culture towards the integration, respect and mutual help, with greater sense of belonging towards the municipality for the development of the product, by means of the training and the pursuit of the relations among the actors, as well as the identification of the work roles, the conciliation of conflicts, the creation of the conditions for the development of all the activities valued from the ecological, social and interinstitutional sustainability.

#### **Step 8. Valuation of tourist potential**



Through the realization of a diagnosis of the current situation of each locality, the potentialities are evaluated. In the same, the inventory of tourist resources and their evaluation and final selection as attractive are determined, not only from their value, but from their accessibility and availability in time and space. Surveys are developed for public and private sector actors involved in the development of local tourism programs. Potentialities are identified that correspond to the tourist development in the short, medium and long term in the municipality and decision makers are involved in order to act to reduce the weaknesses detected. In general, the local physical-geographical situation is characterized, where the main attractions are identified; in addition, the economic and social dynamics, the existing infrastructure to guarantee water, communication and transportation services are meticulously characterized, describing particularly those tourist activities that, if they already exist, can be linked later.

### **Step 9. Determination of tourist modalities**

The design of the tourist modalities is based on the vocation and potential of the municipality, classified in cultural, natural and historical attractions during the previous step. In function of these, it is determined which generic and specific tourism modality/s and sub-modality/s can be developed and which activities are associated with each one of them, predominating in its elaboration a unique and integral concept in all the components, both conceptual and technical, in function of the tourism typology that responds to the class of tourism and the type of tourism that is adapted to the locality (Sánchez Sosa et al., 2020).

### **Step 10. Identification of financing sources**

A survey is made of the possible sources of financing to which one has access and actions are taken to evaluate the best options and strategies to be used. The source or sources are selected and the mechanisms to be used are defined. The types of sources can be: territorial contribution for local development, state budget, local government's own funds from municipal initiatives for local development, funds from international collaboration, foreign investment and own funds from enterprises or self-employed workers based in the territory. Subsequently, the strategies for financing the initiatives are evaluated (co-financing, inter-territorial and inter-factor financing).

### **Step 11. Organizational design of local tourist units**

The structures, functions and relations that should exist among the members of the local tourist units are determined, creating the organizational culture of the same, taking into account the concept of Local Sustainable Tourism of small scale and the determined modality. The organizational chart, job descriptions, and competency profiles are created, developing the manual of work norms and procedures for all processes presented by the local tourism units.

## **PHASE III. Implementation of small-scale Sustainable Local Tourism**

General objective: to execute the portfolio of offers designed for the marketing of the Local Sustainable Tourism destination, on a small scale.

This phase determines the implementation of projects based on the use of endogenous and exogenous resources and the articulation of local actors, taking into account the investment process of facilities and tourism infrastructure. The local tourist units that respond to the concept of design chosen are structured in correspondence with the determined modality, according to the attractions present in the localities, in addition, the tourist products are designed, the tourist offer is conformed to commercialize the local tourist destination and the values of contribution to the local development by concept of tourist activity are determined.

### **Step 12. Investment process of tourism facilities and infrastructure**

This step includes the pre-investment stage, when the preliminary idea of the investment appears for the study of opportunities. It begins with the technical task and concludes with the elaboration and presentation of the feasibility study. In a second moment, the execution stage is carried out which begins with the obtaining of the executive projects and concludes with the beginning of the execution works. Finally, the investment is concluded with the beginning of the test run and ends with the post investment analysis.

### **Step 13. Design of tourist products and offers**

In this step, which can run parallel to the previous one, the information previously worked on is specified and systematized, and the aim is to recognize concrete actions that need to be carried out to develop local tourist products. The perspective to prioritize is the interactor synergy, involved in the tourist activity, where the local approach prevails. The design of local tourist products responds to the modalities determined by the vocation of the localities, which contain the tourist attractions, the service plant or facilities and the infrastructure, which is taken into account in the design of the dimensions of the tourist product with all of which the tourist offers are designed. In order to achieve all this, documentary analysis, tourist inventory sheets, teamwork, workshops between local, public and private actors, participatory workshops to validate local tourist products and offers are taken into account, thus forming the portfolio of tourist products that make up the final offer to be marketed in the corresponding markets.

### **Step 14. Marketing of the local tourist destination**

In this step, concrete actions to be developed are identified, as well as the time each one takes, the people responsible for carrying them out and the implementation schedule. For the commercialization of the destination, it is required to work on the completion of the marketing mix. From the design of products and local tourist offers, the distribution channels are established, selecting the travel agencies and specialized tour operators that respond to the designed modalities and that will commercialize the local tourist destination, accompanied by an adjusted price, taking into account the calculation of the equilibrium point and the competition, to which a communication strategy is added, in a vertical and horizontal way, that guarantees the positioning of the local destination in the market to end, which guarantees a real and potential market in the time.

In order to promote the development and commercialization of local tourism products, the Subgroup of Local Sustainable Tourism is considered the collective management body, through which the necessary actions for the use of endogenous

and exogenous resources and the articulation of local actors linked to the sector are coordinated, monitored and evaluated. It is the Subgroup that has the authority to make decisions on the acceptance or not of a local tourism product or offer.

### **Step 15. Contribution of tourist utilities to local development**

From the conception of local development, the providers of Local Sustainable Tourism start from the principle of contributing to the local economy, with part of the net profits obtained, the proportion of which is agreed upon between the municipal government and the local tourist unit. These are destined to new local development projects and to the solution of the main problems determined in the Municipal Development Strategies, with priority given to those within the area of influence where the tourist destination is anchored. This is one of the aspects that identifies and differentiates this model from those of conventional tourism, that is, its local economic spillover.

### **PHASE IV. Evaluation and control of Local Sustainable Tourism**

General objective: To evaluate the impact of small-scale sustainable local tourism management through a system of indicators.

This phase closes the methodological cycle with the creation of a system of indicators and its application, including the study of the life cycle of the local tourist destination to enable, in a systemic way, the feedback of the procedure and to be able to elaborate the plans of corrective actions.

### **Step 16. Creation of a system of indicators**

A set of indicators is created with their measurement and evaluation criteria, taking into account the particularities and relevance of the information in the municipality. Information processing is evaluated as: unsatisfactory, satisfactory and optimal. The measurement criteria are expressed in ranges of percent, number and tendency, which facilitates and speeds up its determination. The output of the indicators measures the dynamics of Sustainable Local Tourism, of small scale, from the ecological, social, economic and institutional perspective. This measurement by indicators allows for the correction of the procedure in its own application, which admits the adjustment of its phases and steps, with the purpose of achieving greater effectiveness in the commercialization of the local tourist destination and its consequent positioning in accordance with the designed tourist modalities.

### **Step 17. Application of the indicator system**

The indicators are applied and evaluated on a regular basis. The Local Sustainable Tourism Subgroup studies the indicators and measures their behavior. In the first instance, this sub-group, together with previously selected experts, creates a catalog with the selected indicators, which show the behavior in the management of Local Sustainable Tourism, on a small scale, in order to quantify the local indicators. Many indicators are universal, but others are elaborated in correspondence with the particularities of each locality.

The selected indicators are compared with respect to each dimension of sustainability, which is done by tourism experts, accompanied by the Local Sustainable Tourism Subgroup.

### **Step 18. Life Cycle Study of local tourist destinations**

This study allows us to evaluate, as a whole, with the indicators determined above, what stage the local tourist destination is at. This triangulation of information allows making accurate decisions to rejuvenate the product or keep it in maturity, adding value to the offers that compose it, evaluating the competitive advantages and developing strategies in terms of marketing mix. The behavior of the competition and the market, as well as its trends, are continuously studied. The stages of the life cycle provide the evolution of the destination for decision making in its marketing and its final positioning in the market.

### **Step 19. Feedback**

The results of the implementation of the procedure are collectivized through workshops and other forms of socialization of the results, in order to establish corrective actions and to better adjust the model in this feedback process.

It is important to consider that the feedback is constant throughout the process of implementation of the procedure, which allows: replacement, modification, analysis of strategies for Local Sustainable Tourism, small-scale, aimed at the process of continuous improvement in its management.

### **Step 20. Development of corrective action plans**

The development of a plan containing corrective actions, formulated by all the participating actors, led by the Local Sustainable Tourism subgroup, is focused on the solution of the problems detected in the process of developing small-scale Local Sustainable Tourism. This step constitutes a tool for continuous improvement and sustainability for the management of the model.

In short, the proposal of Local Sustainable Tourism is relevant to the context in which the world moves and, in particular, the tourist destination of Cuba. It is consubstantial for the municipal autonomy and the decentralization process that is taking place in the country. It represents an opportunity for the localities with tourist potential, which can revalue their tourist heritage in the same way they manage it, directly producing a local income that benefits the economy and the quality of life of the population at that scale.

Accordingly, the model is a tool that allows the implementation of tourism development at the local level. Its methodological value gives it full applicability by the actors involved in the process. Similarly, its multidimensional basis makes it possible to take into account all the elements of sustainability for an adequate management of Local Sustainable Tourism.

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**Conflict of interest:**

Authors declare not to have any conflict of interest.

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The authors have participated in the writing of the paper and the analysis of the documents.



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