

## Tourism from culture. Contribution to local development

## Turismo desde la cultura. Contribución al desarrollo local

## Turismo através da cultura. Contribuição para o desenvolvimento local



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## ABSTRACT

Cultural tourism has not been free of contradictions in its evolution as a scientific discipline. The aim of this article is to provide a cultural basis for the contributions of tourism to local development on the basis of several initiatives related to the nature modality. The historical-logical, inductive-deductive and synthesis analysis methods were used to study the evolution of the concept of cultural tourism. The empirical methods used consisted of the collection and analysis of primary sources, the unstructured interview and the anthropological genealogy. As a result, the main contributions of tourism from culture through the pilot experiences of the Local Tourist Centers are presented. By way of conclusion, the value of culture as a resource for the implementation of strategic proposals for local development at the municipal level, in terms of tourism, is confirmed.

**Keywords:** tourism; culture; local development; nature tourism; local tourist center

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## RESUMEN

El turismo cultural no ha estado exento de contradicciones en su evolución como disciplina científica. El objetivo del presente artículo consiste en fundamentar, desde la cultura, las contribuciones del turismo al desarrollo local sobre la base de varias iniciativas relacionadas con la modalidad de naturaleza. Se empleó el método histórico-lógico, el inductivo-deductivo y el de análisis síntesis, con el fin de estudiar la evolución del concepto de turismo cultural. Los métodos empíricos utilizados consistieron en el de recopilación y análisis de las fuentes primarias, la entrevista no estructurada y la genealogía antropológica. Como resultado, se exponen las principales contribuciones del turismo desde la cultura a través de las experiencias piloto de los Centros Turísticos Locales. A modo de conclusión, se constata el valor de la cultura como recurso para la puesta en práctica de propuestas estratégicas de desarrollo local a nivel de municipio, en materia turística.

**Palabras clave:** turismo; cultura; desarrollo local; turismo de naturaleza; centro turístico local

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## RESUMO

O turismo cultural não tem estado livre de contradições em sua evolução como disciplina científica. O objetivo deste artigo é fornecer uma base cultural para as contribuições do turismo ao desenvolvimento local com base em várias iniciativas relacionadas com a modalidade natureza. Os métodos de análise histórico-lógica, indutivo-dedutiva e síntese, foram utilizados para estudar a evolução do conceito de turismo cultural. Os métodos empíricos utilizados consistiram na coleta e análise de fontes primárias, entrevistas não estruturadas e genealogia antropológica. Como resultado, as principais contribuições do turismo baseado na cultura são apresentadas através das experiências-piloto dos Centros Turísticos Locais. Em conclusão, o valor da cultura como recurso para a implementação de propostas estratégicas de desenvolvimento local em nível municipal, em termos de turismo, é confirmado.

**Palavras-chave:** turismo; cultura; desenvolvimento local; turismo de natureza; centro turístico local

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## INTRODUCTION

An examination of tourism from culture must start from the adoption of a conceptual stance towards the concept of cultural tourism through the fragmented analysis of the terms that make it up, which allows to somehow circumvent the difficulty of finding an "abundance of definitions of what tourism is" (Francesch, 2004, p. 5) and the difficulty "of defining culture in a precise way, with words" (Lage Dávila, 2018).

However, an initial theoretical immersion allows to verify the convergences between the two, as they are not restricted to a typology or sub-modality conditioned by the desire to enjoy a site with a wealth of heritage. Tourism will be, then, an area of scientific knowledge in permanent construction, as it is closely related to culture since its most remote origins.

The first missionaries, chroniclers and commercial agents who ventured into the New World were the pioneers of the protohistory of tourism (Francesch, 2004) as they experienced, in contact with nature and its inhabitants, the excitement of what they

considered strange and exotic. Their letters and travel diaries will be the first descriptions of experiences where the pleasure of enjoyment and contemplation were part of those initial explorations.

In the 40s of the last century, tourism acquires a *status* as a scientific discipline when in "1941 Walter Hunziker and Kurt Krapf founded in Switzerland, the Institute of Tourism Research at the University of St. Gallen and Bern" (Ascanio, 2010, p. 634) and the geographer Živadin Jovičić establishes the term *tourismeology* in the 1960s, socialized in a journal under the same name in 1972, by conceiving it as a multidisciplinary process comprising economic, political, social, environmental, historical, geographical, anthropological, artistic, educational, communicational and psychological dimensions.

In it, they express a "sum of the relationships and interactions that occur between any actor, any activity or any product at a given time and space, in order to attract, welcome and provide activities to occasional citizens in it" (Velasco González, 2013), a statement in which they reflect two basic elements present in culture: the diverse in space and time. The first in the displacement and the second in the enduring. The change in location from one place to another, distinct, different, places otherness as the central core of culture, one of the expressions of the imprecision of the concept of cultural tourism.

To circumvent this limitation, the very concept of culture (Unesco, 1967, as cited in Juliá, 2016), offers a roadmap by defining it as:

(...) the set of distinctive spiritual and material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group and that encompasses, in addition to the arts and literature, ways of life, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

The set of activities that the tourist carries out outside his environment includes certain practices that he exercises during the contact, in the first place, with a subject carrying those systems of values, beliefs, heritage, traditions, which result of that spiritual production constitutes a tourist attraction for its symbolic and practical meaning. As a product, of course, it can generally be identified with craft objects, costumes and dance instruments, religious trousseau, traditional buildings, ancestral farming techniques, a

reason that inspires the definition provided by the National Council for Culture and the Arts of Chile (2015), which conceives it on the basis of:

(...) that special type of tourism that incorporates cultural, social and economic aspects in its supply and demand of goods and services. It seeks to make economically and socially profitable the local space or place where it is developed and focuses on the fact that people travel with the intention of developing tourist activities that allow them to approach and understand different cultures. That is, to know lifestyles, customs, traditions, festivities, history, architecture and monuments of the place visited.

Despite highlighting the importance of cultural diversity, the above definition shows the ambivalence of the concept of cultural tourism when it mentions the presence of a "cultural aspect." The latter sectorializes the cultural to an area where tourism is part of a whole. Aren't traditions, lifestyles and history also transferred to a different space by the tourist, with different language, ways of acting and representations of reality?

Heritage, for example, is the attraction towards which the tourist's activity is most directed when approaching the cultural in the urban modality of tourism. What type of tourism are we facing when we contemplate the constructions, streets and buildings? Cultural, Urban or Urban and Cultural Tourism? This does not deny, of course, the necessary classifications that studies of this type demand, although authors such as Cardoso, Collado, Pérez and Rodríguez (2019, p. 57), conceive the cultural in integration with the rural as it is in Viñales, Pinar del Río, where there exist within this modality, ways of "life, performances and presence of peasant and vernacular culture" or Cabrera and Cabrera (2020), when using, for the case of the Sumidero Popular Council, Minas de Matahambre, a classification where resources are identified that are differentiated by their historical-cultural, rural and nature richness.

Something similar occurs in the definition of cultural tourism (UNWTO, 2017, as cited in Espeso Molinero, 2019), where reference is made to "tangible and intangible cultural products" and which, in addition, identify it with:

(...) a type of tourism activity in which the essential motivation of the visitor is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination.

These attractions/products relate to a set of distinctive intellectual, spiritual and emotional material characteristics of a society encompassing arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and living cultures with their lifestyles, value, system, beliefs and traditions.

To conceive within this activity the consumption of the products generated by these "living cultures", places, of course, the bearer of culture as a key actor in the cycle learning-discovery, experimentation-consumption, which characterizes the tourist practice, however, its results are reduced to that "set of distinctive features" present in the arts, architecture, heritage, beliefs and traditions. Does the above define the existence of cultural tourism or tourism from culture? Are we not in the presence of the same tautology, present in the previous concept, when defining a cultural tourism that refers to cultural products?

In summary, cultural tourism constitutes an accepted meaning by the academy in view of the existence of its urban, natural and rural profile, an issue that highlights the richness of the concept of tourism. A tourism from the cultural, without pretending to supplant the concept of cultural tourism, allows to operate in the diffuse limits that establishes any of its variants, where the cultural, no longer seen as dimension or type, resides in an integrating conception of this type of activity where the human being, its subjectivity and practice associated in all transforming action in function of a sustainable change is located as center. Hence the objective of this article, which is to base, from culture, the contributions of tourism to local development, on the basis of several initiatives related to the nature modality.

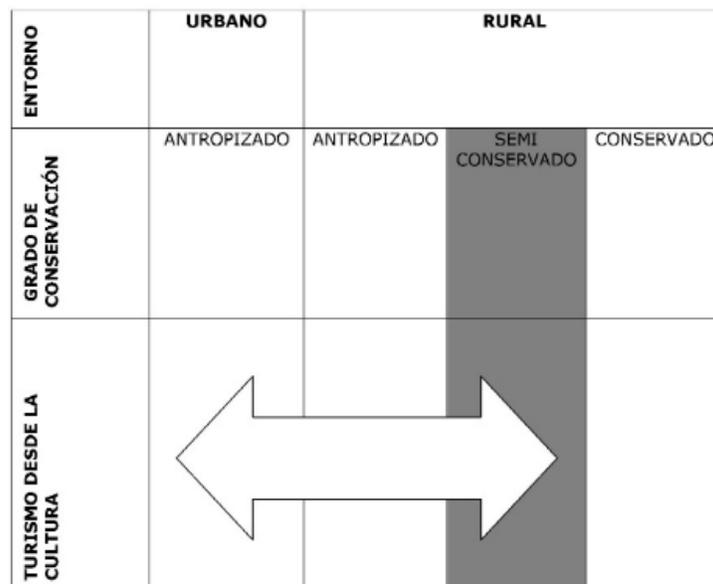
## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The methods used, belonging to the qualitative paradigm, were adjusted to the objective of the research. The theoretical methods were based on the historical-logical, inductive-deductive and synthesis analysis, with the help of the empirical method of collection and

analysis of primary sources, which made it possible to study the evolution of the concept of cultural tourism, the limitations and successes in its formulation, in order to support the presence of tourism from culture. The ethnographic was used during the access to the studied communities through semi-structured interviews to several subjects of the entrepreneurial and institutional sector. The non-structured one was applied with the consent of its members, to a family of assembled typology, that which is reconstituted on the basis of the union of the parents and the descendants of both or of one of them, which processing, through an anthropological genealogy, made possible the interpretation of the obtained data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The cultural underlies any tourism modality, represented with a transition strip mediated by human activity, whether in an urban or rural environment, with different levels of anthropization and conservation. The rural, for example, in forest areas contains potentials for tourism development with a multisectoral, integral, multidisciplinary and participatory approach (Rodríguez Martínez et al., 2020), expression of a strategic thinking where culture is a transversal process, as represented in figure 1.



**Fig. 1** - Example of transversality of culture in tourism

Source: Prepared by the authors

An example of this can be found in the experiences in the field of local development, focused on the application of science and innovation from culture in tourism, through the government-university-enterprise alliance, as a way to stimulate this activity.

The insertion in 2015 of the municipalities of Los Palacios, Consolación del Sur, La Palma, Pinar del Río and Viñales, in the Articulated Platform for Integral Territorial Development (Padit in Spanish), contributed to the positioning of local development as a strategic issue in 2016, where through the Center for Management Studies, Local Development, Tourism and Cooperativism (CE-GESTA in Spanish) of the University of Pinar del Río, the advisory and accompaniment to the provincial government and municipalities in the design, management, monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the Municipal Development Strategies was executed, where culture is included as a working tool in the pilot phase of the Local Tourist Centers (CTL in Spanish) located in La Palma and Guane.

The CTL are based on an international experience of small-scale tourism, which departs from the traditional model associated with a hotel infrastructure with wide coverage of accommodation in sun and beach scenarios. Under a bioclimatic conception in its construction in harmony with the natural environment, the CTL respond to the concept of nature tourism where culture is an added value in the environment where a rural setting predominates in the municipalities of La Palma and Guane.

The first, located in a wooded area nuanced by an abundant biological diversity and the second, located in an area of karst relief with a characteristic landscape related to slave resistance and peasant traditions. Its close link with the agroforestry enterprise group, non-state management forms, institutions and communities, constitutes an opportunity for the reactivation of the endogenous potentialities present in the municipalities and popular councils on the basis of a local tourism development program that is part of the Municipal Development Strategy.

In the design of the CTL, different stakeholders were involved, among them, the Popular Council, with different socio-community initiatives. This made it possible to incorporate the popular knowledge accumulated for generations in the conception of the CTL "Guacamaya", in La Palma and "Rocío del Sol", in Guane, in coordination with the Agroforestry Group, an enterprise belonging to the Ministry of Agriculture; the University

of Pinar del Río; the Municipal University Center and the Government, as a response to a vision of local development where innovation reaches a high level of socialization, by incorporating the creative capacity of the community as a tool that guarantees the effective impact of any initiative from the economic, environmental, socio-cultural or institutional point of view. In this sense, from the moment the CTL began to take shape, they have functioned as rural tourism from the perspective of culture.

Under this criterion, the first site, located in the municipality of La Palma, on land belonging to the agroforestry company, close to the elevations of the "Guacamaya" mountain range, from which it takes its name, contains, as a strength, the peculiar landscape that harmonizes with the productive traditions associated with the cultivation of the land and the raising of large and small livestock, an attraction of high demand by tourism focused on the consumption of cultural products.

The second site, belonging to the agroforestry enterprise "Macurije", called "Rocío del Sol", named after a carnivorous plant (*Drosera capillaris*), as shown in figure 2, is the expression of how the orography, hydrography and flora are used, together with the abundant toponymy of aboriginal antecedent, reserve to be used to identify each of the lodging rooms.



**Fig. 2** - Specimen of Rocío del Sol (*Drosera capillaris*), in the slate mountains, Guasimal river basin, Guane municipality, Pinar del Río

Source: Image taken by Professor Jorge Freddy Ramirez Perez in 2018

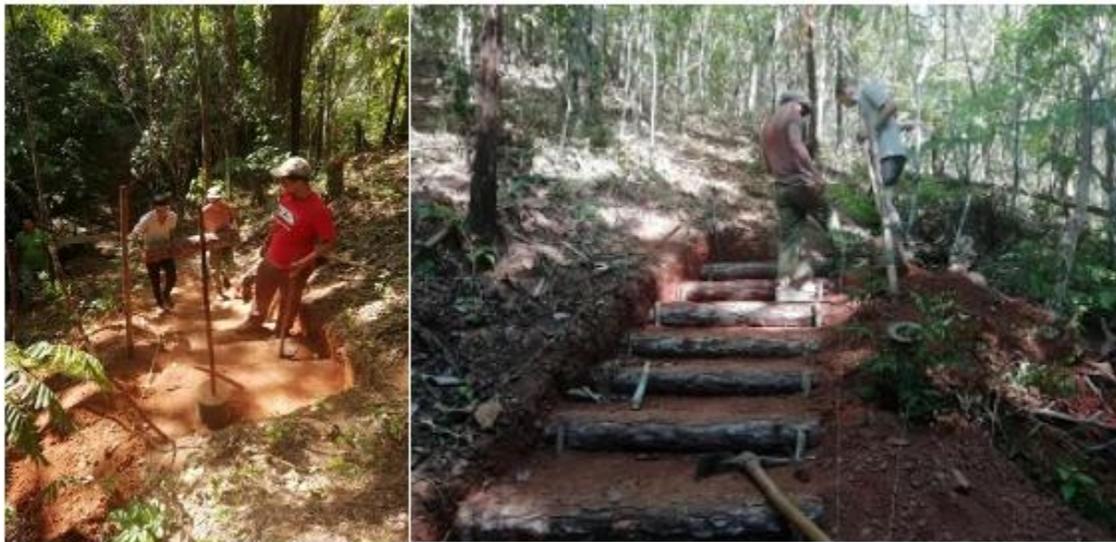
With a constructive typology based on sustainable bioclimatic criteria, harmony with the natural environment and moderate investment, it takes advantage of the culture and traditions of the local people in the use of materials obtained, fundamentally, from pine and palm trees, together with the skills and abilities that require the use of these materials for the construction of these sites, a typical culture that characterizes the peasant housing, in tune with the demands of rural tourism as shown in third dimension, the design of the two CTL, La Guacamaya and Rocío del Sol, in figure 3.



**Fig. 3** - Representation in third dimension of the CTL "Guacamaya" and "Rocío del Sol"

Source: Elaborated by Professor Jorge Freddy Ramírez Pérez

In this regard, the awareness-raising workshops, as a participatory tool based on the meetings held with the local government and agroforestry enterprise managers, enabled the articulation with key stakeholders in the design phase of the CTL. In its implementation, human capital is predominantly composed of a population residing in the community, largely of youth age (Fig. 4), resident in the municipality, source of employment in the face of an unemployment rate in 2018 of 1.1 in La Palma and 1.0 in Guane, according to the National Bureau of Statistics and Information (Onei, 2019) sustaining, in addition, the sense of belonging towards the intervened area as a guarantor of sustainability of the projects under implementation during the construction of the access circuits to the built facilities, in harmony with the natural relief and with a maximum use of the landscape.

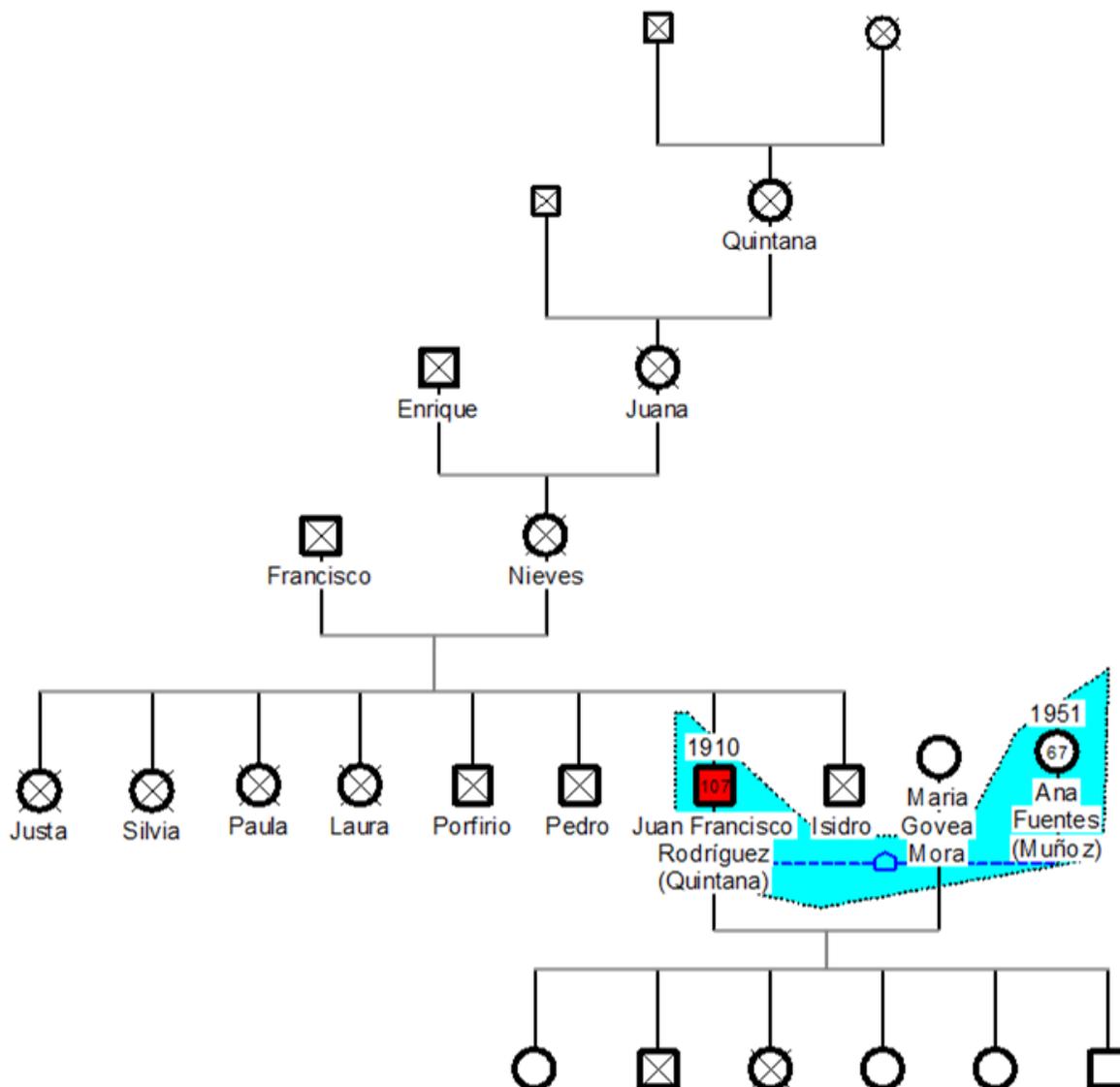


**Fig. 4** - Young people belonging to Agroforestry enterprise La Palma in the construction of the CTL "Guacamaya"

Source: Image taken by Professor Jorge Freddy Ramirez Perez in 2021

In interviews with the autochthonous population, other cultural potentialities present in the community were detected. An example of this would be the exchange held with a family from the Juan Gómez community, headed by a 107-year-old centenarian man named Juan Francisco Rodríguez Quintana.

From the sustained dialogue, it was possible to confirm his aboriginal ancestry of Taino filiation through his mother, the stability of his permanence in his place of birth, known as "El Internado", whose ancestral durability classifies him as the bearer of a culture by possessing valuable data preserved in his historical memory, transmitted orally through the peasant tenth, legends and anecdotes related to the war of independence. In addition, the cultivation of tobacco and the practice of herding cattle, from which they obtained a balanced diet of meat and milk along with the consumption of viands, associated with their advanced age. A cultural resource that complements the existing tourist attraction in the community where this family lives. These data were enriched with the interpretation of the anthropological genealogy made to this social group, as shown in figure 5.



**Fig. 5** - Family tree of Juan Francisco Rodríguez Quintana

Source: Prepared by Professor Silfredo Rodríguez Basso

It was possible to identify the assembled or mixed typology of this family, as four of his children lived together; out of six, two of them were deceased, conceived from his first union with María Govea Mora (now deceased) and the rest with the descendants of his current spouse, Ana Fuentes Muñoz, 67 years old (Fig. 6).



**Fig. 6** - Juan Francisco's family (center) and the tourism assessment team (far right and left), Guane municipality, Pinar del Río

Source: Picture taken by Commercial Radio Television team members in 2018

The house in which they live, made with traditional materials from cane guano, wooden walls and polished cement floor, responds to a vernacular peasant architecture, with an interior furniture, composed of some traditional armchairs and chairs, This is evidence of the existence in this family of skills and abilities that are required for the construction of the model type of room to be built, which translates into endogenous capacities present in this family, taken advantage of in practice through the participation of the indigenous population in the initial materialization of the CTL as a contribution to the local development.

The CTL constitute a proposal committed to the local economy which fundamental basis lies in the conception of tourism from culture, what enables the diversification of the productive activity and the empowerment of the community, a propitious scenario for the generalization of this experience at the territorial level.

By way of conclusion, tourism from culture makes it possible to understand its systemic and transversal nature, by integrating different dimensions in order to promote tourism activity based on the use of cultural potentialities in the strategic management of the local development, far beyond the simple enjoyment of heritage or the exchange with the inhabitants of the community.

The CTL constitute an innovative contribution to rural tourism based on the participation of various actors committed to municipal development under a sustainable environmental concept with an impact on the improvement of the quality of life of the population.

Although a conception of cultural tourism predominates from a vision of heritage as in the cases of Havana, Santiago de Cuba and Sancti Spiritus, as the most extended experience, the CTL maximize on a small scale the expression of culture within the tourist activity, having demonstrated its feasibility as a contribution to local development from the systemic and integrating vision of a culture that transcends in the tourist activity.

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**Conflict of interest:**

Authors declare not to have any conflict of interest.

**Authors' contribution:**

*Silfredo Rodríguez Basso and Jorge Freddy Ramírez Pérez* designed the study, analyzed the data and prepared the draft.

*Silfredo Rodríguez Basso, Jorge Freddy Ramírez Pérez and Iverilys Pérez Hernández* were involved in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data.

All the authors reviewed the writing of the manuscript and approve the version finally submitted.



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