

Original article



Integrated tourism management of natural, cultural and historical resources in the municipality of Manatí, Cuba

La gestión turística integrada de recursos naturales, culturales e históricos del municipio Manatí, Cuba

A gestão turística integrada dos recursos naturais, culturais e históricos do município de Manatí, Cuba

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary tourism dynamics demand the integrated management of resources in such a way that they can satisfy social, economic and esthetic needs, while respecting local cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life-support systems. The objective of the research was to design a tourism product based on the integrated management of natural, cultural

and historical resources in the municipality of Manatí, Las Tunas. For its development, the following methods were used: analytical-synthetic, inductive-deductive, systemic-functional-structural, observation, interview and assessment by specialists. As a result, an integrated tourist product was designed, called "*Manatí, an unique experience*", oriented towards the Canadian market and to commercialize the natural, cultural and historical attractions that have not been currently valued in the municipality of Manatí, which contributes to local development and to strengthen the tourist management of Las Tunas destination in eastern Cuba. The assessment of the product carried out by specialists showed that the product is relevant and of great value.

Keywords: attractiveness; tourism product design; tourism inventory; resource; tourism.

RESUMEN

La dinámica turística contemporánea exige la gestión integrada de los recursos de forma que puedan satisfacer las necesidades sociales, económicas y estéticas, respetando al mismo tiempo la integridad cultural local, los procesos ecológicos esenciales, la diversidad biológica y los sistemas que sostienen la vida. El objetivo de la investigación fue diseñar un producto turístico a partir de la gestión integrada de recursos naturales, culturales e históricos en el municipio Manatí del destino Las Tunas. Para su desarrollo se emplearon los métodos: analítico-sintético, inductivo-deductivo, sistémico-estructural funcional, observación, entrevista y valoración por especialistas. Como resultado se diseñó un producto turístico integrado, denominado "*Manatí, an unique experience*", orientado hacia el mercado canadiense y a comercializar los atractivos naturales, culturales e históricos que no han sido puestos en valor actualmente en el municipio Manatí, lo que contribuye al desarrollo local y a fortalecer la gestión turística del destino Las Tunas en el oriente cubano. La valoración del producto realizada por especialistas arrojó que el producto es pertinente y de gran valor.

Palabras clave: atractivo; diseño de producto turístico; inventario turístico; recurso; turismo.

RESUMO

A dinâmica turística contemporânea exige a gestão integrada dos recursos de forma a satisfazer as necessidades sociais, econômicas e estéticas, respeitando simultaneamente a integridade cultural

local, os processos ecológicos essenciais, a diversidade biológica e os sistemas que sustentam a vida. O objetivo da investigação foi conceber um produto turístico a partir da gestão integrada de recursos naturais, culturais e históricos no município de Manatí, no destino Las Tunas. Para o seu desenvolvimento, foram utilizados os métodos: Analítico-sintético, Indutivo-dedutivo, Sistêmico-estrutural funcional, Observação, Entrevista e Avaliação por especialistas. Como resultado, foi concebido um produto turístico integrado, denominado "*Manatí, an unique experience*", orientado para o mercado canadiano e para a comercialização dos atrativos naturais, culturais e históricos que não foram valorizados atualmente no município de Manatí, o que contribui para o desenvolvimento local e para fortalecer a gestão turística do destino Las Tunas no oriente cubano. A avaliação do produto realizada por especialistas revelou que o produto é pertinente e de grande valor.

Palavras-chave: atrativo; design de produto turístico; inventário turístico; recurso; turismo.

INTRODUCTION

Modern tourism products must increasingly include local elements representative of cultural and natural heritage without detracting from their traditional character, since tourists are becoming increasingly selective in choosing where to spend their vacations and are frequently looking for experiences that change the way they relate to the planet.

New trends and new audiences, coupled with new technologies, are generating transformations in tourism, both by disintermediation processes, as well as by the co-production of places and experiences built collaboratively by the multiple agents involved. Fernandes (2019) analyzed the emergence of the sharing economy, with which new ways of relationship between host and visitor open up, and where the concept of hospitality is transformed. The processes of urban touristification, understood as the cultural, social, economic, physical, political and environmental transformations, originated by the arrival of tourism in cities, acquire a new dimension. Formal models are broken and tourism opens up to new spaces, transforming neighborhoods into scattered centers of tourist lodging.

With the proper management of new technologies and trends, resources must be better managed, so that they can be conserved and revalued, and at the same time put into practice to guarantee the development of tourism itself, provide resources to the State for the realization of economic and

social projects, rescue and, finally, maintain both natural attractions and cultural and historical heritage. Because of its importance, the characteristics of nature tourism will be explained below.

The World Tourism Organization (OMT, 1998) adopted the following definition of nature-based tourism: "Responsible travel that conserves the natural environment and sustains the well-being of local people. It ranges from small groups of people with a special eco-interest in nature that may include a serious study of a particular subject, to large numbers of ordinary people who, in a vacation location, wish to incorporate a day trip to a nature reserve or similar place as part of their entertainment or relaxation".

Three main products can be identified in nature tourism: ecotourism (practiced in more or less preserved natural settings), rural tourism or agrotourism (practiced in agro-productive rural areas) and adventure tourism in those activities that are also practiced in the natural environment.

The macro purpose of nature tourism is to develop plans for the conservation and protection of the environment. And it is from this objective that its importance is derived, since it represents a very valuable economic resource, not only for the natural areas, but also for the different communities that inhabit that particular geographic space.

Nature tourism is a tool for increasing the development levels of communities through the application of methodologies that allow the design of tourism products integrated with other modalities, such as cultural tourism.

Cultural tourism offers great possibilities for study in relation to the most diverse areas of knowledge, presents a potential for disseminating and strengthening the culture and history of the receiving environment itself, and constitutes a promising activity.

Cultural tourism offers the very important possibility of preserving the identity of a given locality. Culture must be adapted for tourism and tourists, or vice versa. It is necessary to develop specialized products to highlight the cultural characteristics of a place.

Cultural tourism is becoming increasingly important because it allows the deployment of activities related to the visit to places of interest for their gastronomy, culture, customs, among other unique aspects, which are leaving behind the sun and beach tourism. In this context, cultural tourism is

consolidating as an important means of development and emancipation of tourist destinations. In general, these authors see cultural tourism as one of the fundamental axes for designing integrated tourism products that allow tourists to live unique experiences of traditions and customs different from those of their places of origin.

The attraction generated by cultural resources, if linked to the natural environment, can be capable of generating positive emotions that make cultural tourism and nature tourism distinctive elements of a destination. As important as cultural tourism is historical tourism, the essence of which will be explained below.

Historical tourism has become an important segment of cultural tourism, driven by visitors' interest in learning about and experiencing the past through its historical sites and monuments (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000). According to Ramírez Sánchez and Rodríguez Marín (2020), historical tourism encompasses the different vestiges of life in the past, archaeological ruins, monuments, parks and squares, cemeteries, rural spaces where various events took place, churches, public buildings, factories and all real estate that was built in the past (ancient or recent).

Historical tourism incites the movement of people through the motivation to visit historical attractions, including monuments, museums, churches, ruins, among others. These authors agree that historical tourism is to live the experience that allows a reunion with the past, giving the possibility of knowing the roots related to the formation and development of a territory.

In line with the above, the Center for Tourism Research, Dissemination and Innovation highlighted the Live Like and Local option, which emphasizes the importance of local contact. Thus, tourists of the third millennium tend to choose less visited destinations and attractions and also tend to prefer a certain closeness with local residents and host communities. This trend offers the authentic taste of experiencing the local culture and living like the locals.

Thus, Cuba established, within its strategic axis of productive transformation and international insertion, to strengthen the competitiveness, diversification and sustainability of the tourism sector in order to promote national culture and increase its linkage with domestic markets and national productions (Mintur, 2020).

By the way, in an exchange with specialists from the Delegation of the Ministry of Tourism (Mintur) in the province of Las Tunas, it was observed that the creation of new and attractive products that allow the diversification of the offers provided by travel agencies is a line of action to follow, in order to achieve a better positioning in the country, since it is characterized by a short stay tourism, which is why its tourism strategy should involve its municipalities and be able to show the tourist, in a short period of time, its potential as a tourist destination (Ávila Hernández et al., 2021). Thus, the municipality of Manatí, located in the north of the province of Las Tunas, has varied natural resources such as vegetation, warm weather and white sand beaches, which are characteristic of the north of the island. Its main tourist facilities are: Camping Cerro de Caisimú, Extrahotelera Lago Azul, which has a lake with medicinal properties, Camping Playa Los Pinos, Restaurant Argelia Libre, Restaurant Las Caobas and Bar-Cafeteria Parador La Rotonda. In addition, the soccer stadium and the "Roque Ríos" baseball stadium are distinguished for their sports facilities.

This municipality has insufficient tourism infrastructure and little variety of products; human resources in the tourism sector are scarce and do not have a competent level of training to provide high-standard services to clients. The development of natural resources is incipient, specifically geomorphological resources, which constitute a potential for tourism development in the territory. The strategic analysis carried out by Ávila Hernández et al. (2021), regarding Manatí's potential for tourism development, yielded a key result area focused on the creation of new tourism products, an aspect that constitutes one of the theoretical foundations of this research.

As a result of the study of the natural, cultural and historical potential, reflected in the preliminary diagnosis carried out in the municipality of Manatí, it was also determined that there are insufficiencies in the tourism management of the territory that do not correspond to the current requirements to achieve an integrated tourism offer that contributes to promote the development of the sector. Among the aspects that limit and require treatment for its transformation are:

- Ineffectiveness of the public and private administration to achieve an integrated and participatory management that favors the tourism development of the territory.
- Deficiency in the variety, quantity and quality of tourism offers and services at the local level due to insufficient supply management and number of suppliers.
- Insufficient participation of tourism stakeholders in tourism development.

- Lack of systemic vision in the planning, execution, control and improvement of tourism management at the local level.
- Poor condition of the tourist corridors linking Covarrubias with the region and the tourist development areas of nearby provinces.
- Limitations on investments within the Ministry of Tourism policy.
- Dependence on head offices in terms of marketing policy, unlike other regions with more developed tourism, which promote and market their products directly at fairs and events.
- Lack of organizational culture that orients tourism management towards the integration of tourism modalities.

Finally, the characterization of the natural, cultural and historical value of the municipality of Manatí asserts that it has a high potential for tourism, but despite this, the design and development of integrated tourism products that enhance these values is insufficient, so the need to propose tourism products that integrate natural, cultural and historical resources is emphasized.

The theoretical and practical elements analyzed allowed defining as a research problem: the insufficiencies in the integrated management of natural, cultural and historical resources limit the tourist offer in the municipality of Manatí. In correspondence with the above, the integrated management of tourism products was defined as the object of research and the general objective of the research was: to design a tourism product based on the integrated management of natural, cultural and historical resources in the municipality of Manatí of the Las Tunas destination.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to respond to the identified problem, a research logic was followed based on the new international trends in the conception of integrated tourism products, through a qualitative methodological procedure that allowed the theoretical contextualization in the municipality of Manatí to finally make a concrete proposal based on the management of integrated products in this locality. In the development of the research several theoretical methods were applied, these were:

- Analytical-synthetic: useful in the processing and interpretation of the information obtained from the review of information sources and the experience of the specialists consulted to develop the theoretical, methodological and practical analysis of product design, as well as

the management of integrated tourism products and their problems in the municipality of Manatí.

- Systemic-structural-functional: meritorious in the analysis and decomposition of the object and field of research defined, which allowed to deepen in the conception of integrated tourism products to respond to the problems identified through a concrete proposal, which constitutes an important way of contribution at the local level.

Among the empirical methods used were:

- Observation: carried out to characterize and describe the practical field of study, referred to the design of an integrated tourist product in the municipality of Manatí de Las Tunas.
- Interviews: applied to specialists of the Mintur Delegation in Las Tunas to learn about the problems associated with tourism management in the destination, particularly in Manatí.
- Criteria of specialists: very useful for the evaluation of the proposed product through the criteria of professionals with experience in the tourism sector, for which it was necessary:
 1. Select specialists with a high level of expertise in tourism product management.
 2. Present the product and elaborate a test to know the criteria, relevance and fundamental aspects to be improved.
 3. Process the results issued by the specialists.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section of results and discussion, it is presented the details of the integrated tourism product based on the natural, cultural and historical characterization of the municipality of Manatí, as well as the analysis of the results of its valuation.

The research was based on the methodology proposed by Ramírez Hernández (2019) for the generation of tourism products from the local community, which consists of the following phases:

- I. Tourism inventory and evaluation: In this phase, the participants of the work team were selected, and the main manager was chosen, the planning of the tourism inventory and the evaluation of the natural, cultural and historical potentialities were carried out. In addition, the tourist attractions were evaluated and assessed.

- II. Integrated product design: Ideas were generated and selected, the product, attractions and activities were defined, and competitive advantages were identified (services and equipment, delivery processes, identification and analysis of demand).
- III. Application of the integrated product: The objective of this phase is to implement strategies that allow the commercialization and implementation in practice of the integrated product.

Management of integrated tourism products in the municipality of Manatí

The municipality of Manatí has beautiful beaches whose characteristics it shares with others in the neighboring municipalities of Puerto Padre and Jesús Menéndez, which together make up the northern coast of the province of Las Tunas, with predominant forms of open and closed shells, with fine white sand, gentle or medium slopes, transparent waters and Caribbean climate, with average annual temperatures ranging from 24 ° C to 34 ° C. It is distinguished by natural resources such as: vegetable, animal, geomorphological, hydrological, among others. From the historical point of view, it has traditions and rich history (Lozano Zamora, 2017), which should be taken into account in future projects of tourism package proposals related to some of its resources of tourism value (Ávila Hernández et al., 2021).

The review of the aspects established in nature, cultural and historical tourism allowed for an approach to the natural, cultural and historical potential of the municipality of Manatí, the results of which are shown in table 1.

Table 1. Natural, cultural, and historical potential of the municipality of Manatí

Potential	Result
Natural	High natural potential due to the ecological reserve of La Isleta. Nuevas Grandes Bay has an ecosystem of coral reefs that preserves an important part of its natural wealth (ideal for contemplative diving and the exchange in the depths with wall diving, for the abundance of fish such as yellowtail, barracudas, snappers, cuberas, chernas and crustaceans, also the contemplation of the coral reef, taking underwater photographs and boat rides).
	The beaches facilitate sport fishing, the encounter with nature and adventure in protected areas where the conservation of mangroves and natural beauties can be observed.

Cultural	Of great cultural value for having representative figures of the national culture as the prestigious writer Luz Maria Araujo Perez, who has obtained national and international awards, has publications in various publishing houses nationwide.
	The movement of amateur artists is considered a driving force in cultural programming, with recognition at the municipal, provincial and national levels.
	Among the events that are exponents of cultural and popular traditions are the traditional popular festivals and the Jornadas Cucalambeanas, the Fiesta del Mar, the Jornada de la Cultura de Manatí and the renowned Festival de Música Popular Barbarito Diez Junco.
	The culinary art is eminently traditional and empirical.
Historical	Its main historical value is associated with the sugar industry and the struggles for national liberation. The main town of the present municipality of Manatí was founded in 1912. The largest number of immigrants in Manatí was of Spanish origin, followed by Jamaicans and Haitians, followed by Chinese, Indians, Barbadians and Arabs.
	From its origins it was eminently sugar, and it generated the entry of foreign workers, as well as businessmen to the municipality, who needed to stay during the period in which they were working. Since the 1930's, the "Las Caobas" motel was built in the center of the town, near the central office. Unfortunately, this hotel was destroyed on December 2, 1958 during a military bombing.

Source: Own elaboration

Proposal for an integrated tourism product "*Manatí, an unique experience*"

Based on the analysis of several definitions of tourism products, provided by authors such as Reyes Vargas et al. (2016), García Reinoso and Quintero Ichazo (2018) and Cardet Fernández et al. (2018), referred to above, a tourism product was designed based on the integrated management of natural, cultural and historical resources in the municipality of Manatí in the Las Tunas destination. The product is also supported by the analysis of several authors who have provided methodological tools for the design of integrated tourism products, these were: Peru (2014), Gómez Ceballos (2014), Saravia and Muro (2016), Reyes Vargas et al. (2016), Cardet Fernández et al. (2018), García Reinoso and Quintero Ichazo (2018) and Ramírez Hernández (2019). In addition, the contribution of Ávila

Hernández et al. (2021) on the importance of planning under integrative criteria of ecosystems and social actors was also taken into account in.

The methodology proposed by Ramírez Hernández (2019) for the generation of tourism products from the local community was considered to be the most relevant, and it was chosen to develop the proposal; however, the authors of this research made adjustments for its improvement, based on the ISO 9001:2015 standard, by conceiving process management, inputs and outputs in four phases that correspond to the plan-do-check-act cycle. It was also incorporated the constitution of a trained and committed work team and, finally, that the product, from its integrated conception, is capable of favoring local development. Its graphic representation can be seen in figure 1.

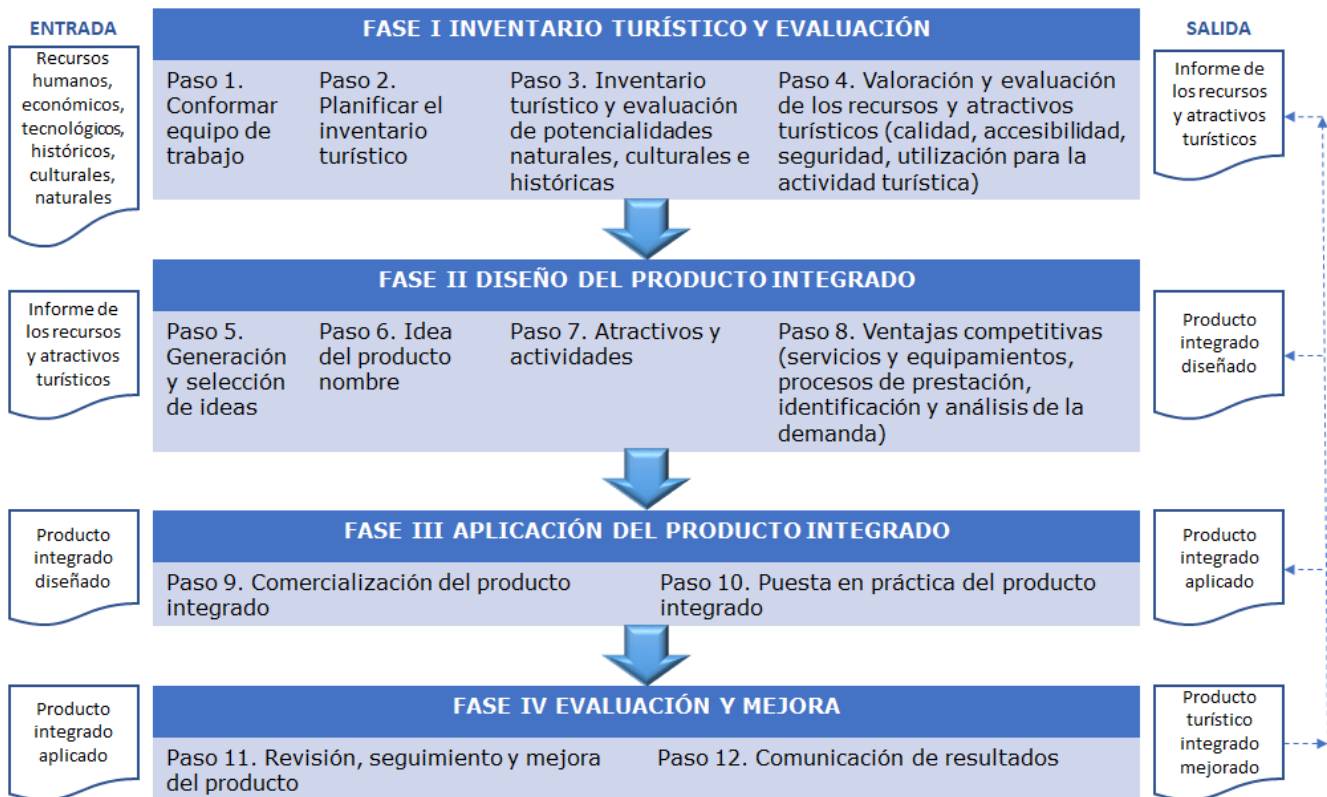


Figure 1. Methodology for developing an integrated tourism product

Source: Own elaboration

As a result of the application of the aforementioned methodology, the integrated tourism product "Manatí, a unique experience" was obtained, the main characteristics of which are described below.

- **Product definition**

The objective of the product "*Manatí, a unique experience*", is to integrate the natural, cultural and historical values of the municipality of Manatí, in a new tourist offer for the Canadian market, the largest entry to the destination. Within the characteristics of this market are the age between 25 to 55 years old; travel is considered the first source of recreation, thus, 90% in the last three years made leisure trips; family income ranges between 26,000 and 50,000 Canadian dollars. The majority decide on their travel destination more than one month in advance. Package tours are the type of travel they are most interested in purchasing. They make the trips accompanied by their pairs or family. The high season for this type of tourism in Cuba is from November to March, with the highest volume in January and a sharp drop in April. Their motivations are: sun and beach, nature, culture and history.

In line with the above, the integrated tourism product consists of living the experience related to the main natural, cultural and historical attractions of the municipality of Manatí in Las Tunas.

- **Attractions and activities**

Tourist resources and attractions in the municipality were identified, taking into account qualities such as accessibility, authenticity and the possibility of carrying out complementary activities. Thus, a program was drawn up that breaks down by days the attractions to be visited, the activities to be carried out, as well as the transfers, as shown in table 2.

Table 2. Program of activities

Day 1
Arrival at Holguín airport. Departure to Las Tunas province. <i>Check-in</i> at Hotel Cadillac. Lunch at La Moncloa Restaurant, where "Kike y Marina" caldosa, typical dish of the province, international seafood, is offered. City tour from the Labor Monument to Plaza Martiana. Meeting with the artist Domingo Alás Rosell, architect and professor, creator of the clocks and solar calendars, among which the Plaza Martiana of Las Tunas stands out, unique in the world, erected in homage to the National Hero of Cuba. The artist will give tourists a tour of the Plaza Martiana where he will explain

how the famous sundial works. Meeting at Casa Iberoamericana de la Décima. Return to the Cadillac Hotel. Dinner at Paladar Imperio.

Day 2

Appreciation of the countryside landscape through a 4x4 Jeep tour from the city of Las Tunas to the "La Georgina" livestock farm in the municipality of Manatí, belonging to the "Antonio Guiteras" Agricultural Company, located in San Miguel de Manatí on the road to Covarrubias in the municipality of Puerto Padre. Here it can be observed the best cattle breeds, producing the largest volumes of meat and milk in the province. Visitors can enjoy a breakfast made with local products such as fresh milk, cheese, fruits, natural juices, coconut water, guarapo, eggs and the process of elaboration and tasting of sugar cane juice or guarapo and appreciation of the breeding of barnyard animals. Horseback riding services are provided with a specialized guide. Guests can enjoy lunch. After returning to the city of Las Tunas, dinner is included at the international restaurant La Bodeguita and free night.

Day 3

Excursion to La Isleta, the best preserved bay ecosystem in the Cuban archipelago (Figures 2 and 3), where tourists can enjoy a short stay at the coal bunker (Figure 4). They will be offered lunch at the flora and fauna ranchon located in front of the sea, and will also be able to enjoy the sun and beach, sports activities and gastronomic offers at the Los Pinos campsite. Night activity: free night to develop activities selected by the clients, but previously authorized by the travel agencies.

Day 4

Bus tour to the town of Manatí, birthplace of the renowned singer Barbarito Diez. It is proposed to visit the kaolin mines, the ruins of the Argelia Libre sugar mill, the Jesús Suárez Gayol museum and the birthplace of Barbarito Diez, singer known as the Golden Voice of Danzón, which functions as a museum where different articles such as scores and pieces of historical value belonging to the singer are exhibited, where they can learn about his life and work as one of the best singers internationally. Finally, they will be transferred to the Brisas Covarrubias Hotel, located on the beach of the same name, nestled on a coastline of 11 km of pristine beaches. The hotel offers: lodging, restaurants, entertainment, currency exchange, store, souvenir shopping, massages, beauty salon, swimming pool, gym, tennis court, billiards, ping pong and water sports (snorkeling, kayaking, sport fishing, sport boats and catamaran).

Day 5
Enjoy the All Inclusive with the possibility of accessing the services included and not included (car and scooter rental, purchase of excursions, among others). Visit to Real Covarrubias. Special dinner on the beach.
Day 6
Tour of the municipality of Puerto Padre, specifically the historic center of the city, the boardwalk, the San José Parish and the export cigar factory: Clients can appreciate the elaboration process of Cuban cigars (a craft that is lost in the memory of the Cuban independence deeds) recognized worldwide and will be offered cigars for optional purchase. Activities: appreciation of the elaboration process, optional purchase of Cuban cigars, exchange with the workers. Then they will be transferred to the province of Holguín for <i>check-out</i> and farewell at the "Frank País" International Airport.

Source: Own elaboration



Figure 2. Corals in La Isleta of Manatí

Source: <https://manatiradio.blogspot.com>



Figure 3. Mangroves in La Isleta of Manatí

Source: <https://www.periodico26.cu/index.php/es/de-las-tunas-2>



Figure 4. Charcoal producers in the town of Los Pinos of Manatí

Source: <https://spanish.xinhuanet.com>

By identifying the target public for the development of the tourism product and analyzing their motivations and interests, the analysis of the existing opportunities for the natural, cultural and historical tourism product to be relevant, competitive and sustainable was completed based on the following:

- High interest by the Ministry of Tourism in the development of circuit products and the growth of the Canadian market on the island.
- Use of the Internet by a high percentage of travelers to select their trips
- Proximity of the province of Las Tunas to Holguin International Airport "Frank País García".
- Services are developed that allow the integration and participation of different companies involved in the tourism activity.
- It contributes to diversify the tourist offer of travel agencies, starting from the exploitation of modalities that are related to history, culture and nature.

This is a new product, which will generate new ventures for the non-state sector that will guarantee production for tourism, and the Municipal Directorate of Municipalities proposes to create new jobs for the environmental hygiene of the municipality, as there will be a greater flow of international and national customers and also in the Mintur will encourage tourism managers to protect the historical, cultural and natural attractions. In this way, more tourism graduates are required from the university and tourism training schools.

The proposal for the tourism product "*Manatí, a unique experience*" was evaluated by seven specialists with expertise in product design and more than 10 years of experience working in the tourism sector. As a result, the product was found to be pertinent by obtaining a score of more than 70% in the designed parameters. Among the suggestions made by the specialists were: to include the sun and beach modality, as this is the main reason for Canadian tourists to travel, to describe in detail the experience with local residents in order to reinforce the authenticity and the natural, cultural and historical values of the municipality, and to strengthen the preparation of the non-state sector to deal with lodging and local restaurants in their ventures.

As a conclusion, the characterization of the natural, cultural and historical value of the municipality of Manatí asserts that it has a high potential for tourism. In spite of this, the design and development of integrated tourism products that enhance these values is insufficient, so it is urged to propose

tourism products that integrate natural, cultural and historical resources to transform the problems identified in the research.

The new integrated product "*Manatí, a unique experience*" was designed for the Canadian market, which highlights the natural, cultural and historical values of the municipality of Manatí, offering a unique and authentic experience in contact with its inhabitants and promoting new ventures for local development.

The evaluation of the product by specialists of the Mintur of Las Tunas and professors of the Department of Tourism of the University of Holguin allowed verifying the relevance and importance of the product, not only for the municipality of Manatí, but also for the destination of Las Tunas, which constitutes a starting point for the improvement of its tourist offer.

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Conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interests.

Authors' contribution

Omar Milanés Carmenate and Migdely Barbarita Ochoa Ávila designed the study, analyzed the data and prepared the draft.

All the authors were involved in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. They also reviewed the writing of the manuscript and approved the version finally submitted.



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