

Original article

Potential of agroforestry enterprises for the development of wellness tourism

Potencialidades de las empresas agroforestales para el desarrollo del turismo de bienestar

Potencial das empresas agroflorestais para o desenvolvimento do turismo de bem-estar



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ABSTRACT

Tourism is a social phenomenon that has evolved over time and stands out for its complexity and variety of economic sectors involved. Although traditional tourism has a greater predominance in the market, alternative tourism has experienced a growing demand as a response to high levels of stress and anxiety in the population. Wellness tourism as a sub-segment of health tourism encompasses physical and spiritual dimensions that contribute to improving the quality of life. The province of Pinar del Río has a representation of landscape units that justify the practice of this activity. The objective of this work is to determine the potentialities of wellness tourism in the Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise that contributes to the management of tourism activities of this sub-modality. Theoretical and empirical methods were used in the research, which facilitated the verification of the problematic situation and provided important elements to contribute to the development of specialized tourism, improving the quality of life of visitors and the community.

Keywords: tourism; wellness tourism; potentialities; quality of life; management of wellness tourism activities.

RESUMEN

El turismo es un fenómeno social que ha evolucionado con el transcurso del tiempo, se destaca por su complejidad y variedad de sectores económicos involucrados. Aunque la modalidad de turismo tradicional tiene un mayor predominio en el mercado, el turismo alternativo ha experimentado una creciente demanda siendo la respuesta ante elevados índices de estrés y ansiedad de la población. El turismo de bienestar como subsegmento del turismo de salud abarca dimensiones físicas y espirituales que contribuyen a mejorar la calidad de vida. La provincia de Pinar del Río cuenta con una representación de unidades de paisaje que justifican la práctica de esa actividad. El objetivo de este trabajo es determinar las potencialidades del turismo de bienestar en la Empresa Agroforestal Macurijes que contribuya en la gestión de actividades turísticas de esta submodalidad. En la investigación fueron utilizados métodos teóricos y empíricos, que facilitaron la constatación de la situación problemática y aportaron elementos importantes para contribuir al desarrollo del turismo especializado, mejora de la calidad de vida de los visitantes y comunidad.

Palabras clave: turismo; turismo de bienestar; potencialidades; calidad de vida; gestión de actividades turísticas de bienestar.

RESUMO

O turismo é um fenômeno social que evoluiu ao longo do tempo e se destaca por sua complexidade e pela variedade de setores econômicos envolvidos. Embora o turismo tradicional tenha maior predominância no mercado, o turismo alternativo tem experimentado uma demanda crescente como resposta aos altos níveis de estresse e ansiedade da população. O turismo de bem-estar, como um subsegmento do turismo de saúde, engloba dimensões físicas e espirituais que contribuem para melhorar a qualidade de vida. A província de Pinar del Río tem uma representação de unidades de paisagem que justificam a prática dessa atividade. O objetivo deste trabalho é determinar o potencial do turismo de bem-estar na Empresa Agroflorestal Macurijes, o que contribui para o gerenciamento das atividades turísticas nessa submodalidade. Foram utilizados métodos teóricos e empíricos na

pesquisa, o que facilitou a verificação da situação problemática e forneceu elementos importantes para contribuir com o desenvolvimento do turismo especializado, melhorando a qualidade de vida dos visitantes e da comunidade.

Palavras-chave: turismo; turismo de bem-estar; potencialidades; qualidade de vida; gestão de atividades de turismo de bem-estar.

INTRODUCTION

In the face of new scenarios that have affected tourism activity, such as the pandemic, new forms of management are needed to find innovative and creative solutions. Rodríguez Jiménez and Martínez Martínez (2022, p. 129) state: "In the midst of the complex situation in which tourism is developing, the management of tourist destinations with a responsible tourism approach becomes more necessary".

Julio Quintana (2020) refers to how management comprises much more than administration and the four phases of the administrative process; it includes other management elements that allow the creation of creative and viable alternatives to achieve the objectives of the institutions. The World Tourism Organization (2007) in its Practical Guide for the Management of Tourism Destinations refers to destination management as the coordinated management of all the elements that make up a tourist destination, whether these are attractions, places of leisure, marketing, access and pricing of these places.

The tourism sector benefits from management models that contribute to an attractive tourist offer and to the development of the economy, so it is important to know that there are several definitions and perspectives on tourism: Acerenza Delgado (2017) mentions how different disciplines have tried to define the concept of tourism and it has had many views in the currents of thought. Hunziker and Krapf (1942) define tourism as: "[...] the set of relationships and phenomena that occur as a result of the displacement and temporary stay of people outside their place of residence, provided that it is not motivated by profit-making reasons". Ledhesma (2018) states that "Tourism is technology, it is education, it is politics, it is nature, it is sport, it is philosophy, it is communication, it is psychology, it is art, it is history... and, in addition, it is economics". Other authors define tourism as "[...] an abstraction, a concept of which we all have different interpretations" (Gurría Di-Bella, 1991, p. 13).

One of the most complete definitions, according to the authors, is the one outlined by the World Tourism Organization (2021), which states: Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon that involves the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal, professional or business reasons. These people are called travelers (who may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism encompasses their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure.

By analyzing the above definitions, it can be affirmed that tourism is a voluntary choice of the place of destination, it is not limited only to travel related to recreational purposes, but the purpose of travel can be diverse and can generate various relationships between the actors involved.

Within the tourism modalities, health tourism is the objective of this research. This tourism modality arose due to different factors such as population aging, the need for greater physical care and the high levels of stress and anxiety. It can be concluded that although it has become a worldwide trend, there is still a lack of knowledge about this modality, the author takes as one of the most complete concepts that of Sáenz Blanco et al. (2020) where she states that: "Health tourism is based on people (potential users) in search of medical or wellness services, outside their country of residence that mainly offer cost flexibility and high quality standards". From this concept, two important elements that define it stand out: physical and mental wellbeing, which is why it has two sub-modalities: medical tourism and wellness tourism.

De la Puente (2015) highlights how wellness tourism is a subsector still unknown, but with great opportunities given its competitive advantages in its natural landscapes, non-invasive relaxation therapies, natural treatments, among others to combat diseases ranging from depression, stress, overweight, among others. "Stress and chronic diseases affect the physical and psychological health of the world's population. Faced with this reality, people seek alternatives, including travel, more precisely to wellness tourism destinations" (Pérez Bonet, 2021).

The lack of connection with nature directly affects human beings, resulting in mental or emotional instability (Plevin, 2020). It can be concluded that wellness tourism as a sub-segment of health tourism encompasses physical and spiritual dimensions that contribute to improving the quality of life. Igeño Cano (2020) points out how loss with outside contact is unnatural.

In Cuba, wellness tourism is a new topic, and there are few studies on the subject. The concept of wellness responds directly to the stress of society itself, which implies a physical and psychological

wear and tear focused on competition, self-improvement and constant productivity, thus reducing the importance of our own life. Inserting wellness tourism as a tourism product would imply improving the lifestyle and quality of life of visitors as well as the community, in addition to raising awareness of the need for this type of activity.

The author considers that there is a lack of technology in the Cuban case that describes the management of wellness tourism in agroforestry enterprises, although there are methodologies such as the one of Rodríguez Martínez et al. (2020) with their proposal for the management of sustainable local tourism on a small scale in Cuban agroforestry enterprises and the one of Magariño Pimentel et al. (2021) for the insertion of agro-tourism into the cooperative sector in the tobacco-growing massif of San Juan y Martínez, however in theory there is nothing on methodologies for the insertion of wellness tourism in agroforestry enterprises.

The typology of the wellness product is based on the province of Pinar del Río, since it has a representation of landscape units that justify the practice of this activity, in addition to the fact that it would be a response to the growing stress and anxiety values in the country. In the municipality of Guane, the "Rocío del Sol" project, located in areas of the Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise, is a Local Tourist Center which, given its natural conditions, becomes an ideal scenario for the development and practice of wellness tourism.

That is why the research is carried out in the Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise, from the conceptual analysis and the particularities that this modality presents, with the purpose of fulfilling the problem: The Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise does not have within its projects the sub-modality of wellness tourism, according to the existing potentialities. The general objective is to determine the potentialities of wellness tourism in the Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise that contributes to the management of tourism activities of this sub-modality.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the development of the diagnosis, the methodology of Mirabal Sarria (2018) was used, which implies an empirical diagnosis, for which it is necessary to resort to secondary and primary sources according to the information needs, as well as to use scientific methods, procedures and techniques to collect, process and analyze information that contributes to the determination of the background linked to the welfare tourism management process and the main people involved in this process.

Each of these steps appropriate to the research is described below:

Step 1. Determination of information needs

The information needs are identified in terms of knowing what are the main regularities of the wellness tourism management process for which it is important to know:

- Potential of the Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise for the development of wellness tourism
- Scope of programs and projects of Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise
- Regulatory legal framework of the Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise
- Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise Development Strategy
- Level of knowledge of the managers of the Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise
- Institutional treatment (policies, programs and projects)
- Level of articulation between actors and structure

Step 2. Definition of information sources

Secondary sources of information: A set of available reports and documents were used for a first approach to the problem.

- Strategy Ministry of Tourism (Mintur)
- Mintur Projects
- Laws and regulations
- Minutes of the Board of Directors of Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise
- Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise Improvement Record
- Macurijes Agroforestry Company Development Strategy
- Minutes of the control committee of the Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise
- Municipal development strategy
- Provincial development strategy

As a complement to the information collected, primary sources of information are also used, applying the measurement method through interview and survey techniques.

Primary information sources: Individual structured interviews were conducted with a duration of approximately 20 minutes, in which each interviewee was able to express their opinions and

considerations about the process of managing wellness tourism in "Rocío del Sol", as well as its progress and limitations at present. The following were interviewed:

- Development Director of Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise
- Responsible for the "Rocío del Sol" Local Tourist Center Project
- Interviews with two international experts

These interviewees were selected based on the information requirements, their accessibility and willingness to collaborate, as well as their responsibilities in the Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise because they lead processes related to the management of wellness tourism and their knowledge of the sub-modality of wellness tourism.

Step 2.1. Sample design

A survey was applied to the members of the Board of Directors, to the total population, its 11 members, which allowed to appreciate the level of knowledge about wellness tourism in the Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise.

Step 3. Design of the formats for data collection.

For the documentary analysis, each of the main documents that guide the process of wellness tourism management and that are necessary for the diagnosis were evaluated in an orderly and particular manner. Based on the elements analyzed above, the individual interview guide was designed. In addition, a survey was designed and applied to members of the enterprise's Board of Directors.

Step 4. Data collection, analysis and processing of the information.

Secondary information sources: For the analysis and processing of the information, the documentary analysis technique was applied where various documents were reviewed in the last five-year period 2018-2022 which allowed:

- To know if wellness tourism is managed in Cuba
- Verify if there are linkages between stakeholders to manage wellness tourism
- To determine whether any projections are evaluated, analyzed and discussed in the different meeting spaces with respect to the potential of wellness tourism
- Verify compliance with development programs and whether they promote wellness tourism

Primary information sources: The survey data were collected and processed in Statistical Package for Social Sciences software version 21, the results of which will be presented later in this document. The most relevant questions for the study were analyzed with numerical and ordinal variables, the latter were weighted to numerical scales to facilitate the analysis of the results.

In order to determine the main potentialities and restrictions it was necessary to use the brainstorming method in a workshop with the presence of different stakeholders, members of the Guane Municipal Administration Council, university professors from all over the country, specialists from Mintur at the territorial and national level, professors from hotel and tourism training centers at the national level, with a total of 28 national stakeholders. After this group work, the information was triangulated, delimiting the main elements resulting from the primary and secondary information sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Macurijes Agroforestry Integral Enterprise was created by means of Resolution No. 9 issued on December 15, 1976 by the extinct Instituto de Desarrollo y Aprovechamiento Forestal, the current denomination of Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise integrated to the Grupo Empresarial Agroforestal that is subordinated to the Ministry of Agriculture (Minag) was given by the Seventeenth resolution of Resolution No. 127 issued on May 13, 2015 by the Minister of Economy and Planning.

Among the projects proposed in the Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise linked to Local Sustainable Tourism, with emphasis on the modalities of Nature Tourism and Rural Tourism, as a contribution to local development are: Local Tourist Center "Rocío del Sol", Local Tourist Center "bosque de piedras" and the Local Tourist Center "punta de la sierra".

The enterprise projected to achieve the objectives, indicators and goals regarding the Local Tourism Center "Rocio del Sol" for 2021, detected as weaknesses the lack of tourism products, with emphasis on the modalities of Nature Tourism and Rural Tourism, in areas of the Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise for which actions were projected to invest in the Local Tourist Center "Rocio del Sol" and contribute to the strengthening and diversification of the capacities of the Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise, in alliance with the government for the use of the forest heritage, linked to the Sustainable Local Tourism, with emphasis in the modalities of Nature Tourism and Rural Tourism.

In the municipality of Guane, the "Rocío del Sol" project, located in areas of the Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise, is a Local Tourist Center which, given its natural conditions, becomes an ideal scenario for the development and practice of wellness tourism.

Elements of tourist interest

These elements can be classified into two types, according to the Land Management Plan (Physical Planning of Pinar del Río, 2013):

Natural attractions:

- Tropical karst landscape and shale heights
- Vegetation
- Fauna
- Cave systems and caves of high speleological value
- Natural viewpoints
- Mineral-medicinal waters

Socio-cultural attractions:

- Agricultural landscapes of the valleys
- Traditional methods of cultivation (mainly tobacco)
- Vernacular architecture
- Cultural manifestations (music, handicrafts, religion, culinary, plastic arts, storytelling, festivities)
- Sites of archaeological and cultural-historical interest

In the Guane region, the predominant relief is undulating, where 45% of the territory is made up of heights and mountains, with 55% of the plains located in the strip near the coast (Onei, 2022). The fauna represents a high degree of endemism and biodiversity conditioned by its geological evolution, in addition to a varied vegetation with mogotes in the territory that are widely represented and forests generally on the edges of the margins of the river currents. In addition, it has archaeological sites of interest such as caves of common type, being notable those of the Bishop and the Cat. It has natural attractions such as forest wealth and tobacco as a traditional method of cultivation, these are the mainstay of the Guane economy.

General diagnostic results

In order to determine the main potentialities and restrictions, it was necessary to brainstorm in a workshop with the presence of different stakeholders, members of the Municipal Administration Council of Guane, university professors from all over the country, specialists from Mintur at the territorial and national level, professors from hotel and tourism training centers at the national level, with a total of 28 national stakeholders. After this group work, the information was triangulated, delimiting the main elements resulting from the primary and secondary sources of information. As a result, the following were obtained:

Potentialities

1. Existence of wellness market demand in different countries, which shows that it is a tourism activity with international demand. Within these regions is Latin America and the Caribbean, where a large percentage of these countries market wellness offers.
2. Existence of wellness tourism on an international scale, in the Cuban context it is a novel topic with great potential for development, especially in agroforestry enterprises.
3. Presence of a regulatory framework that protects the development of tourism activity in Cuba, among them are Law No. 81. Environmental Law, Decree 136. Heritage, Wildlife and its Contraventions, Joint Resolution 1/99 Citma-Mintur-Minag. Nature Tourism, Resolution No. 50/2014 of the Mintur for the development of nature, rural and adventure tourism, Guidelines of the Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution in the period 2017-2021, Provincial Plan of Territorial Ordering, Mintur Development Strategy 2018, Resolution No. 275/2015 of the Mintur, Agreement No. 74/80 of the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers, Resolution No. 146/2018, Decree-Law No. 365 and Decree No. 354, both of 2018 on Agricultural Cooperatives, Resolution No. 29 on Territorial Development 2020.
4. Existence of an extraordinary natural tourism potential, which is part of the province's economic development strategies due to its natural landscapes, insectivorous plant species, outdoor viewpoints, historical attractions, distance from urban noise and the diversity of its trails.
5. Possibilities to strengthen local institutions, the government-forestry enterprise alliance as a way to develop rural areas of forest and natural value, a more varied tourism offer, and environmental conservation.

6. Diversification of tourism services by including activities such as forest baths, yoga, breathing and physical exercises, Tai Chi, among others, would be essential activities to create a wellness tourism offer.
7. Willingness of local stakeholders to develop wellness tourism to promote an improvement in the quality of life, as well as other sources of employment.
8. Presence of tourism infrastructure for the development of the wellness tourism sub-modality.
9. Possibilities of productive linkages with local producers due to the willingness of some cooperatives and non-state entities that want to establish links with the "Rocío del Sol" Project, among them are the *Cooperativas de Créditos y Servicios* Eduardo Chivás and Javier Barret, which already have links with the project.
10. Possibilities of sources of financing for the development of local development projects linked to wellness tourism.
11. Recognition by the government and Mintur of the need to add value to the province's product portfolio with the wellness tourism sub-modality.

Limitations

1. There is no wellness tourism program derived from the province's strategy.
2. There is no coherent planning of the sub-modality of wellness tourism in the province by Mintur.
3. In the instruments used in Cuba for the management of local development, such as the Municipal Development Strategy and the Provincial Development Strategy, the management of wellness tourism is not appreciated or included.
4. Insufficient use of existing potential for the development of wellness tourism.
5. Lack of preparation of stakeholders in relation to the management of wellness tourism.
6. There is inconsistency on the part of the executors in the conceptualization of wellness tourism.
7. Weak integration of the actors involved in the development of tourism activities in general.
8. Failure to take advantage of the opportunity to manage local development projects associated with wellness tourism.
9. Lack of mobilization of financial resources for tourism projects that could boost local economies.

By way of summary, it can be concluded that wellness tourism as a sub-modality of health tourism, encompasses physical and spiritual dimensions that contribute to improving the quality of life, has benefits for sustainability and wellbeing, also as an economic activity it stands out for its contribution to local development.

The province has the potential, infrastructure and regulatory framework to develop wellness tourism. Despite this, it is not fully exploited in terms of marketing and the opportunities offered by wellness tourism as a sub-modality of health tourism.

The research carried out is fundamental to determine the potential of Macurijes Agroforestry Enterprise to develop the sub-modality of wellness tourism, since it only has projects linked to Nature Tourism and Rural Tourism, and to contribute to the development of proposals for procedures or methodologies for the management of wellness tourism activities.

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Conflict of interest

Authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Authors' contribution

Claudia María González Slovasevich, Yamilet Mirabal Sarria and Iverilys Pérez Hernández designed the study, analyzed the data and prepared the draft.

Orlando Gómez Ramos was 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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