

Original article

Procedure for the management of wellness tourism in agroforestry companies



Procedimiento para la gestión del turismo de bienestar en empresas agroforestales

Procedimento para o gerenciamento do turismo de bem-estar em empresas agroflorestais

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ABSTRACT

Wellness tourism as a sub-modality of health tourism has benefits for sustainability and wellbeing, also as an economic activity it stands out for its contribution to local development. In the municipality of Guane, the Rocío del Sol project is a Local Tourist Center which, given its natural conditions, becomes an ideal scenario for the development and practice of wellness tourism. The objective of this research is to design a procedure to manage wellness tourism in the Macurijes Agroforestry

Company that contributes to improve the quality of life of tourists and the community. A diagnosis was made using theoretical and empirical methods that facilitated the verification of the problem, as well as the triangulation of the results and the viability of the procedure for the management of wellness tourism in the current context. The procedure is supported by a sequence of stages and steps for its formulation, which ratified its usefulness and relevance as a tool for managing wellness tourism, contributing to the development of specialized tourism and the quality of life of tourists and the community.

Keywords: wellness tourism; quality of life; local development; procedure; management.

RESUMEN

El turismo de bienestar como submodalidad del turismo de salud tiene beneficios para la sostenibilidad y bienestar, también como actividad económica se destaca por su contribución al desarrollo local. En el municipio de Guane, el proyecto "Rocío del Sol" es un Centro Turístico Local el cual, dadas sus condiciones naturales, se convierte en un escenario ideal para el desarrollo y práctica del turismo de bienestar. El objetivo de esta investigación es diseñar un procedimiento para gestionar el turismo de bienestar en la Empresa Agroforestal Macurijes que contribuya a mejorar la calidad de vida de los turistas y la comunidad. Se realizó un diagnóstico donde fueron utilizados métodos teóricos y empíricos que facilitaron la constatación del problema, así como la triangulación de los resultados y la viabilidad del procedimiento para la gestión del turismo de bienestar en el contexto actual. El procedimiento está sustentado en una secuencia de etapas y pasos para su formulación, lo cual ratificó su utilidad y pertinencia como herramienta para gestionar el turismo de bienestar, lo que contribuyó al desarrollo del turismo especializado y la calidad de vida de los turistas y la comunidad.

Palabras clave: turismo de bienestar; calidad de vida; desarrollo local; procedimiento; gestión.

RESUMO

O turismo de bem-estar, como uma submodalidade do turismo de saúde, traz benefícios para a sustentabilidade e o bem-estar; também como atividade econômica, destaca-se por sua contribuição

para o desenvolvimento local. No município de Guane, o projeto "Rocío del Sol" é um Centro Turístico Local que, dadas suas condições naturais, torna-se um cenário ideal para o desenvolvimento e a prática do turismo de bem-estar. O objetivo desta pesquisa é elaborar um procedimento de gestão do turismo de bem-estar na Empresa Agroflorestal Macurijes que contribua para melhorar a qualidade de vida dos turistas e da comunidade. Foi realizado um diagnóstico utilizando métodos teóricos e empíricos que facilitaram a verificação do problema, bem como a triangulação dos resultados e a viabilidade do procedimento para a gestão do turismo de bem-estar no contexto atual. O procedimento é apoiado por uma sequência de etapas e passos para sua formulação, o que ratificou sua utilidade e relevância como ferramenta de gestão do turismo de bem-estar, contribuindo para o desenvolvimento do turismo especializado e para a qualidade de vida dos turistas e da comunidade.

Palavras-chave: turismo de bem-estar; qualidade de vida; desenvolvimento local; procedimento; gestão.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that traditional tourism has a greater predominance in the market, alternative tourism has experienced a growing demand as a response to the high levels of stress and anxiety of the population. Sancho (1994) refers to the emergence of tourism in the second half of the twentieth century as mass phenomenon, where different factors allowed for the promotion of this activity with remarkable growth rates higher than those of other sectors of the economy over the years. Its great complexity stands out due to the elements and economic sectors involved, in addition to its high contribution to the generation of Gross Value Added.

Ivanova and Ibáñez (2012, p. 18) state that tourism has two modalities: traditional and alternative tourism, the latter is understood as "[...] recreational activities in contact with nature and cultural expressions of rural, indigenous and urban communities [...]". Each modality has different sub-modalities, in the case of traditional tourism it would be related to sun and beach, cultural activities and infrastructure, and alternative tourism linked to nature and health.

One of the modalities of alternative tourism is health tourism, the fusion between both sectors has been remarkable both in its development and in the tourism demand of this sector, specifically the sub-modality of wellness tourism which arises from the need for self-care. Authors such as Pineda

Escobar and Falla Villa (2016), Ledhesma (2018), among others, highlight the importance of wellness tourism sustainable development and improvement of quality of life, although in Latin American countries it is still conceived for a high purchasing power and aging market segment.

Authors such as Rojas Rieckhof (2020) and Pérez Bonet (2021) allude to wellness tourism and the activities that comprise it, in general terms, allow for greater physical and spiritual wellbeing, thus improving the quality of life of tourists who demand this sub-modality.

The group of Song et al. (2016), as cited in Igeño Cano (2020), published a review of 52 articles on this topic, with the aim of demonstrating the physiological effects of nature as therapy. With evidence of favorable results "[...] on diseases such as depression and anxiety disorder, diabetes, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, infectious, cardiovascular and musculoskeletal diseases, obesity, migraines, vertigo or respiratory diseases".

Li (2018) posits that "Shinrin-Yoku" is a Japanese term meaning "forest baths", this tourism activity allows highlighting the power of the forest, reconnecting with nature, feeling the sense of well-being, allows achieving balance and happiness. The forest baths are part of the wellness tourism activities, they allow you to immerse yourself in nature and connect with it.

The consequences of the increasing disconnection between nature and society have generated a "nature deficit disorder" (Pérez Bonet, 2021). Despite the limitations due to the lack of knowledge of this sub-modality, it allows creating a greater awareness of natural activities in the quality of life, both in the physical and spiritual dimension, to combat diseases such as depression, stress, among others associated with the "nature deficit disorder".

In this regard, for de la Puente Pacheco (2015), wellness tourism is a sub-modality 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).

In the province of Pinar del Río, there are health tourism practices in San Diego de los Baños (National Reference Spa), Soroa (mineral baths), San Vicente in Viñales (with mineral baths), among other

centers, but with respect to wellness tourism there are isolated activities that are developed as part of nature tourism. 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.

Protected areas cover 20.2% of Cuban territory, but tourism management should not be limited to these spaces, but also to tourism development in non-protected natural areas. A management of forest resources as part of nature tourism can bring great benefits for local development, without the support of the national and local governments of the stakeholders involved it would be impossible to strengthen tourism capacity (Rodríguez Martínez et al., 2020).

Rodríguez Jiménez et al. (2023, p. 167), based on a bibliometric analysis where 3236 authors were analyzed, concluded: "the largest number of authors only published one article related to destination management, so there is a weak consistency in research on the subject". Given the importance of management in the tourism sector, there are still insufficient studies on the subject.

There are laws, decrees and resolutions that regulate the use and exploitation of natural resources in the country, as well as the way tourism is managed. Among them are: Law No. 81 (Environmental Law); Decree 136 (Heritage, Wild Fauna and its Contraventions); Joint Resolution 1/99 (Nature Tourism); Resolution 50/2014 for the development of nature, rural and adventure tourism, of the Ministry of Tourism; Guidelines of the Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution in the period 2017-2021; Provincial Plan for Territorial Ordering; Development Strategy of the Ministry of Tourism 2018; Resolution No. 275/2015 of the Ministry of Tourism, Agreement No. 4/80 of the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers, Resolution 146/2018; Decree-Law No. 365 and Decree No. 354/2019 Social Purpose of cooperatives; Resolution No. 29/2020 Territorial Development and the social purpose of the company (Decree No. 34/2021), where Cuban agroforestry companies integrated to the Agroforestry Business Group established to include tourism management in the entire agroforestry business system.

The forestry sector in Cuba, despite having a legal regulatory framework that protects the development of tourism activities in Cuba, among them Resolution No. 50/2014 of the Ministry of Tourism to identify sites of tourist interest in agroforestry enterprises in the country, in practice there have been limited experiences linked to agroforestry enterprises in protected areas that are insufficient, as well as methodological tools, also wasting unprotected spaces and their strength to

develop the tourism sector, also although there are methodologies linked to agroforestry enterprises, there are no methodologies or procedures appreciated for the insertion of wellness tourism in agroforestry companies.

In the Cuban context, the existing problems related to the management of wellness tourism reveal a set of limitations centered on the following aspects:

- Forests are wasted as an important natural and economic resource for the country, especially for agroforestry companies, as a tourist attraction for the wellness tourism sub-modality.
- The existence of a technology describing the management of wellness tourism in agroforestry enterprises is unknown.
- Weak integration of the actors involved in the development of tourism activities in general.
- Failure to take advantage of the potential of the Macurijes Agroforestry Company for the management of tourism products that respond to the sub-modality of wellness tourism.

The limitations pointed out allowed to delimit that the typology of wellness product has a basis in the province of Pinar del Río. The general objective is to design a procedure for the management of wellness tourism in the Macurijes Agroforestry Company to improve the quality of life of tourists and the community.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the development of the diagnosis, the methodology proposed by Mirabal Sarria et al. (2018) was used, taking into account the following steps:

Step 1. Determination of information needs

Step 2. Definition of information sources

Step 2.1. Sample design

Step 3. Design of the formats for data collection

Step 4. Data collection, analysis and information processing

The results of the secondary and primary sources were submitted to the criteria of experts, with the purpose of seeking convergence of opinions and processing information from the group of experts on the management of wellness tourism in the Macurijes Agroforestry Company, triangulating the information and delimiting the limitations of the management of this tourism sub-modality.

A workshop was held with the presence of different stakeholders, with a total of 28 national stakeholders, grouping the constraints into four fundamental areas that would make it possible to design actions to eradicate them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The criteria issued by the experts regarding the constraints were analyzed in a workshop where they were incorporated into the following Ishikawa diagram (Figure 1).

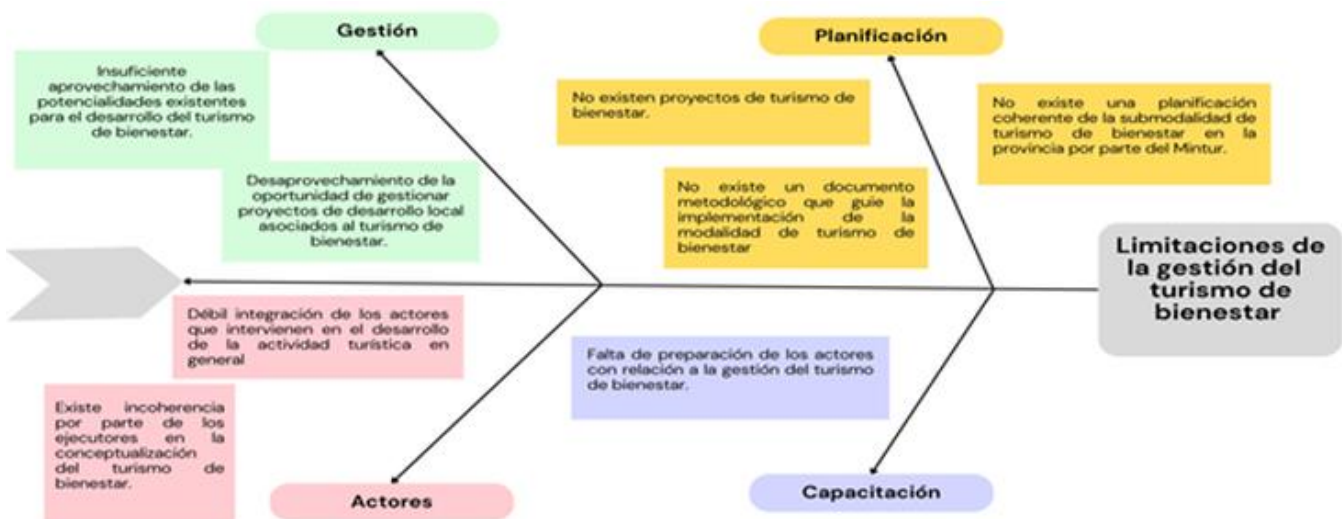


Figure 1. Limitations of wellness tourism management

Source: Own elaboration

The Ishikawa diagram is made with the participation of 28 national actors (Council of the Municipal Administration of Guane, university professors from all over the country, specialists from the Ministry of Tourism at territorial and national level, professors from the hotel and tourism training centers at national level) and guided by two university professors with experience in workshops, where the workshop is carried out with the objective of identifying the variables that affected the limitations in

the management of wellness tourism through brainstorming that develops teamwork. At first, the coordinators explained the Ishikawa diagram, posed the general problem, and from a brainstorming showed the results of the expert judgment method, grouping the limitations in four fundamental areas that would allow the development of actions to eradicate them.

For the development of the procedure, the premises that allow its realization were formed. The proposal shows a scope with a range of local application, with a flexibility that helps to facilitate a guide for the management of wellness tourism, according to the existing potentialities in the Macurijes Agroforestry Company.

The following premises must be taken into account for the development of the procedure:

1. Existence of potentialities in the Macurijes Agroforestry Company for the development of wellness tourism and the implementation of the procedure.
2. Existence of a regulatory legal framework.
3. Willingness of the Management of Macurijes Agroforestry Company in the application of the procedure.
4. Existence of economic contribution mechanisms for local development.

The procedure for the insertion of wellness tourism is a novelty in the Cuban context, since this sub-modality belonging to health tourism has not been developed in Cuba. The design of the procedure for the management of wellness tourism will have an impact on several essential goals:

1. Insertion of wellness tourism in the Macurijes Agroforestry Company.
2. To provide employment levels and a sense of community belonging in the localities.
3. Contribute to improving the quality of life of tourists and the community.
4. Promote local development and productive linkages.

The procedure proposed in table 1 is based on the aforementioned premises and presents a step-by-step structure, each of which includes the techniques to be used. The characteristics of the procedure and the fulfillment of the premises provide the conceptual and methodological framework necessary to favor its application. The following step-by-step procedure is proposed for its analysis.

Table 1. Procedure for managing wellness tourism

Stage	Step	
Stage I. Advance preparation	Step 1	Evaluation of compliance with the premises
	Step 2	Creation of a working group, sensitization and training of participating stakeholders
Stage II. Planning	Step 3	Characterization of forest heritage
	Step 4	Planning of the wellness tourism offer
Stage III. Organization	Step 5	Economic and financial management
	Step 6	Elaboration of the wellness product
Stage IV. Implementation	Step 7	Implementation of wellness tourism
	Step 8	Marketing of wellness tourism
Stage V. Evaluation	Step 9	Feedback

Source: Own elaboration

The stages have been planned according to the different forms adopted by the teaching-methodological and scientific-methodological work, particularly in the workshop modality, these facilitate the collective construction of knowledge, which develops learning spaces that go from the empowerment of the group forces to the conscious, systematic and professional progress that consolidates the commitment to a correct management of wellness tourism.

The activities have a sequential character and have been organized according to the methodology of Participatory Action Research, which is based on the political-pedagogical conception of Popular Education, which proposes a pedagogical process where there are spaces for exchange and reflection where dialogue produces new approaches that enrich the practices, which allows facing the problem from a sociocultural perspective, involving the relationship with nature, society, affections and rationality.

The call for the stages will be made through the relevant information channels of the company (with the necessary time for its preparation), with emphasis on the use of banners and advertisements

that enliven and dispose the participants in a positive way. It is necessary to guarantee the materials and documents required for its realization.

Scientific language should be used during the lectures, but it should be accessible to achieve the understanding of those terms that are unfamiliar, which will guarantee assimilation.

The procedure is structured in the form of workshops in each of its steps, where there are common elements: steps, objective, participants, techniques, duration and person in charge. Techniques of analysis, animation and group cohesion were used in all the stages, as well as interviews and participant observation.

Evaluation: Self-evaluation, co-evaluation and hetero-evaluation are carried out by means of techniques, exercises and independent or team tasks.

The content of each step is described below.

Stage I. Preliminary preparation

The objective of this first stage is to create the conditions for implementing the procedure for managing wellness tourism.

Step 1: Assessment of compliance with the assumptions

For the development of the procedure, it is necessary to form the premises that allow its realization. This step will allow to evaluate the premises in a range of local application, with a flexibility that helps to facilitate a guide for the management of wellness tourism, in according to the existing potentialities in the Rocío del Sol Local Tourist Center of the Macurijes Agroforestry Company.

Objective: To evaluate compliance with the premises.

Participants: 3 members of the Macurijes Project, 2 members of the board of directors of the Macurijes Agroforestry Company, 2 members of the Municipal Government (local stakeholders), 2 members of the University of Pinar del Río, 3 members linked to tourism management and 2 members of the Guane community with knowledge of tourism, plus other guests from the training

center, the Center for Management, Local Development, Tourism and Cooperativism Studies and delegates from the Ministry of Tourism.

Techniques: Brainstorming.

Duration: Two weeks.

Responsible: Working group for the management of wellness tourism.

Step 2: Creation of a working group, sensitization and training of participating stakeholders

Define the key actors for the creation of a working group for the management of wellness tourism. Socialize with the participating actors the result of the diagnosis, highlighting the potential for developing wellness tourism in the Rocío del Sol Local Tourist Center of the Macurijes Agroforestry Company, the importance and benefits of developing the management of this tourist service for each actor involved. Each member will be trained in areas such as management, *marketing* and wellness tourism in order to deepen the fundamental aspects of the procedure. It is important to achieve the commitment, integration, creativity and efficient communication lines of the work team highlighting the novelty and impact of the research.

Objective: To define the key actors for the creation of a working group and training for the management of wellness tourism.

Participants: Working group for the management of wellness tourism.

Techniques to be used: Participant observation and the group shield.

Duration: One month to identify key actors, training should be continuous.

Responsible: Company's Board of Directors.

Stage II. Planning

The objective of this second stage is to determine the objectives for the management of wellness tourism, delimiting the work area and tourism offer.

Step 3: Characterization of the heritage

The characterization of the forest heritage of the Macurijes Agroforestry Company allows for a diagnosis of the local context. To know the forest and wildlife resources of the analyzed area of the Rocío del Sol Local Tourist Center belonging to the Macurijes Agroforestry Company, to analyze indicators such as vegetation, hydrography, the physical-geographical space, soils, flora and fauna as the most important elements to know and evaluate the general aspects that form it.

Objective: Characterize the forest heritage.

Participants: Working group for the management of wellness tourism.

Techniques: Discussion groups.

Duration: One month.

Responsible: Working group for the management of wellness tourism.

Step 4: Planning the wellness tourism offer

To guarantee the satisfaction of the tourist demand by planning the resources, tourist activities and income plans that contribute to a correct management of wellness tourism. Identify the natural and cultural attractions of the Rocío del Sol Local Tourist Center of the Macurijes Agroforestry Company and prioritize the attractions.

It is important to be clear about the client's needs (welfare) and attractions so that the planning of the tourism offer is oriented towards these needs.

Objective: Plan the tourism offer based on natural and cultural attractions.

Participants: Working group for the management of wellness tourism.

Techniques: Rating scale and hierarchical ranking.

Duration: Two months.

Responsible: Working group for the management of wellness tourism.

Stage III. Organization

The objective is to achieve the organization of the different tasks for the design of the wellness tourism product. This stage consists of two steps where, first, the socioeconomic activity of the area will be diagnosed, evaluating the different indicators involved and, second, the elaboration of the tourism product, delimiting its elements.

Step 5: Economic and financial management

This step will allow a technical study to be conducted on the social, economic and cultural elements of the region, where the income, positive and negative impacts that the proposal may generate will be evaluated. A cost sheet should be prepared to evaluate the fixed and variable costs in order to assess the feasibility of the procedure for tourism management of the welfare submodality.

Objective: To carry out the socioeconomic activity.

Participants: Working group for the management of wellness tourism.

Techniques: Troubleshooting.

Duration: One month.

Responsible: Working group for the management of wellness tourism.

Step 6: Elaboration of the welfare product

In order to develop the tourism product, it is important to design it according to market demands, the characteristics of the place, the tourist attractions, the organization of the process, productive forms and tourist activities that will make up the product. In this step, the tourism product is designed within the company's portfolio.

Objective: To design the tourism product.

Participants: Working group for the management of wellness tourism.

Techniques: Documentary review and consultation with specialists.

Duration: One month.

Responsible: Working group for the management of wellness tourism.

Stage IV. Implementation

The objective is to market the activity of the wellness tourism product.

Step 7: Implementation of wellness tourism

In this step the management of the product will be executed defining the most feasible dates to carry out this tourist activity depending on the demands of this product in the international market and the transportation to access the wellness tourism product.

Objective: Execute the tourism product.

Participants: Working group for the management of wellness tourism.

Techniques: Brainstorming.

Duration: One month.

Responsible: Working group for the management of wellness tourism.

Step 8: Marketing wellness tourism

Identify the tourism product, the price, promotion and distribution of the tourism product. This step allows the visibility of the tourism product through different tools linked to the promotion-mix (advertising, personal sales, public relations and sales promotion) and to define product positioning strategies and pricing as competitively as possible in the market.

Objective: To market the wellness tourism product.

Participants: Working group for the management of wellness tourism.

Techniques: Mind maps.

Duration: Two weeks.

Responsible: Working group for the management of wellness tourism.

Stage V. Evaluation

Its objective is to improve the procedure, evaluating the objectives proposed in each of the steps.

Step 9: Feedback

This step is fundamental in the procedure to measure the efficiency of the procedure, it will allow to carry out analyses aimed at improving the procedure for the management of the welfare tourism, to know the status of the application of the procedure, to identify the potentialities and limitations and to elaborate the proposal for improvement.

Objective: To provide feedback on the procedure.

Participants: Working group for the management of wellness tourism.

Techniques: The four quarters of change.

Duration: One month.

Responsible: Working group for the management of wellness tourism.

The proposal of a procedure for the management of wellness tourism in the Macurijes Agroforestry Company is relevant in the Cuban context as it is a new topic, but with great potential to be developed, especially in agroforestry companies. The scientific value of this research lies in the theoretical and methodological foundation of the components that make up a procedure for the management of wellness tourism in the Rocío del Sol Local Tourist Center of the Macurijes Agroforestry Company, based on the study of the area's potentialities and the most novel tendencies on this sub-modality. This will contribute to the development of specialized tourism and improve the quality of life of tourists and the community.

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, and also as an economic activity stands out for its contribution to local development.

The analysis of the bibliography consulted shows that although there are methodologies linked to agroforestry companies, there is nothing in theory on methodologies or procedures for the insertion of wellness tourism in agroforestry enterprises.

The components of the procedure for the management of wellness tourism were designed, which is structured by stages and steps that provide the conceptual and methodological framework necessary to promote its application.

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Conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interests.

Authors' contribution

Claudia María González Slovasevich is the main author of the article. She reviewed and consulted updated bibliography on the subject of tourism management and its different modalities.

Yamilet Mirabal Sarria was involved in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data as well as the revision of the drafting of the manuscript.

Iverilis Pérez Hernández and Angélica María González Slovasevich were involved in the writing of the manuscript and approved the version finally submitted.

Yairim Arteaga Prado was involved in the collection and analysis of the information used in the writing of the manuscript.



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