

Original article

## Cultural tourism destination offers to Pinar del Río, Cuba



### Ofertas de destino turístico cultural hacia Pinar del Río, Cuba

### Ofertas de destinos de turismo cultural para Pinar del Río, Cuba

Pedro Luis González Cruz<sup>1</sup>  0000-0002-9806-164X  [pedro00066@upr.edu.cu](mailto:pedro00066@upr.edu.cu)

<sup>1</sup> University of Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca". Pinar del Río, Cuba.

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#### ABSTRACT

The article approaches the unused cultural tourist offers in Pinar del Río, Cuba, such as the intangible dimension of its cultural tourist identity, traditionally concentrated in the ecotourism of Viñales, which causes the scarce development of tourist diversity. It pursues as objective to analyze the intangible cultural patrimony as an offer of the cultural tourist destination in Pinar del Río, covering the intangible dimension of the tourist identity of the territory. Techniques were applied to study the evolution of the concepts of intangible cultural heritage and cultural tourism, collection and analysis of sources, structured and unstructured interview and observation. As a result, it shows the tourist attractions of the intangible dimension of its tourist identity and its use as an offer in cultural, religious and site-specific tourist modalities. As a conclusion, it shows the value of the tourist offer and the implementation of strategic development proposals, with structured multidimensional projects, which could improve the tourist diversity, the promotion and commercialization of this market with a competitive cultural product, which supported by the provincial and local governments, private producers, self-employed and new economic actors, would generate jobs and monetary income, making the local community increase the standard of living and provide possibilities for local development.

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**Keywords:** intangible cultural heritage; cultural tourism; tourism offer.

## RESUMEN

El artículo aborda las ofertas turísticas culturales inutilizadas en Pinar del Río, Cuba, como es la dimensión intangible de su identidad turística cultural, concentrada de manera tradicional en el ecoturismo de Viñales, lo que provoca el escaso desarrollo de la diversidad turística. Persigue como objetivo analizar el patrimonio cultural inmaterial como oferta del destino turístico cultural hacia Pinar del Río, abarcando la dimensión intangible de la identidad turística del territorio. Se aplicaron técnicas para estudiar la evolución de los conceptos de patrimonio cultural inmaterial y turismo cultural, recopilación y análisis de fuentes, entrevista estructurada, no estructurada y observación. Como resultado muestra los atractivos turísticos de la dimensión inmaterial de su identidad turística y la utilización como oferta en modalidades turísticas culturales, religiosas y específicas del lugar. A modo de conclusión, constata el valor de la oferta turística y la puesta en práctica de propuestas estratégicas de desarrollo, con proyectos multidimensional es estructurados, lo que podría mejorar la diversidad turística, la promoción y comercialización de este mercado con un producto cultural competitivo, que apoyado por los gobiernos provincial y local, los productores privados, los cuentapropistas y los nuevos actores económicos, generaría empleos e ingresos monetarios, logrando que la comunidad local aumente el nivel de vida y brinde posibilidades al desarrollo local.

**Palabras clave:** patrimonio cultural inmaterial; turismo cultural; oferta turística.

## RESUMO

O artigo trata das ofertas turísticas culturais não utilizadas em Pinar del Río, Cuba, como a dimensão intangível de sua identidade turística cultural, tradicionalmente concentrada no ecoturismo de Viñales, o que causa o escasso desenvolvimento da diversidade turística. O objetivo é analisar o patrimônio cultural intangível como oferta do destino turístico cultural de Pinar del Río, abrangendo a dimensão intangível da identidade turística do território. Foram aplicadas técnicas para estudar a evolução dos conceitos de patrimônio cultural imaterial e turismo cultural, coleta e análise de fontes, entrevistas estruturadas e não estruturadas e observação. Como resultado, mostra as atrações turísticas da dimensão intangível de sua identidade turística e seu uso como oferta em modalidades

turísticas culturais, religiosas e específicas do local. Como conclusão, mostra-se o valor da oferta turística e a implementação de propostas de desenvolvimento estratégico, com projetos multidimensionais estruturados, que poderiam melhorar a diversidade turística, a promoção e a comercialização desse mercado com um produto cultural competitivo, que, apoiado pelos governos provinciais e locais, produtores privados, trabalhadores autônomos e novos atores econômicos, geraria empregos e renda monetária, fazendo com que a comunidade local aumentasse seu padrão de vida e oferecesse possibilidades de desenvolvimento local.

**Palavras-chave:** patrimônio cultural intangível; turismo cultural; oferta turística.

## INTRODUCTION

Heritage is the cultural legacy received from the past, lived in the present and transmitted to future generations. Cultural heritage is the set of tangible and intangible assets that constitute the heritage of a human group. Cultural heritage is inherited, transmitted and modified from individual to individual and from generation to generation.

All tangible cultural property that is an expression or testimony of human creation or the evolution of nature, with archaeological, anthropological, historical, architectural, artistic, scientific or technical value, such as constructions, paintings, sculptures, books, machinery, laboratory equipment, household, work and ritual objects, among others.

Cultural heritage is not limited to monuments and collections of objects. It also includes living expressions inherited from ancestors, which constitute the intellectual heritage of a people and give it its social physiognomy, making it unique. The so-called intangible cultural heritage is represented by oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices related to nature and the universe, knowledge and techniques linked to traditional crafts, literature, gastronomy, scientific and architectural knowledge, philosophy, music, dance, religion, rituals and patterns of social behavior.

This living heritage is an important factor in the maintenance and enrichment of the sense of belonging, both individual and collective, which is not only limited to preserving the historical memory of a society, but also has a social function, such as driving and maintaining social and local cohesion, highlighting the values of cultural identity.

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Because of its richness in socio-cultural traditions and the transmission of knowledge accumulated over time, intangible cultural heritage becomes a dynamic source of experience that is at the heart of nationality and should be treated in the same way as other possible approaches to local development. Living cultural traditions, expressions and knowledge systems contribute to different aspects of local development and give meaning to localities.

Despite its obvious benefits, intangible cultural heritage is often overlooked in the development arena. Numerous studies, however, have shown that the practice of this heritage in communities is fundamental to addressing development challenges, from food shortages and environmental change to health issues, education, conflict prevention and resolution.

At the international level, the Educational, Scientific and Cultural United Nations Organization (Unesco) has played a relevant role in this regard and, since its creation, has promoted the multilateral perspective of culture based on actions aimed, initially, at recovering and later protecting the intangible cultural heritage, devastated by the conflagrations of the 20th century, with a special focus on the need to incorporate it as a strategic element in national and local development policies.

The Unesco Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage held in Paris in 2003 aims to conserve this fragile heritage, ensure its viability and optimize its potential for sustainable development (Unesco, 2020). At this meeting it is defined as:

Intangible cultural heritage refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills - together with the instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces inherent to them - that communities, groups, and in some cases individuals recognize as an integral part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, which is transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups according to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, giving them a sense of identity and continuity and thus helping to promote respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

In many countries, cultural heritage has acquired great economic importance for the tourism sector in recent years. The leisure industry has become one of the strongest contributors to local development.

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However, the specialization of localities is a limiting factor in consolidating tourism as a development alternative at the territorial level.

For the tourist destination to occupy a privileged position within the group of places that are presented to the tourist in the process of choice, it is necessary to develop a positive image in the markets. This is the only way to increase the probability of achieving a competitive position in relation to competing destinations.

In Latin America, the same cultural heritage, a similar development model and identical tourism infrastructure, in addition to the lack of differentiation in the increase in supply, have led to intensified competition among tourist destinations.

This situation becomes more complex if it is added the decline of traditional sun and beach tourism, due to climate change, and the rise of other modalities, including cultural tourism.

Cultural tourism today is a phenomenon that is difficult to define, due to the inherent complexity of the concept of culture (Rodríguez Basso et al., 2021). This modality consists of the movement of people due to cultural motives, such as study trips, trips to festivals or other artistic events, visits to sites or monuments, trips to study nature, art, folklore and pilgrimages.

Scholars of the subject, who constitute referents when defining cultural tourism, mostly propose a conceptual definition, which is based on the way in which tourists consume culture, where they establish several classifications for its study (Cardoso Carreño et al., 2019).

At the Twenty-second Session of the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization, held in 2017 in China (UN Tourism, 2017), it is defined as:

A type of tourism activity in which the essential motivation of the visitor is to learn, discover, experience and consume the cultural attractions/products, both tangible and intangible, of a tourist destination. These attractions/products refer to a set of material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional elements distinctive of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, gastronomic heritage, literature, music, creative industries and living cultures with their ways of life, value systems, beliefs and traditions.

There are tourist destinations that, because of their heritage resources, are the center of attention of visitors in search of cultural tourism. In Latin America, Mexico, Brazil and Cuba stand out. Associating cultural heritage with a tourist image and developing a different and high-level product would be favorable for Cuba, as it would allow it to diversify the destination's tourist offer, if we take into account that among its sites declared World Cultural Heritage, the Historic Center of Havana is the main destination for cultural tourism, since it receives almost 50% of the country's demand, as recorded by the National Office of Statistics and Information (Onei, 2021).

Visits to sites and monuments should not only be considered as a tourist product in terms of cultural heritage, but also the uses, representations, expressions, knowledge and techniques, instruments, objects and cultural spaces, as well as the behavior of the residents, the type of society, the way of life, traditions, customs, beliefs, religion, art and its manifestations, among others.

This would allow the cultural tourist destination offer to Cuba to be diversified and very competitive, by decentralizing the country's tourist destination, from almost half of it to Old Havana and its fortifications, to other regions of the country, where the intangible cultural heritage is assumed as a cultural tourist destination offer.

In relation to this issue, research has been carried out to show the need to diversify Cuba's tourist offer, taking into account that, as part of the Caribbean, its tourist development has been based on the sun and beach product, where they propose cultural tourism to try to turn this situation around. Studies have also been made on the tourist interest in Havana as a cultural destination in the international market.

The tourist development of Pinar del Río is based on the nature product, which generates a strong image associated with this tourist destination, which has been directed towards the Viñales Valley, which due to its natural conditions receives international visitors whose interest is nature tourism, whose purpose is to visit natural parks, which is combined with a tour of the historic center of the municipality of Pinar del Río, visiting some places of cultural interest, such as civil or religious constructions and production centers.

However, in this excursion, the image of Pinar del Río as a cultural tourist destination, which also includes the intangible dimension of Pinar del Río's cultural heritage, is not conceived, which causes a scarce development of the territory's tourist diversity.

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Hence the need to create new initiatives in terms of offering a cultural tourist destination, conceiving a structured project for the tourist image of Pinar del Río that also includes the intangible dimension of Pinar del Río's tourist identity.

Research oriented to the analysis of the intangible cultural heritage of Pinar del Río in terms of its image as a cultural tourism destination offer is insufficient, so this study could extend the knowledge that already exists on this subject.

This analysis could improve the diversification of the destination's tourist offer to Pinar del Río, as well as the commercialization of this market, which would undoubtedly favor the promotion of intangible cultural heritage as a tourist destination's offer to the territory and would allow the country to have another cultural tourist destination, as well as diversify Cuba's tourist image.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze the intangible cultural heritage as an offer of the cultural tourist destination in Pinar del Río, covering the intangible dimension of the tourist identity of the territory, which would favor the improvement of its cultural tourist image and its tourist diversity.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The application of methods and techniques for the realization of this research was carried out, adjusted to the objective. Techniques such as the compilation and critical analysis of sources, structured and unstructured interviews and observation were used in the process of selection and interpretation of information, with the intention of specifying the nature, degree of reliability, class and institutional interests and the real transcendence of the sources. This made it possible to study the evolution of the concepts of intangible cultural heritage and cultural tourism, as well as the limitations and successes in their formulation, in order to support the alternative of intangible cultural heritage as an offer of cultural tourism destination in Pinar del Río.

Structured interviews were also applied to members of the management of the Training Center of the Ministry of Tourism, to the Provincial Center of Cultural Heritage, to the Provincial Direction of Culture, to the Provincial Branch of the Fund of Cultural Goods, to the Provincial Museum of History, to Party and Government authorities, to bearers and practitioners of religions of African origin, to ecclesiastics of the Cathedral and parishes of Pinar del Río, as well as the unstructured one to members of the National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba and the Hermanos Saíz Association, to

several subjects of the population of different ages, religious cults and social extraction, in order to obtain different points of view in relation to the topic, whose processing through statistical programs made possible the interpretation of the obtained results.

Thus, it was possible to achieve a more complete vision of the possibilities of the intangible cultural heritage as an alternative offer for the cultural tourist destination of Pinar del Río. Observation was also applied to the manifestations of the intangible cultural heritage as an alternative offer for the tourist destination of Pinar del Río.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The movement of people from their usual places of residence to places of cultural interest, with the intention of gathering new information and experiences that satisfy their cultural needs, in a practice that highlights the cultural heritage offered by a given tourist destination, is known as cultural tourism.

This type of tourism gains certain relevance in those areas that have seen limited other types of tourism to visit towns or cities, see their monuments and participate in different activities, which not only cover the consumption of cultural products of the past, but also of contemporary culture or the way of life of a town or region (Espeso Molinero, 2019).

This concept has changed in recent years. Whereas in the past it was exclusively related to historical and artistic heritage, today it is much broader and encompasses both tangible and intangible elements, including, for example, the history of the regions, the way of life and idiosyncrasies of the inhabitants, popular festivals, traditional dances, handicrafts, local gastronomy, textile or agricultural techniques. Given this variety of tourism offerings, different market areas have also been defined, such as heritage tourism, urban tourism, rural tourism, community tourism, religious tourism and ethno-tourism, among others.

The vast majority of the approximately two and a half million international tourists travel to Cuba mainly for the sun and beach tourism product, with Varadero as the main tourist destination of this specialty. The Historic Center of Havana accounts for almost half of the country's demand and is the main tourist product of the Cuban capital, where cultural tourism is developed, among others, and around which the cultural tourism offer is centered, since it has a variety of cultural resources that reflect the history of this area.



In the province of Pinar del Río, the municipality of Viñales continues to concentrate the tourist offer, due to the attractiveness of its natural wealth, so it is generally visited by international tourists with ecotourism as a destination, who make an excursion through the historic center of the provincial capital. This tour is generally done by reaching the tourist resources of the historic center of the municipality of Pinar del Río, which constitute its tangible cultural heritage and can be grouped into religious and civil constructions, museums, parks, theaters and production centers.

The proposal of these excursions, supported by these patrimonial resources, is where the cultural tourism offer of Pinar del Río is based. In interviews with members of the management of the Training Center of the Ministry of Tourism, it was possible to verify the coordination with different entities, with the objective of analyzing this cultural tourism offer, but in practice this coordination has not materialized.

Therefore, it is necessary to integrate wills to concentrate initiatives in terms of cultural offerings, conceiving a structured project of the image of Pinar del Río as a cultural tourist destination, which also includes the intangible dimension of Pinar del Río's tourist identity and integrates in a multidimensional way, the actions of institutions such as Museums, Archives and Houses of Culture, the Training Center of the Ministry of Tourism, the Directorate of Culture, members of the Party and the Government who work in these areas, the Provincial Center of Cultural Heritage, the Office of the Historian of Pinar del Río and the University of Pinar del Río, among other factors.

The proximity to the capital, which concentrates almost half of the country's cultural tourism demand, could facilitate cooperation in this sense, favoring the tourist diversity of the province and the country.

Pinar del Río is rich in traditions that are a symbol of its identity and that make up the cultural heritage in the intangible dimension of its tourist identity, with the capacity to attract international visitors. Offering information on the product of its tourist identity to the international market, which is characterized by great competition due to the similarity of products offered and with the same benefits, is an urgent need to gain acceptance, to try to have the products recognized and possess an identity among international consumers (González Cruz, 2022).

The living cultural heritage of the province is composed of cultural traditions such as festivities, knowledge, techniques, customs, rites, habits, dances and music, among others, which are typical of this region and could be used as a tourist offer in the destination of Pinar del Río. The most

important traditions with the capacity to attract international visitors are the festivals, among them the Catholic patron saint festivals (González Cruz, 2018) and the festivals of African origin, celebrated in many places in Pinar del Río, which could become a cultural tourism offer, even as an offer product for religious tourism.

It could also be considered as an offer to religious tourism the particularities of religious syncretism in the region, which by having a cultural variety ranging from small aboriginal elements and important groups of African heritage to the numerous Spanish immigrants linked to tobacco production (Salazar Rosabal et al., 2016), had sufficient elements for the proliferation of spiritual practice, mainly in the crusader aspect, a form of spiritualism that combines elements of Catholicism, indigenous heritage and African cults, in a unique symbiosis and with specific cult characteristics, which are still in force in the province.

The particularities of the history of the province in its conformation as a historical region (Hernández Pérez & Ramírez Pérez, 2020), the way of life and the way of being of the local residents, known as tourism specific to the place, could be used as a tourist offer in the destination to Pinar del Río, in addition to making important contributions to the development of the localities of the territory.

An element of vital importance, in the intangible dimension of the cultural heritage of the tourist identity of Pinar del Río, is the handicraft and plastic arts exhibitions of Pinar del Río artists. Since handicrafts are one of the oldest in the province, including basketry, weaving, woodworking and ceramics, as it comprises a set of arts made entirely or partially by hand, which requires manual and artistic skills to make functional or decorative objects, it has a number of regional particularities, which must be taken into account when it comes to promoting tourism products.

The plastic arts in the province are also an expression of identity. The traditional landscaping in the works of outstanding painters from Pinar del Río such as Tiburcio Lorenzo and Domingo Ramos Enríquez, who, although he was not from Pinar del Río, dedicated a large part of his work to painting the Viñales Valley and the western region, which have continuity in outstanding young artists from Pinar del Río in the plastic and visual arts, could be the object of a tourist offer (Merino Acosta, 2022).

Other tourist attractions could be the oral traditions, gastronomy and the art of seamanship of many coastal communities in the province, such as Cortés and La Coloma (Acevedo Rodríguez et al., 2019). The corsairs and piracy propitiated legends and fantasy passages, the heritage they bequeathed us

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in names of coastal sites, in the food culture of species concentrated in these places and in the fishing arts, which are part of our identity.

Another tradition with possibilities of cultural tourist attraction in terms of music is the practice of the Punto Cubano in almost all the province. In the municipality of Viñales it has become a practice for all its inhabitants. This tradition had great weight and was one of the decisive elements for Unesco to declare the Viñales Valley a World Cultural Heritage Site in 1999.

Just as in 2017, the Punto Cubano was declared Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by this international organization, recognizing this musical genre as an essential element of Cuba's intangible cultural heritage. The peasant tonadas have deep historical roots that give them an enormous symbolic value (Carricaburu Collantes, 2021). This musical genre considered integrally as a traditional cultural practice can also be understood as a cultural tourism offer of the province.

If the offer of the cultural tourism destination to Pinar del Río is analyzed, not only as visits to sites and monuments, but also the behavior of residents, the type of society, the way of life, history, traditions, crafts, productive techniques, music, beliefs, art, religion, among others, the intangible cultural heritage can be an important element in the product offer to cultural tourism, which could improve the diversity of tourism in the province, which only receives ecotourists.

In conclusion, intangible cultural heritage plays a fundamental role in the elaboration of cultural tourism offers as well as in their promotion and marketing.

All this would improve the development of Pinar del Río's tourist diversity, taking into account its cultural tourist image as a destination, expand the intangible dimension of the tourist identity and put cultural tourism in better conditions. Therefore, it is necessary to coordinate the creation of structured programs of tourist offers that highlight the aspects of the intangible cultural heritage in Pinar del Río and, in addition, improve its promotion in the media.

Likewise, its image as a destination should be strengthened to develop a differentiated cultural tourism that promotes interaction with the local population and follows the guidelines of sustainable tourism growth.

This study shows that Pinar del Río can aspire to diversify its offer with a tourist product beyond nature tourism, cultural tourism, having as its offer the intangible cultural heritage, which could be

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for the country a point of continuity, due to its proximity to Havana, of a competitive cultural product according to the current demand.

This perspective, supported by the provincial and local governments, private producers, self-employed workers and new economic actors, in terms of handicrafts, painting, sculpture, music, dance and gastronomy, among others, could generate new offers for cultural tourism.

The intangible cultural heritage can be an important element for the development of tourism, especially cultural tourism, to achieve a diversified range of economic and social objectives within the territory. This dimension should no longer be seen as an accessory dimension to human development, but as an intrinsic part of society and an integral part of the concept of human development in development plans.

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### **Conflict of interest**

Author declares no conflict of interests.

### **Authors' contribution**

Pedro Luis González Cruz wrote the manuscript and approves the version finally submitted.



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