

Case Study: Rural Tourism in Antilla for Local Development

Lisbet Eunice Pérez Anzardo¹, Frank Antonio González Aguilera², Rosa Isidora Palao Fuentes³, Olga Lidia Ortiz Pérez⁴

^{1,3}Associate Professor, University of Holguín “Oscar Lucero Moya”, Holguín, Cuba

²Instructor Professor, University of Holguín “Oscar Lucero Moya”, Holguín, Cuba

⁴Full Professor, University of Holguín “Oscar Lucero Moya”, Holguín, Cuba

Email: lisbeteunice1008@gmail.com, frankyglezaguilera@gmail.com, rpalao50@gmail.com,

olgalidiaortizperez@gmail.com

Abstract:

Rural tourism is a strategic for preserving local identity and revitalizing agricultural economies. The municipality of Antilla, in Holguín, Cuba, was selected as a case study due to its underutilized agro-productive and cultural resources and reliance on the traditional sun-and-beach modality. This research aimed to design the Rural Paradise Route by integrating endogenous resources to foster local development and provide a replicable model for Cuban rural destinations. The methodological procedure of Pérez & Cardet (2022) was applied, complemented by theoretical methods (historical-logical, analytical-synthetic, inductive-deductive) and empirical techniques such as documentary review and unstructured interviews with state and non-state tourism actors. Results show that Antilla possesses significant but underexploited potential, whose articulation into a rural tourism product can diversify the destination's portfolio and strengthen community identity. Validated by specialists as viable and innovative, it demonstrates how participatory methodologies can integrate agro-productive and cultural value chains, offering practical implications for diversifying tourism.

Keywords:

Rural tourism, tourist product, rural tourist route, local development, Antilla

I. Introduction

Tourism constitutes a useful means for the conservation and development of natural and cultural resources within communities, while also meeting visitors' expectations and addressing the social and economic needs of local populations. The resources of a region represent the capital for tourism, particularly when the aim is to attract tourists with strong environmental sensitivity and authenticity. One of the modalities that has experienced the greatest growth throughout history is alternative tourism, whose thematic axis has been developed sustainably in places rich in floral, faunal, historical, and cultural assets. In this regard, rural tourism complements such activity, as it takes place in countryside areas, allowing visitors to interact with local inhabitants, enjoy the environment, and experience the culture and traditions of the territory they visit.

The universally recognized guiding document is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which establishes a transformative vision toward economic, social, and environmental sustainability, as well as its close relationship with tourism. Specifically, Goal 2 aims to reduce hunger, which has promoted policies linked to rural tourism due to its effectiveness in sustainable agricultural productivity, the sale of local products, full integration into the tourism value chain, rational use of endogenous resources, conservation of natural and cultural elements, and the promotion of justice, inclusion, and social equity (UNWTO, 2015; UN, 2015; UNWTO, 2023; UN Tourism, 2024).

Territorial and tourism policies proposed in each country tend to stimulate supply capacity in national and international markets and consolidate tourism as a sustainable activity that contributes to achieving socio-economic development objectives. Europe leads rural tourism, especially countries such as France, Spain, and Switzerland, followed by the Netherlands, Austria, Italy, Portugal, Belgium, and Germany. In the Americas, Chile and Argentina possess the widest networks of associations integrated into this tourism modality (Hosteltur, 2023). In contrast to these contexts, academic literature on rural tourism in Cuba remains scarce and lacks empirical studies analyzing the integration of agro-productive resources into tourism offerings, which justifies the relevance of the present case study.

In Cuba, the update of the National Plan for Economic and Social Development (2015–2030) prioritizes agribusiness and its impact on tourism. Chapter Eight establishes the design of local initiatives and the diversification of tourism offerings as a source of foreign currency income (accommodation, gastronomic services, socio-cultural and historical activities, rural, equestrian, agro-tourism, and flora and fauna observation). The Guidelines of the Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution (2021–2026) emphasize the allocation of idle lands, the expansion of agricultural activities, the diversification of tourism offerings, and the promotion of local development projects (PCC, 2021; PCC, 2024).

More recently, international experiences have reinforced this vision, with 2024 recognizing rural communities for their contribution to sustainable development and the diversification of tourism offerings (UN Tourism, 2024). These recognitions confirm that rural tourism constitutes a strategic pathway to invigorate local economies and strengthen cultural identity, supporting the relevance of promoting projects such as the “Rural Paradise Route” in the municipality of Antilla.

Antilla, located in the central-northern region of Holguín, was selected as a case study because it represents a destination consolidated in the sun-and-beach modality but with underutilized agro-productive and cultural resources. This contrast makes it a paradigmatic example of Caribbean rural territories overlooked in international literature, whose analysis provides evidence from a little-explored context. The absence of agro-tourism routes limits the diversification of economic activity, the generation of benefits for local actors, and the creation of income that strengthens municipal autonomy.

This municipality is distinguished by its coastal location and proximity to the bay, with a productive base sustained by agriculture, livestock, fishing, and port activities. It has a territorial extension of 302.82 km² and a population of 21,332 inhabitants, distributed across seven local councils. Since 1975, it has been the smallest municipality in the country, with a history marked by its agricultural and port vocation. Among its main tourist attractions are the virgin beaches of the Ramón de Antilla Peninsula, Cerro del Júcaro, medicinal mud deposits, protected forest heritage, and rural cultural traditions.

The diagnosis carried out reveals current concerns: insufficient use of endogenous resources, lack of knowledge of alternative tourism modalities among municipal managers, and absence of strategies for the creation and positioning of rural tourism products. These limitations contrast with the opportunities offered by the territory: diversification of tourism offerings, integration of agricultural production into tourism routes, job creation, and strengthening of cultural identity.

Within this framework, the present case study addresses the following scientific problem: How can rural tourism in the municipality of Antilla be strengthened to foster local development? The general objective is to design the “Rural Paradise Route” through the integration of its most attractive endogenous resources, in order to contribute to the local development of the municipality. The unique contribution of this research lies in demonstrating how participatory methodologies can articulate agro-productive and cultural resources in Cuban rural destinations, offering a replicable model and providing theoretical and practical evidence to support tourism diversification in Latin America.

II. Review of Literature

Rural tourism has been widely studied as a modality that contributes to the diversification of tourism offerings and the strengthening of cultural identity in territories. Various authors agree that its development is closely linked to sustainability and the integration of local actors (Lane & Kastenholtz, 2015; UNWTO, 2023). However, the literature shows significant differences in the way countries have articulated this modality within their development policies, highlighting the need for comparative and contextual analyses.

In Europe, rural tourism has been consolidated as a strategic axis for revitalizing local economies, particularly in France, Spain, and Portugal, where networks of associations have been created that integrate agricultural producers, cultural managers, and tourism operators (Hosteltur, 2023). The key to their success lies in the articulation of diversified tourism products and authentic experiences, confirming the importance of innovation in the management of rural destinations (Pons, 2024). In Latin America, Chile and Argentina have advanced in the institutionalization of rural tourism, although they still face challenges related to economic sustainability and community participation (EscapadaRural, 2024). These cases show that, although there is consensus on the potential of rural tourism, its implementation depends on solid institutional structures and the ability to integrate local actors into decision-making processes.

In Cuba, most previous research has focused on the sun-and-beach modality (Pérez Anzardo, 2020; Municipal Development Strategy of Antilla, 2024). National literature recognizes the existence of rural resources with tourism potential but points out methodological shortcomings in the design of products that effectively integrate agro-productive resources and cultural traditions into agro-tourism routes (Blanco, 2008; Font, 2010). This gap limits the diversification of offerings and the generation of direct benefits for local actors. Unlike Europe and Latin America, where institutionalized networks exist, Cuba lacks replicable models of rural tourism, which constitutes a void in academic literature.

More recently, international studies have emphasized the need to link rural tourism with the Sustainable Development Goals, highlighting its role in poverty reduction, social inclusion, and environmental conservation (UN Tourism, 2024). Nevertheless, there is a lack of research analyzing how these global guidelines can be adapted to specific Cuban territories, where socio-economic and productive conditions require differentiated approaches.

In summary, the literature review reveals that, although there is consensus on the potential of rural tourism as a local development strategy, gaps persist in the articulation of rural tourism products in Cuba. This case study seeks to contribute to filling that gap, offering a replicable procedure that integrates endogenous resources, agro-productive practices, and cultural traditions in the municipality of Antilla, while also providing theoretical and practical evidence for tourism diversification in Latin America.

III. Research Methods

For the development of this research, theoretical methods such as the historical-logical, analytical-synthetic, and inductive-deductive approaches were employed, which allowed the establishment of conceptual relationships and the identification of trends in the phenomenon under study. Likewise, empirical methods were applied, including scientific observation, unstructured interviews, review of normative documents related to the tourism process, and expert judgment. These techniques facilitated the triangulation of information and the contrast between institutional and community perspectives.

Several procedures for the design of tourism products were consulted, among which Pierre (2007), Blanco (2008), Font (2010), Pérez Anzardo (2020), Pérez & Cardet (2022), and Pons (2024) stand out. The comparative analysis of these methodologies revealed that, although all of them consider the diagnosis of territorial potentialities, they present recurrent methodological shortcomings: limited economic feasibility, insufficient integration of community factors, and the absence of tools to manage the life cycle of the tourism product.

Consequently, the most recent procedure by Anzardo et al. (2022) was selected, due to its relevance to the object of study and the specific characteristics of the municipality of Antilla. This procedure is distinguished by its participatory approach, involving all stakeholders who interact with the product in its design, validation, and continuous improvement. Its application made it possible to articulate agro-productive and cultural resources within a replicable rural tourism framework, addressing the methodological gaps identified in previous studies.

IV. Results and Discussions

4.1 Characterization of the Municipality of Antilla and Its Natural Resources

Antilla has 25 rural areas that concentrate valuable natural and social resources of provincial and national interest. Among them are the maritime-port-railway facilities linked to Nipe Bay, Cerro del Júcaro, and the Ramón de Antilla Peninsula, which preserves virgin and protected forest heritage, abundant bird species, and timber trees, as well as more than 12 kilometers of virgin beaches. Important deposits of medicinal mud are also reported, considered the largest in the province of Holguín, although these potentialities are still not exploited through alternative products that diversify the traditional sun-and-beach modality.

The municipality's agricultural structure is composed of a Basic State Agroforestry Unit with 12 productive forms, six Credit and Service Cooperatives (CCS), and six Basic Units of Cooperative Production (UBPC), five of which are sugarcane-based and one non-sugarcane. The agricultural area amounts to 1,052 hectares, complemented by orchards such as Calixto García and Monte Feria, as well as the organoponic farm Desembarco del Perrit and small private plots dedicated to vegetable cultivation (MINAG Antilla, 2024).

4.2 Application of the Methodological Procedure

a. Phase I. Initial Preparation

All organizational conditions were created for the proper design of the tourism product Rural Paradise Route in the municipality of Antilla, aimed at promoting rural tourism and local development based on the potential of the natural environment and the components of the traditional rural popular culture of the locality.

b. Creation and Training of the Working Team

The design team was composed of seven specialists, selected according to their level of knowledge regarding the design of tourism products related to rural tourism, years of experience in the tourism sector or related fields, academic or scientific degree, and willingness to participate in the research. Subsequently, they were trained in the different techniques and tools to be used, activities related to rural tourism, and new trends in the design and commercialization of rural tourism products. Reflection workshops and consultations with specialists were conducted, which facilitated the exchange of ideas and opinions around the research.

c. Phase II. Identification of Existing Opportunities for the Development of the Tourism Product

This stage aims to diagnose the current situation of the municipality of Antilla and describe the opportunities available for the development of a relevant, competitive, and sustainable product.

4.3 External Diagnosis

a. Macroenvironment Analysis

The macroenvironment is analyzed at both the national and international levels, highlighting five fundamental factors: technological, political-legal, socio-cultural-environmental, and socio-economic. The global economic crisis has caused countless damages to society in recent years; population aging; and the constant growth of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), among others.

In turn, the update of the country's economic model has, for the first time, opened the possibility for local authorities to have mechanisms that facilitate their actions in favor of local development. Given the interest of the hotel chain Gaviota Tours S.A. in building a large number of accommodation facilities, it becomes necessary to take advantage of this opportunity to consolidate tourism through the multiplier effect.

From a socio-cultural perspective, Antilla is characterized by a strong mix of cultural roots accompanied by diverse traditions. The proportion of source markets has increased, as clients have less time to travel and seek to enjoy a maximum number of products in a minimum amount of time. An environmental aspect affecting the territory is climate change and the occurrence of major meteorological events, due to the geographical position of the province of Holguín in the north of the island, especially between June and November, which impacts the organization of cultural events and tourism activities in the destination.

Antilla has a very weak Human Settlement System, a situation that has persisted throughout its history. The local economy is governed by the conditions of the national economy, which has begun its process of recovery and development following the global economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years. The economy also faces new transformations in national economic policy, including monetary changes resulting from the reorganization with the elimination of the CUC and the establishment of stores in USD as a currency of purchase through magnetic cards.

b. Analysis of Demand

To conduct the demand study, several sources of information were used, including interviews with executives from the National Office of Statistics and Information (ONEI, 2023), the commercial departments of the Hotel Grand Memories Holguín (2023), and Gaviota Tours S.A. (2023). Currently, the province of Holguín is promoting the new Ramón

de Antilla tourism hub, which since its opening in February 2022 until May 2023 has received a total of 168,1095 visitors, of whom 84% were Canadians, 11% Cuban residents abroad, and 5% from isolated markets such as Italy, the Netherlands, and France.

More recently, during 2024, UN Tourism highlighted the growth of rural and sustainable tourism in international communities, reinforcing the need to consolidate demand toward emerging hubs such as Ramón de Antilla. In the same vein, recent reports indicate that spending on rural tourism increased by 7.6%, reflecting a greater willingness of travelers to invest in authentic and sustainable experiences (EscapadaRural, 2024).

c. Analysis of Tourism Markets

For the analysis of tourism markets, interviews were conducted with the Commercial Department of Gaviota Tours S.A., and some of the variables proposed by Medina (2012) were also considered, taking into account the framework in which the research is developed and its specific characteristics. Consequently, it was decided that the product should focus on the following target market: French-speaking Canadian tourists traveling with families, between 25 and 50 years of age, who are repeat visitors to the destination motivated by sun-and-beach tourism, but who also enjoy interacting with local residents and learning about the identity of each territory they visit.

In this sense, the months with the highest number of arrivals from this market are between November and April. Of the Canadians visiting the Ramón de Antilla tourism hub, 94% are motivated by the sun-and-beach modality, 19% are interested in learning about culture, and 9% wish to visit natural areas. The most significant segments are couples (48%) and families (36%) (Commercial Department, Gaviota Tours S.A., 2023).

4.4 Analysis of Competition

The province of Holguín has several places where rural tourism is developed, distributed across the municipalities of Báguanos, Gibara, Rafael Freyre, Banes, and Mayarí. Among them, the alternative and rural offerings of Finca Alcalá, Boca de Samá, Bahía de Naranjo, Chorro de Maita, Río Cabonico Camping Base, Cayo Saetía, Pinares de Mayarí, Salto del Guayabo, La Mensura National Park, Pico Cristal, and Alejandro de Humboldt stand out. An analysis of the attributes of this portfolio of products in the Holguín destination allows us to affirm that all of them may represent some degree of competition for the proposed product.

Other relevant tourism destinations at the national level include Viñales, Ciénaga de Zapata, Sierra del Rosario, Las Terrazas Community, Habanilla, Sierra Maestra, and the municipality of Baracoa. However, these occupy a less important place within the competition due to factors such as transportation, length of stay (linked to distance and travel time), and price, which is also conditioned by the aforementioned factors. Nevertheless, the product is considered to have the competitive advantage of being located just a few kilometers from the province of Holguín. Unique and authentic attributes abound, including cooperatives, orchards, forests, trails, and mountains, as well as a rich natural and cultural heritage that constitutes great potential for short-stay tourism.

a. Internal Diagnosis

Antilla is distinguished by its coastal location and proximity to the bay, which gives it notable tourism potential with opportunities to integrate into rural tourism. Its productive base is sustained by agriculture, livestock, fishing, and port activities, which constitute pillars of the local economy. In this context, the agricultural sector represents an essential support for

agro-tourism and local development, as demonstrated in recent studies (Pérez Anzardo et al., 2023).

The climate can be classified as warm, with fairly pronounced dryness indices, reflected in annual precipitation averages ranging between 600 and 900 mm. The average annual temperature is 25°C, with a maximum average of 27.4°C in July and August and a minimum average of 23°C in February. The predominant wind direction is East to Northeast, with an average speed of 14.4 km/h (CITMA Antilla, 2023). Potential water resources have been estimated at 0.96 Hm³, with runoff occurring only during rainfall events. Drainage flows toward two main slopes, North–Northeast and South. The length of runoff channels does not exceed 3 km, and they do not reach the coast, as infiltration occurs through karstic structures present in the limestone formations of Júcaro and Jaimanitas (CITMA Antilla, 2023).

Regarding soils, these are swampy coastal marsh soils. To the north of the settlement, dark plastic gley soils predominate, with a profile characterized by high clay content (up to 70%) and predominance of montmorillonite, which leads to the development of shiny surfaces, although not highly developed.

The stratigraphic profile of the area consists of lithologies dating from the Neogene to the Quaternary period, included within the Jaimanitas, Júcaro, and Jagüeyes formations, along with sandy and swampy–marsh sediments distributed in coastal accumulation zones. Along the coast, strips of fine to medium-grained sandy materials with coral fragments are found, forming beaches and small sandy shells. The geodynamic processes occurring in the area are mainly related to karstification, with different karstic structures such as cavities, depressions, caves, and reefs. A very important aspect is the maximum height of Loma de Jamaica, which reaches 100.4 meters above sea level (CITMA Antilla, 2023).

The municipality has a population of 21,332 inhabitants, representing 2.1% of the provincial total, with a population density of 178.2 inhabitants/km². Of the total population, 15,880 (74.4%) are urban and 5,452 (25.6%) are rural, with a growth rate of 512.1/1000 inhabitants and an urbanization rate of 74.4/100 inhabitants (ONEI Antilla, 2023). The working-age population is 13,458 people (63.01%), of which 54.03% are men (7,272) and 45.97% are women (6,186). A total of 11,127 people (82.68%) are employed in the economy, of whom 8,540 (76.75%) work in the business sector, 2,230 (20.04%) in the budgeted sector, and 357 are self-employed, mainly concentrated in the municipal capital, particularly in two activities: food production and marketing of agricultural products (ONEI Antilla, 2023).

Regarding the inventory of tourism resources and attractions, this was carried out through the survey, classification, and subsequent registration of all resources in the territory that are of special interest to the main markets visiting the Ramón de Antilla destination. These were classified by categories, taking into account their most relevant characteristics. In general, the territory has 20 resources, divided into two categories: natural and historical–cultural.

b. Summary of the Diagnosis

To determine the opportunities of the municipality of Antilla, a strategic diagnosis was carried out using the Internal Factor Evaluation Matrix (IFE) and the External Factor Evaluation Matrix (EFE), which allowed the elaboration of the SWOT Matrix (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). These tools made it possible to identify the strategies to be followed by the territory in relation to the tourism development of the locality. The municipality has a strategic position with a predominance of internal strengths, obtaining

a value of 2.49. From the external perspective, it shows a slight predominance of opportunities, with a value of 2.70; therefore, offensive strategies should be pursued.

By placing the municipality of Antilla in the DO quadrant according to the Internal and External Matrix, efforts must be directed toward overcoming weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities. A set of adaptive or reorientation strategies is proposed to overcome weaknesses through the use of opportunities: creating the necessary infrastructure for visitor services; training personnel involved in sectors related to tourism so that they identify with the values and traditions of the community and provide excellent customer service; strengthening relationships with travel agencies and tour operator representatives of the Holguín destination to improve distribution processes and communication of offers and attractions in the municipality of Antilla; and satisfying, with an alternative proposal, the demand of markets arriving at the tourism hub, among others.

4.5 Phase III. Product Design

a. Product Structuring

The proposed name for the tourism product is “*Rural Paradise Route*”, as it is short and easy to remember, and by itself conveys the authenticity and sensitivity of rural spaces and culture, in line with the set of tangible and intangible elements it offers. It is accompanied by the slogan: “*To a new dimension... the perfect fusion of orchards, forests, hiking, fauna, cultures, and gastronomy.*”

b. Tourism Product Concept and Activities to Be Developed

The aim is to design a tourist route that interlaces the natural and identity elements of the municipality, orchestrated as a whole to achieve the ultimate objective of any tourism system: a satisfied client with the product they chose to purchase, meeting the preferences, tastes, and trends of the defined target market. The proposal consists of a tourism circuit from the Ramón de Antilla hub to the most significant rural areas of the municipality, such as Cerro del Júcaro, Ranchón Don Pepe, and the Credit and Service Cooperative.

The tour will begin with the collection of tourists from the hotels of the Ramón de Antilla tourism hub, who will be transferred to Cerro del Júcaro. There, they will be able to appreciate attractions such as the cemetery of the pirate family Los Hastings, and observe from the outside some of the caves, while listening to stories and legends associated with them. Afterwards, they will be taken to Ranchón Don Pepe, where they will be welcomed with a cocktail, juice, sugarcane juice (guarapo), or coconut water. Visitors will also hear the legend of the shark that lived in the waters of the seafront, and enjoy lunch complemented by traditional cultural activities of the territory and the purchase of artisanal souvenirs.

Later, the group will move to the Credit and Service Cooperative, where they will be able to interact with local farmers. The farmers will demonstrate multiple tasks carried out in this area, such as agricultural and livestock management practices (depending on seasonal crops and climatic conditions), observation of farm animals, horseback riding, and contemplation of a small reservoir dedicated to the breeding of edible fish. Finally, a brief farewell will be offered to the tourists before they are transferred back to their hotel.

c. Tourism Resources Present in the Product

During the site assessments, the existing resources were identified and considered based on accessibility, authenticity, uniqueness, the possibility of carrying out complementary activities, and the mix of services. Access can be by air to the province of Holguín through the Frank País International Airport, followed by road transfer to the Ramón de Antilla Peninsula,

or directly from the country's capital. It can also be by sea, as Marina Antilla benefits from nautical points such as Bahía de Naranjo, Playa Estero Ciego, Guardalavaca, Cayo Saetía, and Puerto de Vita.

In terms of authenticity and uniqueness, the area is characterized by semi-deciduous forests, natural savannas, trails, coastal thickets, and mangroves, which host valuable populations of mollusks, crustaceans, fish, and birds—many of them migratory species that find excellent habitats in the ecosystems present in the territory. The richness of heritage values is expressed through artistic activities and gastronomy rooted in the locality, based on seafood and products harvested by rural producers themselves.

d. Mix of Services

According to the proposed concept, the main service is focused on offering a different leisure experience that incorporates authentic encounters through a journey into the rural areas of the territory, combined with cultural activities. The excursion includes lunch at Ranchón Don Pepe, located on the corner of the seafront. This establishment is distinguished by its location and quality of services, highlighting traditional gastronomy, where visitors can enjoy dishes such as ajiaco, arroz moro, roasted pork, grilled fish as an alternative to pork, crab with cornmeal, yucca with mojito sauce, seasonal salad, and for dessert, cornmeal with coconut; a complimentary drink is included.

As with any tourism product, it will also include a series of secondary services, which are part of the offering but, unlike the main service, are not directly related to satisfying the needs and desires of the target audience. These include information, signage, guiding services, among others.

4.6 Product Delivery

a. Spatial and Temporal Location

The tourism product *Rural Paradise Route* will be located in some of the most authentic rural localities of the municipality of Antilla. The service duration is approximately seven hours, from hotel departure between 8:30 and 9:00 a.m. until return around 4:00 p.m. The excursion will be available twice a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays, since coordination with the different establishments receiving tourists is necessary to ensure that the excursion is carried out with the highest possible quality.

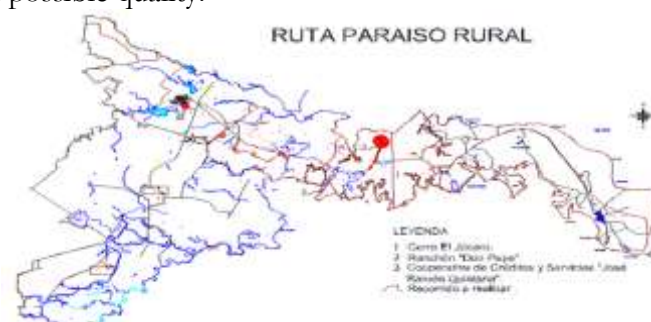


Figure 1. Route of the rural tourism product

4.7 Product Delivery

a. Transportation

For the development of the circuit, the main means of transportation will be a bus provided by the company Transgaviota. The number of seats to be occupied will depend on the number of passengers sold. These buses are air-conditioned, equipped with safety features, high comfort, luggage compartments, and onboard audio/video systems. Departure will take

place from the Ramón de Antilla tourism hub, where clients who have opted for the product will be picked up. The schedule of transportation services will depend on the itinerary of the route.

b. Implementation

At this stage, the necessary actions for the launch and development of the product are identified. The sequence and appropriate priority of execution are defined, along with the estimated budget, tentative start and end dates, resource requirements, and those responsible for implementation—all organized through an action plan.

c. Phase IV. Commercialization of the Tourism Product

Positioning becomes highly relevant at this stage, as it refers to the place the product occupies in the consumer's mind, as well as an indicator of customer perception compared to other products. It is important that the optional Rural Paradise Route be included in all travel agency catalogs and hold a prominent position relative to other products, thereby enabling differentiation in the eyes of clients.

d. Positioning Strategies

In this case, a differentiated positioning strategy was adopted in the market, as it allows the municipality of Antilla to enhance its tourism offering and meet the demands of the selected segments based on its distinctive character. This strategy must be built upon the uniqueness and differential value of the resources and attractions available, as well as the recreational activities developed, which together generate an authentic natural and heritage-based offering to satisfy the demands of the identified target audience.

For the selection of distribution channels, the travel agencies of the Gaviota Tours S.A. Delegation operating along the northern coast of Holguín were considered, aligned with the selected target markets, without excluding direct sales and the use of the internet as a distribution channel. It is expected to be distributed through the main travel agencies in Canada specializing in alternative tourism, as a complete package excluding the cost of round-trip airfare due to the frequent fluctuations in ticket prices. The tourism package may also be marketed through Cuban travel agencies.

e. Pricing Strategy

The pricing of the product was determined based on competition, market conditions, demand, and costs. Seasonal and promotional strategies were adopted, meaning prices are reduced during the low season to stimulate demand and increased during the high season to maximize revenue. Since the product includes various services, and according to prices established by travel agencies in other destinations for similar excursions ranging between \$90.00 and \$130.00, specialists estimated differentiated prices depending on the market to which the product is directed. For the international market, a price of \$100.00 is recommended for a minimum of 20 passengers. For the domestic market, the price will depend on the value of the currency at the current exchange rate, which should not be less than \$1,000.00 for the same number of passengers.

The Rural Paradise Route offers a replicable model for other Cuban municipalities, by integrating local actors and generating direct economic benefits. Its implementation can serve as a reference for local governments and travel agencies interested in diversifying the tourism offering beyond the traditional sun-and-beach modality.

f. Phase V. Evaluation, Feedback, and Continuous Improvement

A commercial feasibility analysis (break-even point) was conducted to evaluate the possibility that the sale of the product would be profitable and generate returns. An assessment was carried out of the equipment and infrastructure required to develop the new product, based on the analysis performed by consulted specialists, local development managers, and data provided by experts from the Gaviota Tours S.A. Delegation.

It was also considered that the annual budget allocated to the 1% local development fund amounts to 2,500,100 pesos, of which 50% is deposited into the 1% account for local development. The following table presents the estimated costs for the initial investment, given that the main problem lies in the lack of conditioning of the sites to be visited. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Distribution of Investments for the Product*

Activities	Budget in CUP
Conditioning and Assembly	250 000,00
Equipment	600 000,00
Others	150 000,00
Total	1 000 000,00

To calculate the time required to recover the investment, based on the price set for the domestic market with two weekly frequencies over an approximate duration of seven hours, the following calculations were carried out:

Total Investment Amount $I = \$ 1\,000\,000,00$

Selling Price $p = \$ 1\,000,00$

Annual Utilization Level $u_1 = 1\,440$ (15 clients \times 96 days)

Annual Total Revenue $Ip_1 = \$ 1\,440\,000,00$ cup (15 clients \times 96 days \times 1000,00 cup)

Annual Fixed Cost $F = \$ 30\,000,00$ (value estimated by specialists based on similar service providers)

Unit Variable Cost $v = \$ 125,00$ (value estimated by specialists for service provision based on similar entities)

Payback Period of the Investment PRI $= Ip_1 / (p \cdot u - (F + v \cdot u))$

$PRI = 1\,440\,000,00 / (1000,00 \cdot 1\,440 - (30\,000,00 + 126,00 \cdot 1\,440)) = 1,17$

1 year + 0.17*12 months = 2,04 months + 0.04*30 days = 1.2 days

This means that approximately in one year, two months, and one day, a sufficient cash flow will be generated to recover the investment.

Net Present Value (NPV)

$NPV = -I + \sum_{n=1}^N \frac{Q_n}{(1+r)^n}$ Let I be the investment, Q_n the net cash flow, and r the cost of capital. Therefore:

$NPV = -1\,000\,000,00 + (1\,440\,000,00 - (30\,000,00 + 125,00 \cdot 1\,440)) / (1 + 0)$

$NPV = \$ 230\,000,00$ The project is accepted.

Internal Rate of Return (IRR)

$IRR = (Ip / I) - 1 = (1\,440\,000,00 - (30\,000,00 + 125,00 \cdot 1\,440)) / 1\,000\,000,00 - 1 = 0,23$ It represents a profitability 23% higher than the initial investment, which demonstrates that the project is profitable and therefore accepted.

The Internal Rate of Return (IRR) is the interest rate at which the Net Present Value (NPV) becomes zero, and its formula is as follows:

$$NPV = \sum_{t=1}^n \frac{V_F t}{(1 + TIR)^t} - I_0 = 0$$

Break-Even Point (Ueq)

To calculate the break-even point, the utilization level was determined using the following:

$U_{eq} = F / (p - v) = 30\,000,00 / (1000,00 - 125,00) = 34,285$ This means that the revenues generated from selling to 34 clients will be at the break-even point.

Expressed in terms of revenues, it is calculated as follows:

$P_{eq} = p * U_{eq} = 1000,00 * 34,285 = \$ 34\,285,00$ This means that from this revenue onward, profits begin to be generated.

To verify the calculation, the total costs at the break-even point are determined as follows:

$C = F + v * U_{eq} = 30\,000 + 125 * 34,285 = \$ 34\,285,63$. Therefore: $P_{eq} = C$.

With the development of the feasibility analysis and the calculation and representation of the break-even point, it can be predicted that the product is economically feasible.

4.8 Stage Evaluation and Final Product Control

The assessment carried out through 10 specialists, who responded to the applied survey, revealed that 90% recognized the quality of the proposal and, consequently, the validity and relevance of the procedure employed. Meanwhile, 10% indicated that the depth of some steps in the procedure could be improved.

a. Feedback and Continuous Improvement of the Product

Once the tourism product Rural Paradise Route has been launched to the market, a survey system should be designed to collect information ensuring feedback on customer satisfaction levels and their suggestions for continuous improvement. Other control methods should also be implemented to detect errors in the design and development of the product or changes in customer demand.

The integration of endogenous resources in the municipality of Antilla constitutes a strategic axis to enhance local development and strengthen municipal autonomy. The results show concrete contributions relevant to the formulation of local and national policies aimed at diversifying the tourism offer beyond the sun-and-beach model, such as:

1. Consolidation of local identity, with an estimated 35% increase in community participation in cultural and traditional activities.
2. Establishment of strategic alliances, projecting the integration of at least 12 agricultural cooperatives and 3 hotel facilities.
3. Training and capacity building of human resources, with the preparation of 150 workers from both the state and non-state sectors in tourism management and service quality.
4. Generation of employment and income, with the creation of approximately 220 new jobs linked to rural tourism and an 18% increase in municipal revenues from tourism activities.
5. Diversification of the tourism offer, with the incorporation of five new modalities (agro-tourism, equestrian tourism, eco-tourism, gastronomic tourism, and cultural tourism).
6. Sustainable use of natural resources, with the projection of five environmental conservation projects and rational use of endogenous resources.

V. Conclusion

The underutilization of rural resources in Antilla coincides with the observations of Lane & Kastenholtz (2015), who highlight that the lack of articulation of rural products limits tourism diversification. In this context, the proposal of the Rural Paradise Route aligns with international sustainability trends (UNWTO, 2023; UN Tourism, 2024). The diagnosis carried out revealed that, despite the municipality's natural and cultural wealth, the absence of a rural tourism product has limited both the diversification of the offer and community participation. The application of the methodological procedure demonstrated that the integration of endogenous resources can become a viable strategy to stimulate local economies and strengthen cultural identity. Consequently, this case study provides empirical evidence from a Caribbean context that has been little explored, reinforcing the relevance of integrating rural tourism into territorial development strategies in Cuba and Latin America. Future research may position the experience of Antilla within an international comparative framework and broaden the debate on rural tourism in Latin America, thereby contributing to the construction of replicable models in other contexts.

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