

Tourist Observatory of Matanzas. A necessary proposal.

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Summary

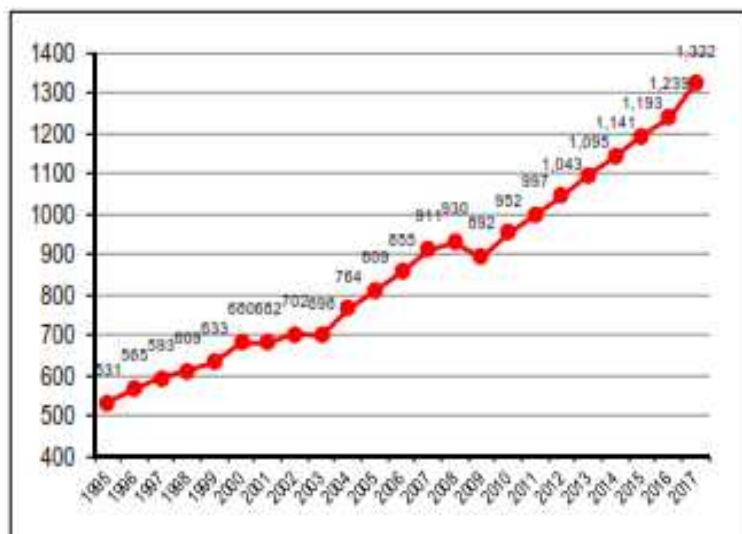
In addition to contributing significantly to attract foreign currency, and therefore to the balance of payments, tourism also exercises a strong synergy over the other sectors of the economy that necessarily function as suppliers or complements necessary for the proper functioning of this sector, contributing so in a relevant way to the development of them; being at the same time of great attraction for the direct foreign investment, source of necessary financing to guarantee the sustainable and sustainable development of the country. All this together with the insertion of the market in the conception of the Cuban economic model strongly linked to planning as necessary tools, determines the need to have sufficient and reliable information for decision making both for national entrepreneurs, as for potential investors foreign Meeting this need for information is the primary objective proposed for the creation of the Tourist Observatory of Matanzas, classifying companies according to the results and their contribution to the economy of the country, as well as other relevant and complementary information.

Key words: tourist observatory, tourist information, decision making.

Introducción

The tourism industry is currently an essential sector in the economic life of modern society, generating 10 percent of world GDP, 1 in 10 jobs and 30 percent of international business transactions in the sector services; being the main contributor to the balance of payment and main source of income of many countries according to Talebⁱ (2017). For the seventh consecutive year, according to information from the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the year 2016 showed a sustained growth of world tourism, with more than 1.2 billion tourists, and according to this institution, the forecast of growth until 2030 provides for the amount of 1.8 billion. See table 1.

Table 1- Tourist arrival growth. World (Millions of tourists).
Source: World Tourism Organizationⁱⁱ.



Cuba is not immune to this growth of tourists, showing a sustained growth of this indicator in the last 7 years as well, which is illustrated in the following tables of information from the National Office of Statistics and Information (ONEI for its acronym in Spanish):

Table 2- 15.1 - Basic series on Cuba's tourist industry.

Source: ONEI. ANUARIO ESTADÍSTICO DE CUBA 2015. CAPÍTULO 15: TURISMO. Edición 2016.

	Unidad					
CONCEPTO	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Llegadas internacionales						
Visitantes	2 531 745	2 716 317	2 838 607	2 852 572	3 002 745	3 524 779
Turistas	2 505 970	2 688 004	2 814 541	2 828 933	2 969 825	3 490 710
Excursionistas	24 775	28 313	24 066	23 589	32 920	34 069
Pasajeros en crucero	2 484	1 235	2 683	1 683	8 085	9 922
Llegadas de visitantes por región						
De África	11 090	8 902	10 975	12 573	14 714	14 160
América	1 664 040	1 799 074	1 926 001	1 964 113	2 042 010	2 350 596
Europa	809 515	852 085	839 258	810 381	857 013	1 058 202
Asia Oriental y el Pacífico	41 349	48 498	53 158	56 229	57 653	69 592
Asia Meridional	5 832	5 841	5 901	6 728	8 674	8 863
Oriente Medio	2 053	1 814	2 191	2 321	2 759	3 319
Llegadas de turistas por medio de transporte						
Via aérea	2 505 970	2 688 004	2 814 541	2 828 933	2 969 825	3 490 710
Llegadas de turistas por motivo de visita						
Vacaciones, ocio y recreo	2 398 929	2 578 309	2 701 366	2 721 923	2 861 180	3 363 372
Negocios y motivos profesionales	13 400	15 577	16 592	15 109	14 151	18 616
Otros	95 641	94 118	96 583	91 901	94 454	108 722
Viajes al extranjero						
Salidas	251 047	253 057	213 027	206 107	354 798	500 117

Tourism is the branch of Cuban industry in the opinion of the author called to become the pivotal sector of the economy, according to the global trend and in correspondence with the place it occupies within it, not only for its net contribution to GDP and the balance of payment, but because its growth brings with it a synergy that affects many other sectors.

The decisive role of tourism in the Cuban national economy, is based on the fact that the estimated growth of GDP by 1.6% in 2017 is based on the increase of 30% in the sugar industry and 8% of the added value in the hotel and restaurant sector. Even though the growth of income from tourist services between 2011 and 2016 reached 22.6% (Rodríguezⁱⁱⁱ, 2018), it is insufficient to compensate for the decrease in income from the export of skilled labor, causing the decline of this last line a fall total revenue from the export of services of 9.5%, which demonstrates the existence of reserves in this regard.

Tourism was the sector with the greatest expansion in 2017, but there are still reserves in the efficiency due to the lack of correspondence between the increase in visitors by 16.5% and the increase in income resulting from them to only 10.5%; decreasing the income per tourist from 760 dollars in 2016 to 722 in 2017, which highlights the need for extra hotel investments (Rodríguez (2018)).

In order to put these reserves into operation, managers and other decision makers must have a reliable and transparent source of data and information. The Cuban economic and social model is in the process of being updated, with the central objective of guaranteeing a prosperous and sustainable growth, whose strategic theoretical base is contained in the Guidelines approved in 2011. This growth supports the growth of investment as a fundamental source of financing direct foreign (FDI). Tourism also needs this source of financing. At present investors are based on a thorough study of the assets in which they will invest, to determine the feasibility of investing or not, studies that are based on data and transparent and reliable information.

Consequently, considering that tourism is an essential branch for the economic and social development of Cuba, in order to guarantee the sustainable and prosperous development of this sector, among other factors, it is necessary:

- a) Benchmarking process that allows homogenizing information for decision making.
- b) Updated, transparent and reliable information for the best decision making in the sector.
- c) Transparent and attractive presentation of the information of the sector to promote and facilitate FDI.

These elements currently do not exist, at least concentrated in a single source of easy access for consultation in the province of Matanzas, so, in the opinion of the author, the creation of a tourist observatory in this town would supply this deficiency and facilitate the decision making of the managers of this branch in the territory, at the same time that it would serve as a base for the analysis of the potential foreign investors in tourism.

Referential theoretical framework.

Tourist observatory.

In general, and without distinction of the branch of knowledge or sector of society in question, observatories are tools or instruments that produce, analyze and provide data and information about the field they study, facilitating accurate decision making from them. Several theorists have conceptualized and classified them, Muñoz and Torrent ^{iv}(2003) consider it as a community of learning and innovation; Phelan ^v(2007) organizes them according to the recipient of the information if it is for the public sector or the private sector; Malagón ^{vi}(2010) clarifies that these are not audit bodies, but are transparent and neutral information support for decision making; whereas Farné ^{vii}(2011) establishes the relationship: information / monitoring / investigation.

The UNWTO defines rather a network of tourism observatories, as those tools that allow monitoring the economic, environmental and social impact of tourism on destinations. This initiative stems from the long-standing commitment of the UNWTO to support a sustainable and resilient growth of the sector, through the realization of measurements and verifications that allow a management of tourism based on reliable evidence^{viii}.

The author defines tourism observatory as a tool for monitoring the tourist development of a territory that provides truthful, up-to-date and transparent information from both an environmental and socio-economic point of view, which serves to make decisions about improving the impact of this sector in these areas and for the selection of portfolios of foreign direct investment.

As guiding objectives, those determined by UNWTO are endorsed:

Main objectives of the observatories

1. Establish a solid base of tangible information with a view to taking informed decisions. To ensure that local stakeholders actively participate in the measurement

of risks, costs, impact, limits and opportunities through an inclusive and participatory approach.

2. Provide a framework for the systematic, timely and regular monitoring of the use of resources and for a better knowledge of the incidence of tourism.
3. Forge networks and exchange information in order to improve collaboration, communication and public accountability.
4. Monitor the implementation of policies, management measures and plans related to sustainable development.
5. Encourage the long-term commitment to carry out regular follow-ups, with a view to contributing to the sustainable growth of the sector in the destinations.
6. Highlight and share good practices and lessons learned.

Background.

Cuba does not have any recognized tourism observatory in the UNWTO, an organization that has been developing and perfecting a network of observatories for several years, highlighting above all the latest steps that have resulted in the creation of a Sustainable Tourism Observatories Network (UNWTO INSTO for its acronym in English). This process has among its antecedents the Conference on Sustainable Development of the United Nations RIO + 20 in 2012, which highlighted the necessary contribution of tourism to sustainable development and knowledge^{ix}.

In the Report of the Secretary General of the UNWTO (CE / 95/3 (III) (b) Add.), At the 95th Session of the Executive Council of this organization in 2013, it is resolved to create Observatories of Sustainable Tourism under the auspices of the WTO. Through Resolution 69/233 of the UN General Assembly of 2014, Promotion of sustainable tourism including ecotourism for the eradication of poverty and protection of the environment, the need for sustainability policies based on accurate and transparent information is underlined^x. In this same year, the Sustainable Tourism Observatories Network of the WTO is created.

Strengthening this line of work, in 2015, Resolution 69/13^{xi} of the General Assembly of the United Nations, Addis Ababa Action Agenda and Resolution 70/1^{xii} Transforming our world: Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, where emphasis is placed on the monitoring of sustainable development and its impact on various economic activities, including tourism.

As a result of the course of these events, in 2015 and in the context of the expansion of the Sustainable Tourism Observatories Network, within the framework of the 101 Session of the Executive Council of the WTO, an updated guide for the operation and management of tourism observatories.

The Forum on Sustainable Development under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council emphasized the importance of the countries' capacity to generate data and information based on reliable and real-time evidence for decision-making for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. all levels.

In 2017, the following were added to the Sustainable Tourism Observatories Network of the UNWT

- Sonoma County (California, USA)
- Raglan and Waitomo, Waikato Region, New Zealand

On February 27 and 28, 2018, at the 18th Meeting of the Committee on Statistics and the Tourism Satellite Account at the WTO, the growing relevance to expand tourism statistics beyond the current economic approach to include social and environmental aspects was discussed^{xiii}.

In order to be recognized as a tourism observatory of the UNWTO and belong to this network, the nine indicators published by the UNWTO must be complied with: "Indicators for sustainable tourism of destinations"^{xiv}

1. Local satisfaction with tourism
2. Economic benefits for the destination.
3. Employment
4. Seasonality of tourism
5. Energy management
6. Water management.
7. Water saving management
8. Administration of expenses
9. Governance.

Generally, before presenting the complete file to be admitted as a tourist observatory of the network, there are operating experiences as satellite observatory of another territory that has already been admitted to it and that has the resources, knowledge and experience in this sense.

Regarding the environmental impact, it is our intention to subscribe to the line of work drawn up by the UNWTO and to implement this approach accordingly in the creation of the Matanzas Tourist Observatory. Given the peculiarities of Cuba, it is in the economic and social framework that an approach will be developed according to our characteristics.

Preliminary methodological approach.

The project is in its creation phase, with which the methods used up to this moment have been the bibliographic review and the personal survey and / or via email with subject experts.

Due to the importance that both quantitative and qualitative information requires, it will be a mixed investigation, in general, with the objective of combining both in the collection, analysis and inferences derived from the results, with the consequent validation, to facilitate the understanding of the object of study.

As part of the methodological design, the object of study is defined as the management of the tourist companies of the province of Matanzas and their impact on the sustainable development of the territory, the field of action being the sustainable development of the territory of Matanzas. For its objective is an exploratory investigation.

As research variables are defined:

- INDEPENDENT VARIABLE:** Management of tourism companies.
- DEPENDENT VARIABLE:** Impact of the management of tourist companies of Matanzas in the sustainable development of the territory, considering the latter in its three dimensions: environmental, economic and social.

Dialectical materialism will be the guideline to follow as a general method, also using quantitative and qualitative methods for the treatment of data and the integration of information, analysis and interpretation of it and the construction of an integral indicator.

Results and Discussion.

The design of the Matanzas tourist observatory will be in correspondence with the objectives, strategies, procedures and parameters established by the Observatory Network of Sustainable Tourism of the UNWTO; fundamentally with regard to the environment dimension. Hence, in the first instance, it is proposed to emphasize the following three aspects:

Build trust among local decision makers. For this purpose, common values and understanding must be built and strengthened, as well as guaranteeing inclusiveness and transparency.

Establishment of a strong system of facilitators. Promote the initiative and the mobilization of resources based on sustainable tourism. Develop clear and precise strategies, promoting change and the elimination of obstacles and barriers.

Training and commitment of local work groups. Ensure monitoring and commitment to the information provided through systematic and periodic exchanges for discussion and decision making, agreeing on an effective communication mechanism.

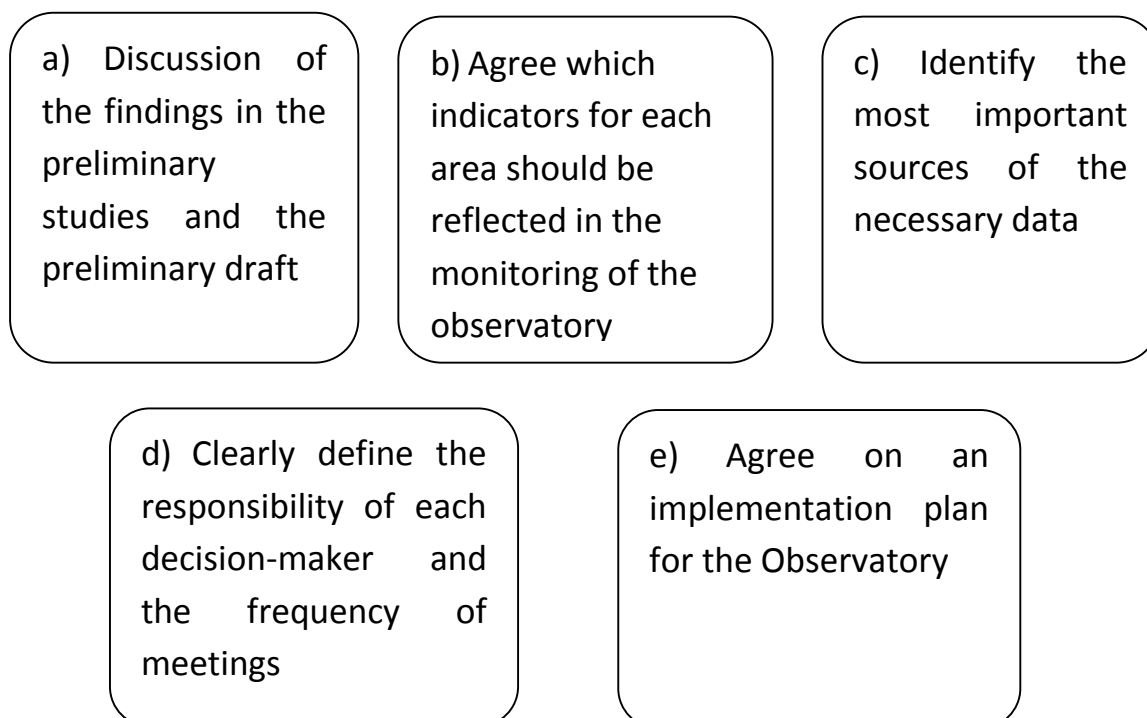
This research supports the main objective of the Network, expressed as: Facilitate decision makers the necessary tools to strengthen institutional capacity, the formulation and implementation of sustainable tourism management policies, strategies and plans and processes; through the systematic application of monitoring, evaluation and information management techniques.

In this way, the 9 indicators to belong to the Observatory Network of the WTO described above are also considered.

Once the preliminary studies and a preliminary draft have been carried out, Work Workshops will be created with the main decision-makers and groups of experts, which will be developed with the following logic:

Diagram 1- Lead thread of Workshops.

Source: Approach to UNWTO.



The environment dimension will be implemented according to WTO standards and in line with the strategy of the Blue Community^{xv}, Florida Observatory with advanced experiences

and recognized by the UNWTO for their advanced results. The twelve strategies of this observatory are: 1-Improvement of the design of the constructions in function of the sustainability and the reduction of disasters; 2-Promote the use of mass transport to reduce carbon emissions; 3-Reduce the use of non-renewable energy; 4-Water conservation; 5-Perfeccionamiento of the expenses of management; 6-Reduction of the use of plastic; 7-Promote local hydroponics for food; 8- Promote the sustainability of seafood; 9-Protection of habitat and cultural heritage; 10-Clean Marine Initiative; 11-Education and 12-Improvement of planning and management policies.

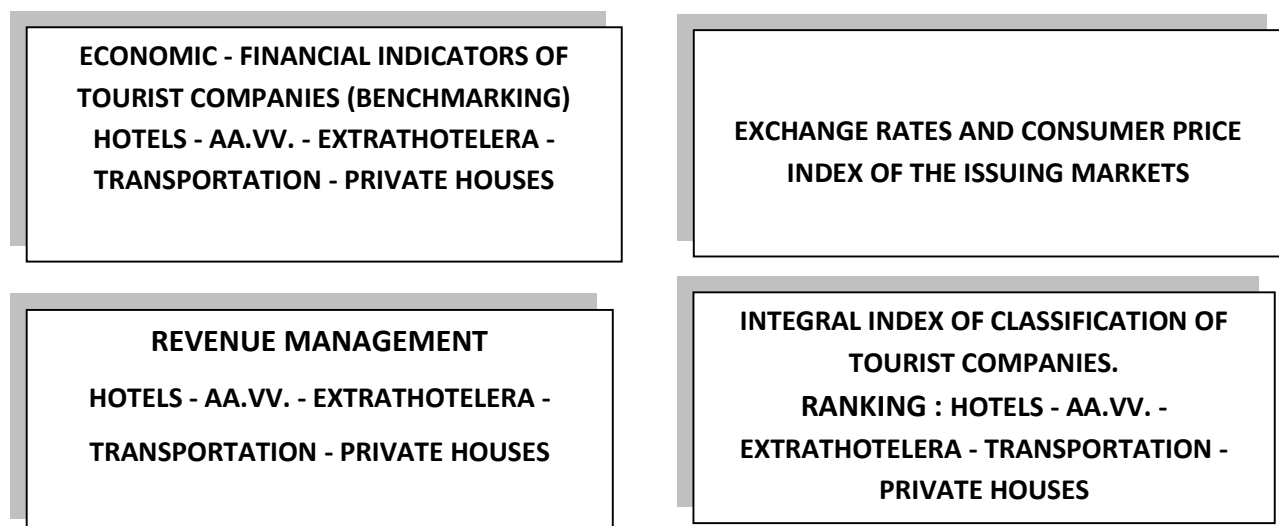
These strategies must be reconciled with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA for its acronym in Spanish). The measurement indicators of the same should not differ in the essentials with what is regulated by this Ministry.

The economic dimension is the one that differs fundamentally from the rest of existing tourist observatories, in order to contribute to the solution of the problematic outlined on the need for transparent and reliable information for making decisions in the management of tourist companies in the territory, and serve as a basis for data analysis for potential foreign investors.

In this sense it is proposed that the information of this dimension, appear reflected in four quadrants according to the following scheme:

Scheme 2- Economic dimension

Source: self made.



Before compiling the information that will be offered in each of these quadrants, it is necessary to carry out a thorough benchmarking work, with the objective of homogenizing the information and making the different facilities and services that make up the tourist

activity of the territory comparable. This activity has been divided into five major groups: hotels, travel agencies, extra-hotel activity and transport and private homes. The first quadrant will show the main financial economic indicators of the companies in the territory that includes the tourism observatory, considering mainly the indicators offered by ONEI: Total physical tourists; Tourists - total days (Overnight stays); Rooms- busy days; Income (Tourist Entities); Average income for tourists - days; Occupancy rate; Total Income broken down into: Accommodation; Retail Trade; Gastronomy; Transportation; Recreation and Other income:, only reflecting them at the company and territory level. It would also include the housing capacity, the composition of the workforce; the average salary, the productivity of work and the relationship between these last two indicators. Disaggregated by installation and grouped at territorial level.

In this way, more accurate decisions can be taken in the economic management of these facilities with the aim of improving their operation and contribution to the social and economic development of the territory.

The second quadrant will reflect the exchange rates defined by the central banks of the different countries (markets) that issue tourists that make up the credit portfolio of the territory; This indicator will not only allow decision-making in the financial sphere, but will also serve as a basis for establishing the contract currencies that will be established for the payment of services rendered, considering the US blockade of Cuba, as well as the measures to be taken to reduce the impact that this brings with manifested in foreign exchange losses.

In addition, it will display the Consumer Price Index, which allows determining to which markets to direct marketing management depending on the behavior of the same, and what prices and offers to establish in correspondence.

The Revenue Management is the base of the business management of the business, focused on the optimization of business decisions based on demand forecasting, based on a correct strategic planning with its consequent tactical application, with the objective of not only maximizing revenues, but also the greater operational efficiency and cost control. It consists of developing strategies to sell the right product to the right customer at the right time and at the right price in order to maximize the company's income. The information related to this tool is the one shown in the third quadrant.

It is in this quadrant that we have been working the most, developing two master's theses and several theses in hotels in the territory, establishing the Revenue Management as an essential tool to establish an effective line of work that allows the entity to offer its product in an adequate manner, achieving the fulfillment of three fundamental objectives: obtain the maximum income, better positioning of its offer in the market and greater competitiveness in the sector.

Applying predictive analytics techniques, an adequate segmentation of the clients has been achieved, guaranteeing the continuous updating and considering the internal market, as well as the different booking channels, the projections and forecasts based on these criteria have contributed to the increase of income in the hotels in what has been implemented. And the quality and transparency of information for forecasts has been improved. Prices, even when governed by the minimum values established by Tourism Ministry (MINTUR for its acronym in Spanish), have moved more freely and the offers have contributed to the improvement of employment and income, always considering the price parity, and how this can affect the distribution channels.

The transparent and updated information that will be offered in this quadrant will serve as the basis for the correct application of this tool.

In the fourth quadrant, a ranking of companies will be shown considering the five segments explained, considering an integral index, which considers the positioning of the same in the media, as well as their economic results and impact on the conservation of the environment and the social environment in that is. This index will be determined from the methodology of Medina, A. and Nogueira, D., et.al. (2013).

The third dimension, that is, the social impact of tourism management in the territory will be measured through qualitative variables, which will be initiatives of tourism companies that improve the standard of living of the inhabitants of the area and their degree of social commitment to the territory, and quantitative variables measured through the part of the contribution of taxes that contribute to local development.

Conclusions to debate.

Project at last, this is a work in constant improvement, so they are offered as conclusions rather points of departure that undergo critical debate to enrich it.

1-Tourism is the sector of the Cuban economy with the greatest contribution to GDP in recent years in the field of services, so the management of this sector has to continue in constant improvement and for this the decision-making has to be based on transparent and updated information.

2-The national economy requires foreign direct investment to achieve the growth rates of GDP that are required. To be able to incentivize this investment, it is necessary to provide transparent and updated information to potential investors for their analysis and investment decisions.

3-Tourist observatories are a source of transparent and up-to-date information on the territories to which they belong, in order to facilitate the most accurate decision-making of decision-makers and potential investors.

4-A tourist observatory of Matanzas is proposed, considering the three dimensions of impact: environment, economic and social.

5- The environmental impact dimension is developed following the parameters of the UNWTO in general and Blue Community in particular.

6-The economic impact dimension is developed considering four essential aspects and differs from the rest of the existing tourist observatories.

7-The social impact dimension is measured as the initiatives in the territory by tourism companies and their contribution to the financing of local development through the payment of taxes.

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