

# Local Concern for Sustainable Tourism Development: San Juan de Los Remedios, Cuba

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## Abstract

The growing global concern for sustainable and alternative tourism development has strengthened the scientific research and management of tourist destinations. In this context, the objective of this study is to characterize the tourism system of the city of San Juan de Los Remedios in order to understand the current problems and design sustainable solutions. It corresponds to a quali-quantitative, applied, deductive and multidisciplinary propositional research, in which the basic principles of strategic tourism planning were implemented. It presents, in a sequential and integrated way, an inventory of the local tourism system, a diagnostic study based on SWOT analysis, and a projective study for the consolidation of sustainable tourism. It concludes that there is favorable potential for urban tourism use, though this is not currently being pursued in a sustainable way; further, there is a lack of regional-territorial cohesion. This situation demands higher levels of strategic planning, as well as the creation of a destination management organization and a tourism observatory at a local-regional level. These approaches would strengthen the holistic management of the territory and lead to the creation of a competitive, multi-purpose, multi-product destination.

## Keywords

Tourism, Sustainability, Planning, Local, Strategic, Urban, Cuba, City

## 1. Introduction

International concern around alternative tourism development has been increasing in the last decades, which has strengthened the scientific research and man-

agement of tourist destinations (Scott & Debbie, 2019; MacKenzie & Gannon, 2019; Hall, 2019). Edgell (2016) identifies major concerns for global tourism around the sustainable use of destination resources; politics and strategic planning of tourism; human and natural hazards; and changes in tourism demand (Guevara & Vinicius, 2009). Therefore, the importance of managing urban-heritage tourist spaces with regard to enhanced sustainability of social, cultural, natural and built resources; as well as the urgency to engage the highest levels of local/regional leadership on tourism policy and strategic planning is recognized (Edgell, 2016). This justifies the need to promote the sustainable management of the resources that support tourism, as well as the formulation of plans, strategies and actions that favor the optimization of tourist use at both national and regional levels.

The Responsible Tourism Institute (RTI, 2017) presents two key challenges faced by urban tourism centers. First, their capacity and adaptability to respond effectively to increasing tourist expectations and needs. Second, that cities must ensure that tourism is developed and managed in such a way that benefits accrue to the local community; that tourism does not contribute to the deterioration of the urban environment but ultimately enhances it; and also improves the quality of life of locals without becoming a financial burden to public sector managers. The multiple challenges of urban tourism raise the need to satisfy the expectations and requirements of tourists while sustainably managing the urban space. This requires extensive knowledge of the destination which catalogues existing problems and solutions that informs a strategic approach which results in enhanced sustainability.

The objective of the research is to characterize the tourism system at the heritage city of San Juan de Los Remedios, as a base from which to diagnose challenges that typify the urban-tourist space in the current scenario and to establish strategic projections that direct future sustainable tourism development at a local level.

The selected topic is of great interest and significance, since the problem of sustainable tourism development at the local level is addressed as the research objective of this study, which corresponds to an important line of investigation at the international level (Sigala, 2017; Made, Made, & Kompiang 2018; Dwyer, 2018), through which seeks to move from the paradigm of traditional tourism development models characterized by a high background of negative impacts, towards sustainable tourism development models (Castro-Spila, et al., 2018; Celeste, Vieira, & Lima, 2018), in which the preventive management of negative impacts is incorporated, while positive impacts are maximized. The specific research area is limited to the city of “San Juan de los Remedios”—known as Remedios—, since it is a small urban tourist destination with no explicit background in tourism activities, which is located close to one of the priority tourist poles in Cuba, named “Cayos de Villa Clara”, which is characterized by an attractive product of sun and beach, with a recent massive opening to the international market. These arguments justify its study with a territorial approach based

on the principles of sustainable tourism.

Outcomes from the work performed include an inventory of the local tourism system, which deepened understanding and informed systematization of the urbanized tourist space, the tourist value of the urban space, the composition of the tourism infrastructure, and the configuration of a tourism development model for the city. Based on the findings, a diagnosis study is presented, substantiated on the situational analysis of tourism development, which served as a base for the city's sustainable tourism development proposal. The results are valuable to local decision-makers, tourism entrepreneurs, and the host community.

The value of the results corresponds to the integrated management of the urban-heritage tourist destination with an approach to local sustainability. This approach permits the sustainable management of the resources on which tourism is based and positions local leadership as part of the tourism policy and strategic planning core. The approach enabled formulation of plans, strategies and actions that optimize touristic use of the territory on a municipal scale. The results answer the specific problems related to scientific, technological, cultural, economic and social development identified for the city of Remedios. The findings connect the research results, the context and the beneficiary stakeholders, while increasing knowledge and available information for decision making at the destination.

The results have been partially introduced in practice through cross-sectoral work actions and inclusion of proposals in different strategies for local economic and social development. The transference of knowledge has been initiated through training workshops with different local participants, and the dissemination of the results through the presentation of the findings and proposals at local and regional events. The main limitations of research have been related to limited access to information, a lack of motivation of some local actors to get involved in the study and solution of local tourism problems, as well as insufficient development of mechanisms and instruments for broadcasting of the results at the local level.

## 2. Literature Review

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with specific aims to be reached on the next 15 years. The SDGs go further than their precursor, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in 2000, which should have been accomplished by 2015. Both are intended to address the fundamental causes of poverty and the universal need for equality and human development for all, considering with an emphasis the local level. According to this, the concept of local tourism development it is used here according to the theories of local development and sustainable development, incorporating the territorial scales where the tourism development takes place (Torres, 2005; Madruga & Rojas, 2012; Payen, 2014; Thompson et al., 2018).

Goal 11 discusses the achievement of inclusive, secure, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements; this must include particularly the tourism functions in urban destinations at a local level (Van Der Merwe & Rogerson, 2018; Kapera, 2018). Common problems of cities, identified in the Agenda (2015) include, inadequate resources for basic services, congestion, inadequate housing and the deterioration of urban infrastructure. It describes the desired future as one where cities provide opportunities for all, and where basic services, housing, energy and transportation are available to everyone. According to the United Nations (2015), half of the world's population, 3500 million people, live in cities; by 2030, nearly 60% of the world's population will live in urban areas, with 95% of the urban expansion taking place in the developing world. Rapidly advancing urbanization is pressuring supplies of freshwater, and threatening the adequacy of wastewater treatment and public sanitation. While cities constitute 3% of the planet's occupancy, they account for 60% - 80% of energy consumption and 75% of carbon emissions.

If tourism is inserted in various urban local spaces from polyvalent cities to specialized tourism cities, then advancement on goal 11 can be achieved through integrated urban planning that incorporates sustainable approaches to tourism development. Given that the situation is not displayed in the same manner in tourist cities and non-tourist cities, and between developed countries and developing countries, the treatment and management of the problem has to be differentiated (Spirou & Judd, 2019; Orum, 2019). In tourist cities research into the relationship between tourism and the local cultural heritage is a critical area for examination given the complex relationship between the two and the implications for sustainable management of the sector.

Urban tourism is experiencing a boom on a global scale (Shenga & Gub, 2018; Novy & Colomb, 2019). Tourist arrivals and spending has increased by approximately 45% between 2009 and 2015 in the main 132 urban destinations. Currently, urban tourism represents 20% of all international travel. Nevertheless, the conversation around urban sustainability often fails to consider tourism as a critical element of the development and promotion of cities. There is a need to address critical issues related to tourism sustainability in urban areas, the sector's contribution to global sustainability and its influence on the governance of cities (UN, 2015).

The integration of sustainability principles in development strategies has received significant attention in recent years (Cavagnaro & Curiel, 2012), although it remains a challenge to engage commercial tourism interests in the creation of social and environmental values in the patrimonial tourist destination context to implement sustainability as an attribute of leadership (Postma, Cavagnaro, & Spruyt, 2017). It has been identified that one of the stronger motivations in tourism is the growing interest in the natural environment and cultural heritage at a local level (Salinas, et al., 2018; Mike, Chan, & Legerer, 2018); both of which establish an opportunity to promote sustainability through alternative tourism

modalities (Edgell & Swanson, 2013). Other authors agree that the “contemporary world is unsustainable, both socioeconomically and environmentally [...] particularly in tourism” as “tourism represents an interesting challenge for sustainability, since it directly impacts and is impacted by both dimensions of sustainability” (Postma et al., 2017: p. 14), especially in patrimonial cities.

The Center for Sustainability at East Carolina University points out (Edgell & Swanson, 2013) that sustainable tourism contributes to a better balanced economy through the creation of jobs, income and taxes, while protecting and improving the cultural, historical, natural and built resources for the enjoyment and wellness of residents and visitors. Thus, tourist destinations that embrace sustainability add special value to the economic growth and quality of life of the community (Edgell & Swanson, 2013).

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) remarks that the principles of sustainable development and responsible management practices are applicable to all types of tourism in all destinations, including mass tourism and the diverse tourist segments. Taking into consideration that sustainability principles apply to the territorial-environmental, economic-market and sociocultural aspects of tourism development, establishing an appropriate balance between the three dimensions is necessary to guarantee salutary tourism in the long-term (OMT, 2005). The need to develop sustainable models for rural and heritage spaces is particularly recognized, given their higher level of vulnerability to predatory development models (IEEP, 2001).

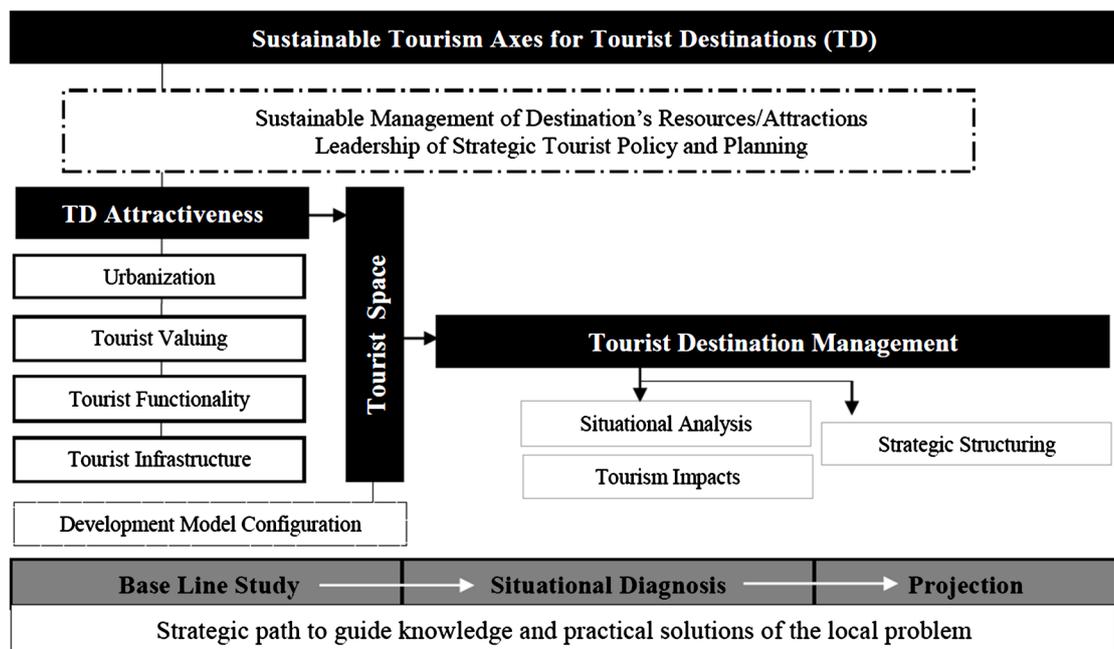
Consequently, sustainable tourism must make optimal use of environmental resources, respect the host community’s sociocultural authenticity and ensure that economic activities are viable in the long-run (Vargas, Castillo, & Zizumbo, 2011; Pérez de las Heras, 2012). According to the WTO, the concept of sustainability is linked to three important criteria: quality, community and balance. Therefore, sustainable tourism must function as a model for development that is designed to: improve the quality of life of local populations; provide a better experience to the visitors; maintain the quality of the environment on which the local and visitor’s experiences depend; obtain higher levels of touristic economic profitability for local residents; and ensure the procurement of benefits for tourism stakeholders (OMT, 2005; Mateos & Luis, 2012).

It should be noted that the sustainability experiences in destinations, hotels, and tours has considerably increased in the last years, even though not always with the expected results. This gives rise to two questions, i. how to approach sustainability in heritage spaces? and, ii. how to transform that challenge into a business opportunity that increases competitiveness in a way that the true contribution to the solution of practical problems becomes tangible? (Sustainability Leader Project, 2016). In order to systematize sustainable tourism best practices, the Sustainability Leader Project (2016) recognizes the importance of integrating sustainability into the tourism offer as opposed to considering it a supporting feature. Embracing sustainability represents a much more intelligent manner of

doing things, one that engages the guests' values thereby promoting commitments to the visited destination and its local community; creates specific sustainability programs focused in the business reality of each destination/business; and equips businesses with the essential elements of sustainability.

For their part, Postma et al. (2017) claim that the integration of sustainability into an organization's primary strategies faces two key challenges; i. how to make sustainability relevant to the costumers? and, ii. how to make sustainability a distinguishing factor over competing businesses? As part of the integrated management of tourist areas these questions could be answered in the long-term strategic plan through the integration of social, environmental and economic factors within projections and operative actions, both at the business and territorial management levels. The theoretical background and practical experiences served as the basis for the elaboration and sustention to the research object approach as it is presented in Figure 1.

The implemented logic to the theoretical analysis of the research object is based on tourism sustainability as a viable option for local development. Based on the conceptual positioning to sustainability, two basic axes that methodologically guide the study are identified. One, the sustainable management of the attractions resources and two, the leadership that governs tourist policy and planning. As shown in Figure 1, three conceptual variables are recognized to be integrated, these are the destination's attractiveness, the formation of the tourist space and management of the sector. The attractiveness is due in large part to the development of tourism on the foundation of existing historical patrimony, the tourist functionality of the urban space and the built tourist infrastructure.



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework as the research guiding base.

All of those elements lead to the design of a particular tourism development model, according to the requirement of informing appropriate tourism management, both preventive and corrective.

Tourism management for sustainable development at the local level is defined for this research as, the sequenced array of activities, actions and instruments that have been planned, implemented and controlled by different local tourism agents. It is directed to guarantee the responsible performance of tourism according to the public-private interest, with support and participation of local community and visitors with the purpose of minimizing the hostile impacts and maximizing the benefits that come from the tourism activity. Tourism management applies the institutionalized and legalized tourist policy through a multidisciplinary approach, taking into consideration the acquired tourist culture and the educative processes oriented to the tourist awareness from the different social actors and economic agents.

### 3. Methods

The methodology utilized a qualitative-quantitative and applied study, in which a deductive approach that transitioned from explanatory theory to a case study was utilized. The approach is justified in the interest of greater comprehension and implementation of the formulation of the tourist space according to its history, local context and temporal changes from a strategic perspective. It corresponds to an investigation of propositional character with a multidisciplinary approach in which the fundamentals of tourism strategic planning were used. A detailed document review was concluded, along with interviews with specialists, researchers, academics and managers; case analysis; secondary data systematization; and field work for the information gathering and validation of proposals.

The investigation's operationalization responded to the logic of reaching a theoretical integration and practical application of the conceptual variables proper to the definitions and explicative theories corresponding to the city, urban tourism, tourist destination, sustainability, and tourism planning at diagnosis and projection levels. The relationships and dependency between these elements were worked on through representation and visualization in conceptual models.

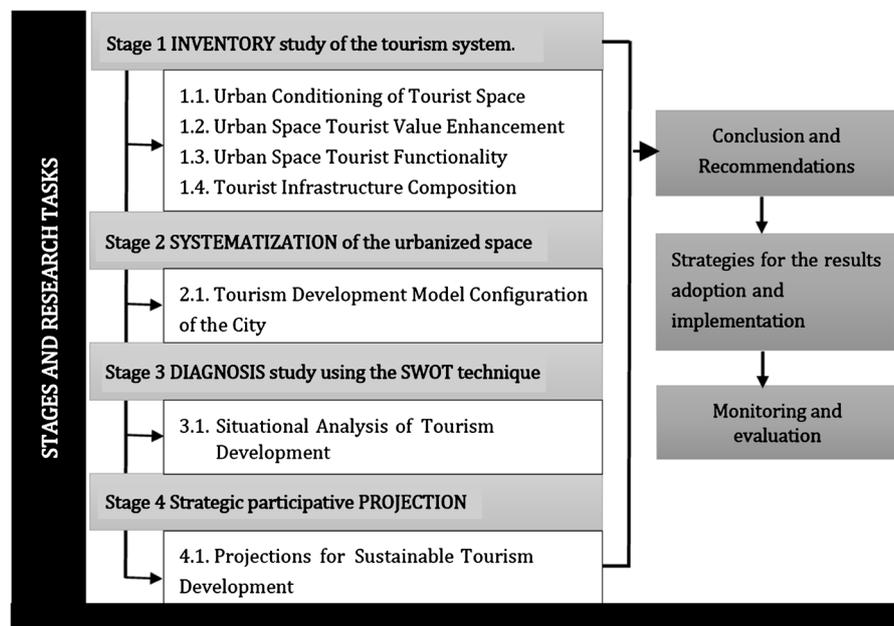
Empirical methods were used on the gathering, registration, measurement, analysis, and interpretation of representative data of reality, such as participatory observation, documents analysis, surveys, experts' judgment, case studies and working groups. Theoretical methods were employed for comprehension of the current scientific theory, regularities and characteristics essential to identification of the research object, such as analytical-syntactical, inductive-deductive, historical-logical, systemic-structural and conceptual modeling. Regarding the selected methods, various conceptual techniques were used, descriptive and projective, that supported the study of the tourism system's inventory, the diagnosis using the SWOT technique, and the strategic participative projection in which different actors and groups of interests were involved through working sessions.

The research process was developed through four main stages (Figure 2). The study began with the inventory of the tourism system based on the primary and secondary gathered data, and the fieldwork carried out in the city, using inventory sheets for the lifting of information related to the urban conditioning of the tourist space, the tourist space value, the space tourist functionality, and the tourist infrastructure composition. Based on the previous information, this study continues with the analysis of the tourism development model in the city of San Juan de Los Remedios according to the lifecycle of the destination, and the situational analysis of tourism development using the SWOT technique. Taking into consideration the characterization of the tourism system, the projections for sustainable tourism development with the participation of the main local stakeholders was proposed and validated.

## 4. Results and Discussion

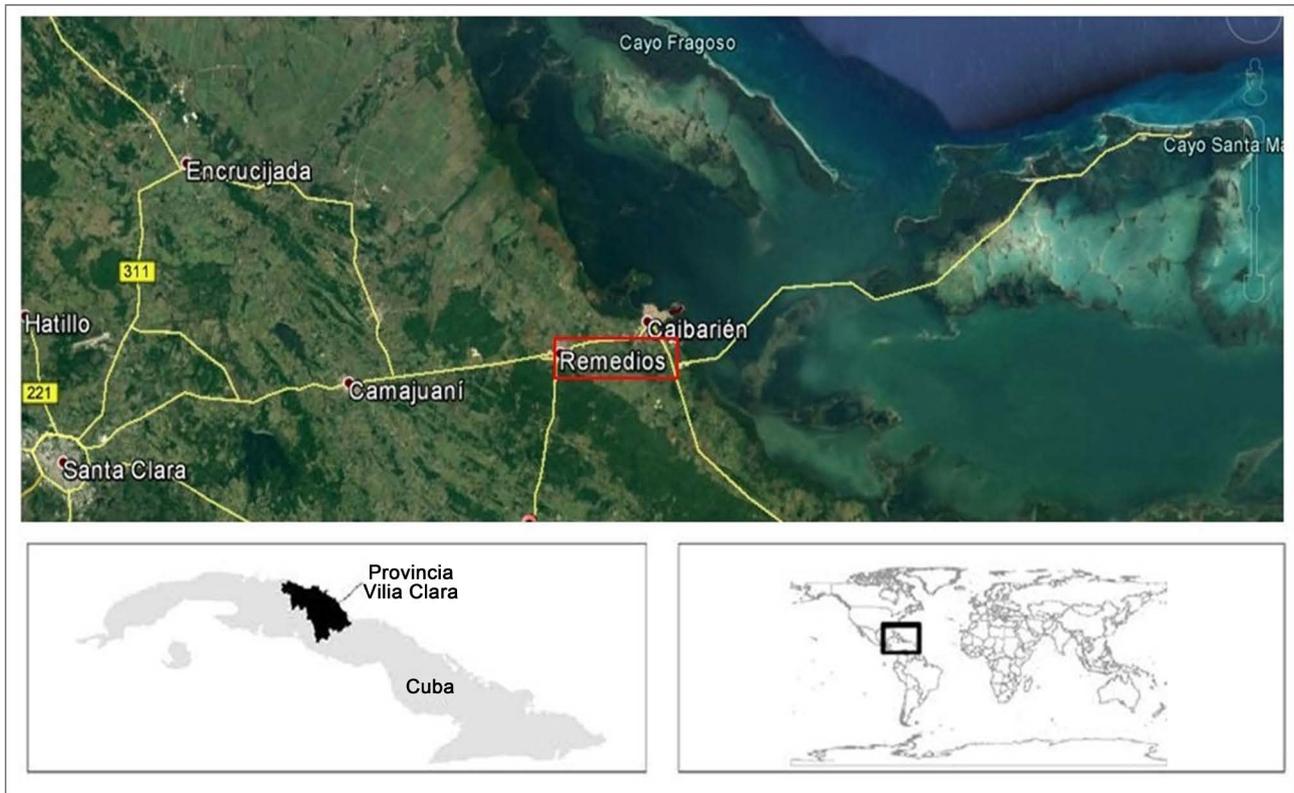
### 4.1. Urban Conditioning of Tourist Space

The city of San Juan de Los Remedios, known by the local community as Remedios, is located to the northeast of Villa Clara, Central Cuba, in the north part of the municipality of Remedios (Figure 3). It has a superficial area of 558.6 km<sup>2</sup>, with a semi-rectangular configuration and an irregular morphology. It has around 20,000 inhabitants and it is classified as a first order town (a classification specific to Cuba which is assigned according to the cultural value of a place, its level of infrastructural development, availability of urban services and population size). It is 53 km away from the city of Santa Clara, capital of the province, in the articulation axis between Santa Clara and the beach resort destination of



Source: Own elaboration.

**Figure 2.** Stages and tasks of the research process.



Source: Own elaboration.

**Figure 3.** Geographical localization of Remedios municipality.

#### Cayos de Villa Clara.

The city is characterized by its historical richness. According to R. Farto (the city's former historian) it was established 3 May 1513 with the original name of Santa Cruz de la Sabana de Vasco Porcallo de Figueroa, and existed for nearly 500 years before being colonized and renamed by the Spanish in 1545. (R. Farto, personal communication, January 2005). Remedios is thought to be the eighth village founded in Cuba during Spanish colonization.

It was pillaged by corsairs and pirates, suffered fires, destruction, and it was relocated; it was rebuilt later in time acquiring increasing importance until its definitive consolidation by 1800 when the majority of houses and mansions, that are preserved today, were built. The colonial setting (so treasured in Remedios) together with Trinidad de Cuba, represents one of the most valuable repository of colonial architecture in the nation. In correspondence with its rich history, San Juan de Los Remedios maintains with great splendor a tangible heritage characterized by the architectural styles of baroque, neoclassic and eclectic. It is home to valuable buildings with fine colonial architecture, stained glass windows, large portals in the form of corridors, sizable windows, wrought iron grille work, colonial door frames and extended eaves supported on wooden corbels, ceilings of simple and decorated frames, and spacious interior patios with bountiful vegetation.

The urban layout follows the pattern of villages founded in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, it is structured in irregularly compact blocks with a diffused grid, narrow streets and winding paths, around which are large mansions. The urban model is structured around the central plaza, being the only one in the country with two churches: Nuestra Señora del Buen Viaje and Parroquia Mayor de San Juan Bautista being (with its gold-plated altars) one of the oldest and most beautiful in Cuba.

The city is characterized by its relatively homogenous architecture with one and two stories colonial buildings and a dynamic culture. It is representative of 19<sup>th</sup> Century domestic architecture, concentrated in its historic center which remains the city's geographical and cultural center, where most of the services, public functions and patrimonial values are located. In 1980, its urban historic center was declared a national monument. It has developed around a system of small squares including Plaza Isabel II (the largest), Plaza de la Libertad, La Trova Park and the squares where the churches of Nuestra Señora del Buen Viaje and Parroquia Mayor de San Juan Bautista are located. The city's main functions are residential, services, commercial, industrial (endowment and public services), recreational (open spaces), and tourism.

The process to enhance the tourist value of the city's heritage has generated a patrimonial urban tourist product of historic and cultural character, that has been recently open to commercialization in the international market. Regarding the origin and urban evolution, the city preserves a tangible heritage of great value. The tourist inventory of the historical-cultural resources of the city is fundamentally based on the historic sites, buildings of different values, popular culture and local population.

The urban environmental challenges around which tourism takes place includes the now inadequate historic central sewerage system, a deficient aqueduct system, deficit of parking areas, lack of a street lighting system and electrical layout, all of which affect the urban image. The image is also influenced by the state of deterioration of the township, including the housing area, and the problem of urban waste. In general, many of these problems are boosted by the lack of an environmental and tourist culture in the local population.

#### **4.2. Urban Space Tourist Value Enhancement**

The city of San Juan de Los Remedios is one of the better preserved urban centers reflecting 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Cuban architecture. The historic city's preserved state and its recognizable urban structure, morphology, architectural elements, traditions and lifestyles is related to the economic stagnation that happened with the emergence of new consolidated cities towards the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

Remedios' most significant tourism features were established during the decade of the 1850s, which is the era when masonry and roof tiles were developed. The main public buildings were erected and became the main core of the vil-

lage's social life and popular celebrations, most of which still currently occur in the city center. This growth is related to the economic boost that took place in the village due to the development of the sugar industry that occurred at the time. Consequently, buildings for social, recreational and commercial use were built, as well as cafeterias and hotels like the Mascotte, Barcelona, Saratoga (**Table 1**) and other small establishments like inns and restaurants (which were not relevant from a touristic approach). In this urbanization process is the building of two stories and eclectic styles from the 1920s, which break through the preceding unique stylistic character and grant a special significance to the city's current cultural narrative.

Regardless of its high use potential, it is appropriate to recognize that tourism has been developing in Remedios for a little over 20 years, which coincides with Cuba's reopening to the international tourism market. Nonetheless, there is an important background related to the attractiveness of the city to the visitors since historical times. Its rich heritage and historical value broadens and improves the product offering in conjunction with the emergence of the neighboring beach resort destination Cayos de Villa Clara. This has been progressively generating a higher level of sociocultural exchanges between hosts and visitors.

### 4.3. Urban Space Tourist Functionality

The local tourism system is based on urban tourism as a product. The most distinctive feature of the cityscape is in the colonial image that conveys to the visitor the essence and mystery of an ancient city with its myths, magic, tales and traditions. The main attractions are associated with the city's formation and favored by the conservation of the formal aesthetic components of the cityscape. The principal groups of cultural and cognitive attractions (existing for nearly 500 years) are related to its high historical, paleontological-archaeological, urbanistic, architectural, cultural, traditional and popular features, as well as the preserved myths and legends. These determine current cultural activities through

**Table 1.** Main facilities that characterize the tourism development process as a social phenomenon in Remedios.

Business	Origin and Function	Current Use Status
Mascotte Hotel (1879-1970) (1983-1997) (1999-present) For international tourism	Two stories building with neoclassic influences, 1860s decade, former first social function as second home for aristocracy. Tourist use from 1879	Tourist use
Barcelona Hotel (1926-1934). Other later uses	Built as hotel on first story and restaurant on ground floor	Tourist use
Saratoga Hotel (1920s-1930s up to 1959)	Two stories building, first functioned as hotel, later burns down and is demolished	Neighborhood of five homes, regular to poor status, low original state conservation

Own elaboration. Source: Municipal Patrimony, Municipal Statistical Office, Historical Archives of the city.

visits to historical sites, monuments, and the experience of everyday life in the city. The cultural recreational activities associated with popular celebrations are related to the practice of the Afro-Cuban syncretism religion (Santería and others), which is ingrained in the city.

Among the more valuable demonstrations are homes, churches (including the two Catholic churches built in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries), public buildings and the colonial era environment with great aesthetic and contemplative value. The domestic architecture from the time of the Spanish colony exhibits a variety of features that can be appreciated in the ceilings, wall paintings, floors, woodwork and other constructive elements that parallel the distinct periods of the city's occupancy. The current gravitational center is the Jose Martí square (once known as Parroquia and Isabel II) which is flanked by flamboyant trees, and historic buildings. Its most distinguished monuments are the Parroquia Mayor de San Juan Bautista Church, Nuestra Señora del Buen Viaje Church, Municipal History Museum, Museum of Music Alejandro García Caturla and the Parrandas Remedias Museum.

#### 4.4. Tourist Infrastructure Composition

The accommodations sector of San Juan de Los Remedios is founded on five state sector hotel properties of the Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR), which belongs to the Base Business Unit (UEB) Remedios Complex from the Cubanacán Hotel Group (Table 2). There are also nine private hostels—private homes—in a lease with MINTUR for the selling of rooms through travel agencies. The city has approximately 100 private rooms dedicated to international tourism. Private hostels that have a contract with MINTUR are: Buenviaje Hostel; Casa Richard Hostel; Haydee and Juan K Hostel; La Paloma Hostel; Villa Colonial Hostel; La Buganvilia Hostel; Plaza del Cristo Hostel; La Estancia Hostel; and Casona Cueto.

The city's extra-hotelería (non-accommodation) offering includes four restaurants, two pubs, three cafeterias, a creamery and a night club (Table 3). From the 11 business establishments that provide tourist service, six are operated by Cubanacán Group belonging to MINTUR, four equate to lower quality popular gastronomy restaurants, and one to the non-state sector.

**Table 2.** MINTUR's hotel infrastructure in Remedios.

Hotel	Type	Accommodation Capacity	Category	Brand	Hotel Chain
Mascotte Hotel E	City hotel	10 rooms	4 stars	Hotel Encanto	Cubanacán
Barcelona Hotel E	City hotel	24 rooms	4 stars	Hotel Encanto	Cubanacán
Camino del Príncipe Hotel E	City hotel	28 rooms	4 stars	Hotel Encanto	Cubanacán
Real Hotel E	City hotel	8 rooms	4 stars	Hotel Encanto	Cubanacán
Leyendas Hotel E	City hotel	8 rooms	Pending categorization (proposed category: 4 stars)	Hotel Encanto	Cubanacán

Source: Own elaboration.

The destination has two travel agencies and tourist information offices, the Gaviotatur Sales Bureau and Cubatur Sales Bureau. Tourist transportation is managed by the rent-car office that belongs to Transtur. There are no tourist transportation enterprises in the city of Remedios. Tourist transportation is managed through sales bureaus and travel agencies in other cities. Through the Amadeus network, automatic reservations can be done with Viazul (a tourist bus transportation company). There are four souvenir shops specializing in Cuban products (Table 4).

#### 4.5. Tourism Development Model Configuration of the City

Although the city of San Juan de Los Remedios constitutes an international tourism center, there is no structured development model. However, there is evidence of a progressive process of the enhancement of tourist value of heritage consecutively with a layout of an urban tourism development model. Remedios

**Table 3.** Extra-Hotelera (non-accommodation) offering in Remedios.

Business Establishment	Type	Chain
La Finca de la Cabaña	Restaurant	Cubanacán Group
Las Arcadas (Mascotte Hotel)	Restaurant	Cubanacán Group
Los Portales de la Plaza	Restaurant	Popular gastronomy
La Pirámide	Restaurant	Non-state sector
Los Siete Juanes	Pub	Cubanacán Group
Don Juan	Pub (night center)	Popular gastronomy
El Louvre	Cafeteria	Cubanacán Group
Drivers	Cafeteria	Popular gastronomy
La Fe	Cafeteria	Popular gastronomy
Doña Lala	Creamery	Cubanacán Group
El Golazo	Sports bar-night club	Cubanacán Group

Source: Own elaboration.

**Table 4.** Souvenir shops in Remedios.

Business Establishment	Specialization	Property/Business Type
Los Tres Reyes Shop	Rum, coffee and cigars	Caracol enterprise belonging to MINTUR
Los Precios Fijos Shop	Convenience store and butchery shop	Caracol enterprise belonging to MINTUR
Artex Shop	Cultural products and souvenirs	Cuban mercantile society for the promotion and commercialization of products of the national culture
Fondo de Bienes Culturales Shop	Cultural products and souvenirs	Company of the Ministry of Culture of Cuba that promotes and sells works of plastic arts and applied arts.

Source: Own elaboration.

is a secondary, or supporting destination to the resort area of Cayos de Villa Clara. In alignment with this, the organization of space for tourist use is marked by the rationalization of urban functional uses, including residential, commercial and industrial, and the progressive, but regulated, integration of the local community.

Local tourist space organization is based on a model of integrated and planned development, with no explicit local integration, and oriented to the specialization of historical-cultural tourism modalities. Conceptually the production process of tourist space is based on the paradigm of sustainable development, in urban environments with high vulnerability and where stronger protection levels and a holistic approach to sustainable development are warranted. Impacts are predicted as a result of related tourist use of the space and increased visitation from intensification of tourism development at the cays. The establishment of new geospatial liaisons between both territories indicates the potential for significant secondary impacts. The model is based on limited levels of urban space assimilation, which implies territorial combinations of functions between the tourist use and the city's use.

It is based on tourism in small cities that mainly welcome short visits (sun and beach tourists on their way to or from the destination through organized circuits or self-organized trips), while in some cases the city is used as a midpoint to visit the cays/beaches or as a complement to the sun and beach destinations. The city's function as a long stay area (the city as the main destination) is limited, as is its accommodation concentration in family hostels. In fact, the spatial structure of tourism development tends to be mononuclear according to the infrastructure distribution and unipolar according to the motivations the city generates, with a tourist base inclined to stay at sun and beach destinations.

Interpretation of the city's morphological zoning scheme in its tourist function reveals a main concentration zone related to the historical center. There is no development in the secondary concentration zone within the city and its isolated attractions do not generate a significant effect as yet. A touristic corridor has been created in the vehicular path from Caibarién (coastal city) and Santa Clara (inner city and provincial capital) that coincide to the ingress and egress of the city, as well as various pedestrian corridors that follow the main urban routes that connect the more important attractions. This allows identification of a zone with more intensive use associated to the concentration of urban tourism spots.

Generally, the tourist narrative of the city is informed by its great contextual values, accessibility, concentrated focus, local scale suitable to walkable space, intrinsic and bohemian environment, conservation of the socio-cultural value of its built patrimony and the aliveness of its character and ambience with its distinct museum city quality. Features and characteristics are recognized and valued in the regional area.

#### **4.6. Situational Analysis of Tourism Development**

As primary reference for the situational analysis of tourism development, an in-

ternal and external analysis of local tourism development was elaborated. Through group working sessions with participants in the diverse formative activities an internal analysis of the destination was made and the weighted list of strengths and weaknesses was obtained. It was elaborated in a participatory way according to the social perception of the tourism impacts affecting the local host community.

The following lists reflect the main concerns of the residents in the city, including the recent opening to beach and sun mass tourism in the destination of Cayos de Villa Clara, and is derived from an internal situational analysis of the tourism development.

Weighted list of weaknesses facing tourism development:

- 1) Poor training from the destination's managers for the enhancement of tourist value of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.
- 2) Insufficient local participation and a general lack of tourism culture within the local population.
- 3) Lack of informative material in support of destination management.
- 4) Insufficient hotel infrastructure and a very limited restaurant and specialized services offering.
- 5) Technical and support infrastructure deficit.
- 6) Nearby peripheral neighborhoods of lower aesthetic value from the tourist use area.
- 7) Deficit of open spaces and green zones close to the center of the city.

Weighted list of strengths facing tourism development:

- 1) High potential and current status of the historical cultural patrimony, both built and intangible heritage.
- 2) Progressive social appreciation of tourism as a basic component of the city's economy.
- 3) Declaration of the city of Remedios as a "National Monument" since 1980.
- 4) Good accessibility in the internal territorial frame.
- 5) Strong sense of identity and belonging by the local inhabitants.
- 6) Development of non-hotel tourist accommodation in private homes.

Through the application of the before stated procedure the external analysis of the destination was made and the weighted list of threats and opportunities was obtained from consideration of the recent insertion of tourism as a social phenomenon within the city's context and the likelihood of tourism intensification without the corresponding experience in tourism development, nor a meaningful level of local participation or integration with existing structures, services and traditional social activities. The existing structural base is oriented to other social and economic activities such as agriculture, as opposed to tourism. The following lists are derived from the external situational analysis of the tourism development which could introduce impacts.

Weighted list of threats facing tourism development:

- 1) World economic recession with an unstable recovery in the main source

markets with interest in the destination.

2) Migration of trained professionals to the tourist poles in the Cayos de Villa Clara area.

3) Strong concentration on a national scale of the supply-demand of this tourism product at the urban historic center of La Habana.

4) Increase of the tourist publicity and commercialization campaigns of other consolidated cultural destinations and new emergent destinations potentially competitive within the region.

5) Increasingly high expectations of the market segment that demands this product.

6) Santa Clara city international airport located 50 kilometers away from these cities.

7) Relative proximity to the Historic City of Trinidad, also in the central area of Cuba, as a well-positioned alternative.

Weighted list of opportunities facing tourism development:

1) Positioning of cultural tourism segment as a growing modality for the experiential learning of history and culture.

2) Promotion of general tourism education in Cuba with a better standard of quality.

3) Campaigns for conservation and respect of the cultural heritage by UNESCO and ICOMOS, among others.

4) Recuperation of the tourist attractiveness of historical cultural cities.

5) Proximity to the tourist destination, Cayos de Villa Clara, where important hotel chains operate under the concept of 'Beach Plus' with an interest in promoting visits to Remedios.

6) Advantageous position in regards to the Las Villas Central University, Hotel and Tourism School, as well as important centers of investigation.

7) National tourism development enhancement, as well as the implementation of policies for diversification of the Cuban tourism product and development of the complementary supply to the sun and beach product.

8) Location in one of the eight prioritized regions for tourism development in the country.

At the end of the study a SWOT Matrix was elaborated (Osácar, 2005), in which the highest total value impact was the "Illusion" quadrant, which indicates the opportunities there are in the current scenario that cannot be taken advantage of because of the weaknesses identified. Followed in points was the "Strategy" quadrant, which reflect its strengths. Then, the next value impact corresponds to the "High Risk" quadrant, evidencing the threats that make the destination more vulnerable, in consequence of the weaknesses it has. Finally, the lowest value corresponds to the "Fragility" quadrant that augment the threats that inhibit application of the strengths.

Through analysis of the SWOT Matrix, the generic strategies that should be implemented in this urban destination were identified:

- Adaptive strategies to decrease or overcome the weaknesses of this city that limit the maximum exploitation of the identified opportunities in the environment—illusion quadrant—.
- Offensive strategies to maximize the advantage of the identified opportunities in the environment supported by the strengths of both cities—strategy quadrant—.
- Defensive strategies to minimize the negative impact from the identified threats in the environment supported by the strengths of both cities—fragility quadrant—.

Based on the situational SWOT analysis the following strategic problem was formulated: There is a lack of tourist culture in the local population and lack of preparation of the managers of tourism to adequately evaluate the value of the local cultural heritage. This is in a context in which the market expectations are increasingly higher, there are economic recessions and the tourist flows are concentrated in other nearby urban destinations. Therefore, the opportunity of urban cultural tourism positioning will not be maximized irrespective of the great patrimonial value of the city and the human talent that exists there.

The solution to the problem must therefore be oriented from the formation of a tourism culture within the local population and the decision makers, particularly emphasized in the training of tourism managers, cultural heritage value enhancement, and resolving the lack of information and effective communication mechanisms. In addition, an integrated solution for these destinations will require investments in infrastructure and improvement in the image of the urban landscape.

The response offered in the research corresponds to an adaptive strategy which is intended to address the insufficient tourist culture within the local community and the decision makers, as well as the lack of training of the tourism managers on the cultural heritage value enhancement. The strategy recognizes the opportunities related to the positioning of cultural tourism as a growing modality, favored by conservation and in respect of heritage campaigns and the growing demand for tourist activity in historical-cultural cities.

In response to the identified perceptions and the technical study made, it was concluded that the main impacts that must be the focus of local management in order to minimize the adverse effects of the development model include the:

- Irresponsible attitude and behavior from the local community in the presence of the visitors.
- High pedestrian-vehicular flow within the central areas of the city.
- Increased demand for parking areas.
- Volume increase in demand for water, electricity, communications and increased generation of solid and liquid waste.
- Rapid population growth.
- Alteration of the traditional styles and ways of life of the city with effects on local intangible heritage.

- Contrasts in the urban landscape image between the areas that concentrate the tourist investment and the less favored ones, with the consequent increase of the socio-spatial differences.

#### **4.7. Projections for Sustainable Tourism Development**

Tourism, as new activity that incorporates the local economy, must contribute to sustainable development by integrating itself completely to the natural, cultural and human environments; to accomplish that, it must respect the fragile equilibrium that characterizes urban spaces. Tourism activity must foresee an acceptable evolution regarding its influence on natural, cultural, historical and socio-productive resources, responding to the assimilation capacity of the generated impacts.

Particularly the tourism development model has to consider the induced effects on the cultural heritage and the elements, activities and traditional dynamics of the resident community. The recognition of these local factors and the support to their identity, culture and interest, must be taken into consideration in the formulation of tourism policies for the destination. This approach necessarily presupposes solidarity, mutual respect and participation of all actors, both public and private, involved in the process.

For harmonious sustainable economic and social development to occur at the local level, consideration must be given to the context of the tourism activity according to the national and provincial policies of integrated development, particularly in the tourism sector. Similarly, sustainable tourism development will guide the tourism process based on the social policies and priorities identified at national, provincial and local levels.

In addition to the already stated arguments, attention to the following is needed to guide the tourism activity:

1) Preserving the tradition of the sugar industry, enhancing the production of sugar cane and its derivatives, such as Mulata rum, Guarapo and Raspadura, which in turn are part of the tourist attraction.

2) Maintain and increase the productive processes linked to the textile industry, and reorienting the products to the internal demands generated by tourism development.

3) Promote and encourage the preparation of young people in the Municipal University Headquarters, incorporating elements that contribute to the formation of an overall tourist culture in line with the new social and economic functions of the local area.

The main beneficial impacts of tourism as an option for local sustainable development must address the following strategies:

- Creation of employment, income generation and stimulation of regional development.
- Encouraging local business relationships and the growth of other sectors.
- Attracting foreign investments in a controlled manner.

- Conservation of historical heritage and local culture.
- Stimulation of other forms of contemporary culture (events, festivals, etc.).
- Conservation of the environment by improving the use of areas.
- Contribution to local quality of life.
- Coordination of public and private agents and interests.
- Social awareness of the environmental, social and economic benefits of tourism.

## 5. Conclusion

Urbanization of tourist space in the city of San Juan de Los Remedios is heavily influenced by the rich local history, cultural heritage both tangible and intangible, the urban landscape and its colonial architecture. Despite the high attractiveness, accessibility and connectivity that support the favorable potential use for tourism, there is no tourism development plan based on the principles of sustainability. Traditional tourism development models have been employed along with management strategies that have not shaped territorial cohesion within regional context in which tourism takes place. In that manner, the functionality of tourist space must optimize use based on the attractions, focusing on groups with cultural and cognitive motivations (higher value exponents of the city), as well as the integration of the host community in the tourist process with a more endogenous and participative approach.

To date, the planned development of local tourism has been oriented with more attention to the types and levels of tourist assimilation required and to the scale of development, especially of the tourist infrastructure and the extra-hotel network. The sustainable tourism development model should clearly develop the organization of tourism space, hierarchies of tourism space, tourist functions, required levels of protection in light of levels of vulnerability, functional relationships, orientation of tourist flows and areas of gravitation according to load capacity.

The medium and long-term implications of the study could guide the creation and consolidation of a Destination Management Organization (DMO) and a Tourism Observatory (TO) at a local-regional level, in which the cities of Remedios, Caibarién and the sun and beach destination of Cayos de Villa Clara are integrated; it is because during the entire research process a lack of organization in the processes of tourism management has been recognized and insufficient sources of information about the functioning of local tourism have been perceived. This would strengthen the holistic management of the territory and would lead to the positioning of a more attractive multi-product offering with more coherent, diverse, multi-purpose and competitive destinations.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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