



## SCHOOL IN ECOTOURISM: AN INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC POLICIES THAT PROMOTE TOURISM IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CÓRDOBA

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**Abstract-***Ecotourism is currently presented as an alternative ecological tool or model that involves a series of actions, activities and strategies related to tourism carried out by people, government institutions, government, among other entities, to meet the needs, demands, services and products of the markets; and ensure the care, protection, conservation and preservation of the environment and its socio-cultural diversity, provide opportunities and benefits to local communities, in order to produce goods and income necessary to achieve sustainable and sustainable development, using values such as respect, honesty, humility, justice and social equity. The objective of this article is to design a proposal for an ecotourism training school as a consolidating tool within the framework of institutional strategies that promote the development of public policies for the promotion of tourism in the department of Córdoba. The methodology used is based on a qualitative approach because it is an institutional construct that collects the contributions of all the actors involved in order to envision a reflection strategy to strengthen the recognition of ecotourism in said department, therefore, the type of research is projective, and the method is phenomenological. The results show that ecotourism constitutes a viable, pertinent, and necessary institutional strategy that must be included in public policies to face the challenge of the different tourist activities carried out in Córdoba, in order to achieve local development, sustainable and sustainable.*

**Keywords.** *Ecotourism, strategy, Tourism, Public Policies.*

### INTRODUCTION

For Cavalieri (2012) the importance of tourism lies in the fact that it is a pleasurable and economic activity, which promotes the movement of millions of people in the world, therefore, people as the main point must participate and develop correctly in the development of ecotourism, consequently, they must not only comply with principles and a certain profile that allow to carry out the activity in an ideal way, but also feel them as part of their philosophy of life. Among its principles are: respect for nature and local culture, the preservation of the environment, the adequate, necessary and pertinent use of the environment, the valuation and evaluation of resources and the awareness of those that have been lost, and the search for and use of other less exploited resources in order to produce a balance.

Now, all these aspects mentioned in previous lines have to do with what is known as ecotourism, which could be said to be nothing more than the link between ecology and tourism. According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (1996, c.p. Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1998) ecotourism is a tourist and environmental modality that consists of traveling or visiting natural



areas respectively without disturbing them with the purpose of enjoying, enjoying, appreciating and studying the attractions derived from the nature (landscape, flora and fauna) of these areas, Likewise, it represents a cultural manifestation (of the present and the past) that can be located there, through a process that favors conservation, has a low environmental and cultural impact and in turn generates and involves a socioeconomic asset that favors the local populations. In this sense, the objective of this study is to design a proposal for a training school in ecotourism as a consolidating tool in the framework of institutional strategies that favor the development of public policies for the promotion of tourism in the department of Córdoba.

In this regard, it is worth noting that in Córdoba, one of the prioritized focuses is tourism, however, there is little intervention in this area not only at the regional level but also at the national level, information that is corroborated by the article, *Tourism in Colombia: Results of the sector (2007-2010)* written by Dr. Alexander Zúñiga Collazos in which he establishes that the preferred destinations in the country are only nine, among them Cartagena, Magdalena, Medellín, Guajira, Quindío, Cauca, Santa Marta and Bogotá, thus exposing the low degree of development of the tourism sector in the Caribbean area and much more in the department of Córdoba.

For this reason, the design of this proposal is intended to change this situation, which is why the general component of a public policy for the promotion of ecotourism in Córdoba is also added, protecting its natural resources and emphasizing the management and conservation of natural resources to guarantee environmental goods and services. It describes the importance of developing tourism as a sustainable activity that contributes both to the protection of the environment and the development of the communities in the tourist areas, especially the protected areas of the department of Córdoba, therefore, it promotes that tourism should play an important role, not only in the conservation and preservation of biodiversity, but also in the respect for ecosystems, making efforts in the sense of waste reduction and consumption, conservation of native flora and fauna, and awareness activities with the community. (Law 300 of 1996, General Law of Tourism). This research is approached considering four fundamental sections: the theoretical references related to ecotourism, then the methodological aspects used, the final conclusions derived from the study, and the bibliographical references used for this purpose.

### THEORETICAL REFERENCES

Next, a series of aspects related to Ecotourism are presented and defined:

**Strategy:** Strategies are all those actions that are taken at a given time, in order to achieve the objectives and are of great importance for the future of organizations. For David Fred (2003), strategies represent a means that makes it possible to achieve long-term objectives.

For William Stanton et al. (2004), strategy constitutes a general plan of action through which an organization intends to achieve its objectives.

Likewise, Cebrián de la Serna (2005) indicates that strategies consist of actions that are carried out in favor of maintaining and supporting the achievement of the objectives of the organization and of each work unit and thus making the expected results a reality when defining strategic projects.

**Ecotourism:** According to Gonzales and Neri (2015), ecotourism constitutes a modality of tourism that was born due to the increase in market demand necessary for sustainable tourism practices, which makes viable the proportion of tourism products and services taking as a cross-cutting thread the socioeconomic and environmental aspects of society.

For Drumm and Moore (2002), ecotourism is an ideal component of a sustainable development strategy in which natural resources can be used as tourist attractions without damaging the natural area. These authors point out that there are elements that make an ecotourism initiative successful, including: having little impact on natural resources; involving stakeholders (individuals, ecotourists, communities, public and private tourism operators, and government institutions) in the planning, development, implementation, and monitoring stages; respecting local cultures and traditions; producing income for protected area conservation; and educating participants about their role in conservation.



**Tourism:** Tourism is an important economic activity for the country. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism is in charge of its regulation. The government also designated the tourist districts of Santa Marta and Cartagena, the archipelago of San Andres and Providencia, Colombia's national natural parks, and the Indigenous Territories as part of the country's territorial planning. Most foreign tourists visiting Colombia come from neighboring countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and Europe, according to Julián Yecid Cárdenas Giraldo stated that planning and tourism strategies are fundamental for the development of the regions as a foundation for innovation and creativity, together with diversity (Cardenas Giraldo, 2009).

**Cultural or historical tourism:** It is a form of tourism that highlights the cultural aspects offered by a particular tourist destination, whether it is a small town, a city, a region or a country; similarly Alain Castro Alfaro, Andrés Darío Hoyos Arango, Miguel Ángel Londoño Ossa and Lino Mercado León, affirm that the company plays an important role in establishing tourism and the cultural aspect of the region (Alfaro, Arango, Ossa, & León, 2017), likewise according to Arthur Jhon Burkart and Slavoj Medlik argue that tourism is indispensable for the future of the entity (Burkart & Medlik, 1981), likewise, Walter Coddington affirms, that development is synonymous with the conservation of the tourist environment (Coddington, 1993).

**Historical heritage:** Historical heritage is the set of goods, both tangible and in-tangible, accumulated over time. These assets can be of various types of historical, artistic (architectural, sculptural, among others), paleontological, archaeological, ethno-graphic, documentary, bibliographical, scientific and technical, as well as natural sites or parks, which by their ecosystem or historical value should be protected, according to Collazos Zúñiga Alexander and Marisol Castillo Palacio, the results of the tourism sectors are both cultural consequences, such as the customs of the environment and with reference to historical heritage (Collazos & Palacio, 2012), as Victor Hugo Cordova Aldas states, ecological marketing when promoting sustainable tourism with respect to historical heritage, in the defense and its conservation to promote such driving activity in areas and regions (Cordova Aldas).

This diversity of the type of goods it includes explains that lately the term tends to be replaced by "cultural goods" (cultural heritage), a more recent and internationally used meaning showing the best of the customs, forms of experiences, facts that have happened in that region that attracts the consumer in a more effective, efficient way, satisfying their needs. On a global scale, the figure of World Heritage (World Heritage) is used to protect those assets of international and community interest.

**Leadership:** Leadership is the set of managerial or directive skills that an individual has to influence the way of being or acting of people or in a given work group, making this team work with enthusiasm towards the achievement of its goals and objectives. It is also understood as the ability to delegate, take the initiative, manage, convene, promote, encourage, motivate and evaluate a project, in an effective and efficient way, be it personal, managerial or institutional (within the administrative process of the organization), to create effective strategies that develop a formation, according to Arturo Crosby mentions that they are basic elements in the development of leadership strategies, sustainable for the conformation of natural areas, exclusive of recreation in tourism. Leadership does not imply an unequal distribution of power, since the members of the group are not powerless, but shape the group's activities in different ways. As a general rule, however, the leader will have the last word (Crosby, 1996).

**Tourist destination:** A tourist destination is a zone or geographical area located in a distant place and visited by the tourist, it has limits of a physical nature, political context and perception by the market. From the business point of view, both strategic and organizational, the perimeter of the destination is constituted by the relationships that are built between the set of productive units that participate in the tourist activity.

On the other hand, J. Balagué and P. Brualla consider the tourist destination as the formalization of those new geophysical spaces of interest or of those others that want to consider a reconsideration of their valuation towards possible tourist parameters for the enhancement of their current structures (Balagué & Y BRUALLA, 2001). With the passage of time, most authors have adopted a



different definition that starts from a spatial orientation, but focuses on a consumer or tourist orientation.

**Environmental culture:** It is the way human beings relate to the environment, and to understand it one must begin by studying values; these, in turn, determine beliefs and attitudes and, finally, all are elements that give meaning to environmental behavior, likewise states Reinaldo Dias, that the environmental culture of area, training the people of the environment helps to preserve the scarce resources of the environment as encouragement to care for the environmental heritage to make it more pleasant to the reception of visitors in the tourist ecologism and in the business environment as important holistic system of fusion. (Dias, 2008).

**Tourist attention:** A tourist office, tourist information office or tourist information center is the organization in charge of providing information to potential tourists and tourists visiting a certain place in order to facilitate their decision to travel, facilitate their stay and decrease the risk of negative experiences during their trip, positively influencing the image of the tourist destination. The tourist office is usually public and non-profit, dependent on public agencies in order to maintain the neutrality and quality of information, without commercial bias. The information provided includes contact information for tourism service providers (tourism offerings: accommodations, travel agencies, guides, restaurants, transportation and others such as hospitals, Internet booths and telephones, vaccinations), attractions, places, events and activities of interest, opening hours, rates, routes, safety tips and other relevant information for tourists.

**Entrepreneurship:** It comes from the French 'entrepreneur', which means pioneer, and refers etymologically to the ability of a person to make an extra effort to achieve a goal, although its use is currently limited to refer to the person who starts a new company or project as Gabriel Gutiérrez Pantoja states, that in the sciences human entrepreneurship is the key to the development of the sciences and the entrepreneur is the mark of humanism par excellence since in each act he exercises his entrepreneurial function in undertaking that which gives value to the action in pursuit of an end in question, it is the wonderful thing about the social sciences, human creativity. (Pantoja, 1996).

**Public Policies:** For Torres-Melo and Santander (2013) public policies are essential to understand and comprehend the dynamics of assuming the challenges of political action, and to know how the ends of the State are materialized, in correspondence with the objectives that arise in society with the help and intervention of governmental entities and the multiple participation of socio-political actors. In other words, the central element is that public policies are fundamental to the fulfillment of the functions of the State. But they go beyond a simple instrument, that is, they transcend it, since they are a means through which interactions between the State and society are carried out.

Similarly, Torres-Melo and Santander (2013) add the fact that public policies represent the State's instrument par excellence in its purpose of transforming any situation or behavior. Consequently, the main functions of the State must be developed in the edges of public policies and are thus determined in terms of the success of public policies, a situation that is observed and explained in the triad State, society and market, and in the end materializes through decisions that can be assumed as public policies.

Next, Torres-Melo and Santander (2013) point out that it is relevant to bear in mind that public policies are not only simple tools that promote the action of the State, but that from their internal study it is feasible to identify a meaning or perspective within society. Consequently, depending on the role that the State plays in public policy processes, societies have a representation of the State that governs them.

**Ecotourism:** A fundamental strategy for local and sustainable tourism development in the department of Córdoba.

Ecotourism is characterized by the fact that it is provided by small and medium sized operators and produces benefits and income directly to rural, indigenous and poor communities (Garraway, 2009). For Stronza (2008), ecotourism differs from other types of tourism in that it includes conservation objectives and enhances the livelihoods of local populations in both tangible and intangible



aspects, as well as revaluing cultural traditions and beliefs, empowering leadership and community organization, increasing community self-esteem and dignity, and spreading the network of contacts with people and sources of supply for both national and international tourists, tour operators, nongovernmental organizations and private foundations.

However, the possibilities of ecotourism favoring development are not very high, due to the fact that on a local scale it can be extremely significant, since it makes it viable for the population to maintain its lifestyle, this activity by itself does not have the capacity to represent the sole sustenance of the population (Hall and Boyd, 2005).

In this order of ideas, Dubin and Durham (2008) point out that ecotourism in addition to the benefits and contributions on a local scale also influences exogenous agents because it has the potential to increase the environmental awareness of the local population and the tourist, therefore, it is relevant and advisable that when attending these places people are educated and prepared to interact with the community that receives them, since this activity should ensure the increase of biological and cultural learning assumed by the locals.

Kiper (2013) points out that it is important to experience and learn about nature, its landscape, flora, fauna and habitats, as well as cultural relics.

Likewise, for Garraway (2009) ecotourism consists of a tourism model that aims to achieve an alternative development path, whose function is to conserve nature areas, capitalize on the opportunity for the development of diverse social and economic welfare in a space of sustainability for economically marginalized communities (poor, indigenous, rural). In previous times, ecotourism destinations are located in adjacent areas where there are limitations of monetary resources, local skills, lack of mechanisms to ensure a fair and adequate distribution of benefits, low association to carry out commercial ties, human capital weaknesses and deficient skills in planning, business and financial management experience and in product development and research (Coria and Calfucura, 2012).

Similarly, in these areas there is a lack of innovation and almost no participation of governmental entities to overcome economic difficulties, migrant flows persist towards the central regions, intrinsic economic relations are weak and there is a tendency to lack effective policies and economic control over decisions that affect their welfare (Hall and Boyd, 2005). In relation to the previous approaches, this study assumes ecotourism as a fundamental strategy for the local and sustainable development of tourism in Monteria, department of Córdoba.

However, Córdoba, which is the target destination of this proposal, is not listed as one of the departments with the greatest tourist activity, in fact, it is only part of 0.13% of the rest of the destinations chosen by foreign tourists, according to (Tourism Development Plan for the Department of Córdoba, 2012).

On the other hand, the study conducted by Kokalji (2007) suggests that, despite Colombia's enormous natural and cultural wealth, the economic development of tourism is limited due to various problems including war, drug trafficking, forced migrations, among others. These problems are not foreign to the Caribbean region and especially to the department of Córdoba. Due to these situations, according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Colombian Caribbean Observatory, the Caribbean region has positioned itself as one of the poorest areas of the country, taking into account that income poverty is almost 57%, a figure higher than the national average (49.7%), the most worrying cases being those of Sucre (69.5%) and Córdoba (66.3%).

This situation is also worsening in the department of Córdoba due to the environmental impact of anthropogenic actions or processes derived from human activities, a region where the quality of air and water is increasingly compromised, rivers are overfished and deforestation is causing floods; reasons for which it is necessary to direct human beings towards the protection and conservation of ecosystems, promoting ecotourism as a viable strategy to pay more attention to the health of the biomes and their role in the economic development of the region.

And specifically, the municipality of Monteria is no stranger to this problem in each of its biomes or macro ecosystems: wetlands, highlands with forest, plains with tropical dry forest, plains with



pastures, riparian forests, river courses and streams that in turn have beaches in the channel as the Sinú River, have been subject to a process of progressive deterioration that has led to the disappearance of approximately 50% of existing marshes in the POT, and the change of forest suitability in the hilly sectors that are part of the urban area and the periphery of the city, giving way to the growth of urbanization and agricultural activities. This situation is articulated with the strategic line of management Risk management and natural hazards formulated in the POMCA-RS (Guerrero, Martínez, & Wilches, 2006).

Therefore, based on the postulates of Sunil Bastián and Robin Luckham, which establish that tourism and environmental preservation are the development environment that promotes the competitiveness of heritage and regional sustainability (Bastian & Luckham, 2003), the aim is to position this department as a national and inter-national cultural tourism destination that, through the use of its biodiversity and natural wealth, generates local development dynamics and sustainable production chains.

And in relation to public policies, Arévalo (2017), states that tourism public policies manage the future of the destination and will provide people with the possibility of how to work, grow, where to focus and look, for this reason it is important to get in-volved in these ideas that will govern the destination, for this reason, it is required that people significantly improve their knowledge in tourism in order to achieve sustainable and sustainable development.

Similarly, Arévalo (2017) points out that currently the public policies carried out by governments must be good, taking into account all aspects related to Tourism that are generally sustained in providing between nations, and involves in turn inclusive tourism, social, therefore, public policies must be municipal, and of the society that is interested in the subject.

In view of the above, it is necessary to design a school in ecotourism as an institutional strategy for the development of public policies that allow the promotion of tourism in the department of Córdoba, recognizing that it is a region rich in culture and history, with landscapes, rivers, beaches, parks, monuments, ecological trails and other spaces that allow the development of this sector.

### METHODOLOGY

The proposal presented here is qualitative in nature because it is an institutional construct that gathers the contributions of all the actors involved in order to envision a strategy of reflection to strengthen the recognition of ecotourism in the department of Córdoba as a cultural, historical and tourist destination in the region.

Similarly, it is projective in nature because it aims to build a theoretical model of a training school in ecotourism as a strategy of opportunity for learning about the bioeconomy that allows developing processes of awareness, valuation and sustainability of ecosystems in the department of Córdoba. All this, in order to respond to the problem posed through a motivating strategy, in this case the realization of a curriculum that links tourism entrepreneurship in its curriculum.

Therefore, in order to achieve the proposed objectives, it is necessary to use a phenomenological research methodological approach that involves the entire educational community of the institutions in the region.

Among the techniques and instruments to be used are: a) Documentary/ Document Observation Sheet. To diagnose the current situation of the ecotourism services provided by the educational institutions in the department of Córdoba. Its units of analysis are: ODS, PND, Regional and Local Tourism Plan, and its analysis techniques is documentary. b) Interview/Interview script. To implement a comprehensive training program in bioeconomy and sustainable tourism in the educational institutions of the department of Córdoba, which will allow strengthening public policies for the promotion of the historical, cultural, environmental and touristic richness of the region.

Its units of analysis: 5 experts in local, regional and national tourism, and the analysis techniques: Structuring, Categorization, Contrastation, and Theorization.

### CONCLUSIONS



Finally, within the diversity of possibilities offered by ecotourism for local development in the department of Córdoba, Montería, the following can be mentioned:

Sustainability, conservation and participation of the local community in the achievement of sustainable development objectives in the regions of that department with tourism potential.

The evaluation, follow up and control of the different activities carried out to promote the preservation of the environment and the care of natural resources.

Promote cultural diversity in the regions visited by ecotourists.

Openness and disposition to a variety of natural resources such as lakes, rivers, mountains, forests, snow-capped mountains, deserts, among others.

Also, this proposal values the fact that Montería is the cattle capital of Colombia and is an epicenter for tourism, which very little has been made known to people from the interior of the country or foreigners; And that its location favors the people who visit it to have a vacation full of culture, river, adventure and even ecological stays around the city, making then evident the importance of promoting tourism in it, considering it a sustainable practice that contributes to economic development, social equity, cultural rescue and preservation of the environment and biodiversity, not only at the municipal level but also at the departmental level.


For all these reasons, it is necessary that the department of Córdoba and the city of Montería bet on an initiative that involves not only the tourism field but also ecotourism, as a viable strategy for the sustainability and valuation of the natural resources of the region, highlighting that in Córdoba there is a great potential for the development of the bioeconomy, defining it as an economy based on the consumption and production of goods and services derived from the direct use and sustainable transformation of biological resources, being an alternative for productive diversification and value addition to the rural environment, especially in the agricultural and agroindustrial sectors. (Rodríguez, 2017).

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors express their gratitude to the Universidad Cesar Vallejo Trujillo Perú, University of Sinú, Educational Services and Innovations SCRL and National Unified Corporation for Higher Education CUN, for giving us the time and opportunity to participate in the development of these projects that have to do with school in ecotourism: an institutional strategy for the development of public policies that promote tourism in the department of Córdoba.

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