Papers

Authentic Cuba: analysis of tourism advertising, 2002-2016[1]

Autêntica Cuba: análise da publicidade turística de 2002-2016

Auténtica Cuba: análisis de la publicidad turística de 2002-2016

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Abstract

Keywords:

Tourism.
Advertising.
Tourist destination image.
Tourist destination.
Cuba.

Tourism and advertising are fields of study that gain interest and space in the academic world, essentially in the scope of Applied Social Sciences. The present work seeks to analyze the Cuban tourism advertising discourse, providing possible interpretations of the contents (text/image) contained in its advertising campaigns, in order to perceive the way the country was promoted in the last decades. The corpus of analysis consisted of 50 posters of the four Cuban tourism advertising campaigns carried out between 2002 and 2016. Through research methods and procedures that included morphological and content analysis, semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis, the research found that diversification of products and incentives offered by the destination was the main communication strategy in the period, and that cultural attractions are the anchor of the tourist advertising of the island.

Resumo

Palavras-chave:

Turismo.
Publicidade.
Imagem do destino turístico.
Destino turístico.
Cuba.

O turismo e a publicidade configuram-se como campos de estudos que ganham interesse e espaço no mundo acadêmico, essencialmente no âmbito das Ciências Sociais Aplicadas. O presente trabalho busca analisar o discurso publicitário turístico cubano, proporcionando interpretações possíveis dos conteúdos (texto/imagem) contidos na sua publicidade, com o fim de perceber a forma como o país foi promovido nas últimas décadas. O corpus de análise foi composto por 50 cartazes das quatro campanhas de publicidade turística cubana realizadas entre 2002 e 2016. Por meio de métodos e procedimentos de pesquisa que incluíram a análise morfológica e de conteúdo, entrevistas semiestruturadas e análise documental, a pesquisa constatou que a diversificação dos produtos e incentivos que oferece o destino constituiu a principal estratégia de comunicação no período, e que os atrativos culturais são a âncora da publicidade turística da ilha.

Resumen

Palabras clave:

Turismo.

El turismo y la publicidad se configuran como campos de estudios que ganan interés y espacio en el mundo académico, esencialmente en el ámbito de las Ciencias Sociales Aplicadas. El presente trabajo busca analizar el discurso publicitario turístico cubano, proporcionando interpretaciones posibles de los contenidos (texto / imagen) incluidos en su publicidad, con el fin

de percibir la forma como el país ha sido promovido en las últimas décadas. El cuerpo de análisis fue compuesto por 50 carteles de las cuatro campañas de publicidad turística cubana realizadas entre 2002 y 2016. Por medio de métodos y procedimientos de investigación que incluyeron el análisis morfológico y de contenido, entrevistas semiestructuradas y análisis documental, la investigación constató que la investigación la diversificación de los productos e incentivos que ofrece el destino constituyó la principal estrategia de comunicación en el período y que los atractivos culturales son el ancla de la publicidad turística de la isla.

1 INTRODUCTION

It is said that the first tourist to arrive on the island of Cuba was Christopher Columbus when in 1492 he expressed, as indicated in his diaries, "this is the most beautiful land that human eyes have ever seen" (Colón, 2002, p. 3). The Cuban island, known worldwide for the unique characteristics of its beaches, also has other components that support the country's competitive position in the so-called Caribbean tourism industry. The privileged geographical location, the climatic peculiarities, the diversity and exuberance of the natural landscapes, the extroverted character of its inhabitants, the political-social stability, the millennial architectural constructions in perfect state of preservation, and a rich historical and cultural accumulated wealth, provide the base of its great potential for tourism development.

Advertising uses these elements to praise the authenticity that boosts the tourist experience. Some studies (Fullerton and Kendrick, 2011; Pomering, 2013) indicate that exotic elements that emphasize local culture, identity, and characters should be part of destination branding, as these may be effective to evoke an attractive image that arouses consumer interest. In this way, the advertising narrative is an essential component in the marketing of tourist destinations and a central element in the formulation and promotion of local culture and identity (Avraham and Daugherty, 2012).

To address these concerns, the aim of this study is to analyze the Cuban tourist advertising discourse, providing possible interpretations of the contents (text/image) in its ads, in order to understand the way the country was promoted in the last decades. The corpus of analysis were four campaigns of Cuban tourist advertising carried out between 2002 and 2016. Through research methods and procedures that included morphological and content analysis, semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis, the study focused on the fulfillment of the following objectives: (1) to characterize the main attributes of the destination's projected image; and (2) to identify advertising strategies to promote tourism in Cuba. The results of this research attempt to provide clues about the role of advertising for the tourist development of the island. Both tourism and advertising gain space in the academic world with research of multi, inter and/or transdisciplinary character, essentially in the scope of Applied Social Sciences. In Brazil, several authors analyze the image, identity, brand, and tourism attributes in their work from different approaches, making it possible to understand the importance of these within the context of tourism (Añaña, Anjos, Pereira, 2016; Azambuja, Mecca, 2017; Manosso et al., 2015; Zucco et al., 2017). In addition, there are Brazilian studies on advertising and promotion of Brazil as a tourist destination (Lage, 1990; Pereira, 2009; Souza and Brito, 2014).

This work adds to the previous efforts of the Research Group on Regional Media Studies, focused on the understanding of regional media processes and the study of communication strategies for the development of tourism. Moreover, although the topic of advertising and image of tourist destinations has already been addressed, this

study provides empirical evidence on the formation of Cuba's projected image, which is a little researched destination in this field. Thus, the investigation provides insight into how Cuban destination, in an attempt to include itself in this new reality of global, economic, and communicative processes, and despite its limited advertising practice in the post-revolutionary period, adopted and implemented advertising communication strategies for this sector.

2 TOURISM ADVERTISING AND DESTINATION IMAGE

As Péninou (2005) states, the advertising narrative is rooted in the creation of a product-friendly world. It is based on seductive and persuasive arguments that interact with the motivations of the audience for the purpose of creating, changing, or reinforcing their attitudes. Examining tourism advertising, researchers often look at ways in which narratives are used by advertisers to promote destinations. The stories, anecdotes, symbols, legends, and myths associated with a place become important components in advertising campaigns. These elements are significant in increasing destination attractiveness, given that they often act as a catalyst for emotional connections with the audience (Avraham and Daugherty, 2012).

Advertising positively influences the marketing of tourist destinations. This assumption is based mainly on the discussions of Bojanic (1991), Chon (1990), Morgan and Pritchard (1998) and Urry (2002) who consider that in the tourism and leisure industry, where the product is a service and what is sold are dreams and illusions, advertising plays a vital role. This communicative tool is "one of the most efficient means by which a country can convey its image to potential travelers" (Bojanic, 1991, p. 352). Some researches (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Beerli and Martin, 2004; Gallarza, Saura and Garcia, 2002; Gartner, 1993) recognize that destination image formation through advertising is an essential element for tourism development. This is because image is the most used resource for promoting attractions, and in many cases essential for destination selection and purchase decision.

Some authors draw attention to issues related to tourist destination image. This topic has a broad theoretical corpus in the research literature in communication and tourism (Gallarza, Saura, and García, 2002). Heterogeneous approaches analyze issues related to the understanding of their formation process (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Avraham and First, 2003; Gartner 1993; Marreiro das Chagas, Marques Júnior, and Duarte, 2013). They consider the cognitive and affective nature of the variables that compose the image (motivations, beliefs, values) and the effects on image projection and on tourists' perception of it. Other studies are devoted to its evaluation and measurement (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999, Añaña, Anjos and Pereira, 2016; Gallarza, Saura, and García, 2002; Pérez-Nebra, Torres, 2010) considering the cognitive-affective image dimension, as well as the expected and perceived benefits of the destination.

Other literature focuses on destination image management (Lima da Silva, Perinotto, 2016; Leão de Menezes, 2010; Kotler, Haider and Rein, 1993; Urry, 2002) as a necessary element to identify the differential attributes of attractions for its dissemination in communication channels in which tourists trust. Some researches (Beerli and Martin, 2004; Kim, Hallab and Kim, 2012) indicate that destination image is based on physical attributes (environment, landscape, infrastructure, climate) and intangible attributes (culture, history, security, services), and that the combination of these affects significantly tourists' choices. In this way, destination-projected image starts from an imaginary previously constructed and based on the attributes that reflect the physical, cultural, symbolic, and affective value of the place.

In this context, visual elements are a fundamental component in the configuration of the tourist destination. Visual elements such as photography are quite frequent in tourism advertising, aiming to stimulate the consumption of what the ad contains. John Urry (2002) argues that as tourism requires anticipation of experiences, communication—advertising—will be primarily responsible for destination image formation. In this sense, the fundamental motivation of tourists is to discover the landscapes, buildings, people, and places to which they were exposed through the visual representations made in commercials ads (Garrod, 2009).

3 ADVERTISING IN CUBA?

In addressing the issue of advertising in Cuba, some contradictions and questions emerge. Is advertising a typical tool of capitalism and consumerism? Can advertising be used to promote products and services in a socialist society? On the subject, Mariño (2011) considers that with information and communication technologies—which bring new forms of socialization—"global brands disseminate their discourse and everyone, from developed or developing societies, socialists or capitalists, wanting or not, is a receptor" (Mariño, 2011, p. 8). Based on these criteria, another question arises, how has Cuban advertising projected the country's image as a tourist destination?

Historically, Cuba was a developed country in communications, such as the railroad in 1837 (the first in Latin America), radio in 1922, television in 1950, fifth in the world and second in color in 1958 (Muñiz, 2012). The largest island in the West Indies also has a wide advertising tradition since 1898, especially linked to the USA intervention, which from the beginning has transformed the local market culture. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, advertising in Cuba—introduced by USA agencies—showed a broad graphic history based on national products or American companies such as Colgate, Palmolive, Standard Oil, Sears, Gillette, Avon (Sarduy, 2005). Cuba became the test market for all advertising campaigns for Latin America (Muñoz, 2008).

In the case of tourism and to the island advantage, the United States entered the era of the Volstead Law in the 1920s, at the same time that Cuba was trying to develop its tourism industry. For Americans, vacations in Cuba were promoted as a tropical encounter, full of charm and fun. Images of Cuba and the pleasures that the island offered began to be promoted, anchored fundamentally in visual resources related to prostitution. Thus, images exploring the female body—and its sensuality—filled the Cuban travel ads, illustrating a haven of debauchery (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Posters of the National Commission for the Promotion of Tourism in 1930 and 1940

Source: Retrieved from archives Publicitur /MINTUR Cuba

In later years, travel agencies, the advertising industry, and Cuban tourism institutions continued to portray the island as a near and exotic paradise. Based on this principle, advertising from 1940 until the late 1950s exaggerated the promises of a permissible paradise, adding to new tourist attractions at the time: big casinos, cabarets, hotels, and bars. Advertising declined considerably after the triumph of the revolution in 1959. The main cause of this phenomenon was the fact that advertising was considered as "an instrument of pressure on the consumer society, [...] providing guidelines for conduct and ideological models representing bourgeois interests"

(Góngora, 2010, p. 16). Contrary to this model of incitement to consumerism, advertising in the Cuban context seeks to promote an attitude towards the rational consumption of products and services (Muñiz, 2012).

The island's projected image in the first 30 years of revolution (1959-1989) represented the cultural and political life of the country, as well as the leading role of the Cuban people. The tourist sector did not have an advertising development at this stage, since the strategies were focused mainly on domestic tourism. With the collapse of the socialist bloc and the loss of commercial ties that sustained the Cuban economy for about 30 years, the island had no other way but to integrate with the world economy. Since 1994, with the creation of the Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR), tourism advertising has begun to rebound, due to the repositioning of Cuba as a tourist destination in the international market.

Communicative efforts began to be visible. Advertising communication has become one of the crucial initiatives to be undertaken by Cuban official agencies in order to compete with other destinations in the region. In the early 2000s, the foundations for constructing a coherent and renewed image destination of Cuba (De Armas, 2011; La Rotta, 2011) were defined, and advertising campaigns were created for these purposes. It should be noted that the current Cuban advertising activity which, through a whole system of national values and ideology, presents specific features. In this sense, the new communication efforts of the sector try to reflect the sustainable approach of its development policy.

4 METHODOLOGICAL PATHWAYS

In the present study, an attempt was made to analyze the Cuban tourism advertising discourse through the characterization of the messages (text/image) contained in the ads that served as the basis for defining the island projected image between 2002 and 2016. From an exploratory and descriptive approach, research methods included morphological and content analysis, interviews, and documentary analysis. Morphological analysis seeks to associate the characteristics of the product with its objectives in terms of communication, by means of a "comparison between the elements used in the graphic composition, i.e. titles, illustrations and texts" (Marques de Melo, 1972, p. 100). This technique allows studying the structure, classification, and function of register decoding units (words, symbols, phrases) in the advertising messages.

Regarding textual information, in this paper we focused on identifying and analyzing slogans and body texts in the ads. The analysis of the narrative of the copy text was done in the original language (Spanish) in order that the presented discourse did not suffer conceptual alterations nor lose the initial meaning in the attempt to translate them. For Krippendorff (2004), the content analysis allows to make replicable and valid inferences of texts (or another relevant contents) for the contexts of its use. According to Bardin (2010), with this technique the researcher seeks to understand the meaning of communication, trying to find another implied meaning. In the present study, the analysis focused on ads content, particularly on the attributes they represent. The work of Beerli and Martin (2004) and Kim, Hallab and Kim (2012) provided the theoretical basis for the formation of the attributes and categories analyzed.

In this way, three attributes (natural resources, cultural attractions, social incentives) were developed in nine categories, which represent essential elements and identities of Cuba's image. All categories are coded and described in Table 1. Each image was considered as a single content unit (Krippendorff, 2004; Neuendorf, 2002) and coded into several categories/attributes. The sample were 50 posters from MINTUR-Cuba in the digital format: 7 pieces of the campaign "Cuba Sí" (2002-2006); 10 pieces of the "Viva Cuba" campaign (2006-2012); 13 pieces of the campaign "Auténtica Cuba" (2010-2015), and 20 pieces of the renewal campaign "Auténtica Cuba" (2015).

Throughout the research, interviews were conducted with seven MINTUR-Cuba employees, responsible for national tourism development plans and with specialists on advertising and communication management in the sector. According to May (2004), this technique yields valuable information about people's experiences, opinions, aspirations, and attitudes. In this case, a semi-structured interview was used, since it "allows people to respond

more on their own terms" (May, 2004, p. 149) and offers greater space for dialogue and understanding of context and content of the interview.

According to Godoy (1995), "documents can be considered as a natural source of information as they originate in a particular historical, economic, and social context, portray and provide data on the same context" (Godoy 1995, p. 22). For the purposes of this study, documentary research aimed to complement the theoretical framework and assist the research process. The normative documents of Cuba's tourism communication management (communication policies and strategies for the period 2002-2016) were selected as units of analysis.

Table 1 - Guide to description/coding of attributes/categories

Attribute	Category	Description
Natural resources	Beaches and water sports	Refers to the warm climate and marine, paradisiacal, sunny, and tropical environments. It includes visual elements like the beach, the sea, and fine white sand. It also includes water sports, boating, kayaking, fishing, swimming, etc.
	Landscape	It refers to untouched nature, with small elements related to human presence. Variety and uniqueness of flora and fauna. It includes everything that evoke appreciation of nature.
	Protected nature reserves	Refers to natural preservation areas protected by specific legislation. Includes valleys, parks, and other areas of special interest.
Cultural Attractions	Cultural Attractions	It refers to the distinctive, spiritual, material, intellectual, and affective attributes that characterize the destination society. It includes elements related to religion, architecture, art, history, heritage, music, dance, sport. It offers leisure, adventure, and fun.
	History and heritage	It refers to elements of exceptional archaeological, ethnographic, bibliographic, or artistic value that involve human action in the course of history. It includes legacy inherited from past civilizations and passed on to future generations: archaeological zones, landscapes, ancient architecture, typical villages, folklore, traditional festivals, superstitions, rituals, and other popular manifestations.
	Customs and ways of life	It refers to the way the local population lives and reflects their living conditions, housing or daily, productive, and traditional activities.
	Night life	Refers to any popular recreational activity of leisure and entertainment intended for an adult audience. It includes bars, cabarets, discos, shows and live music, clubs, restaurants, etc.
Social incentives	Adventure Activities	Refers to the practice of adventure activities of a recreational nature in natural, built, rural or urban spaces. Includes boat trips, kayaking, diving, hiking, trekking, horseback riding, fishing, swimming, ecotourism, etc.
	Friendliness of locals	It refers to the attitude of local people towards tourists. It includes images with the local population that show the national identity: joy, fun, charisma, naturalness, solidarity, energy, and hospitality.

Source: Adapted from Beerli and Martin (2004) and Kim, Hallab and Kim (2012).

5 CUBAN TOURISM ADVERTISING (2002-2016): UNDERSTANDING THE DISCOURSE

The main findings are presented below. The data is displayed in two thematic blocks: textual and visual resources.

5.1 Textual resources

The collected data were analyzed in an interpretive way, with the purpose of identifying keywords expressed through advertising text, whether in the slogan or body text. Initially, the results of the study show that all campaigns use slogans, and these are composed of only two words. It is worth noting that, according to Pike (2004), most destinations tend to minimize the number of words in their slogans to increase their effectiveness. Thus, there is a clear tendency to use words that convey attributes to be associated with the brand and the destination (Garrido et al., 2012). Pike (2004) argues that including the brand name in the slogan has a positive effect on the association of ideas to be conveyed, and allows the inclusion of a distinctive and inimitable element. In line with these criteria, the slogan of the four campaigns analyzed is clearly constituted by the name of the destination accompanied by words that add meaning: *Cuba Sí, Viva Cuba, Auténtica Cuba*.

The first slogan in analysis was *Cuba Sí*. According to one interviewee, this phrase was a valuable and synthetic resource that removed all doubts about Cuba's capacity as a tourist destination, especially when trying to get out of the 1990s crisis. The slogan *"Viva Cuba"* remained within the conceptual margins of the predecessor campaign, using the brand name and a symbolic statement of the national idiosyncrasy. According to another interviewee, this textual resource was a memorable proposal with a high level of applicability. The choice of this phrase was very successful. It is short and found in the imaginary of many countries as a distinctive Cuban element. The typographic work must also be highlighted. The letters are not static, and they have movement, an element that reinforces the idea of dynamism and energy that is lived on the island. The name "Cuba" appears in red, "Viva" varies between white, yellow, blue, and green, depending on the contrast it makes with the image that accompanies the poster.

Already in the case of the campaign *"Auténtica Cuba"* (2010-2015), one interviewee argues that they tried to find a word that could represent what distinguishes and makes the destination unique: its authenticity. This slogan, along with other elements, was part of the visual identifier of the campaign. In the MINTUR update to the campaign in 2015, the slogan was retained, the visual identifier was eliminated, and other words were included that described and specified the singularity: *auténtica* [authentic]...adventure, history, culture, hospitality, etc. As a complement, and in line with the need for global insertion and promoting strategies in social media, an online content generation label (#CubaTravel) was placed as the official MINTUR-Cuba brand on all advertising posters in the campaign.

The text body was used only in the first two campaigns *"Cuba Sí"* and *"Viva Cuba"*. This change is due to the importance of visual and aesthetic content and the search for greater resource savings in advertising. In general, campaigns body texts used 39 phrases, whose function was to offer meanings to the Cuba brand. Hence, phrases like *"espectáculo natural que fascina"*, *"ciudades coloniales y tradiciones mestizas"*, *"gente entusiasta y sincera"*, *"tesoro de atractivos contrastes"*, were the centerpiece of the advertising message.

The words *"segura/seguridad"*, *"alegría"*, *"aventura"*, *"cultura"* and *"natural"* were the most repeated, with an average frequency of more than two times per campaign. In this regard, one of the interviewees argues that the issue of destination security—a determining factor in tourist choice—is one of the island's greatest attractions. About 75 percent of the text bodies are represented by phrases with a great use of adjectives that have connotations of both the authenticity and the exceptionality of the announced attractions. Finally, phrases have no verb in their structure, using the ellipse as a syntactic figure. The fact of trying to imitate the simple and descriptive style of colloquial language contributed to the use of the ellipse. Still without a verb, phrases can transmit the message successfully, fulfilling the readability criteria: *"Verde, intacta, diversa"*; *"Mezcla de poesía, maraca y tambor"; "Ciudades coloniales, sabores legendarios y tradiciones mestizas"*. Body texts built with the help of ellipses correspond to 46 percent of the sample.

5.2 Visual Resources

Similar to the findings of the textual analysis, it is observed that in the tourist discourse the images are highly selective, amplify the beauty of the territories, and emphasize only their positive aspects. As already explained, each analyzed image has been described and codified in several categories, according to previously defined attributes (natural resources, cultural attractions, and social incentives). In this phase of the process, the relative frequency of each variable was assessed, having as an indicator its presence/absence in the advertisement representation. It is worth noting that it is possible that the same attribute originates different representations, for instance, while mountain images evoke adventure (nature hiking, ecotourism, zip lining, etc.); they can also suggest peace and tranquility. Thus, the sum of percentages of variables in each attribute can be higher than 100 percent. Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage of variables analyzed in the 50 ads.

Table 2 - Frequency of variables analyzed in ads

Attribute	Category	Frequency (N=50)	Percentage
	Beaches and water sports	12	24%
Natural resources	Landscape	16	32%
	Protected nature reserves	15	30%
	Cultural Attractions	27	54%
Cultural Attractions	History and heritage	30	60%
	Customs and ways of life	14	28%
	Night life	8	16%
Social Incentives	Adventure Activities	9	18%
	Local responsiveness	13	26%

Source: The authors.

Taking into account the data, we can observe that the variables "History and heritage" and "Cultural attractions" stand out, both with results over 50 percent. Next, the incidence of each attribute and coded variables will be described.

5.3 Cultural attractions

This attribute was the best positioned in content analysis. There is a predominance of images of Cuban architecture, historical and cultural heritage, music and dance, well-known figures from the artistic and sports world, people's joy, and some traditional elements (Figure 2). Special emphasis should be given to the old cars—automobile heritage that has become a national icon—Havana's historic center, Viñales Valley, rumba —intangible cultural heritage—and Cuban cigar, the country's cultural symbol, all represented in the campaigns. It is also worth pointing out the insertion of baseball, national sport, in the campaign *"Auténtica Cuba"* as a traditional element and Cuban identity. The relevance of this attribute is due in large part to the fact that Cuba is the Caribbean country with the greatest amount of assets listed by UNESCO as World Heritage. Hence, the advertising tourism strategy concentrate its efforts to highlight such elements.

5.4 Natural resources

This attribute ranked second in the tourism campaigns analyzed. The natural environments of greater representation were beaches, waterfalls, valleys, and mountains, exhibiting all the extraordinary richness of the Cuban landscapes. The beaches are one of the most appreciated landscape values of the island. The transparency, temperature and quality of its waters, environmental security, and the relaxation they offer have allowed them to be historically the tourist attraction par excellence of the Greater Antilles and one of the most explored communicative resources in Cuban tourism advertising. Nevertheless, it is clear that the analyzed campaigns were able to establish a balance between the sun/beach and nature resources. This did not limit the image of the country to a single tourism product, attenuating the stereotypes and reinforcing the idea that Cuba is more than a summer tourism destination (Figure 3).

Figure 2 - Representation of cultural attractions in campaigns
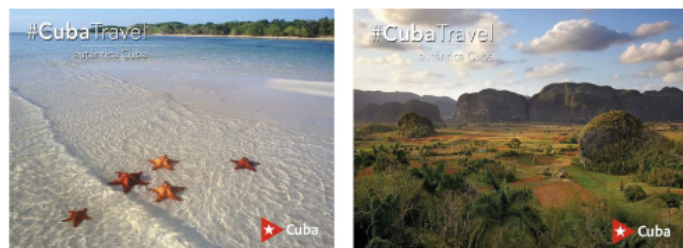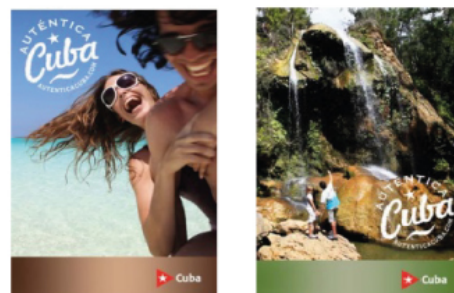

CUBA SÍ (2002-2006)

VIVA CUBA (2006-2010)

AUTÉNTICA CUBA (2010-2015)

AUTÉNTICA CUBA (2015- ...)

Source: Recovered from Publicitur/MINTUR files, Cuba

Figure 3 - Representation of natural attractions in campaigns

Source: Recovered from Publicitur/MINTUR files Cuba

5.5 Social incentives

This attribute has the lowest participation in the content analysis of the posters of the last four Cuban tourist campaigns. There is a predominance of images with people involved in different contexts, performing various activities, and representing the Cuban reality. There are popular leisure and entertainment activities (16%) such as bars, cabarets, discos, shows, and live music. Adventure activities (18%) and experiences of buying

and tasting authentic products, with an emphasis on Cuban cigar (6 %) are also included. Special attention has been given to images that show the joy, charisma, naturalness, and energy of the local population (26%). Some examples of these attribute variables are represented in Figure 4.

Figure 4 - Representation of social incentives in campaigns

Source: Recovered from Publicitur/MINTUR files, Cuba

6 ADVERTISING STRATEGIES FOR TOURISM PROMOTION IN CUBA

In general, the morphological and content analysis allowed us to observe that, regarding the issue of product versatility, the campaigns basically promoted three types of tourism: scenic (60% of the pieces); cultural/heritage (34% of the pieces), and adventure tourism (6% of the pieces).

Regarding the advertising narrative built around the basic attributes of the destination, the results of the study indicated that the cultural attractions are the anchor of the tourism advertising of the island, despite an increasing effort of diversification. In this way, culture and heritage are the most frequent contents in the campaigns, present through the natural or constructed heritage, urban or rural (churches, squares, monuments, and easily recognizable sites), as well as expressions and cultural manifestations such as music, religion, and dance. The Revolution Square, the Capitol, the historic center of Trinidad, the *Plaza Vieja* in *La Habana*, the street music, the cigar culture, among others, are symbols of Cuba. We are witnessing, then, a kind of reinforcement of national identity through tourist attractions, which brings us to the idea of Richard Sharpley (2012) that the advertised images act as markers, exercising decisive influence, and defining "must visit" places.

From the specific point of view of the projected images, the posters articulate different spatial contexts, shaped, in principle, by meanings of representation of resources. The most used setting was the exterior (84%), whether rural (nature, landscape, forest, mountain), beach/sea, or urban. There is also an evolutionary effort to diversify the promotion of regional destinations between campaigns, avoiding the evident and marked use of the "coastal strip" of Cuban and Caribbean tourist advertising in general. This is due to two factors: first, the guiding principle of the sector to take full advantage of the territorial potential for tourism (Resolution 57/MINTUR, 2005), which is why other territories begin to appear in the destination advertising.

Secondly, because from 2010 the island has several cities listed as World Heritage Site that are celebrating their 500th anniversary of the foundation.

The discursive discourse predominates, however, and the affective/persuasive is also found in expressions such as *"espectáculo natural que fascina"* and *"tesoro de atrativos contrastes"*. The use of short, memorable, and impact phrases and statements close to the brand name became common in the advertising narrative of the ads analyzed, in line with the assumptions of Donaire and Galí (2012), Galí et al. (2017) and Kohli et al. (2007) about tourism language. In general, and according to the postulates of Avraham and Daugherty (2012), empirical results have shown that the advertising narrative has been an essential component in the commercialization of Cuba as a tourist destination, and a central element in the promotion of its culture and local identity.

The findings helped to conclude that the latest campaigns promoted by the Ministry of Tourism—based on the diversification of the tourist product and the use of all the territorial potential—sought to diversify the image of the country, showing that Cuba is more than sun and beach. Exotic elements that emphasize their local culture, identity and characters, their natural attractions, and their autochthonous historical heritage form a fundamental part of the destination brand and are effective to evoke an attractive image that arouses consumer interest.

However, it should be noted that the photographic work took a contemplative approach in the last advertising proposal, characterized by the scarce presence of characters, be they tourists or Cubans. Only 10 percent of the posters of *Auténtica Cuba* (2015) have a significant presence compared to previous campaigns: *Cuba Sí* (100%), *Viva Cuba* (90%), and *Auténtica Cuba* (84%). The absence of characters means that tourism advertising does not have the dynamism and emotional involvement that is expected. In addition, it loses strength of identification, in the sense that the use of the human figure can have an impact and function as a mirror for the recipient of the message, triggering processes of recognition and desire to experience what is seen. On the subject, one of the interviewees argues that to some extent, one of the main factors of motivation in choosing Cuba is to enjoy situations of sociability and interaction with the people. In this sense, it is considered that the particular selection in the choice of more contemplative images shows an insufficient use of the potential to legitimize the representation of "authenticity".

Statements recorded in interviews with representatives of MINTUR/Cuba indicate that the Cuban advertising communication strategy, in recent decades, has been guided by the basic principle of showing the situation of the country, which makes it unique. One of the interviewees argues that the tourism advertising of the Caribbean islands does not have conceptual difference, because they all explore their greater resource, the natural environment, that motivates the rest in stunning beaches. "The natural environment is the same for all, in this sense, we must project the legitimate, singular, real, undeniable, and profoundly Cuban. That's what makes us authentic". On the subject, another interviewee suggests that in order to project a heterogeneous and genuine image of Cuba, it is necessary that the Cuban be represented, and in the last campaign, this differentiating value was not shown, which reinforces the above.

Based on the analysis procedures applied in this work, it can be stated that the visual and textual resources that defined the advertising proposals of the period under analysis correspond to criteria of representation: the diversity of destination resources, social incentives, and the idiosyncrasy of the host population, in line with industry policies. In order to optimize communicative processes due to the commercialization and positioning of Cuba destination, MINTUR's tourism communication policies and strategies (Resolution No. 57/2005 and Resolution No. 186/2014) sought a more conscious and articulated management, that would achieve the large-scale diffusion of the attributes and potentialities of Cuba as a tourist destination. The island's new communication efforts are attempting to reflect an economically viable, environmentally friendly, socially fair, spatially balanced, and culturally diverse tourism that characterizes the sustainable approach of its development policy.

7 FINAL REMARKS

The central focus of this article was the analysis of the Cuban tourist advertising discourse, providing possible interpretations of the contents (text/image) contained in its ads, in order to perceive the way in which the

country was promoted in the last decades. The corpus of analysis was composed of four campaigns of Cuban tourist advertising carried out between 2002 and 2016. For these purposes, and through research methods and procedures that included morphological and content analysis, semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis, it is concluded that the last campaigns promoted by the Ministry of Tourism have sought to diversify the image of the country, showing that Cuba is more than sun and beach, avoiding the evident stereotype of Caribbean tourism advertising.

Without doubt, the posters analyzed show the evolution—very positive—of the image of Cuba as a tourist destination and to a certain extent, the sector development strategies in the analyzed period. The following results justify this statement: (1) heritage images, ecotourism, and adventure that respond to the constant search of diversifying the Cuban tourism product, based on its natural, cultural, and social incentives. (2) Scenes that show natural landscapes such as reefs, beaches, forests, and attractions of high historical value, revealing a commitment to the preservation of these places. Finally, (3) the presentation and promotion of other regions with high tourism potential, in order to take advantage of the whole national territory, to boost local economies, to improve the quality of life of the local communities, and to mitigate regional imbalances.

In this sense, such discoveries can help analyze and understand the way in which other destinations have developed in the past and their current status, as well as aiding in their future planning. There are lessons to be learned about good practices and potential pitfalls from the experiences of Cuba destination in recent decades, and their history deserves further monitoring and analysis. There are, however, some limitations that should be acknowledged. Given the need to circumscribe the study period, the conclusions are restricted to the period considered and some relevant change or subject may not have been analyzed. In addition, the research was limited only to the projected image of the country, a study that also included the perceived image would be, in this sense, more complete.

From the results of this study, it is suggested that future researches carry out a comparative study among competing tourist destinations. The impact of advertising campaigns on the arrival of tourists in Cuba can also be evaluated, as well as an analysis of the efficiency of Cuban online advertising in the destination choice process.

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