

The Orchids, a sustainable alternative for the development of ecotourism. Case study, Carchi province, Ecuador

Las Orquídeas, una alternativa sustentable para el desarrollo del ecoturismo.
Caso de estudio, provincia del Carchi, Ecuador

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Abstract

The research completed proposes a development of thematic tourist route, taking advantage of the emblematic natural resource “the orchids” to develop the tourist activity in Carchi province, Ecuador. The design process is described through methodologies established by the Tourism Ministry to determine tourist attractions and their hierarchies. With the geographical representation systems, the route is determined and each point of tourist interest are represented. Marketing strategies are established to promote the route, as alternative for the economic development through sustainable ecotourism. Finally, a tourist rout is based with the highlights natural’s values of the region, diversifying the tourist offers in the province, to become an important element for the development of the communities, with the linkage of its inhabitants and the use of existing natural resources

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and improve living conditions and encourage new ventures, as well as, the conservation of the environment.

Keywords: *Orchids, ecotourism, sustainable, natural resources, tourist route.*

Resumen

El trabajo realizado presenta una propuesta de ruta turística temática, aprovechando el recurso natural emblemático “Las Orquídeas”, como una alternativa para desarrollar la actividad turística en la provincia del Carchi, Ecuador. Se describe el proceso de diseño en el que se aplican metodologías establecidas por el Ministerio del Turismo, para atractivos turísticos y sus jerarquías. A través de sistemas de representación geográfica se determina la ruta y se representan cada uno de los puntos de interés turísticos señalando los valores naturales y culturales en ella. Se establecen estrategias de marketing para promover la ruta, como una alternativa para el desarrollo económico a través de un ecoturismo sustentable. Finalmente se presenta una ruta turística con los más altos valores naturales de la región, diversificando las ofertas turísticas de la provincia, y convertirse en un elemento importante para el desarrollo de las comunidades, con la vinculación de sus pobladores y el aprovechamiento los recursos existentes y mejorar las condiciones de vidas e incentivar nuevos emprendimientos, así como, la conservación del medio ambiente.

Palabras Clave: *Orquídeas, ruta turística, recursos naturales, ecoturismo, sustentable*

1. Introduction.

At the beginning of 2005, Ecuador was declared a “Country of Orchids”, representing a recognition of the efforts made to promote the appreciation of the important biodiversity that exists in its 256,370 km² of geographical area. Reality that makes it the most biodiverse country in the world by unit area, not only from their ecosystem points of view, their vulnerability and the natural dynamics they constantly face, but also considering it as a source of scientific knowledge and constant information (Cornero, 2006).

Because of their beauty and elegance orchids, are the oldest and most valued plants in the world, their existence goes back 65 million years ago. They are plants belonging to the Orchidaceae family, considered the missing link between the animal world and the plant world, because its conservation depends on keeping alive the natural chain of millions of years. These beautiful plants have shapes, colors and aromas that make them enigmatic and research subjects. Its floral wealth awakens the interest not only in scientists from different latitudes, but also nature lovers of these beautiful plants, who travel throughout the year to observe them and deepen their knowledge.

Ecuador possesses four of the five subfamilies of orchids existing worldwide, which develop in tropical, subtropical environments and in conserved areas, whether temperate or cold. In total 4,032 of the species that until now have been classified and published, 1,714 are endemic, to more than the 400 that are still in the process of study and description (Dodson, 1994).

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In Ecuador, Carchi province has a large population of orchids that can potentially be positioned as a tourist attraction with around 6% of the total endemic species registered in the country and constitute a reference destination, which enhances the local economy. A clear example of one of the endemic orchid species of this province is the Dracula Gigas Orchid (F.Populin, G.Merino, & H.Medina, 2009).

Carchi province is located at the northern end of the Inter-Andean alley, with an area of 3,749.6 km². The provincial territory is extended between Pasto nodes to the north, from Boliche towards the south and in part of Chota Valley. The northern limit is the Republic of Colombia, Imbabura province to the south, Sucumbíos province to the east and Imbabura and Esmeraldas provinces to the west.

Due to its structure and geographical complexity, as regards the biophysical aspect, it has a variety of natural heritage resources and landscape richness, each one with important characteristics to regulate and maintain the natural processes of environmental conservation, these elements in one way or another contribute to the reduction of the effects of climate change, which is why they need to be conserved.

For this reason, the province has a high number of attractions, both natural and cultural, potential for the tourism development, but have not yet been exploited by various factors. A clear example is the existence of 18 orchids, registered by the Ministry of the Environment, highlighting that some of them have more than 5,000 plants. It is known that these places are private and with a high rate of visits from different markets.

According to (GAD Provincial of Carchi, 2015), it mentions that there are problems that in one way or another affect the development of tourism, some of these are: Low quality services, little tourist culture, difficulty at the moment to get loans for tourism, absence of travel agencies for receptive tourism, low investment of private enterprise, lack of coordination and political decision of local authorities, no market research that characterizes the client, tourism units in local governments are not strengthened, there is no Province Brand, bureaucratic obstacles, among others.

On the other hand, the Provincial Technical Direction of Carchi of the Ministry of Tourism, in its eagerness to promote the interest to develop the tourist activity in the province, has created the tourism table where the flaws were clearly identified, the same ones that are framed in the following aspects: Scarce design of tourism products, poor quality of services and physical environment of the tourist offer, limited tourist information, inadequate natural and cultural resources management, poor training and skills development, low investment and promotion of tourism entrepreneurship, inadequate security policies and risk management.

After analyzing these problems arises, from the academy, the need to establish actions that allow tourism in Carchi province to begin to take off, therefore, it is proposed to carry out an investigation where the existing potential is used, such as Orchids to design a route as another alternative for the tourist development of the province and be able to take advantage of and conserve their natural resources to strengthen the economic capacity of local communities and generate spaces for entrepreneurship.

To understand to a large extent what the purpose of this research has been, it is pertinent to know concepts that address the meaning of "Tourist Route", where many versions can be found. Additionally, address other concepts such as tourist attractions, natural resources, etc., which highlight the values that make up a Tourist Route.

Then it is proposed that a tourist route is an itinerary that can be land, air, sea or mixed, which allows to discover and appreciate the natural beauty, products, history, culture, lifestyle or folklore in the sites and places visited or traversed.

The Tourist Routes are part of the products offered by tourist destinations in various parts of the world, which, following a trajectory, aim to captivate and show the socio-cultural and natural values that make it up, as well as being a promotion source for the different attractions in the region.

The Tourist Routes are part of the new trends of alternative tourism that is used in the design of products to catch the attention of the tourist, it can be said that it is a road or path that has generally been designed to show places of great influence with certain architectural, social, cultural and natural attractions, constituting in its entirety, tourist attractions that are pleasing to the tourist or visitor.

The routes are promoted under a particular name that has some historical, cultural, ethnic or religious sense, in which adequate information is provided for tourists.

In the definition of tourist route that raises (Briedenhann, 2004) suggests that it is the creation of a group of activities and attractions that encourage cooperation between different public and private companies, existing in the geographical area and serving, in this way, as a vehicle to stimulate economic development through tourism.

According to (García, 2010) for the creation of a tourist route, it is necessary to articulate a series of itineraries that group similar elements that support an area as a destination. In addition, the design of a tourist route passes, in the first place, by the construction of the same, based on the tourist resources that are available and secondly, for the necessary marketing of it. Another concept to take into account in the development of a tourism product, are the attractions, then, is defined as a tourist attraction to the site or fact that generates great interest among travelers. In this way, it can be a reason for a person to make the decision to visit a city or a country.

The value of the tourist attractions may lie in different issues. In some cases, these are spaces of historical importance, in others, attraction arises due to natural beauty. In addition, there are tourist attractions that are rather symbolic, such as gastronomy or the event offers.

The different kinds of tourist attractions can be combined to transform an area into a popular destination. Due to the economic importance of tourism and cultural or natural relevance, tourist attractions are usually protected by the authorities, who invest large amounts of money in their conservation and promotion.

Natural resources have also played an important role in the development of nature tourism worldwide, as stated in his article (Mateos, 1971) that tourism does not only refer to states or activities (rest, leisure, game, recreation), but to the conditions under which they may occur. The healthy climate, the pure air and, nowadays, the sun, have been and are determining factors of important tourist currents. For this reason, tourism focus on nature begins to have thousands of followers. Nature is offered to us as an attractive point of arrival; in this aspect it represents the culmination of the entire tourism process.

In addition, for (Quintana, 2017) nature tourism is directly related to development and tourism sustainable, and it is practically related to natural habitats and their biodiversity, where natural

parks, protected reserves, ecotourism, the rural environment, the agrotourism and the population involvement belonging to the determined area of tourist implantation take on great relevance.

The use of natural resources for tourism development of regions and communities, depends on the close relationship that exists between residents and their resources, as manifested (Gerritsen, 2016) where he mentions that these meet the needs of food, construction and other large number of uses that represent the local materials. That is why the different institutions and organizations support the search for alternatives that promote social development through technical studies, case analysis, description and biodiversity inventories, in such a way that they originate strategies with the aim to improve life quality, maintaining a balance between the objectives of social, economic and environmental development (Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico, 2005).

Turism development sector has been immersed in an intense process of enhancing the participation of local communities in the developing countries, which materialize in Community Tourism initiatives (Pastor, 2018) In addition, this type of tourism is appropriate in Latin American countries, as it is a fundamental tool to reduce the poverty level of the most depressed areas and contribute to their economic growth, taking advantage of their environment potential.

It is a reality that rural and community tourism is taking more and more strength in the management of their territories, where the participation of the communities is done actively to generate their own wealth, reducing poverty and improving the life quality of their settlers.

This type of tourism offers the opportunity to create small businesses and entrepreneurship and employs a relatively higher percentage than other sectors (OMT, 2003) In addition, it is necessary that tourism be respectful with the environment and responsible with the society. Inadequate tourism can degrade habitat and deplete natural resources, while sustainable and responsible tourism can help preserve the rural environment and local culture, and resources can be better managed collectively than individually (KAY, 2007), It must also be ecologically sustainable in the long term, economically viable and equitable from an ethical and social perspective for local communities.

Then, as a way to solve the needs to develop tourism in Carchi, in the northwestern region of Ecuador, rural and community tourism means an opportunity for the improvement of the life quality of their inhabitants, for such reasons, this research identifies the current potentialities and proposes like an alternative through a tourist route to begin to diversify the sector in the Zone, with the use of its natural resources.

2. Materials and methods.

It is important to note, that was necessary, to begin the research, to know the tastes and preferences, through the survey and interviews conducted to visitors. A total of 350 surveys and 50 interviews were applied, all in the mains orchids of the Carchi province.

After analyzing and summarizing all the information collected from the surveys applied, the following results are shown, as well as the profile of the tourist.

Chart 1

Profiles of clients who visit the orchids in carchi province

Profile	Nacional	International
Age	41- 50	31- 40
Provenance	Ibarra – Tulcán – Quito	Colombia – Suiza
Visiting season	Weekend/ Holiday	Any season
Visit reason	Contact with the nature	Research / Tourism
Prefer to travel with:	Family	Friends/ family
Environmental values that it possesses	Respect for flora and fauna / likes to plant trees	Respect for flora and fauna / Avoid polluting the place
They feel satisfied with:	Orchid quality / Cost of service	Cost of service / Quality of orchids
Needs in the orchids	Signage / Species information / Food	Species information / Signage / Interpretive Guidance / Food
Arrival to the place	Personally	Personally / Association
It is reported by means of:	Mouth - heard / Social networks / Ministry of tourism / Websites	Web pages / Mouth-heard / Social networks / E-mail

This information is the basis to establish the characteristics of potential clients, discovering what the needs are and, by doing so, establish the necessary strategies to get these clients.

By other side, this research has a qualitative character since it allows to describe in detail each of the attractions, mainly orchids, and services to be used within the route, through the inventory of tourist attractions, which facilitates the evaluation of criteria supported by the tourist competitiveness indexes published by the World Economic Forum. Once the information of the attractions has been raised, these are put in numerical value on a scale of 1 to 100 and that are framed within a level of hierarchy that goes on a scale from I to IV. The evaluation of the criteria is carried out through interviews with the owners of the orchids and attractions, while the hierarchies correspond to a review process of criteria proposed by the OEA.

The “Methodological guide for the hierarchy of attractions and generation of tourist areas of Ecuador” (MINISTRY OF TOURISM OF ECUADOR, 2018), establishes technical guidelines for the identification, classification and valuation of the attractions with better conditions for the development of tourist products. For optimal management of the evaluation tool, the methodology is divided into two parts:

- First part: Guide for the survey of tourist attractions. (Data sheet)
- Second part: Methodological guide for ranking tourist areas attractions and generation in Ecuador.

The technique to evaluate the attractiveness and tourist spaces that the card establishes, is the observation, the same one that contains the following criteria with their respective scores, that at the end of the survey process allows identifying those with greater potential.

Chart 2

Evaluation criteria in the technical file with its respective values of scoring.

CRITERIA INDICATOR / WEIGHTING	SCORE
Accessibility and Connectivity	18
Tourist Plant and Complementary	18
Conservation and integration attractive/environment State	14
Hygiene and Turist Safety	14
Policies and Regulations	10
Activities that are practiced	9
Attractive diffusion	7
Visitor and influx registration	5
Human Resources	5
TOTAL	100

With the application of this file and the scores have gotten as a result, the possible attractions are located under the following hierarchy.

Chart 3

Ranges and hierarchies of tourist attractions.

RANGES	HIERARCHY	DESCRIPTION
86 - 100	IV	Exceptional and highly significant attraction for the international tourism market capable on its own to motivate an important amount of visitors (current or potential) and presents the optimal conditions for the development of tourism products focused on the international market.
61 - 85	III	Attractive with exceptional features capable to motivate on its own or in accordance with other contiguous attractions a current or potential amount of national or foreign visitors and presents the optimal conditions for the development of tourism products focused on the national and international market.
36 - 60	II	Attractive with some striking feature that presents basic conditions for the generation of tourist products able to interest visitors who had come to the area for other tourism reasons or to motivate national tourist flows.
11 - 35	I	Attractiveness that presents minimum conditions to generate products, as elements that complement others of greater hierarchy.
0 - 10	RESOURCE	It is a natural or cultural element that can motivate displacement, but they are not yet incorporated into the tourism dynamic, nor does it have any kind of support infrastructure.

In the development of the work it was necessary to use technological tools, which allow to locate geographically each of the places, such as the GPS systems and equipment for the geo referential location and with the help of the ArcGis 10.2 software, generate the maps of the route. As a result of the process of analyzing this information, two maps are obtained.

An important aspect for the development of the route is, link local gastronomic offerings and accommodation services as elements that stimulate the emergence and development of business forms, also connect tourism experiences with the environment and local communities where they are protagonists of organizing and managing tourism offers (Gabriel, 2018), to generate tourism initiatives, management and care of the environment and additional economic contributions for families.

It should be noted that the evaluation instrument for the gastronomic and accommodations services facilities is the result of applying the Delphi method, with a group of experts selected in different areas. This method is carried out, sending a list of criteria to the experts for the selection of aspects to be taken into account, according to their expertise and knowledge. For the evaluation of gastronomic service providers, aspects such as food services, installations conditions, kitchen area, and others services, are evaluated each with its evaluative elements and ranges as specified in the following table.

Chart 4

Sheet Criteria for the evaluation of gastronomic services.

EVALUATION TOURIST GASTRONOMIC SERVICES			
GENERAL DATA OF THE ESTABLISHMENT			
REQUIREMENTS			
FOOD SERVICES	EVALUATION RANGE	SCORE	SUB TOTAL
Attention	0 - 12		/30
Offers	0 - 10		
Price / Quality	0 - 8		
INSTALLATION	EVALUATION RANGE	SCORE	SUB TOTAL
Hygiene and Bathrooms	0 - 12		/31
Accessibility	0 - 4		
lighting / Ventilation	0 - 4		
Desing / Ambiance	0 - 7		
Parking / Capacity	0 - 4		
KITCHEN AREA	EVALUATION RANGE	SCORE	SUB TOTAL
Hygiene	0 - 8		/28
lighting / Ventilation	0 - 4		
Desing / Structure	0 - 4		
Food handling	0 - 5		
Qualified cooks	0 - 4		
Cookware	0 - 3		
OTHERS ASPECTS	EVALUATION RANGE	SCORE	SUB TOTAL
Employees / Language	0 - 5		/11
Internet connection	0 - 3		
Catering	0 - 3		
			/100
REMARKS:			

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Within the types of tourist accommodation established by the Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador, all establishments taken into account within the route, are in the category of guest houses, which are evaluated through a technical sheet that requires compliance of essential aspects to provide these services.

The technical sheet that is applied, evaluates the conditions and the facilities in a general way, as well as, the common areas for clients, rooms, bathrooms and other services, with the aim of guaranteeing quality standards demanded by the market. The vast majority of guest houses offer similar accommodation services; however, some have much more acceptance than others, and the differentiating element is often the quality of the service they offer. The quality / price ratio of the service is an element that attracts clients and helps to maintain them.

The fulfillment of the requirements demanded by the sheet guarantees a quality standard in rural accommodation services.

The planning of a marketing plan is focused on achieving a product with constant improvements, in this way, the marketing plan must be supported under two basic pillars according to (Kotler, 2006), the strategic and the operative. The strategic part will allow to know where the organization is, through the definition of its mission, vision and values; and where you want to go, through different analyzes and market studies. The operational part is responsible for executing the necessary actions to ensure the success of the strategies proposed and achieve the objectives set in the plan.

Taking into account what the aforementioned authors have said, we have seen the need to establish a marketing plan with the purpose that the tourist product "Route of Orchids" achieve its objectives with greater effectiveness through the following methodology:

Within this point we proceed to observe the external aspects of the Tourist Route, such as the political, social, economic and competitive environment of the sector, this allows us to know or have a clearer idea of how we are working on these axes; On the other hand, the internal environment of the route is evaluated with the purpose of knowing the existing tourist potentialities and the capacity of operation.

With this we obtain a diagnosis of the situation that allows us to be clear about the neuralgic points of the route and thus continue with the next step that is the establishment of objectives.

Establishment of objectives

Once the diagnosis has been made and the critical points are clear, objectives are set to reach the goals set, such as:

- Design the representative image of the Route of the Orchids and identify the concept of the tourism service and products to be included.
- Position the Route of Orchids in the market.
- Achieve a visitor quota and maintain an annual tourist growth rate of 10%.

The applications of these methodologies allow to evaluate, determine and select those facilities with the minimum conditions necessary to provide services within the route.

Once the route has been determined, with its central theme, the attractions and the different services benefits, the programming and articulation of each one of the elements that compose it are carried out in a logical manner that allows its acceptance and commercialization.

With all the preliminary information, marketing strategies are established, therefore, it is necessary to analyze and diagnose the current situation, as well as to determine the profile of the customers, their demands and needs to achieve a quality and perishable product.

Therefore, thinking about tourism in a different way, outside the traditional sun and beach, looking for the use of cultural and natural resources in a sustainable way, becomes an alternative tourism (Bringas, 2004).

3. Results and discussion

This research is aimed to propose an alternative that promotes tourism development with the Orchids appreciation and conservation and position the Carchi province as a tourist reference.

It starts from a previous investigation called “Evaluation of orchids for the tourist projects implementation in the Carchi province”, in which each of the orchids of the province is identified and evaluated, as well as their hierarchies according to what is established in the “Methodology of attractions and generation of tourist areas of Ecuador”, granted by the Ministry of Tourism (MINISTRY OF TOURISM OF ECUADOR, 2018).

The methodology is applied to 18 orchids and yields the following result, where only 10 of them fulfill with the established.

This evaluation allows to select which keep the minimum criteria necessary to be declared as tourist attractions.

According to the hierarchical nomenclature, 9 of the orchids are in the second (II) hierarchy, while only one is in the first (I). Therefore, the development of this route starts with the ones that have the best results, in this case (Paraíso de los Orquídeas, Rincón de las Orquídeas, Yelas and Melody).

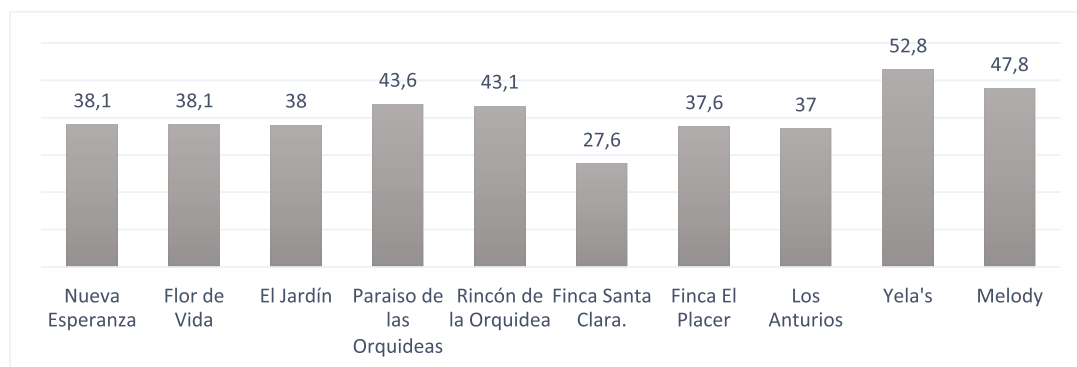


Figure 1 Orchids evaluation summary.

Once those orchids that keep the requirements established within the methodology and declared as tourist attractions according to these procedures are determined, they are located geo referentially and are represented on a map of the area, to find the access roads that communicate them and have a preliminary idea of which or what would be the possible routes to follow.

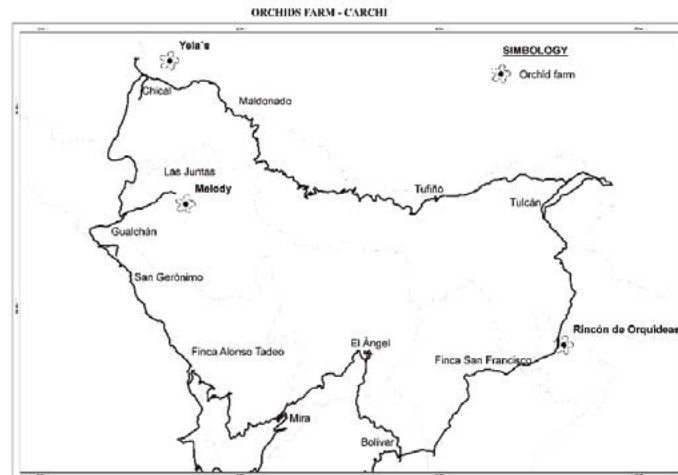


Figure 2 Geographical location map of orchids.

This map makes it possible to include other attractions that are on the same route, and thus enrich the content of the route with added values. The complementary attractions that are decided to include, must likewise be evaluated by the same methodology established by the Ministry of Tourism.

Likewise, any circuit, route or excursion must contemplate food services, accommodation, transportation, guidance and others that guarantee customers the full enjoyment for which they paid.

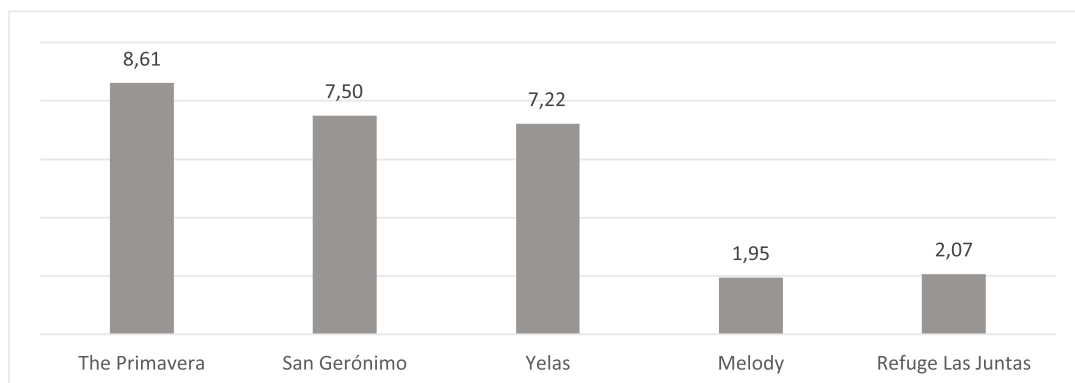


Figure 3 Accommodation evaluation summary.

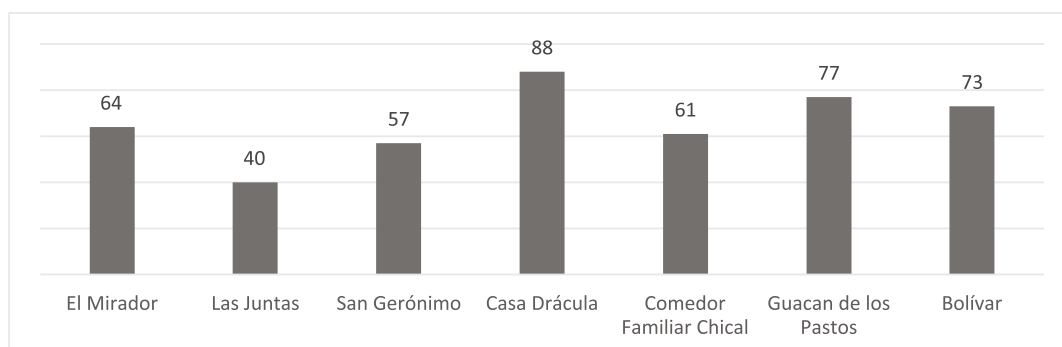


Figure 4 Restaurant evaluation summary.

In this sense and once determined the routes to follow logically and taking advantage of the natural, geographic and cultural wealth, it is decided to include within the tour those attractions that meet the established, to give life to this product, so that tourists can appreciate the Andean forests, moors, hills, volcanic complexes, lagoons, viewpoints, as well as a great wealth of flora and fauna, these places are also favorable for the practice of scientific tourism, adventure tourism, among others.

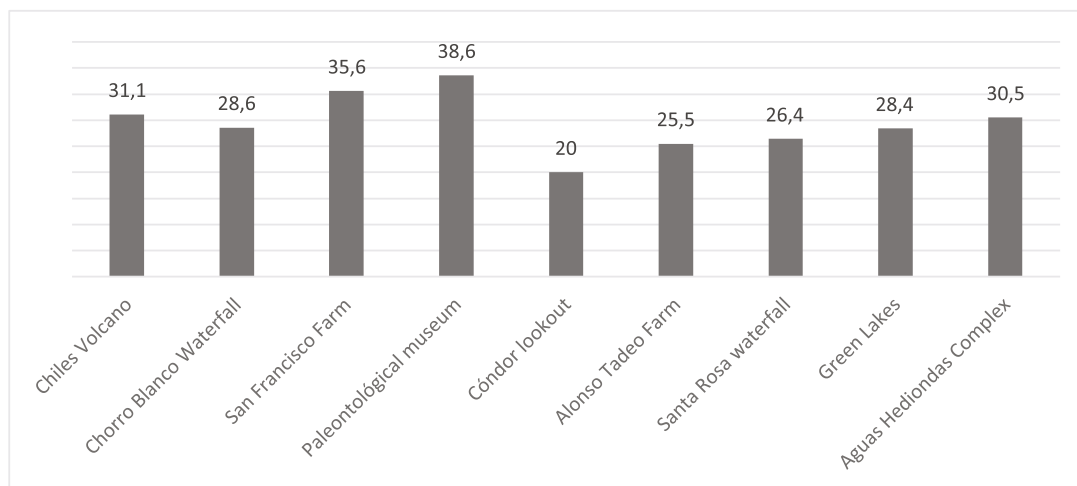


Figure 5 Attractions evaluation summery.

This is established by the Ministry of Tourism in Ecuador (2012, pp. 1-2) where it defines a tourist route as a planning and development tool that consists of a journey from point A to point B, in which attractive lines are aligned tourism with products / activities and services under a clearly established theme “. Said route must also have a specific area of influence (MINTUR, 2012).

This route has the characteristic of being an ecological route, developed on rural roads with distinctive natural values, highlighting the observation and appreciation of orchids as its main activity, Additionally, it includes other activities such as bird watching and landscapes, trekking, etc. It has an infrastructure and necessary services to offer the visitor a unique experience in nature tourism.

The following figure highlights on a map the attractions, natural resources and services available to customers.

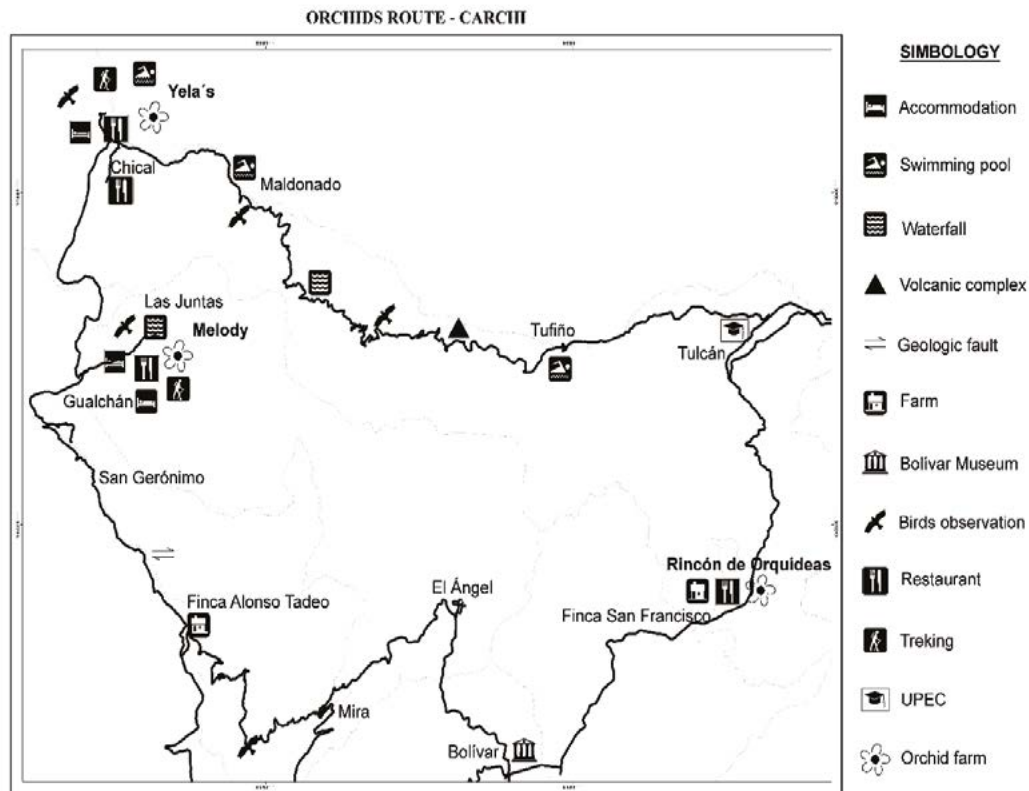


Figure 6 Map "Route of the Orchids" with complementary attractions and services.

Once the attractions, resources and services on the route have been established, it is essential to assemble and schedule the itinerary, as established (Chan, 2011), which for the passenger is materialized in a single act of purchase and a single final benefit. Structure the itinerary is the phase where a sequential and logical order is given to the service, activity and visit provisions, where the times in route, visits and excursions time, technical stops and daily free times are determined.

Another important aspect is the quotation of the itinerary that depends on the ability to negotiate to obtain the best results and minimize costs. In this process all the possible establishments in each visit place or technical stops must be taken into account, without forgetting that it is a question of selecting possible suppliers to reach a service agreement or contract rendering that guarantees the highest quality, in addition to the expenses for transportation and other indirect costs.

Once the Tourist Route of the Orchids has been pre-designed in Carchi province, with its main attractions (orchids, nature reserves, relevant sites, etc.) and the services include (food, guidance, lodging and transportation), it is essential to know the demands and the needs of potential clients (Chart 1), through a study of the current market and the profile of the client. The result of this information helps us to propose a strategic marketing plan to promote good tourism practices for the Orchid Route.

Strategies Approach for the "Route of Orchids"

In order to accomplish the objectives, it is necessary to establish some strategies that lead to their execution, which have been subdivided by criteria, as shown below.

In the service.

For (Ardura, 2011), services are characterized as activities that can be carried out by people, objects and machines, therefore, they do not have a physical existence, but are intangible, and their production and consumption are executed at the same time so they cannot be stored. On the other hand, service management must encompass all the factors involved, concentrating on four basic elements (Larrea, 1991).

- What of the service: What the content of the service offer is, what complementary services included and what the design of the offered package are.
- The who of the service: What personal elements that intervene are, their role and what needs to be done to act effectively.
- The how of the service: Through what operations the service is guaranteed, what systems should be implemented so that the service is provided as designed.
- Who for the service: To whom should the service offered be directed, what type of communication should be implemented to involve the market.

In this sense, a group of strategies are proposed to provide a better service within the route, such as:

- Train the owners of the orchids, restaurants, lodging and guides, through the Ministry of Tourism, in topics of tourist interpretation, hospitality, services, with talks and practical workshops
- Establish a brand with its respective slogan, that is short, striking, innovative, easy to remember, that distinguishes and highlights the virtues of the route, you can even make use of the representative orchid of the province, which is the *Dracula Gigas*.
- Establish alternatives to carry out the "Route of Orchids", and facilitate the execution of the tour, so that visitors have flexibility.
- Implement tourism information signage and periodic maintenance of it. In addition to labels with information on the species.
- Create spaces where traditional or typical food of the area is provided, it must be cozy and with materials in accordance with the environment so as not to interfere with the harmony of the place. Also, a place to stay at night and continue the tour the next day.

In the price.

After preparing a cost sheet with the inventory of the products borrowers and the prices of the services they offer, the indexes of benefits for the agencies are established and the price of the product is defined by market segment. From this moment, according to (Machado Chaviano, 2007), a commercial strategy must be developed for the price, taking into account the life stages of the product, this allows planning the process of inserting the new product in the market with the following strategies.

- Find a balance between the price and the quality of service to commercialize the Route of Orchids, also take into consideration the rest of the optional activities that clients can execute during the trip and turn it into an unforgettable experience.
- Implement additional services, complementary activities and guide interpretation, and

thus, the ratio of the price for the visit to the orchids can increase, besides that the tourists are willing to pay for it, however, the foreign tourist is the one who would pay more if the service is improved

- Commercialize the “Route of Orchids” through travel agencies with the objective to create groups of tourists and lower sales prices, taking into account the installed capacity.

In the commercialization

Tourism planning must necessarily consider the integration of other spaces such as the intermediate communities that help articulate and prioritize the territory and the natural environment where the criteria of environmental management and sustainability must prevail. Then it is necessary to propose a strategy that highlights the product “Route of the Orchids”, within a competitive market. These strategies should include continuous self-reviews, search for external financing to achieve goals and objectives, build meaningful relationships between markets, improve and market existing tourism structures.

Strategies will have to be decided if they are directed to new markets or to current ones, as stated (De la Colina, 2010) and, on the other hand, actions on the chosen market can be carried out with current products or with new products. By combining these options, the following strategies are achieved:

- Capture an internal market in cities with larger population settlements, and where there are people who like to enjoy this type of activity.
- Capture the receptive market, with the “Route of the Orchids” offer, in countries such as Colombia, Venezuela, Spain, France and the United States, which register the highest number of visits in the country.
- Make strategic alliances with national tourist operators from Tulcán, Ibarra and Quito and international companies from Ipiales and Pasto, so that the Carchi province increases visits to tourism.
- Provide information on the “Route of Orchids” to visitors in travel agencies at the provincial, national and international levels.
- Establish more partnerships or alliances with international agencies, universities and organizations that like to investigate biodiversity on the planet.

In the promotion

All those who travel need a minimum of information about the place to be visited in order to plan and choose, especially considering the tendency to make more independent trips. In recent years, the emergence of new media and social networks facilitates and contributes to produce content and share information among people (Mendes Thomaz, 2013). This new scenario triggers several changes in consumer behavior and new types of tourism, tourists, professionals in the area, and marketing (Digital Marketing, Search Marketing (SEM), Media Marketing and Social Networks, etc.). In this sense, it is important to highlight the importance of informing about the production, organization, distribution and management of relevant tourist information for people interested in knowing the destination and also as a way to promote it, and thus pose the following strategies.

- Participation in local and national tourism exhibition fairs, such as the International Tourism Fair in Ecuador (FITE), to position the product “Route of the Orchids” of the

Carchi province in a tourist market, creating contacts with future customers or in turn with intermediaries that manage to capture greater demand.

- Carry out scientific publications as research products involving the “Route of Orchids”.
- Carry out continuous advertising through information and digital communication technologies such as: social networks, web pages and by email. In addition, television frequency that has great reception in our country, to cover the previously established segments.
- Technically prepare the guides and improve the quality of the product and services, generates a good image of the destination, therefore, it is key to make the tourist leave completely satisfied, and thus, recommends the place to family and friends as an excellence place for the treatment received there.
- Inform through the Ministry of Tourism, as governing entity of the province, in schools, colleges, universities, political and social organizations, among others, the natural and tourist wealth that the province possesses so that citizenship is a prophet in their own land.

4. Conclutions

Within the current context of Carchi province, Ecuador and knowing all its cultural and natural potential, the wealth of the existing flora and fauna, its geographical diversity and the need to find alternatives for the tourist development of the region, a tourist route is proposed highlights an existing natural value and little appreciated in the area as “The Orchids”.

For the development of the route, 18 orchids were evaluated by applying the technical sheet for the inventory of attractions established by the Ministry of Tourism in Ecuador and its hierarchy. In addition, the different facilities that provide accommodation and food services were evaluated, which are complementary within the route.

The use of GPS systems and software in geographic information systems such as ArcGis 10.2, facilitates the maps generation, as well as data analysis with Microsoft Excel.

Marketing strategies were proposed, for the continuous product improvement, with the information obtained by the application of surveys to the visitors of the orchids. This seeks a necessary feedback for borrowers, with the aim of continuously improving their offers and avoiding the stagnation of services.

The methodology developed to generate this route can be applied to the design of other tourist routes in different latitudes, because it is very practical once the objective and relevance are establishing in the new touristic product.

The “Route of the Orchids” can become an important element for the development of the communities through which it passes, with the linkage of its inhabitants and the use of existing natural resources and improve living conditions and encourage new ventures, as well as, the conservation of the environment and its diversities.

5. Recomendations

To train constantly the direct beneficiaries, communities and future entrepreneurs, with a view to improve the quality of the services they provide.

To maintain a systematic evaluation, under the methodologies that govern the Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador, and all the attractions that make up the route, to ensure continuous improvement of the product.

To generate strategic alliances between the authorities of the Decentralized Autonomous Governments, the Academy, private companies and communities to consolidate the product "The Route of the Orchids".

To carry out workshops in environmental education, to promote the conservation of natural resources, especially Orchids.

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