CUBA’S HISTORICAL TRYST WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND FUTURE PATHWAYS

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This paper inspects the historical development of Cuba put against its challenges in promoting tourism. Due to internal and external pressures, the economic development opportunities for Cuba were largely limited to tourism — despite the best efforts by the Cuban authorities to diversify its economy. Drawing insights from the strategy literature, the competitive advantage of Cuba in tourism is explained. We trace the pathways the Cuban economy and society took in Cuba’s its tryst with tourism as the primary development driver. Particular thrust is given to Cuba — Soviet bonhomie and the “special period”. We conclude the discussion by highlighting the hope that Obama kindled and the fears that Trump brought back in.

Keywords: Economic development, Soviet Union, Special Period, Competitive advantage, Tourism, Cuba.

Introduction

Cuba has always been a popular destination for the American tourists. US Prohibition in the 1920s made Americans find in Cuba a place to escape to. American tourists did not hate Cuba, even during the bitterest days in the US-Cuba relations. The political taint just made Americans to see Cuba as a forbidden fruit. As we write this book, the American policy towards Cuba is flip-flopping. After a short stint of friendliness during the presidency of Obama, there was anxiety how the new administration would deal with Cuba (Romeu, 2014). President Donald Trump (2017-) is yet to make a clear stance, but his interim directives have made travel to Cuba harder.

It is not often history but hopes that shape tourism development. There is widespread hope about the future of tourism in Cuba. Many multinational hotel developers have expressed interest in investing in the hospitality sector. As of now, Cuba does not have the tourism-focused infrastructure to support any more additional tourists, even during the off-peak seasons. Professionalism in the industry is yet to be developed and matured. The tourism product in Cuba right now is in a state of flux. Even when a small cruise ship brings a couple of hundred visitors, coastal cities are overwhelmed. Notwithstanding, the Cuban authorities are presumptuous about their ability to handle any number of additional visitors. If American tourists to Cuba increase, it will not be easy to provide them with the required facilities.

Something that every other Caribbean island nations look forward is to see how the relaxing US embargo on Cuba would affect them (Henthorne, George, & Miller, 2016). Many of these countries were beneficiaries of the embargo. It is not evident that they have any plans to deal with Cuba’s re-ascent into the tourism map. Some experts, however, are of the view that there are enough tourists to meet the targets set for the Caribbean and that it won’t be Cuba, if any, that is hurting overall tourism demand for the Caribbean.

There are perplexing signals coming from Cuba. With the Venezuelan crisis, gasoline is already being rationed in Cuba. The Cuban economy fell overall in 2016, despite a significant hike in tourism related revenue. Cuba cannot import even essential commodities due to its fast-emptying foreign exchange reserves. The quickest way to replenish foreign exchange probably is tourism. But, Cuban authorities are taking
a cautious approach, especially given the socio-cultural and environmental impacts of unleashing tourism. That said, there is also a heightened realization that the country cannot continue to survive on subsidies from foreign governments.

Cuba's first tourism heyday in the 1950s is well known, as is the industry’s collapse in the face of the U.S. economic embargo initiated in the 1960s. The “new age” of Cuban international tourism development dates to the mid-1970s (Miller and Henthorne 1997), but gained new urgency as the country entered the “Special Period” of economic near-collapse, following the fall of the Soviet Union, in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

In 1988, the Spanish tourism corporation Meliá entered into Cuba's first modern joint venture with the then-recently formed Cuban para-state corporation Cubanacán. Between 1993 and 1994, policy-makers targeted the three most promising sectors of the Cuban economy as the sugar industry, biotechnology, and tourism. With, to date, modest returns in the biotechnology sector, and major setbacks in the country’s sugar industry, the country’s tourism industry has assumed a central position in the national economy.

The scramble to expand the country’s international tourism industry dramatically in the early years led to many mistakes, including sub-standard construction, uncontrolled sex tourism, tumultuous relations with international investment partners, and poorly trained service staffs (Henthorne & George, 2009). Government planners rapidly expanded the number of hotel rooms, but with relatively little attention to other, related, supporting industries. The result was that, by some estimates, in the early 1990s, the country’s tourism industry had a multiplier of less than one – the country lost money for every tourism dollar it collected. The Cuban Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR) was not formed until 1994, and it played a very minor role in tourism development and planning for the first years after its formation. Tourism development was largely fragmented and uncoordinated among a half-dozen national para-state corporations (Henthorne, George, & Williams, 2010).

Tourism in the Soviet Cuba

The bonhomie with the Soviet bloc helped resurrect the Cuban tourism in the 70s. Increasing number of visitors from the Soviet allies began to flock to Cuba. The Havana Hilton (later renamed as the Habana Libre) and the Riviera were the last two American hotels constructed before the Revolution. These and the other existing hotels were not sufficient to accommodate the sensibilities of the new visitors, and a new building boom ensued.

The Soviet Union invested heavily in building the much-needed hospitality infrastructure. The newly constructed hotels were modest in appearance, keeping in view the austerity expectations of typical visitors. Six hotels were completed in 1976, nine were completed in 1977, and eight were completed in 1978. By 1979, the total number of tourists visiting Cuba researched close to 130,000. By 1989, Cuba was attracting over 300,000 tourists.

Political tourism was a major form of tourism during this period. In its purest form, it happens when sympathizers of international political struggles travel to destinations of struggle, in solidarity with the struggle. However, tourism to Cuba from the Eastern bloc was more to get a glance, how much so ever controlled that might be, of its unique socialist development. The source and destination governments incentivized it; also, the tourists did not want their money to go to the capitalists. Visitors to Cuba were presented with a fascinating view of how the state controlled tourism resources, products, infrastructure, and management in a comprehensive manner.

Guest host interactions were limited, and the official line was that the interactions would adulterate culture and values. The real reason was to prevent free flow of ideas, which the government feared would inflame dissent. Cuban residents constantly felt the pain of enacting to the tourists a life of freedom and abundance. In an otherwise collectivist society, everyone began to distrust others and thought each other to be secret government agents. Yet, given the similarities in the institutional characteristics of socialist countries, tourists from the Eastern bloc felt at home when they traveled to Cuba. Most socialist countries had adopted in some form
or the other administrative systems originally
developed by the Soviet Union.

Given the political need for controlled
flow of ideas, Cuba encouraged group tours. Tourist groups were herded to particular spac-
es with the implicit objective of showcasing
specific achievements of the state. Tourists
were led to museums, housing projects, facto-
ries, farms, universities, and defense facilities
and the narrative was mediated with the help
of government employed interpreters. The
vibrancy of social institutions and how that
could not have been achieved without a revo-
lation were always at the center of narration.

In the 1960s and 1970’s, some of the dis-
senting minority voices in the United States
too found a champion in Cuba. Curious ones
among them took trips to Havana. During
their tour, the Americans were shown how
their country’s policies victimized Cuba and
how the resilience of Cubans stood against the
US led tyranny. Even some progressive church
groups sent their church leaders to Cuba and
were quite impressed with the humility of
people. They did not see or chose not to see
the subjugation of individual liberty, persecu-
tion of sexual minorities, poverty, despotism,
etc., in Cuba. Finally, those Americans who
were not impressed with their own govern-
ment’s policies were actively looking for al-
ternatives and they could not but glorify the
alternative at their next neighborhood. Many
western intellectuals felt themselves aliens in
their own land and found some fancy in the
developments of Cuban political economy.
These political pilgrims from the US became a
key source for Cuba to get some vital foreign
exchange, too.

By 1985, the Soviet Union was reassess-
ing its overseas commitments. Cuba was get-
ting close to $4.5 billion a year from USSR, in
the form of developmental and military as-
sistance. This was way too untenable for the
crumbling Soviet economy. Castro was divert-
ing part of the aid to support proletarian rev-
olutions and regimes in various other parts of
the world. Ironically, this was not seen favor-
ably in the USSR. Castro’s imprints on interna-
tional proletarian movements at the expense
of USSR invited their displeasure. In 1988,
Castro was forced to withdraw his forces from
Angola. Cuba seemed to have anticipated
the weakening of the Soviet Union. As early
as 1988, there were some talks in Havana on
mending relationships with the US. What hap-
pened however was a thaw in the US-USSR
relations. The coming of Mikhail Gorbachev
to power as the President of the Soviet Union
and his friendly gestures to the US did now
however help with the US-Cuba relations. It
was felt as if the US would settle for nothing
less than an absolute fall of the Castro regime.

Cuba, All Alone: Era of Overtourism

The demise of the Soviet Union in 1989
and the subsequent dissolution of Comecon
brought rapid and dramatic change to the peo-
ple of Cuba (Morris, 2014). It inaugurated the
Special Period (Período Especial). Imports and
exports dropped by about 80%; GDP declined
by around 30%. This also marked the begin-
ing of the new era of Cuban international
tourism. The disintegration of Soviet Union
forced Castro to find other means of survival.
He allowed Cubans in the US to send money
back home to support families. Also allowed
small businesses in certain sectors (most sec-
tors are still largely under Army control).

With the collapse of the Social Union also
came the departure of Soviet investments in
Cuba. The special period is a period of near
economic collapse in Cuba. The Cuban gov-
ernment which had been the sole provider of
the fundamental needs of its citizenry terribly
felt the heat of it. Food shortages and out-
ages were common, gas prices peaked, citi-
zens literally lined up to secure their rationed
pound of rice, public services were curtailed
or eliminated, and hospital services deterio-
rated. Castro took out the last remaining for-
-eign currency savings to import bicycles from
China. These bicycles were freely distributed
to people for shared use.

Reliance upon tourism for economic sur-
vival is a popular alternative chosen by newly
liberated and ex-socialist countries (White-
head, 2016). The transition to a market ori-
ented economy in such countries is often in-
augurated with unbridled tourism promotion
and tourist dollars provide a quick means to
jumpstart the economy. The Brightside of it
is that it quickly and massively brings in pro-
fessional values such as customer service into
the workforce. Also, tourism development can
stimulate infrastructure development in areas such as transportation and communication.

Castro government’s last remaining straw in the 90’s was to refocus on tourism, too. Oil from Venezuela was thought to help stir the Cuban economy: but, leeching off Venezuelan resources had limits (Font & Jancsics, 2016). Tourism businesses were reopened in massive numbers, again. Even the US citizens could visit Cuba, although they had to fly via another country. The majority of clientele came from the Europe, South America, and Canada. By 1993, tourism numbers had risen to a whopping 600,000. By 1995, Cuba’s annual tourism revenues surpassed 1 billion USD and by the end of the next year, the number of visitors grew over 1 million. The largest visitor base were Canadians, over quarter of a million.

The expectations of the new segments were different than what the Soviet or Eastern bloc visitors would look for in Cuba. New kinds of hotel rooms, new attractions, and new tourist support facilities were needed. Numerous all-inclusive properties were developed to cater to the new tourist segments. Since the Cuban government did not have the money to invest, joint ventures with international investors began to be allowed. Spain emerged to become the most major trading partner in tourism. Even though the foreign investors invested all the money, the joint venture was framed as if it were a Cuban majority venture. The Cuban government’s 51 percent or more of stake in these ventures ensured continued State control over the industry.

The boom in tourism resulted in a severe shortage of service personnel like bar tenders, waiters, housekeepers, etc. The wages and tips were attractive in the tourism industry. Tips paid in the foreign currency enabled hospitality workers to fetch the luxuries unavailable for the others. A schoolteacher earning 200 Cuban pesos a month could earn the same amount in a day as a waiter. Those who were employed in professional capacities such as doctors, engineers, lawyers, etc., were abandoning their State supported jobs and turning to these newfound opportunities.

The brain drain from key scientific professions was so alarming that the government had to formalize employment requirements to work in the tourism industry (Domenech, 2017). This led to the development of hospitality education certification and licensing. Hospitality job aspirants had to apply and be accepted into one of the training schools. The length and intensity of the training programs and the admission requirements disincentivised people in other professions to join the hospitality trade.

The school authorities would direct the candidates to various specialization areas in the industry. The schools also assigned the graduates to particular properties to work. The Cuban government collected a management fee in foreign currency from the overseas hotel investors and the wages of the Cuban workers were paid by the government in Cuban pesos. Elements of centralized vocational planning percolated throughout this process.

The special period’s austerity requirements were unbearable, and people looked for opportunities outside of the formalized economic peripheries (Hill & Tanaka, 2016). Prostitution comes to mind. During the rule of Batista, prostitution was prevalent among the poor rural women. Just before Castro came to power, Cuba had more than hundred thousand prostitutes. More than a couple of thousands of men found job as pimps. This came to a sudden stop during the rule of Castro, until the Special Period. With tourism back in the center point of economic development in the 1990’s and beyond, the evils of tourism began to resurface. Tourism exacerbated the wealth differences and equivalent master-slave social relationships and prostitution reappeared as a primary manifestation of the same. Tourists could take prostitutes to casas particulares rentable for less than ten dollars, even though most established hotels still don’t provide the service of prostitutes. It is not uncommon Cuban Police officers tracking prostitutes, not to bring them to law but to collect bribe to supplement their skimpy salaries. The proliferation of “love hotels” benefitted the locals, many of them lived in cramped settings. Especially with children around, making love was hard. After making some savings, Cuban couples rented rooms in government / military owned motels called posadas for hourly rates and engaged in intimate relationship. Some of these private rooms were sold for a little over five dollars for three hours.
The term *jineterismo* refers to illegal economic activities related to tourism in Cuba. While prostitution and pimping were not legalized, it continued to happen and the authorities did not police. Jineterismo appeared in various other forms such as unregulated tour guiding, informal renting of personal cars, and selling counterfeit goods. Jineteros, those who practiced jineterismo, spoke English and became the interface between tourists and the Cuban people. Even during the embargo, Spaniards and Canadians sought prostitutes; some explicitly demanded underage boys and girls. In the special period, sex tourism and child sex tourism skyrocketed. Cuba was cheaper. It was closer, especially for those in the North America. Cuba’s achievements in public health meant prostitutes were less likely to have STDs.

International tourism and visitors to Cuba expanded dramatically, pouring much needed hard currency into the island coffers. However, as noted elsewhere, the hemisphere’s largest and most wealthy visitor base, the U.S., was very minimal in presence. The big growth in international tourism to Cuba missed the US customers and the industry players. The first new property opened in Cuba in the post-Soviet era was the Spain based Melia properties owned Cohiba hotel. There has been continued all-inclusive property boom in Varadero and neighboring areas, but with no US or USSR presence. This is a remarkable period, in that respect. Cuba is now faced with the need to find tourism revenue from tourist originating countries other than their original sources. Austere properties have given way to beach holiday centered ‘sun and fun’ properties. Spain continued to maintain its key investor status, but countries like Mexico, Canada, Jamaica, UK, and Germany too showed interest in the Cuban tourism.

All-inclusive resort based tourism meant less spending outside these properties and less movement of tourists. By international comparison, these properties were priced low and hence became very popular for the price conscious tourists. Despite significant quality improvements, there existed very little product differentiation across these properties. Market segmentation did not exist, for the most part. This period also saw the beginning of resort development in the Cuban keys, such as Cayo Coco, Cayo Guillermo, and Cayo Laro. These added an extra flair to the Cuban tourism.

International Terminal 3 of the Jose Marti international airport in Havana was built in 1998. This tremendously expanded the international connectivity to Cuba. Alongside, secondary airports such as those in Varadero and Santiago de Cuba began to cater to international airliners. With these, it became so much easier for an international traveler to reach Cuba.

Notwithstanding Cuba’s distaste for capitalism, it has experimented with various forms of private sector. This mainly included self-employed single entrepreneurs, private farmers, agricultural co-operatives, and non-agricultural cooperatives. Self-employment is available in 201 strictly defined categories. Joint ventures in Cuba are neither in the private sector nor in the government sector. Since more than half of the ownership stake in them is with the government, it is safer to classify them as state owned. Employees in these joint venture companies are sourced from a government controlled employment exchange, too.

**Theoretical Explanation of the Cuban Competitive Advantage**

*Cluster Theory.* Porter (2000) offers a succinct definition of the central idea contained in industrial clustering: “A cluster is a geographically proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and complementarities” (p 15). The nations or regions that are most competitive in the global economy today, this theory suggests, are those which are characterized by such clusters of industries.

Cluster theory remains a very productive field within the general economic development literature, generating both extensions to and critiques of Porter’s original theory. One of the major areas of criticism of cluster theory today concerns its application to emerging economies. At best, such economies are likely to possess only incomplete industrial clusters and be fueled more by external, rather than internal demand. Additionally, such economies are more dependent on external
investment by multinational corporations (Clancy, O’Malley, and O’Connell 2001).

Much of the recent research literature focuses on operationalizing the cluster concept as a tool for rigorous analysis of regional industries (Henthorne & Miller, 2003). Much of this analysis seeks to evaluate the robustness of existing regional industrial clusters. That is, to what extent do the elements of a cluster exist, and how extensive are the interrelationships within this cluster? One technique for applying qualitative rigor to such cluster analysis is the use of “cluster mapping.” Cluster mapping is a graphic representation of the industrial linkages that comprise a given industrial cluster. The technique is widely employed in professional practice as a tool for analyzing both the strengths and weaknesses among such linkages. There is no standardized format for such maps, however, or the elements that are to be included.

The academic literature related to tourism clusters remains limited. Porter’s original 1990 work extensively addresses service sector industries, but contains only one reference to the tourism industry. Later authors make mention of tourism clusters (Porter 2000; Barkley and Henry 2001), but generally without elaboration. One exception is Martín de Holán and Phillips’ (1997) analysis of the then-adolescent tourism industry in Cuba, within a preliminary cluster framework. These authors concluded that Cuba’s strategy for tourism industry development was not in keeping with the leading theories of competitive advantage. Michael (2003) provides a more optimistic assessment of the potential for cluster-based tourism development within a micro scale of analysis. Within professional development practice and policy-making, clustering is currently one of the most important models for tourism industry development ranging across the United States and around the world (South African National Economic Development and Labour Council 1999; Acuña, Villalobos, and Ruiz 2000; Arizona Department of Commerce 2001; Gollub, Hosier, and Woo 2002).

The cluster concept has been widely embraced in practice throughout Latin America (Porter 1991; Altenberg and Maeyer-Stamer 1999; Canales 2001). In recent years, Cuba has pursued a very deliberate and explicit cluster-based planning model for its tourism development. The 1994 formation of MINTUR helped provide a coordinated planning function largely based on a cluster perspective (Durán 2000; Figueras 2001). This planning has been further encouraged by the work of Cuban economic institutions such as The National Institute for Economic Research’s Tourism Division (García 2001), and consulting companies such as Consultores Asociados, S.A. [CONAS] (Díaz 2003).

Cuban tourism planners have applied the cluster perspective and terminology to tourism development across a wide range of geographic scales, from national to neighborhood. The Ministry of Tourism presently identifies eight priority tourism development regions across the island, each intended to have a distinctive identity. Just as significant from a strategic perspective, MINTUR has deliberately excluded as priority clusters other areas of potential differentiation and development promise. Meanwhile, planning also includes micro scale analysis of clustering within the Habana Vieja historic district of greater Havana.

The Resource-Based View. The “resource-based view” (RBV) of management strategy places less emphasis on the greater competitive environment than does cluster theory and instead places more emphasis on the strategic resources internal to the firm (Wernerfelt 1984; Barney 1991, 2001). The RBV differentiates itself from cluster theory’s assumptions regarding resources in two ways. First, the RBV assumes that strategic resources within an industry may be heterogeneously distributed among firms within the industry. Second, the RBV assumes “¼ these resources may not be perfectly mobile across firms, and thus heterogeneity can be long lasting” (Barney 1991, p. 101).

However, not all resources may be considered of strategic importance. To provide sustained competitive advantage, a resource must have four attributes:

(a) it must be valuable, in the sense that it exploits opportunities and/or neutralizes threats in a firm’s environment; (b) it must be rare among a firm’s current and potential competition; (c) it must be imperfectly
imitable; and (d) there cannot be strategically equivalent substitutes for this resource that are valuable but neither rare or imperfectly imitable (Barney, 2001, pp. 105–6).

Compared to cluster theory, the resource-based theory of competitive advantage has been less widely employed in the economic development literature, as well as in the literature of tourism industry development. Martín de Holán and Phillips (1997) briefly reference some of the resource-based literature. Melián-González and García-Falcón (2003) make more extensive and prominent use of this theoretical foundation in their analysis of competing tourism destinations within the Canary Islands.

For two reasons, the RBV offers particular promise for application in the case the Cuban tourism industry. First, Cuba is widely thought of as unusually resource rich, both in terms of both traditional tourism factors such as developable beaches, as well as unusual resources such as distinctive architecture and vintage automobiles. Second, in contrast to cluster theory, as noted above, the literature of resource-based theory is thriving in its application to emerging economies, explicitly taking into account the role of multinational corporations and state-owned enterprises in such economies (Hoskisson, et al. 2000; Peng 2001).

Is Cuba pursuing a tourism development strategy that is likely to be competitive and sustainable? This section presents an evaluation of the current state of Cuban tourism industry strategy, based on the combined perspectives of cluster and resource-based bodies of theory. The organization of this section is based on a cluster map of the Cuban tourism industry, proceeding through the individual facets of the “Porter Diamond”.

**Demand Conditions.** In his discussion of “demand conditions,” Porter places particular emphasis on the importance of sophisticated, demanding local customers. Cuba, however, largely lacks this local customer base with regard to the tourism industry – at least in the conventional sense. It is often charged that Cuban citizens lack access to their own developing tourism industry. However, Cubans do have a long tradition of domestic tourism. One of the first laws following the Revolution established the Department of Beaches for the People, which was intended to encourage tourism opportunities for Cuban citizens within their own country. Although these accommodations may not be plush or “world-class” in a traditional sense, they often do incorporate elements of current trends such as eco- and heritage-based tourism.

Cuban citizens are sophisticated in some of the most important factors (to be discussed following) that constitute the country’s vital strategic resources for a competitive tourism industry. For example, the quality of Cuban art and craftsmanship (such as cigars) contributes to a strong overall tourism product. Cubans’ knowledge of their history and culture has made possible the architectural integrity that sustains much of the island’s tourism image (Scarpaci, Segre, and Coyula 2002). Cuba’s commitment to its musical traditions has resulted in a recent explosion of international exposure and secondary industries such as tourist-oriented music clubs. The most comparable international destination in this respect may be New Orleans. New Orleans’ reputations for architectural integrity (Williams 1978), distinctive music and cuisine, and adult nightlife have long served as that city’s competitive advantages for its tourism industry – and the foundations for re-establishing that industry in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

**Related and supporting industries.** Although stronger than in 1997, industrial linkages remain one of the weakest aspects of the development of the Cuban tourism industry. Of course, this weakness is more rule than exception in the tourism industries of nearly all developing countries, in which economic “leakage factors” can commonly exceed 70 percent (Pérez-Ducy 2001; Gollub, Hosier, and Woo 2002).

Cuba’s own leakage factor in the mid-1990s was estimated as high as 75 percent (Simon 1995) and may have been even higher in the earliest years of Cuba’s modern tourism industry. In the earliest phases of Cuba’s modern tourism development, Cuba had to import nearly everything to support hotel development and operations, including modern plumbing and electrical fixtures, linens and towels, cooking equipment and
serving ware, an international assortment of soft drinks, beer, wine, and liquor, both basic and specialized foodstuffs, and nearly all petroleum necessary for transportation and electricity generation. Simon (1995) and other observers have noted the lack of tourism-related services available as potential linkages within the Cuban tourism industry complex, including entertainment venues, tourist-oriented retail shopping, and outlets for locally specialized arts and crafts.

Since that time, Cuban policy-makers have targeted industrial and service-industry linkages as important needs for competitive tourism development: both to develop a larger overall tourism attraction and to retain more currency earnings. There has been progress in this regard. Greenhouse production now supplies more of the year-round vegetable needs of the Cuban tourism industry. The country now produces over 95 percent of the demand for beer and bottled water (Figueras 2001), along with most glass, aluminum, and plastic containers. There is now national production of more basic manufactured inputs for the tourism industry, such as air conditioning equipment and many textile products. In terms of services, malls in the principal tourism centers now sell a variety of international products, although still not on a scale that is competitive with other Caribbean destinations. There are more tourist-oriented nightclubs, museums, and other attractions.

Despite this progress, however, the weakness of tourism linkages – and the concomitant leakage of tourism revenues – remains intractable for Cuba, as in much of the developing world (Pattullo 1996). Tourism restaurant cuisine, for example, is dominated by international rather than Cuban cuisine. This is at least partly a function of mass tourist demand, reflecting the homogeneity of tourist cuisine across the Caribbean. The result for Cuba as other countries in the region is economic leakage and a more poorly defined overall tourism image, and continued necessity to purchase imported foodstuffs.

For many specialized food and beverage imports there are no local alternatives of adequate quality or substitutability. Other goods – e.g., high quality manufactured goods, construction materials, computers, telecommunications equipment, meats – may only be developed at the local level over the long term; short term, it often makes more economic sense to import directly than to invest in necessary capacity and production factors. Like many other Caribbean destinations, Cuba remains dependent upon international producers for taxis, buses, planes, and other necessary vehicular infrastructure. Even where the country has achieved some success – such as textile or beverage production – the economy remains dependent upon imports for the next round of production factors: e.g., cotton thread or sheet aluminum. Like nearly any other Caribbean destination, Cuba’s domestic air carrier – Cubana – must compete with many international carriers and charter operators.

One of the greatest sources of economic leakage for Cuba, like most of its smaller Caribbean competitors, remains energy. Extensive exploration for petroleum around the island has provided little return (Frank 2004a), with the result that Cuba is now heavily dependent on and deeply in debt to Venezuela. One of Cuba’s major hotel chains – Gran Caribe – announced in October 2004 that it would be forced to close several of its properties for the low season, a total of approximately 4,000 rooms. A reported 118 factories suspended production (Rodríguez 2004). Energy scarcities present a serious challenge for the country’s competitive position, especially vis-à-vis energy-rich regional competitors such as Mexico.

Further, the industrial linkages that do exist apply only at the national scale of cluster analysis. Very nearly all domestic industrial linkages in the country link directly back to industries, headquarters, suppliers, and services in greater Havana. Despite the country’s policy of developing sub-national regional tourism clusters, mentioned above, these clusters represent little more than concentrations of hotel properties.

Possibilities do exist for strategic adaptation to address the country’s problems of linkage and leakage. For example, Cuban tourism development could place greater emphasis on eco-tourism and energy-efficient design, together with greater emphasis on Cuban cuisine and products as part of the tourism package. At present, in contrast, Cuba’s development efforts appear focused on the
traditional high-end market, requiring continued high levels of petroleum consumption along with other imported inputs.

**Factor Conditions.** There is no question that Cuba is exceptionally well-endowed with the most basic “production factors” of the tourism industry – tropical climate, extensive beaches, historic structures, and attractive landscapes. Cuba also has invested extensively in developing other necessary factors of production, including extensive new air infrastructure across the island, and cruise-ship terminals in Havana and Cienfuegos. The national highway network has many needs, but remains superior to other Caribbean countries such as Jamaica. Cuba’s overall capacity for electric, water, and other utilities remains weak, but tourism areas receive priority. Viewed through the perspective of resource-based theory, however, which of these qualify as truly strategic competitive resources?

Barney (1991) organizes strategic resources into three categories: physical capital resources, human capital resources, and organizational capital resources. With regard to physical resources, sun or sand do not satisfy Barney’s (1991) tests of strategic resources, as both are nearly ubiquitous across the Caribbean region. Beaches are not even necessarily inimitable; man-made beach construction is common in Jamaica and other Caribbean destinations. The same must be considered true, as well, for Cuba’s growing tourism infrastructure, including airports, cruise ports, highways; these improvements are imitable or substitutable in terms of sustained strategic advantage for tourism.

At present, Cuba competes on the basis of comparatively low labor costs relative to the region, but this is not necessarily sustainable. There are ample examples of labor substitution in the tourism industry. Cruise ship crews, for example, demonstrate that low-wage labor positions can be substituted by employing laborers from outside the region. Many other tourism labor positions – e.g., reservations, bookkeeping – can potentially be substituted with technology or international outsourcing.

However, Cuba does possess a number of important physical resources for tourism that may qualify as strategic. Cuba’s distinguishing architecture reflects the country’s distinctive heritage and image. Historic architecture exists in competing Caribbean destinations, but the extent and character of the architecture in Cuba qualifies this resource as “rare” and not readily imitable. Similarly, Cuba’s preservation of its heritage may also be found in the relatively high quality of its coral reefs and other natural resources. Other resources such as Cuba’s distinctive music, art, history, and cuisine represent real and widely-recognized resources that reflect the country’s distinctive culture. Again, these cannot be readily imitated or substituted by competing destinations.

In terms of human resources, the quality of Cuba’s tourism labor force has been widely noted as one of Cuba’s most significant weaknesses. Cuba has made significant strides in the past decade toward addressing this need. The Ministry of Tourism was instrumental in the formation of FORMATUR, a nation-wide organization for training in a wide variety of tourism-related job skills. Such training is vital to tourism development, but again does not represent true strategic competitive advantage. Training programs are not rare in the region and can be imitated by competitors.

The highly educated character of the country’s population, on the other hand, may represent a true strategic resource. The average Cuban student attains an 11th grade education, and Cuba has the highest proportion of college-educated population in Latin America. The University of Havana offers tourism specializations within traditional fields of study, including business and economics (Mújica, Montiel, and Oliveros 2001). MINTUR estimates that 20 percent of workers in the tourism sector are university graduates (MINTUR 2002). This cannot be imitated by regional competitors over the near term.

In terms of organizational resources, Cuba again does not possess immediate competitive advantage. To date, the highest-level managers of many individual properties remain foreigners, although Cubans fill most of the secondary ranks and are positioned for the top ranks in the near future. Cuba may enjoy some competitive advantage in this regard through the educational attainment of many of its emerging managers: university undergraduate and graduate programs
in tourism management are now widespread and popular.

Globally, the tourism industry is placing greater priority on higher education in the face of much greater challenges and competitiveness. Information technology, for example, is growing rapidly in the industry as a potentially strategic resource for gaining competitive advantage in property development, marketing, and management. Cuba, as a planned economy, has a tradition of extensive data collection for other industries. This has been adapted to the tourism industry. The National Statistics Office collects and publishes data related to the tourism industry. The National Institute for Economic Research has an office devoted to tourism research and analysis. MINTUR is initiating a national network of university centers for tourism data collection and research. Colleges within the University of Havana have research programs on tourism, including economic and environmental impact analyses. As a result, Cuban managers and policy makers have the potential for better access to information and research than many of their regional competitors, along with the education to make full use of these resources.

From a policy perspective, Cuba has shown good stewardship for, and taken good advantage of, many of its architectural and other cultural resources. It is much less clear how the country plans to fully capitalize on its human resource endowment. Superior human resources potentially give Cuba the capability for developing and capitalizing on new technologies for market information and analysis, new and innovative tourism products, web-based marketing, and improved property management.

However, the potential for human-resource-based advantage in the country’s tourism industry is still broader than specific technologies and job skills. Fully realized human capital resources have the potential not only for “¼ implementing predetermined competitive scenarios but [also for] building strategic capability, [and] improving the long-term resilience of the firm” (Boxall 1996, p. 70) – or, in this case, the overall Cuban tourism industry. The result is not simply trainable staff, but the capacity for developing “¾ employees and teams in such a way as to create an organization capable of learning within and across industry cycles” (Wright, Dunford, and Snell 2001, p. 704). The educated human resource base Cuba possesses could provide truly rare capability in the Caribbean region for creating an innovative industry that can adapt to negative shocks and capitalize effectively on new opportunities that emerge.

**Firm Strategy, Structure, and Rivalry.**

The facet “Firm Strategy, Structure, & Rivalry,” as shown in Figure 1, is in turn subdivided into quadrants based on Porter’s (1985) representation of the four possible generic strategy options. Porter (1990) cautions of the dangers of pursuing too broad a mix of strategies:

> The worst strategic error is to be stuck in the middle, or to try simultaneously to pursue all the strategies. This is a recipe for strategic mediocrity and below-average performance, because pursuing all the strategies simultaneously means that a firm is not able to achieve any of them because of their inherent contradictions. (p 40)

Cuba has experimented with a broad array of tourism development strategies. Examples may be located in all other quadrants of the matrix, raising concerns about a “stuck in the middle” strategy. After a preliminary emphasis on budget package tourism in the early 1990s (upper left quadrant), the Ministry of Tourism now maintains an aggressive focus on higher-scale hotel development. Cuba’s present strategic priority appears to target the development and redevelopment of four and five-star facilities, on the basis of differentiation (unique period architecture, music, and other aspects of culture), coupled with rates intended to reflect high value. (Although hotels remain self-rated by the individual Cuban corporations, MINTUR is attempting to develop common standards.) This strategy is represented in the upper-right quadrant of Figure 1. Alternatively, some of these projects may also be located in the lower-right quadrant. For example, the Cuban corporation Habaguanex is focusing on the development of small, high-end, period accommodations in the Habana Vieja district. These properties are targeted to discriminating customers who are willing to
pay a premium price for a distinctly differentiated, highly-specialized product.

The nature of the strategy appears more diffuse outside of Havana. Presently, Cuba lacks an overall distinctive, encompassing image. The general idea in recent years has been to highlight the diversity of tourism destinations, attractions, and options in Cuba, especially in comparison with other countries of the Caribbean. This concept was incorporated in an earlier marketing slogan of “The Big Island.” Outside of Havana, Cuban tourism strategies range across a broad spectrum, including traditional sun and sand, family tourism, business and convention travel, cruise ship tourism – and, to a lesser extent, specialties such as ecotourism, sports, health tourism, and hunting and fishing. It is possible such a diverse strategy may be feasible, especially if different strategies were applied to specific regions of the country, e.g., corresponding to the eight distinctive tourism growth poles noted earlier. However, this approach does not seem to be reflected in development realities at present. The websites representing the country’s major tourism corporations – e.g., Cubanacán (2017) or Gran Caribe (2004) – seem to represent similar properties and strategies deployed widely across the island.

In the absence of clear differentiation, the only strategy outside Havana appears to be that of cost leadership focused in higher-market traditional sun and sand tourism. This approach is represented in the lower left quadrant. To be successful in this strategy, Cuba must establish a reputation for high value for the money. Currently, Cuba struggles to maintain the competitively high-quality service expected of up-market properties.

The country’s wide-ranging strategy is reflected in the structure of the country’s tourism industry. Cuban policy-makers originally structured the island’s tourism industry such that the country’s six major para-state corporations would not compete with, but rather strategically complement, one another. However, since 1997, the distinctions among these corporations have blurred considerably. The largest of these, Cubanacán and Gran Caribe, now compete across a broad spectrum of strategies and target markets, including classic properties, all-inclusive beach resorts, boutique properties, budget, family, and ecotourism.

Even more concerning from the standpoint of competitive rivalry, is the dramatic restructuring and concentration of the tourism sector in 2004. Beginning in December 2003, several high-level administrators were dismissed from country’s largest tourism-related corporation, Cubanacán, with the government citing “serious errors in direction” (Rodríguez 2004). In February 2004, the Minister of Tourism was replaced by Manuel Marrero Cruz: formerly executive president of Grupo Gaviota, the aviation and tourism corporation controlled by the Cuban Army. Prior to that time, Gaviota had operated largely independently of MINTUR. In July, plans were announced for the merger of four major tourism corporations traditionally under MINTUR’s purview: Cubanacán, Gran Caribe, Horizontes, and Isla Azul (Frank 2004b).

Further, in November 2004, the Cuban government banned the use of U.S. dollars in the country, legalized in 1993, in favor of Cuban “convertible pesos” (Alfonso 2004). Meanwhile, higher taxes and regulatory burdens are substantially reducing the numbers of privately-owned restaurants (paladares) and accommodations that were legalized and popularized in the mid 1990s (Economist 2004).

The full extent and impacts of these policies can only be speculated on as of this writing. Obviously, however, these policies mark major reversals of the past decade’s development model of decentralization and economic liberalization. The role of competitive rivalry clearly appears to be significantly diminished in the Cuban economy and tourism industry.

Overall, this facet of Cuba’s tourism cluster is perhaps least consistent with industrial cluster theory. Cuba’s tourism strategy presently appears muddled, at best, running the risk of a “stuck in the middle” strategic confusion. As a comparatively large and diverse country in the Caribbean, Cuba could potentially target different strategies for different geographic tourism growth poles across the island. Mexico, for example, has achieved some success in capitalizing on its geographic size and diversity in this way. To date, though, Cuba’s destinations seem to be only poorly differentiated in terms of distinctive strategies.
The resource-based view suggests placing greater emphasis on strategies that capitalize on the country’s most competitive resources. For example, Cuba’s superior human resources suggest the capability for developing more “narrow target” strategies. Such strategies might include more specialized “sun and sand” tourism resorts, targeting particular markets and tastes: e.g., senior citizens, those seeking a healthier vacation experience, or jaded travelers seeking a richer cultural experience. Resource-based strategies might also include greater emphasis on Cuba’s comparative strengths for scuba-diving, eco-, or sport tourism segments. These are all available elsewhere in the Caribbean, but Cuba could potentially offer a lower-cost advantage through its experience in these sectors, superior human capital, and ability to make use of new technologies in these sectors.

Just as important as strategy, however, the cluster literature emphasizes the critical role of rivalry among competing firms within an industrial cluster. Porter states clearly that “[r]ivalry has a direct role in stimulating improvement and innovation. Its significance is enhanced because rivalry is so important in stimulating firms to reap the benefits of other determinants” (p 143). Hill and Brennan (2000) concur, that “[a] major (and arguably the most important) source of cluster economies is generated by the forces of competition in product innovation; quality enhancement; the adoption of process innovations; and the encouragement of entrepreneurship to take advantage of perceived market, supply, or distribution gaps within the cluster” (p 68).

Undoubtedly Cuba’s tourism industry will continue to prosper on the basis of its strong factor endowments, continued development of linkages, etc. Without the element of rivalry, however, cluster theory suggests that Cuba’s tourism is unlikely to realize its fullest potential for synergistic growth of the tourism industry and resulting overall economic development.

**Chance and Government.** The impact of “chance” occurrences were made clear in 2004, with two major hurricane strikes on Cuba, inflicting extensive general damage, disrupted tourism operations, and damage to the country’s major tobacco-growing region. The impact of the 9/11 attack was another major unanticipated “chance” shock to the tourism industry. Less dramatically, but still importantly, Cuba is subject to the same general external trends in the tourism industry as any other global competitor, including shorter vacations, increase in senior citizen travel, and many new competing destinations and attractions (Garcia 2003).

Government policies cannot prevent or even significantly influence such external elements of chance in the tourism industry. Government policies, though, can play a role in creating a tourism industry that is strong, flexible, innovative, and adaptive enough to weather such shocks, and even potentially recognize and capitalize on opportunities that they may present. Of course, the position of “Government” is complicated in the case of Cuba, since nearly all aspects of the tourism industry ultimately pertain to the government. In the present sense, the Government of Cuba refers to in its many important roles outside the operations of the para-state tourism corporations. These roles include strategic coordination and marketing through MINTUR, developing and delivering training programs, and encouraging higher education and research programs that support the tourism industry. These roles also importantly include, though, more subtle but pervasive influences of government policy that can either encourage or retard competitive entrepreneurship and rivalry.

**The Second Coming of the United States**

The US – Cuba relations dramatically changed in the December of 2014, when the US President Barack Obama announced the restoration of diplomacy with Cuba and the reopening of the US embassy in Havana (Bustamante, 2017). President Obama also publicly vowed to sweep aside the last remnants of the cold war. With this announcement came the easing of restrictions on banking, remittances, and travel, for Americans. The will of Cuban people for more economic freedom and the need of the Cuban State to seek the support of capitalistic enterprises for development acted together to make this happen finally. Obama’s personal philosophy of a more integrated world with porous...
national boundaries too has helped with the new accord.

Cuba has perfected a history of clandestinely promoting self-employment in the private sector, especially during periods of recession. The recent changes would provide an added impetus to private business endeavors. Cuba would not call it a move to capitalism. The best official explanation for all that has been changing in Cuba is that Cuba is moving towards a more participative form of socialism, reform socialism, or decentralized socialism: socialism of the people, for the people, by the people.

Although not directly related to the embargo, some special mention is to be accorded to the Obama administration’s short lived “Wet Foot/Dry Foot” Policy for Cubans. As per this, if Cuban migrants traveling to the U.S. are intercepted at sea, they are sent back to Cuba or a third country; if they are lucky enough to land in the US before being caught, they are offered a pathway to US residence and eventually citizenship. This policy was rescinded in January 2017.

When Obama extended the olive branches to Cuba, stocks and index funds with exposure to Cuba like $CUBA jumped and danced in exhilaration (Rumbaut, 2016). Many remembered the wet days of capitalism during Batista’s time – when per capita reached to levels comparable to some of the developed countries and economic growth kept shooting up on nonstop upswings. On September 27, 2016, Obama announced his pick for the ambassador to Cuba, first time in over 50 years. There was all-pervasive optimism.

Despite this, the embargo remains in place – only its implementation has been relaxed. Americans travelling to Cuba must still fall into one of the approved visa categories. The 12 categories of authorized travel to Cuba are: family visits; official business of the U.S. government, foreign governments, and certain intergovernmental organizations; journalistic activity; professional research and professional meetings; educational activities; religious activities; public performances, clinics, workshops, athletic and other competitions, and exhibitions; support for the Cuban people; humanitarian projects; activities of private foundations or research or educational institutes; exportation, importation, or transmission of information or informational materials; and certain authorized export transactions. It should be noted that these categories do not include leisure travel. As a result of this, it is still not legal for US citizens to visit Cuba for tourism. This, coupled with the fact that marketing communication about the policy changes did not reach the mass tourists, meant the promise of tourism from the American outbound market did not materialize as much as hyped.

It has always been possible to travel between the US and Cuba, even during the heights of the embargo. However, they were all charter flights, and every passenger would have to prove with documentary evidence that their purpose fell within one of the twelve approved categories of travel. Additionally, all travel had to be booked through a US licensed travel agent approved to book travel to Cuba. Following the relaxation of restrictions by Obama, several US flag carriers applied to the USDOT for approval to fly to Cuba. The first regularly scheduled airline to Cuba was JetBlue. The actual demand fell significantly below the increased seat capacity, and the airlines found themselves flying with basically empty flights.

Come November 2016. The United States has got a new President. During the campaign leading to his election as the President, Donald Trump had vowed to revise Obama’s executive orders on Cuba. All the progress made in mending relationships during the previous regime is now facing reversal (Dominguez, 2017). President Trump already announced some policy changes regarding Cuba. More should be coming, but in unpredictable directions. Some critics are of the view that Trump does not have an innate enmity against Cuba: some reports emerged during his Presidential campaigns suggest that his companies secretly conducted business in Cuba during the embargo. The joke in town is that Trump will go by the last man he talked with. We would think Trump will follow his instincts as a shrewd businessman and his decisions will be guided by realpolitik.

Even after Trump toughened stance, American businesses may continue to invest in Cuba (Benitez & Eremin, 2017). A permit
from the OFAC, an arm of the Treasury Department, is all that is needed still. The Cuban partner, as always, is the government. Hotel property management companies have found this deeply troubling. In typical agreements, the hotel management companies get to manage the profits and costs arising out of the operations and also manage employee relations. In Cuba, the government wants to manage the finances and the employees but pay the hotel management company a fee for their marketing efforts.

International hotel companies, after their initial enthusiasm, learned this bitter lesson: the untrained Cuban government employees administering the affairs of the hotel, the substandard materials used in the hotel construction, the menial pay the hotel staff receives, or the quality of food and beverages being served in the hotel, over none of which the management company has any control, could still bring them global brand disrepute. If traditional businesses fail, there is a bright beacon of hope in the emerging sharing economy. Airbnb is a resounding success, and many foreign tourists seeking authentic Cuban experiences prefer to book their accommodation using their services. There some chemistry of attraction indeed between Cuban socialism and capitalistic sharing.

Multinational businesses like Unilever, Tyson Foods, Nestle, Anheuser-Busch, Netflix, Samsung, Alcatel, Colgate, Cargill, Accord Hotels, Kempinski, Mitsubishi, Benz, Google, etc. have developed varying degrees of presence in Cuba. Some banks in Cuba accept payments processed through Mastercard. Coca-Cola is sold in Cuba, although it is imported through Coke’s foreign subsidiaries. Russia and China have taken a more strategic approach with regard to investment: Chinese companies invest heavily in infrastructure projects and Russian companies are partners with Cuba in some of their advanced pharmaceutical research projects. Empresa de Telecomunicaciones de Cuba S.A. (ETECSA), the government owned telecom provider in Cuba, has received significant investment from the Chinese telecom giant Huawei.

Conclusion

While Cuba can continue its neo-socialist experiment, it is still important for Cuba to mend its ways with the USA, not just because of the American money (Wilkinson, 2017). The US has historically exercised its global diplomatic influence to threaten every other country thinking of investing in Cuba (Walsh, 2017). The Cuban exiles in Florida, the epicenter of anti-Cuban propaganda in the US continue to lobby against mending relationships. So, during the embargo, even some of the utmost willing European or Canadian businesses could not meaningfully engage with Cuba. Cuba does realize this. Also, with Raul Castro crippled by old age and there is no named natural successor in place, even the top brass in the administration is considering more democratically representative forms of government. Raul announced that he would step down in February 2018. A news item quoting the Cuban National Electoral Commission chair Alina
Balseiro confirmed that the next President would be elected by the legislators elected by people. These changes will make it harder for the US to continue with the embargo, too (Zheng, 2017).

Cuba is probably one of the very few countries in the world that have transitioned, although imperfectly, through all the four phases of socioeconomic development that Karl Marx hypothesized. Yet, the chain of actions initiated by the US government and also the changing dynamics within the Cuban government have created a surprising point of strategic inflection seen never before and our ability to explain the future of tourism development with the aforementioned theories of competitive advantage are unclear. Cuba is always an enigma for the scholars.

References


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ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОЕ РАЗВИТИЕ КУБЫ: ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЕ ТРЕНДЫ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ В АСПЕКТЕ РАЗВИТИЯ ТУРИЗМА

Статья посвящена анализу исторического развития Кубы относительно становления туристской отрасли, этапов ее развития и становления, связанных с конкретными политическими и историческими периодами. Долгое время, несмотря на усилия властей диверсифицировать экономику, из-за внутреннего и внешнего давления, возможности экономического развития Кубы в основном ограничивались туризмом.

Куба всегда была и остается популярным направлением для американских туристов. Даже в период антикубинских санкций и напряжения в отношениях между США и Кубой, последняя рассматривалась американскими туристами скорее, как запретный плод, а не как внешний враг. Сегодня, после непродолжительного потепления в дипломатических отношениях при администрации Барака Обамы, есть опасения, что новый президент изменит политический курс, что в свою очередь негативно скажется на туристической отрасли Кубы.

Сегодня на Кубе нет инфраструктуры, ориентированной на туристов, и способной в полной мере удовлетворить туристский спрос даже в непиковые сезоны. Отрасль нуждается в профессионально подготовленных кадрах. Даже когда небольшое круизное судно привозит пару сотен туристов, прибрежные города переполняются. А в случае потепления отношений и упрощения визовых формальностей, поток туристов из Америки значительно возрастет, и тогда туристская отрасль на Кубе не будет способна с ним справиться.


Стягивание к расширению международной индустрии туризма в стране в те времена привело к многочисленным ошибкам, включая стихийное строительство, неконтролируемый секс-туризм, бурные отношения с международными инвестиционными партнерами и плохо подготовленному персоналу. Авторы рассматривают исторические предпосылки развития туризма на Кубе и анализируют подробно причины, вызвавшие основные ошибки и недостатки в отрасли. Особое внимание в статье уделяется советскому периоду развития туристской отрасли на Кубе. Дружеские отношения с советским блоком помогли воскресить кубинский туризм в 70-е годы, в это время в страну значительно увеличивается поток из социалистических государств, а Советский Союз вкладывает значительные средства в строительство инфраструктуры гостеприимства. В этот период политически контролируемый туризм стал основной формой туризма. Кубинские власти поощряли групповые туры. Туристические группы направлялись в определенные места с целью демонстрации конкретных достижений государства. Туристов направляли в музеи, жилищные проекты, фабрики, фермы, университеты и объекты обороны, а повествование было опосредовано с помощью правительственных переводчиков.

Краш Советского Союза драматически сказался на развитии Кубы, и особенно на ее туристской отрасли. Этот период авторы называют «почти экономический коллапс на Кубе».

Однако сегодня благодаря туризму уровень экономического развития страны медленно, но растет. При этом туристская отрасль испытывает определенные трудности, связанные с негативной инфраструктурой, кодекс, грамотной туристической политики. Авторы описывают термин «jineterismo», который относится к незаконной экономической деятельности, связанной с туризмом на Кубе. Jineterismo проявляется в различных формах, таких как нерегулируемые экскурсии, неофициальная аренда личных автомобилей и продажа контрафактных товаров. Это характерное явление для туристской отрасли на Кубе. Авторы также раскрывают конкурентные преимущества Кубы по сравнению с другими странами, где туристская инфраструктура разнообразна и развита более глубоко. В будущем, авторы предсказывают развитие туристической отрасли в Кубе, основанной на устойчивом развитии и экологической сохранности. 

Туристская политика Кубы будет строиться на основе уважения к местным культурам и традициям, а также на устойчивом развитии территории. На Кубе в будущем можно ожидать более глубокого развития гостеприимства и туризма, основанных на уважении к местным традициям и культуре.
Особое внимание авторами уделяется взаимоотношениям Кубы и США в контексте развития туризма. Авторы рассматривают исторические и политические предпосылки, описывают процесс потепления отношений и сложности текущего периода, а также возможности развития кубинского туризма в контексте ориентации на северного соседа. США на сегодня является потенциальным рынком туристов для Кубы, однако в структуре туристского потока американцы представлены слабо. Учитывая их покупательную способность, первое место в мире по туристским расходам, эта группа потребителей туристских услуг наиболее перспективна для Кубинского туризма.

**Ключевые слова**: Экономическое развитие, Советский Союз, Особый период, Конкурентные преимущества, Туризм, Куба.


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