



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE

FOR THE CREATION OF INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS WITH  
A FOCUS ON SOCIAL TOURISM



# 1. FRAME OF REFERENCE

The Methodological Guide for the Creation of Innovative Products with a Focus on Social Tourism, which is developed within the framework of the “Intersectoral Program to Support the Development of MSMEs and Sustainable Tourism” thanks to the cooperation of the Republic of China (Taiwan), reflects the result of a solid cooperation between the Secretariat for Central American Tourism Integration (SITCA), on behalf of the Central American Tourism Council (CCT), and the Secretariat for the Americas of the International Social Tourism Organization (ISTO Americas).

The Secretariat for Central American Tourism Integration (SITCA) is a sectoral secretariat of the Central American Integration System (SICA) that serves as the operational body of the Central American Tourism Council (CCT), which is composed of the heads of the National Tourism Administrations (ANT), and is responsible for tourism integration and competitiveness.

The International Social Tourism Organization (ISTO) was founded in 1963 in Brussels, Belgium to propose alternatives to the massification of tourism and to promote its human and social benefits, universal accessibility, respect for the environment, the fight against child and youth exploitation, the inclusion of host communities in the benefits of tourism and fair trade. To date, it is the main global benchmark for socially responsible tourism.

ISTO's guiding document "For a humanistic and social vision of tourism", known as the Montreal Declaration (1996), states, among other things, that:

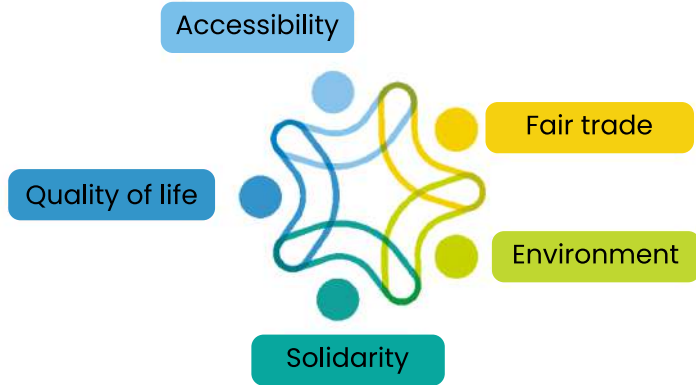
- "The primary objective of all tourism development initiatives must be the full realization of the potential of each individual, as a person and as a citizen."

In addition, social and humanistic tourism includes any project that clearly expresses a desire not to disturb the local environment, understood not only as the landscape or the ecosystem, but also as the social and cultural network in which it is inserted.

Similarly, it is considered that:

- "Any tourism organization that clearly identifies with social objectives and the goal of making travel and tourism accessible to the greatest number of people – thus differentiating itself from the sole objective of profit maximization – can claim membership in the social tourism movement."

## ISTO ADN

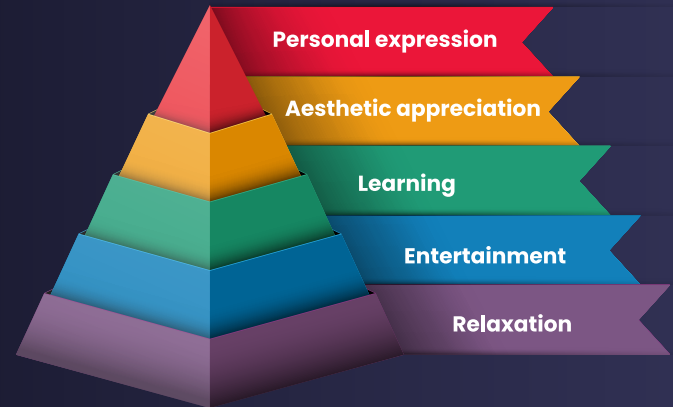


Source: ISTO, ISTO DNA and the Sustainable Development Goals, 2018.

Social tourism ventures adopt various legal and associative forms provided for by law and must be formally constituted, since there is no social responsibility without compliance with current legislation.

However, the social character does not depend on the line of business, but on the management approach. Every social tourism company understands that its ultimate goal is to make leisure accessible to the greatest possible number of people, thereby creating well-being. Guaranteeing fair and accessible prices allows people of different socioeconomic levels, especially those in vulnerable situations, to exercise their right to leisure, recreation and knowledge of their natural and cultural heritage. Tourism is nothing more than the most sophisticated form of exercising this right to leisure, free time in which the following activities can be carried out:

### Leisure activities



Source: Serviço Social do Comércio SESC, *Innovative itineraries; planning of social tourism itineraries*, 2020).

Social tourism covers only vacation travel. The rest of the trips are not strictly tourism, but business trips, motivated by reasons not related to leisure. Although at an economic level they may be similar, they respond to different logics and interests and, therefore, there must be different policies and operational solutions for both. Social tourism is the business of leisure, not the business of selling travel services.

Only those who understand this difference, whether they are public or private agents, are able to give tourism a social meaning.

Socially meaningful vacation trips should promote culture, sports, family integration, local pride and regional identity. The experiences they offer may be therapeutic, educational or aesthetic, but they should always contribute to the generation of well-being.

This should be the objective of the development of innovative and socially meaningful tourism products.

## 2. THE SOCIAL TOURISM MARKET

Social tourism aspires to be tourism for all, that is, for visitors from abroad as well as for the country's inhabitants, who should be able to enjoy the cultural and natural heritage equally.

Social tourism should include all people. From ISTO's perspective, the universe of social tourism travelers is subdivided into 4 major audiences (market niches) which, in turn, allow for further subdivisions for greater specificity.

The main audiences of social tourism are:

- 1. Families, as the fundamental nucleus of social cohesion and well-being.**
- 2. People with disabilities, promoting their right to recreation in conditions of equity and accessibility.**
- 3. Older adults, recognizing their right to an active, dignified and participatory life.**
- 4. Youth, fostering their integral development and the construction of citizenship through formative tourism experiences**

### Families

Family audiences are divided into niches:

1. Families with young children.
2. Families with school-age children.
3. Families with adolescents.
4. Adult families.

El calendario escolar define las temporadas altas para las familias, que demandan principalmente:

- Services adapted to the size of the group
- Safe, comfortable and quiet places to settle in for the day
- Independence of movement
- Children's entertainment activities
- Sedentary activities for seniors
- Services for minors
- Prices designed for the family group

## 2. People with disabilities

Disability is historically associated with the idea of disease. However, it is only a condition of disadvantage in terms of mobility, communication or interaction, temporarily or permanently.

Virtually every traveler experiences one of these conditions at some point, so disability is an inherent element of tourism that should be dealt with naturally and on a daily basis.

The number of people with disabilities is estimated at around 10% of the population, which means that in the SICA region there are slightly more than 6 million people.

People with disabilities usually travel in the company of family or friends, to places with friendly facilities and in a repetitive manner. Their demands are:

- Autonomous, safe and dignified access to outdoor or enclosed public spaces
- Access to the same tourist services as the general public
- Adapted transportation, both urban and foreign
- Socialization and discovery activities
- Tours in conditions of safety, comfort and dignity.
- Non-discriminatory treatment
- Respect for traffic regulations

## 3. Older Adults

The elderly, who reach the age of 60 in increasingly better physical and mental health, and who have the time, resources and willingness to travel, constitute one of the publics of growing interest. They can be divided into 2 groups:

Active older adults. Physically and mentally fit, willing to accept physical challenges to assert themselves and/or enjoy postponed activities.  
Sedentary. With mobility difficulties or disabilities that limit their social interaction.

Older people tend to travel outside of peak seasons and tend to travel in pre-arranged packages. In the SICA region, the number of people over 60 is estimated at 6.1 million by 2025

Their main demands are:

- Comfortable and spacious transportation and accommodations
- Quiet rhythm in packages and circuits
- Socio-cultural animation activities
- Light physical challenge
- Preferential treatment in waiting lines
- Regular excursions at affordable prices

#### 4. Youth

Young people (15 to 29 years old) are one of the most attractive markets for many reasons:

There are more than 17 million young people in the SICA region. If the flow of those arriving from other countries is added, the figure increases significantly. In the case of international tourism, it is estimated that 16% are young people, although this proportion varies depending on the destination and its characteristics.

Youth travel is often linked to the school calendar. Their most frequent demands are:

- socializing spaces in the lodging facilities
- thematic tours with socio-cultural animation
- physical challenge activities
- language courses
- labor exchange and internship programs
- community outreach activities
- environmental immersion activities

### 3. DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATIVE SOCIAL TOURISM PRODUCTS

The Montreal Declaration states:

- "It is the full development of the human being, as a person and a citizen, which must constitute the essential object of all tourism development activities" (Art. 21).

Most of the tourism products and destinations on the market do not comply with this. An economic vision prevails in which the consumption of travel services is promoted as the main objective. Tourism is confused with the productive sector of tourism and the objectives of business growth have been imposed on the international tourism sector.

The social quality of tourism is given to the extent that it provides the trip with its human and personal meaning and to the extent that destinations and companies comply with these conditions:

1. The activities offered have explicit social, educational and cultural objectives.
2. The public is served according to their profile, but without discrimination of any kind.
3. The products have a non-economic added value.
4. Prices are compatible with the possibilities of the different audiences.



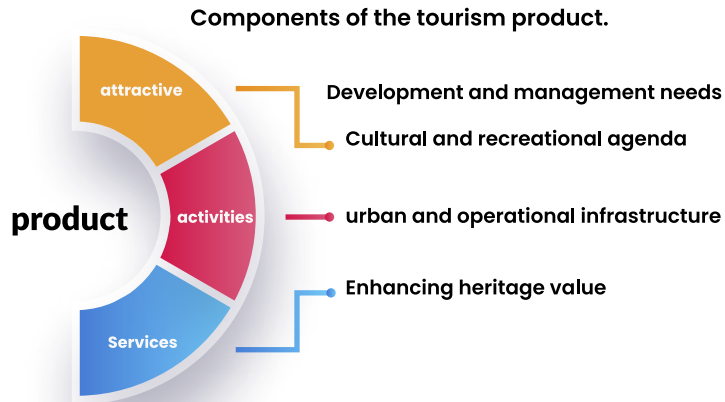
5. Effective actions are developed to value and improve the local environment.

6. Personnel administration is in compliance with current legislation and job satisfaction is promoted.

In order to develop tourism products with a social approach, it is necessary to ask the "why?" of tourism instead of the "why?"

Every tourism product, when implemented and operated in the territory, has effects on tourists, residents, workers, entrepreneurs, suppliers in the value chain and local authorities, as well as on heritage, the environment and the local economy. Reflecting on this allows us to make responsible decisions.

From the perspective of social tourism, the tourism product is the sum of attractions, services and activities that allow the exercise of leisure.



In a tourism model with a social approach, destination management and product generation must be the result of a governance process in which the community must always have the last word.

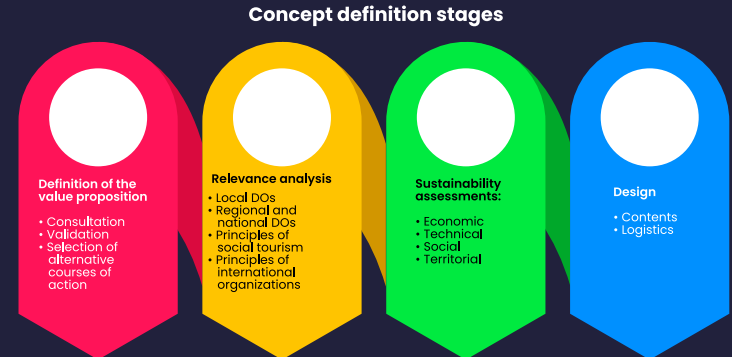
The process of developing tourism products with a social approach involves two stages:

- **Definition of the concept**
- **Implementation of the initiative.**

### 1 Definition of the concept

At this stage, the idea of the possibility of developing a certain product is generated. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out a series of cabinet activities to define, more than a product, a concept.

The definition of the concept involves carrying out the following activities:

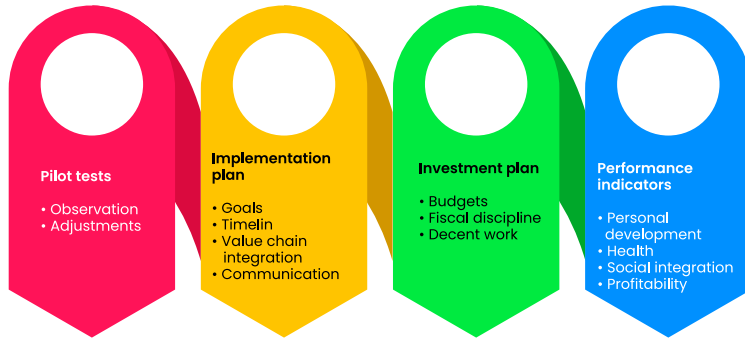


## 2. . Implementation of the initiative

An action plan allows the implementation of what was planned. It is tested, executed, corrected and the results of the operation of the new tourism product are measured to ensure consistency between what is said and what is done, as well as compliance with the objective.

The action plan should include the following:

### Action plan



measure their contribution to the social, cultural or educational objective they pursue and generate indicators of social sustainability.

Finally, it is necessary to verify the social attributes of the tourism product based on two types of evaluation:

- Analysis of alignment with social development objectives.
- Elimination of barriers to travel.

Products may be new but only commercial. They may have specific features that make them novel and interesting but are not sufficient to give them a social quality because they do not contribute to meeting the expectations of all stakeholders. In practice, this is difficult but not impossible. The valuation of social attributes is the filter that guarantees the social quality of the product and is fundamental to generate a transformation of the role that tourism has in the communities.





## REFLECTIONS ON THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL TOURISM

Tourism is an indispensable activity in contemporary life and will continue to grow steadily. However, tourism is changing to reflect the new expectations of global society.

In the case of the SICA region, growth expectations, which in general exceed the economic growth expectation of the Latin American region (2.1%), and internal social mobility are moderately positive. In view of this, tourism with a social focus presents itself as a useful alternative to accelerate the trend. The region has the potential to position itself as a socially focused tourism zone in a very clear way, both in domestic and intra-regional travel.

The future of social tourism in the world is very promising. For entrepreneurs and authorities, it is essential to offer different formulas that combine personalized experiences and easy access.

The challenge is to work towards the social sustainability of tourism, which means that stakeholders (authorities, tourism entrepreneurs, suppliers from other sectors) take into account the social aspects of tourism activities for the people who live in the places visited, for the workers and for the visitors themselves.

From this perspective, tourism must contribute to guaranteeing social justice, equal opportunities and a good quality of life for all. This is, in itself, innovative.



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REPÚBLICA DE CHINA (TAIWÁN)

