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Motivations: An Analysis of Tourist Behavior in Ecuador

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Abstract: This study on tourism behavior in Ecuador analyses and synthesises the primary motivating factors for both domestic and international tourists. This piece of longitudinal research categorises visitor motivations while assessing the influence of various productive sectors that are a good fit for the same. Through factor analysis, three core motivational dimensions have been identified: satisfaction, adventure travel,and safety, with the latter currently of most significance. These findings hold considerable implications for strategic tourism development, facilitating market segmentation and fostering sustainable development from both the social and economic perspectives.

Keywords: Tourism; Behavior; Motivational factors; Sustainable development; Ecuador.

Motivaciones: un análisis del comportamiento turístico en Ecuador

Resumen: Este estudio sobre el comportamiento turístico en Ecuador analiza y sintetiza los principales factores motivadores tanto para los turistas nacionales como para los internacionales. La investigación, que emplea un enfoque longitudinal, clasifica las motivaciones de los visitantes y evalúa la influencia de diversos sectores productivos que pueden amplificar estas motivaciones. Mediante el análisis factorial, se han identificado tres dimensiones motivacionales fundamentales: satisfacción, viajes de aventura y nivel de seguridad, siendo esta última la más significativa en la actualidad. Estos hallazgos tienen importantes implicaciones para el desarrollo estratégico del turismo, ya que facilitan la segmentación del mercado y fomentan el desarrollo sostenible desde el punto de vista social y económico.

Palabras Clave: Turismo; Comportamiento; Factores motivacionales; Desarrollo sostenible; Ecuador.

1. Introduction

Tourism is an economic activity that stimulates socioeconomic development in Ecuador, benefiting both urban and rural communities. This sector generates substantial revenue and fosters the integration and empowerment of local populations through job creation and opportunities, especially in economically disadvantaged areas (Menor-Campos et al., 2019; Quezada-Sarmiento et al., 2018). The importance of tourism's contribution to the country becomes evident when analyzing various scenarios, as any significant changes could drastically affect the nation's living conditions and economy. This underscores the critical need for sustainable management of the sector.

In 2022, Ecuador witnessed a significant increase and recovery of 105.7% in the number of foreign tourists compared to 2021, reaching a total of 1,213,830 visitors and generating an economic contribution of $1.802 billion. This highlights tourism as a vital driver of the country's economy. The majority of these tourists originated from countries such as Colombia, the United States, Peru, Argentina, Chile, Spain,

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and Germany (Bravo, 2014; Ministry of Tourism, 2022; World Tourism Organization, 2020; Ministry of the Environment of Ecuador, 2015).

The rising demand in Ecuador's tourism market is further influenced by variations in vacation behavior, alongside changes in motivation, satisfaction levels, preferences, and needs (Stafford et al., 2016; World Tourism Organization, 2020). These dynamics position the sector as a significant area for scientific inquiry.

The sustainability of tourism necessitates strategic planning that accounts for the needs of local communities and assesses the benefits produced, emphasizing elements such as visitor motivation and satisfaction. Comprehending the behavioral aspects of this sector and their progression over time is crucial for formulating effective policies. Within this framework, these motivational factors play a pivotal role in tourists' decision-making processes and, consequently, in crafting experiences that align with their expectations (Carvache-Franco et al., 2020; Cajiao et al., 2022)

This study aims to analyze tourism behavior in Ecuador by identifying the motivational factors that impact both domestic and international tourists. By examining these factors, the research seeks to understand how tourists perceive and value their experiences and how such perceptions translate into behaviors that contribute to the sustainable development of tourism (Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011; Tiku et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2020). The focus of this research lies in the interconnection between motivation, behavior, and sustainability, addressing the following research question: What motivational components encourage tourist interest and influence their behavior?

The main contribution of this study is to present a comprehensive analysis of tourism behavior in Ecuador from a socioeconomic perspective, facilitating the development of strategies that support sustainable development and enhance the quality of life in local communities (Carvache-Franco et al., 2020; Pérez-Rincón et al., 2019; Stafford et al., 2016). By examining visitor motivations and assessing their alignment with the capacities and resources of host communities (Badola et al., 2015; Cohen et al., 2014; González-Rodríguez et al., 2023; Instituto Geográfico Militar, 2020; Page, 2011), this study aims to build a robust basis for the creation of policies and programs that encourage more equitable and sustainable tourism, centered on tourists' needs (Stafford et al., 2016; World Tourism Organization, 2020).

This article is structured as follows: after the introduction, a comprehensive theoretical framework on sustainable tourism and tourist consumer behavior is presented. This is followed by a description of the research methodology, and subsequently, the presentation and discussion of the results from the empirical study. Finally, the conclusions are provided, emphasizing the implications of the findings for tourism development in Ecuador.

2. Theoretical framework

Tourism is a crucial driver of socioeconomic progress in Ecuador, with its development significantly impacting both urban and rural communities. What would happen if tourism were to disappear, if visitor numbers exceeded community capacity, if a prolonged drought occurred, or if a pandemic severely affected tourism for an extended period? Any of these scenarios would profoundly alter current living conditions.

The objective of sustainable tourism programs in Ecuador is to eliminate poverty, boost the economy, and emphasize key ecological aspects. This strategy ensures fair and equitable access to economically disadvantaged areas while considering environmental limitations and safety standards. To achieve this, community-managed tourism enterprises are established. These enterprises utilize cultural and environmental resources to provide goods and services to visitors. In doing so, they generate new employment opportunities, particularly for women and young people, in alignment with traditional economic sectors and with the support of the Ecuadorian government (Nikitina & Vorontsova, 2015).

To ensure the long-term sustainability of tourism, it is crucial to evaluate its benefits by considering two main components (Menor-Campos et al., 2019; Muñoz et al., 2019). First, strategic planning that motivates and addresses the needs of local communities is vital, along with an analysis of tourist profiles to boost community-level tourism (Chung & Chung, 2009; Moratis & Melissen, 2020). Understanding existing behavioral elements and their progression over time is an effective tool for meeting objectives. Therefore, grasping the motivational components and their evolution is fundamental. Psychological needs and desires influence behavior and translate into motivation (Carvache-Franco et al., 2020; Fallatah & Syed, 2018), which is the core element in the decision-making process (Cajiao et al., 2022;

Crompton, 1979; Lee et al., 2017; Yolal et al., 2009). Human behavior is shaped and driven by factors such as motivation, satisfaction, and psychological aspirations. Individuals have diverse motivations for exploring various attractions and natural sites (Carvache-Franco et al., 2020). The preservation of natural resources in Ecuador, along with the promotion of knowledge, research, and respect for indigenous cultures, facilitates the discovery of spaces of remarkable natural beauty, distant from urban pollution (Kantola et al., 2018). This dynamic allows tourists to partake in a range of outdoor activities, such as hiking, birdwatching, horseback riding, and nature observation, enriching their education, culture, and involvement while motivating them to support environmental conservation (Acosta et al., 2017; Jeong et al., 2016).

Tourist consumer behavior encompasses various models that consider factors such as brand selection, emotional reactions to environmental stimuli, and the decision-making process, from problem recognition to post-purchase evaluation (Park et al., 2018). Additionally, tourists evaluate the influence of the destination brand and its projected image when making decisions (Lemoide et al., 2021). In tourism, this pertains to understanding how individuals make travel-related decisions, including the reasons for choosing specific destinations, tourist activities, accommodations, transportation, and other elements of the travel experience. This field of study incorporates various factors influencing tourists' decisions, including psychological, social, economic, and cultural aspects (Wasaya et al., 2024; Ulker-Demirel & Ciftci, 2020; Garcia-Ayllon, 2018).

Researchers in tourist consumer behavior investigate how tourists process information, form attitudes, make decisions, and evaluate their travel experiences. This may include analyzing social influences, such as recommendations from friends or family, as well as psychological factors, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for travel. Moreover, the impacts of advertising, destination branding, perceived quality, and other marketing elements on tourist behavior are also examined (Oliveira et al., 2022).

Tourist consumer behavior is an interdisciplinary field that integrates principles from psychology, sociology, economics, and marketing to better understand tourist behavior and how their needs and desires can be fulfilled. This knowledge is essential for formulating effective marketing and management strategies in the tourism industry and enhancing the overall travel experience (Goyal et al., 2022). The interrelationship between tourism and behavior is explored through three traditional research approaches (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Gitelson & Crompton, 1983; Jeuring, 2016). The first approach emphasizes tourism management analysis, assessing the sector's potential economic impact, types of accommodations preferred by tourists in various regions, and gathering data on social, economic, safety, and environmental indicators (Mendoza et al., 2021; Ocampo & Arteaga, 2018). The second approach focuses on tourism intermediaries and the development of tourism services through interactions with the local community. The third approach examines tourism regulations concerning policy planning and the structuring of safety strategies in Ecuador.

Elements related to community-based tourism, ecotourism, wildlife tourism, landscape appreciation, gastronomy, and the enjoyment of the location fall under territorial analysis, influenced by the three research approaches mentioned (Jeong et al., 2016; Martínez et al., 2021; Yun et al., 2018).

The literature emphasizes the importance of understanding tourism trends to ascertain whether visitors remain within a tourism sector or opt to change destinations (García & Lavalle, 2012; García--Palomares et al., 2018; Castillo et al., 2015). Three key questions emerge: Who are Ecuador's visitors? Why do they choose Ecuador as their tourist destination? What is the peak tourism season in Ecuador? Given the growth of ecotourism and the increasing number of visitors to Ecuador, it is vital for tourists to experience local authenticity to fulfill their expectations of the destination (Fang et al., 2016; Instituto Geográfico Militar, 2020).

Understanding the mechanisms that drive tourist behavior and the factors influencing their decision--making is crucial, particularly when tourists have diverse perspectives (McKercher et al., 2019; Aguado et al., 2018). Visitor motivation and satisfaction serve as indicators of service quality and perceived value, encompassing needs, preferences, communication, and social media reviews (Yang et al., 2020). The degree of involvement in purchasing services and the approach to evaluating market strategies are integral to dynamic marketing practices (García-Palomares et al., 2018).

The sustainability of the tourism sector depends on the safety and quality of services provided by tourism business models to both domestic and international visitors (De Esteban & Antonovica, 2010). Education is highlighted as a critical factor enhancing the effectiveness of entrepreneurial strategies and tourist behavior, acting as an alternative method to boost tourism demand (Castro et al., 2017).

This is especially pertinent given the substantial shifts in business models adopted by tourism chains and prevailing trends (Zenker & Kock, 2020).

Scientific literature on tourist behavior is informed by numerous studies (Cascales et al., 2017; De la Fuente, 2011; World Tourism Organization [WTO], 2021; Rodas et al., 2015; Yan & Lee, 2015). Ecuador's rich biodiversity propels the tourism sector to continuously develop and assess strategies that are impactful at the individual, family, and business levels (Jaramillo, 2014; Pérez-Rincón et al., 2019).

The primary conclusion of the analysis is that tourism in Ecuador, driven by its biodiversity, has the potential to serve as a significant catalyst for socioeconomic growth through the adoption of comprehensive and sustainable strategies. Such strategies should build the safety and trust of both national and international tourists and support public policies that reinforce the tourism sector and foster sustainable development (Cohen et al., 2014; Kastenholz et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2018). Most tourists, often young, spend an average of $170 every three days, contributing substantial revenue. They appreciate a range of local experiences, and the adaptability of travel demand implies that reduced rates could further stimulate the economy.

3. Methods

For this study, a structured survey was designed and administered to a representative random sample of tourists, informed by a thorough review of existing literature (Lloret-Segura et al., 2014; Ministry of Tourism, 2019; Ministry of Tourism, 2022). This review facilitated the identification of key visitor motivations and the development of a robust theoretical framework for analysis. In line with the World Tourism Organization (2021) guidelines, the main objective was to investigate visitor behavior factors, including sociodemographic profile, information sources, average spending, motivations, and post-visit satisfaction.

The sample size (2,000 distributed surveys, with 1,813 complete responses) was chosen to ensure statistically significant representation of both domestic and international tourists visiting Ecuador. With a margin of error of ±2.19% and a 95% confidence level, the study aimed to reliably extrapolate the findings to the broader visitor population. This approach captures the range of experiences and motivations within Ecuador's diverse tourism landscape.

Table 1: Multiple actors in the tourism sector in Ecuador

Participants		Strategic importance for tourism	Main field of industrial activity and objective	Action plan
Public	Universities	Technological deelopment	Education and development	Technological innovation
	Ministry of Tourism	Legal, economic and logistical support	Tourism	Virtual platforms and promotion of new projects
	Local Governments	Legal, economic and logistical support	Development	Investment
	Banks	Financial support	Economy	Financial support
Private	Chambers of Commerce	Strategic support	Business	Business strengthening
	Educational Institutes	Technological development	Development and innovation	Technological innovation
	Universities	Technological development	Education and development	Technological innovation
	Visitors	Economic development	Companies/tourism/ business	Service improvement

Note: The actors within the tourism sector are classified as public and private.
Own elaboration.

The study's demographic group included both domestic and international tourists, selected to offer a comprehensive perspective on tourist motivations in Ecuador. This approach was justified by the variability in tourism consumption patterns among visitors from different countries and regions. It enabled the identification of differences in expectations and motivations, as well as their implications for developing targeted marketing strategies and sustainable management.

The 37-question survey was organized into thematic sections covering sociodemographic variables, average spending, tourist profiles, information sources, expectations, motivations, desires, post-visit satisfaction, and infrastructure. Surveys were conducted in all 24 provinces of Ecuador, spanning both urban and rural areas selected for their tourist appeal and biodiversity. This selection ensured thorough coverage of Ecuador, allowing the analysis results to represent the country's geographic and cultural diversity.

To validate and ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot phase with 30 surveys was conducted, supplemented by interviews with tourism experts. The reliability of the results was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to confirm the consistency of the items within each factor. This step ensured that the identified dimensions accurately represented coherent motivational constructs.

Factor analysis was chosen as the primary technique to identify and simplify the complexity of the various underlying motivational components observed among tourists (López-Cámara et al., 2015). This method was specifically selected to group motivation-related variables into manageable dimensions, facilitating the analysis of common patterns in tourist behavior. To enhance the interpretability of the extracted factors, a Varimax rotation with Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) normalization was applied.

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 22 software (University of Granada, 2004), and the identified results were utilized for non-hierarchical cluster analysis to segment the sample into homogeneous groups based on tourist motivations.

Finally, reliability tests, relational analysis, and variance analysis were conducted to validate the relevance of the extracted factors and to explore the relationships between variables. These techniques were chosen to provide a comprehensive assessment of the differences and similarities in tourists' motivations and behaviors.

4. Results

In a context where tourism is a vital source of income and sustainable development, Table 2 provides a summary of the sociodemographic profile of tourists to aid in designing appealing experiences. Of the visitors, 87.5% are under the age of 45, and 61.9% have an average family size of 3-4 members. The main locations visited by domestic tourists are the provinces of Guayas and Pichincha, accounting for 23.7% of visits. Foreign tourists make up 8% of total visits, with most coming from the United States and Spain, often based on recommendations from friends or family.

The final scale's Cronbach's alpha coefficient reached a value of 0.825, indicating a notable internal consistency among the scale items. There is a significant association between income and monthly expenditures (gamma statistic = 0.339; $p = 0.001$), suggesting that tourists with higher incomes tend to spend more than those with lower incomes. On average, foreign tourists spend $170. There is a significant relationship between spending and nationality (contingency coefficient = 0.335; $p = 0.046$). Additionally, declared income by gender shows a significant relationship (contingency coefficient = 0.178; $p = 0.000$).

The average stay for both domestic and foreign tourists is four days. However, there are significant differences between the two groups (ANOVA statistic $F = 258.876$; $p = 0.003$): foreign tourists tend to stay twice as long as domestic tourists (six nights compared to three, respectively). The income rate and length of stay also show a statistically significant gamma relationship of 0.157 ($p = 0{,}000$).

The critical level (p) associated with the F statistic (351.962) in the analysis of variance (ANOVA) for testing the null hypothesis is < 0.001. The null hypothesis states that all items on the scale have the same mean. The results indicate that the means of the variables are not equal, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Factor analysis was conducted based on the reasons for visiting, requirement variables, and relevant tourism factors, as shown in Table 3. This analysis allowed for the extraction of three motivational dimensions for visiting Ecuador, providing a characterization for each extracted factor.

Table 2: Socio-demographic profile of tourists in Ecuador

Variables		Percentage	Variables		Percentage
Gender (N = 1 813)	Male	55,9%	Frequency of vacation trips (N = 1 813)	Very low	2,8 %
				Low	5,5 %
	Female	44,1%		Medium	25,3%
				High	46,9%
				Very high	19,5%
Age (N = 1 813)			Perception of employees working in the local tourism infrastructure within the province (N = 1 813)	Very low	2,8 %
	18-25	22,8%		Low	5,8%
	26-35	39,0 %		Medium	32,8%
	36-45	25,7%		High	38,2%
	Over 45	12,5%		Very high	20,4%
Number of family members (N = 1 813)			Province of origin (N = 1 813)	Azuay	11,1%
	1-2	23,6%		Bolívar	1,6 %
	3-4	61,9%		Cañar	2,2 %
	More than 4	14,5%		Carchi	2,6 %
				Chimborazo	3,4 %
				Cotopaxi	3,3 %
				Imbabura	3,9 %
				Loja	3,9 %
				Pichincha	9,7%
				Santo domingo	1,0 %
				Santa elena	5,6%
				Tungurahua	12 %
				El Oro	1,5%
				Esmeraldas	3,6 %
				Guayas	14 %
				Los Rios	2,9 %
				Manabí	0,9%
				Morona santiago	1,0 %
				Napo	2,4 %
				Orellana	1,2 %
				Pastaza	1,1%
				Sucumbíos	1,2 %
				Zamora Chinchipe	0,8 %
				Galápagos	1,1%
				Others	8,0 %
Level of motivation (N = 1 813)	Very low	5,5 %	Average family income (N = 1 813)	400-700	29,8%
	Low	10,0 %		701-1000	55,5%
	Medium	25,2%		1001-1300	15,2%
	High	45,8%		More than 1300	10,5%
	Very high	13,5%			
Likelihood of recommending the place (N = 1 813)	Very low	2,9 %	Preferred vacation time. (N = 1 813)	Weekends	24,3%
	Low	9,7%		Holidays	36,5%
	Medium	20,9%		Work of school	24,9%
	high	45,4%		holidays	10,8%
	Very high	21,0 %		Institucional celebrations	3,4 %
				Others	

Note: The socio-demographic profile shows that 55.9% of tourists are mostly men, and the preferred time for vacations is during long weekends, with 36.5%.
Own elaboration.

Table 3: Factor Analysis

	Components										
Motivacional Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Dimensions
Environment	0,752										Stay/ Environment
Quality of stay	0,736										
Attention	0,714										
Security level		0.900									Safety
Accessibility		0,891									
Permanence			0,781								Duration
Culture and history				0.613							Culture
Satisfaction				0.542							
Accessibility for disabilities					0.821						Accessibility
Environment					0.537						
Value added						0,612					Added Value
Water sports						0.523					
Seasonality						0,471					
Enthusiasm							0,742				Observation
Observation							0.549				
Adventure travel								0,827			Adventure
Ecosystem Control									0,882		Ecosystem
Daily travel to work										0.824	
Automatic values	3.734	1.693	1.419	0.971	0,952	0,925	0,894	0,852	0.818	0,741	
%Variation	15.600	12.004	11.436	10.049	9.982	8.852	7.723	3.573	3.367	3.220	
%Accumulated	15.600	27.604	39.040	49.089	59.071	67.923	75.646	79.219	82.586	85.806	
KMO										0.800	
Chi-square test Bartlett's test of sphericity										5505.781 Sig< 0,001	

Note: Extraction method: Principal axis factoring. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) normalization.
Own elaboration.

According to Table 3, the first factor is associated with stay/environment, a common factor in tourist destinations with a megadiverse setting, along with perceptions of the location, which enhances the visitor's educational experience. This factor includes visitors who view it as an opportunity to expand their knowledge of the environment. The first principal dimension accounts for 15.6% of the variance in the total motivation variation matrix. The second dimension, safety, consists of two items and explains approximately 12% of the total variance. The third dimension, duration of stay, consists of one item and accounts for around 11.4% of the total variance. The nine dimensions have a Cronbach's alpha of

0.824. These results relate to tourists who view the visit as an experiential activity (whether with a partner, family, and/or friends).

The factor analysis identified ten components, and a non-hierarchical cluster analysis was subsequently used to optimize variance, forming three clearly differentiated groups. The averages of the nineteen motivational variables extracted from the questionnaire are detailed in Table 4. The ANOVA indicated significant differences between the groups ($p < 0.001$), based on the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance, allowing for the conclusion that the means are unequal. Group 3 stood out in most of the variables, showing higher levels of satisfaction and appreciation in aspects such as "Environment," "Quality of Stay," and "Level of Safety." A post hoc multiple comparison analysis confirmed the significant differences between the means, highlighting the distinct perceptions and evaluations of the groups regarding their tourism experiences.

Table 4: Identification of clusters based on satisfaction variable means.

	Belonging clusters				
	1	2	3	ANOVA	
Motivational variables	**Mean**	**Mean**	**Mean**	**F.**	**Sig.**
Environment	**3.5**	**3.8**	**4.4**	342.745	<0,001
Quality of stay	**3.3**	**3.8**	**4.4**	288.899	<0,001
Attention	**4.0**	**4.1**	**4.0**	276.898	<0,001
Level of safely	**3.9**	**4.3**	**4.8**	278.630	<0,001
Accessibility	**4.4**	**4.0**	**4.7**	139.235	<0,001
Duration	**3.8**	**4.7**	**4.1**	543.630	<0,001
Culture and history	**3.4**	**3.5**	**3.0**	326.869	<0,001
Satisfaction	**4.8**	**4.7**	**4.9**	562.536	<0,001
Accessibility degree	**3.9**	**3.8**	**3.0**	328.263	<0,001
Environment	**4.0**	**4.1**	**4.2**	101.304	<0,001
Added value	**3.0**	**4.5**	**4.0**	321.548	<0,001
Aquatics sports	2.0	2.4	**4.0**	494.384	<0,001
Seasonality	**4.7**	**3.4**	**3.7**	473.734	<0,001
Enthusiasm	**3.0**	2.9	1.9	248.796	<0,001
Observation	2.0	2.5	**3.9**	374.657	<0,001
Adventure trip	**4.7**	**4.9**	3.8	34.097	<0,001
Ecosystem control	**4.0**	3.5	3.3	54.842	<0,001
Daily travel to work	**3.9**	**3.8**	3.0	280.678	<0,001
Quality of life	2.0	3.0	**3.9**	45.235	<0,001

Nota: The highlighted elements correspond to the survey questions used in the factor analysis, from which six dimensions were extracted. The Games-Howell test was employed to compare significant differences between means. The highlighted values indicate significant differences in one of the three group means in the post-hoc ANOVA analysis.
Own elaboration.

These comparisons are conducted under the assumption that variances are not equal; the statistical critical level of Levene's test is below 0.05 in almost all cases, thus refuting the equality of variances. The Welch and Brown-Forsythe statistical methods were used as alternatives to the ANOVA F statistic to determine if the populations were equal, as shown in Table 5. The critical level associated with both statistics is less than 0.05; therefore, the hypothesis of equal means is rejected, indicating that the means of the motivational variables among the three compared groups are not equal.

The first group comprised 28.5% of the sample. This group scored average on items related to satisfaction, suggesting that these visitors primarily seek travel options that allow them to experience new sensations with family and friends in relation to their surroundings. The second group, termed adventure travel, represented 8% of the sample and was characterized by low scores across all items used to extract motivational variables. The final cluster accounted for 63.5% of the sample and showed the highest significance in items related to the dimension of safety as the main motivation.

Table 5: Test of homogeneity of variance and equality of means for the motivation variable.

Motivational variables	Homogeneity of variance Levene		Equality of means		
Environment	215.206	<0,001	Welch	83.753	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	99.678	<0,001
Quality of the stay	142.389	<0,001	Welch	93.730	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	98.391	<0,001
Attention	161.620	<0,001	Welch	86.456	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	83.730	<0,001
Securyty level	264.968	<0,001	Welch	67.319	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	75.528	<0,001
Accessibility	98.764	<0,001	Welch	55.379	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	51.639	<0,001
Stay	241.730	<0,001	Welch	77.840	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	70.482	<0,001
History and culture	0.583	<0,658	Welch	26.830	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	21.349	<0,001
Satisfaction	266.769	<0,001	Welch	81.353	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	123.620	<0,001
Accessibility degree	16.949	<0,001	Welch	25.783	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	23.294	<0,001
Environment	109.729	<0,001	Welch	62.739	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	56.273	<0,001
Added value	0.631	<0,489	Welch	50.273	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	46.273	<0,001
Aquatics sports	14.275	<0,007	Welch	24.235	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	28.034	<0,001
Seasonality	13.940	<0,005	Welch	19.294	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	23.820	<0,001
Enthusiams	14.893	<0,003	Welch	24.039	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	22.930	<0,001
Observation	19.349	<0,001	Welch	78.293	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	55.029	<0,001
Adventure trip	20.478	<0,001	Welch	45.923	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	48.927	<0,001
Ecosystem control	140.572	<0,001	Welch	78.294	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	89.392	<0,001
Daily travel to work	89.563	<0,001	Welch	24.593	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	23.934	<0,001
Quality of life	179.638	<0,001	Welch	83.384	<0,001
			Brown-Forsythe	86.737	<0,001

Note: The last group comprises 63.5% of the sample and stands out significantly in aspects related to the safety dimension compared to other items.
Own elaboration.

Table 6: Degree of satisfaction and motivational dimensions.

	ANOVA							
Motivational dimensions	**F**	**Sig.**	**Homogeneity of variance Levene**	**Sig.**	**Equality of means**			**Pearson's correlation**
Stay/environment	36.948	<0,001	20.573	<0,001	Welch	12.963	<0,038	0,38**
					Brown-Forsythe	14.463	<0,025	
Safety	12.270	<0,001	6.478	<0,001	Welch	5.704	<0,042	0,72**
					Brown-Forsythe	7.461	<0,472	
Duration	11.630	<0,001	6.937	<0,048	Welch	9.735	<0,385	0,55**
					Brown-Forsythe	10.857	<0,275	
Culture	10.893	<0,002	4.942	<0,048	Welch	5.482	<0,369	0,53**
					Brown-Forsythe	6.459	<0,472	
Disability	9.739	<0,002	4.614	<0,003	Welch	7.710	<0,020	0,24**
					Brown-Forsythe	8.441	<0,042	
Added value	8.393	<0,001	3.895	<0,048	Welch	5.728	<0,058	0,67**
					Brown-Forsythe	7.529	<0,472	
Observation	7.602	<0,003	3.489	<0,048	Welch	3.702	<0,385	0,60**
					Brown-Forsythe	5.127	<0,472	
Adventure	6.740	<0,002	3.461	<0,048	Welch	3.246	<0,385	0,69**
					Brown-Forsythe	5.629	<0,472	
Ecosystem	5.892	<0,001	3.173	<0,038	Welch	4.781	<0,385	0,73**
					Brown-Forsythe	7.409	<0,452	
Proximity	2.306	<0,003	1.949	<0,018	Welch	3.741	<0,335	0,59**
					Brown-Forsythe	5.129	<0,472	

Note: The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).
Own elaboration.

Table 5 assesses the homogeneity of variance and equality of means in the motivational variables. Levene's test reveals that most variances are not homogeneous ($p < 0.001$). Therefore, the Welch and Brown-Forsythe tests were applied as alternatives to ANOVA to confirm differences in the means of the variables. Both tests showed critical levels below 0.05, rejecting the hypothesis of equal means, indicating that the perceptions of the three groups regarding the motivational variables are significantly different. The last group, representing 63.5% of the sample, stands out particularly in aspects related to safety.

Table 6 shows the relationship between satisfaction and motivational dimensions through ANOVA, homogeneity tests, and Pearson correlation. The dimensions of safety, ecosystem, and adventure have the highest correlations with satisfaction ($r = 0.72$, 0.73, and 0.69), indicating their significance in the visitor experience. Other dimensions such as duration of stay, culture, and added value also show moderate correlations ($r > 0.5$), influencing overall perception. The ANOVA tests confirm significant differences ($p < 0.001$), while Levene and Welch validate the non-homogeneity of variances. Variables with lower values do not directly align with the tourist experience in Ecuador.

Table 7: Determination of clusters based on the means of the motivation variable.

	Belonging clusters					
	1	**2**	**3**	**ANOVA**		
Satisfaction variable	Mean	Mean	Mean	F	Sig.	Mean
Moderate degree of satisfaction	4.02*	4.72	4.35	41.769	<0,001	4.36

Note: The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).
Own elaboration.

The data obtained in Table 7 suggest that to improve tourism management in Ecuador across different populations, it is important to understand tourists' travel motives, as this helps identify the appropriate tourist experience, which in turn increases visitor motivation. However, Table 8 shows differences in satisfaction levels among the various dimensions of the visitor groups.

Table 8: Robust tests of homogeneity of variances and equality of means of satisfaction variables.

Satisfaction variables/tourist experience	Homogeneity of variance (Levene)		Equality of means		
Moderate degree of satisfaction	4,584	<0,005	Welch Brown-Forsythe	24.589 38.483	<001 <0,001

Note: The participants have significantly different levels of satisfaction.

5. Discussion

The tourism industry can leverage knowledge of visitors' motivations and expectations to design experiences tailored to their needs. In this analysis, three key dimensions were identified: satisfaction, perception of adventure, and safety, all of which significantly influence the overall tourist experience. Satisfaction, linked to service quality and enjoyment of the environment, is essential, as 45.8% of tourists rate it at high or very high levels. The perception of adventure, which seeks to fulfill the need for memorable activities, and safety, which provides confidence and peace of mind, are equally important dimensions, reflecting a comprehensive view of visitors' needs (Cajiao et al., 2022; Castaño et al., 2003; Ryu, 2014).

The use of factor and cluster analyses made it possible to differentiate and group significant variables, identifying the main motivational components that define travel decisions. This provides a solid foundation for designing specific tourism products and effectively guides market segmentation, optimizing the tourism service offerings to attract groups with similar motivations (Zhao et al., 2023).

The results link satisfaction variables with motivational theory and establish a focus on the consumption behavior of Ecuadorian tourists. The satisfaction of both domestic and international tourists is related to specific differentiated motivations, and these extracted motivational dimensions are consistently correlated.

The tailored offering to specific segments, such as groups that prioritize adventure or those who value safety, optimizes services and attracts visitors with similar motivations. Notably, the group of tourists that places high importance on safety represents 63.5%, highlighting the need to integrate this component into tourism development strategy. g

These findings reinforce the diversity of motivations in tourism and provide a solid foundation for promotional and planning strategies. Cluster segmentation shows that the perception of safety and satisfaction has a strong correlation with destination recommendation, underscoring its importance for visitor loyalty tailored to different visitor profiles, which in turn strengthens Ecuador's position as a competitive international tourism destination.

6. Conclusion

The results of this study related to tourist motivation suggest that the perceived characteristics or attributes of the places visited and the existence of a priority level of safety are the main reasons for choosing tourist cities in Ecuador. Tourists consider it a privilege to support sustainable local development, which promotes social motivation. Domestic and foreign visitors are mostly young and spend an average of US$170 every three days, which translates into an average income of US$1.4 billion. The results indicate that tourists value the different experiences offered by the localities and the diversity of their environment.

Tourist motivations and satisfaction were identified based on an analysis of travel decision factors according to the tourism service investigated. Thus, the segmentation of tourists according to their motivations allows tourism providers to create products and services demanded in different destinations.

It is important to note that we are always exposed to environmental risk situations. An example of this is the COVID-19 pandemic, which triggered blocking measures, for example. These are social and natural

processes that offer a learning opportunity in Ecuador, strengthening its resilience and helping to build more resilient and sustainable societies. The flexibility of demand for short and long trips suggests that governments could significantly reduce access fees to boost their economy through revenues.

It is relevant to highlight that we face possible environmental risk situations at any time, such as the COVID-19 pandemic that triggered confinement measures, among other causes, which are social and natural processes that generate a learning and empowerment perspective in Ecuador, strengthening its resilience and building more resilient and sustainable societies. The flexibility of demand for short and long trips suggests that governments could significantly reduce access fees to boost their economy through revenue.

Future investments could take a green approach, ensuring ecosystem conservation and providing a safe travel experience. Signage and rest areas could be improved in harmony with local ecosystems. However, the current studies have limitations, highlighting the need for further research. The study has certain limitations in data collection, as it used data obtained from a sample of visitors in different parts of Ecuador.

The study underscores the pivotal role of social connections and personal recommendations in influencing tourists' accommodation choices, with a clear preference for staying with family and/or friends. This emphasizes the significance of interpersonal relationships and word-of-mouth marketing in shaping tourists' decisions, indicating that the tourism industry should prioritize fostering positive experiences that encourage visitors to share their recommendations.

The research results highlight the intricate interplay between satisfaction, adventure and safety as key dimensions influencing tourist motivations. The identification of these dimensions through factor and cluster analysis provides a nuanced understanding of the various motivations driving tourist behavior in Ecuador. Consequently, the tourism industry can leverage this knowledge to adapt marketing strategies and improve destination planning, ensuring that services and products are tailored to the specific needs and expectations of domestic and foreign tourists. In addition, the study underscores the need for in-depth research on the security factor to adapt strategies and promote sustainable development in a constantly evolving tourism landscape. Future investments should focus on environmental preservation, the development of local infrastructures that respect nature and favor wildlife protection. In addition, signage should be improved and maintained, and investments should be made in rest areas and platforms for species observation, in harmony with local urban and rural ecosystems.

While the study has certain limitations in data collection, relying on information gathered from a sample of visitors across various regions of Ecuador, it underscores the importance of conducting regular research. The ever-changing dynamics of tourism mean that trends evolve rapidly, and destinations may cease to be attractive or new ones emerge. Therefore, the need for constant updates becomes crucial to capture and understand transformations in tourists' motivations and preferences. This dynamic approach would enable more agile and precise strategic planning for the sustainable development of tourism in Ecuador.

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