

## Article

# Tourist Clusters in a Developing Country in South America: The Case of Manabí Province, Ecuador

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**Abstract:** Societies nowadays shape their history by establishing traditions, customs, artisan expressions and, in short, the cultural heritage that represents them as a people in symbiosis with their natural environment. The present investigation analyzes the tourist phenomenon that has developed around intangible cultural heritage and natural heritage in the province of Manabí (Ecuador). Three types of visitors were identified in terms of motivation schemes; these three types were considered valid and useful for segmenting within the province of Manabí as a tourist destination. The conclusions suggest the need to conceive tourism products that improve the image of the destination and, at the same time, enable the sustainable management of the destination itself.

**Keywords:** intangible cultural heritage; natural heritage; tourism; motivation; satisfaction; developing countries and Ecuador

## 1. Introduction

The cultural legacy of a people stems from the slow evolution of their traditions, some of which become true historical standards that define a territory and its inhabitants. All such communities linked to their natural space possess ancestral customs that endow them with a unique singularity that also becomes an incentive for tourism. The interrelationships between tourism and the heritage of a destination have therefore developed around four different areas of study [1]: First, the role of recognition by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) of a specific element of world heritage (material, immaterial or natural) and a first-order element of tourism promotion of the destination; second, the economic and social development that this recognition brings; third, the study of the attitudes and perceptions associated with visiting; and, finally, the influence of this recognition on tourist flows.

Heritage tourism looks for engaging in unique experiences related to the history and customs of the destination [2]. For [3], this link between the tourist and the destination's heritage supposes not only a recreational experience but also a way of understanding the meaning of the culture of the visited place. If cultural value is joined by an attractive natural heritage, this results in the possibility of a complementary and differentiated tourism offer that can contribute to local sustainability and an improvement of the living conditions and economic, human and social progress within the local community, especially in destinations in developing countries [4–6]. In such destinations, it is helpful if the income generated by tourism becomes an instrument for the fair and inclusive development of towns and cities [7].

This study considers the relationship between tourism and heritage—both cultural and natural—of a developing destination. Specifically, we identify clusters or segments of tourists based on their reasons for visiting the destination, analyze their main sociodemographic characteristics, and assess the tourist resources at the destination, taking into account the types of tourists identified. Additionally, this research tries to analyze the socio-economic relevance of tourism in this geographic area. Fieldwork was therefore developed concerning tourists visiting the cities of Montecristi and Manta, located in the province of Manabí in Ecuador, which have been recognized for intangible cultural heritage (ICH) by UNESCO for the traditional weaving of the Ecuadorian toquilla straw hat (inscribed in 2012 on the Representative List of ICH of Humanity by UNESCO).

## 2. Literature Revision

### 2.1. Motivation

The behavior of the tourist at the destination is clearly influenced by the visitor's motivations [8]. At the same time, the decision to visit a particular destination is based on different motivations, one of the most relevant being the cultural and natural value that the proposed destination is believed to possess [9]. This increases the competition between heritage destinations that seek to attract this specific type of tourist [10]. Tourism demand for heritage destinations is, hence, conditioned by the services that tourist managers can offer to tourists who visit Manabí and, especially, by the participation of the local community in the interpretation and promotion of the destination, as well as in the hospitality offered to the visitor [11].

Four main factors for the proper development of a cultural destination have been suggested: (1) Its history and customs, (2) the main and secondary services and facilities available to tourists, (3) the possibilities offered for the correct interpretation of the destination's heritage, and (4) the various cultural activities available to the visitor [12]. Nature tourism, understood as a tourist phenomenon that helps the conservation of the natural environment and its population, has also been thought of as being based on four basic pillars: (1) The existence of virgin or little visited natural landscapes, (2) the possibility of enjoying experiences in unique natural environments intertwined with its inhabitants, (3) the impulse to protect the destination as a natural resource, and (4) the need to teach respect for the environment and the local culture of the visited territory [13].

Researching the motivations that encourage tourists to decide to visit a specific heritage destination, three major areas of influence have been identified: Historical interpretation and ease of accessibility, shopping and complementary training, convenience and efficiency in the visit [14]. The analysis of tourist motivations is usually carried out on the basis of three alternative frameworks [15]: The pull-push model [16,17], Iso-Ahola motivation theory [18] and the Travel Career ladder [19]. The present investigation used the first of the models reviewed, as it is the one most often used by academic studies [20] and is also a robust tool for the scientific analysis of the motivations that move and condition heritage tourism [21].

In line with the literature review, we propose to examine the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1).** *The motivations to visit a tourist destination are heterogeneous.*

### 2.2. Segmentation of Tourists

To research the tourist phenomenon, it is fundamental to determine the typology of the visitors who, as in the present investigation, visit a certain destination based on their cultural heritage [2] and by their natural heritage [22]. In his study to determine the interest that a tourist can have in visiting a certain cultural destination, [23] discovered four different groups of tourists: Accidental cultural, cultural, partially cultural, and very interested in culture. The Worldwatch Institute, meanwhile, has categorized visitors attracted to the nature of the destination based on eight groups: Adventure tourism,

ecotourism, geotourism, massive tourism, nature-based tourism, pro-poor tourism, responsible tourism, and sustainable tourism [24].

The segmentation of cultural tourists based on two different dimensions has been investigated [25]: The first is the transcendence of cultural motivations when deciding which destination to visit, and the second is the amount of information and knowledge visitors have about the cultural heritage of the destination. According to the results extracted for both dimensions, five segments of tourists were determined: The pragmatic tourist, contemplative tourist, casual tourist, incidental tourist and fortuitous tourist. This tourist segmentation has been used in several subsequent investigations [2,26–28].

The segmentation of tourists is important for the efficient management and sustainable development of the destination. It is essential to discover the groups of tourists attracted by the cultural and/or natural heritage, their associated motivations, their visiting behaviors and the perceptions they develop during their stay [2]. In this way, we can distinguish between patrimonial tourists and tourists who make their visit in a more circumstantial way [29,30]. In line with the previous literature, we propose to examine the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2 (H2).** *Depending on the different motivations for visiting a destination, there are different types of tourists.*

### 2.3. Visitors' Socio-Economic Characteristics

In the scientific research on tourism, it is usual to study the sociodemographic variables of visitors at a specific destination. With this analysis, public and private managers in charge of tourism promotion can determine the profiles of those who are attracted to the managed place and adapt their marketing strategies. Among the main factors that are the object of study, visitor age is one of the most recurrent. Most investigations conclude that cultural tourists tend to be young or middle-aged (below 45 years), or even between 21 and 35 years [31]. On the other hand, some scholars increase this age profile to between 26 and 45 years [6] or 30–44 years [21]. Based on research on tourists visiting the city of Porto in Portugal (recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO), the average profile of tourists visiting this heritage site is above 45 years of age [32].

In terms of educational level of tourists visiting heritage destinations, most research has found that this type of tourist general has completed higher education [9,10,21,30,32,33], although it remains important to highlight the attractiveness of destinations with an important cultural and natural heritage among university students [31].

Income level is another sociodemographic variable that is usually analyzed, and most studies have found that cultural tourists tend to have a medium or medium-high available income, which is also related to educational level [9,21,31–34]. Finally, regarding the potential contribution of cultural tourists to the destination's economic development, it has been suggested that the greater the interest in the destination's heritage, the greater the intention to spend on the visit, which increases the consequent impact on the local economy [32]. In line with the previous literature, we propose to examine the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 3 (H3).** *Cultural interest in a destination increases with the age of the tourist.*

**Hypothesis 4 (H4).** *Cultural interest in a destination is greater among travelers with a higher level of academic education.*

**Hypothesis 5 (H5).** *Tourists with greater cultural interest generate a greater economic impact in the visited destination.*

## 2.4. Evaluation of Destination Tourist Resources

Destinations have multiple resources that make up the set of elements that attract tourists [35]. The tourist experience is therefore intimately linked to the disposition and enjoyment of these destination attributes, enabling the tourist to have an unforgettable experience [36,37]. Not only must elements ensure tourist enjoyment, but the correct combination of resources demanded by the visitor must also be present. In the case of heritage destinations, these generally relate to the local history and culture, natural landscapes, public safety, mobility, shopping possibilities, and traditional cuisine [12,38,39]. Not all the resources of a destination bring competitive advantages, but only those aforementioned resources provide tourists with the unique experience sought [40]. Having such a unique experience determines tourist satisfaction and, in turn, loyalty to the destination, as well as its direct and indirect promotion [41].

It has recently appeared that ‘participatory tourism’ is a key segment within ecotourism, encompassing those tourists who travel to a destination seeking direct contact with nature and its cultural expressions. This is planned based on the enjoyment, knowledge, and protection of the heritage resources of the destination. This type of tourism feels responsibility towards the destination, actively enjoying the natural areas, trails, observation of flora and fauna and, ultimately, contact with the natural and cultural roots that are the hallmark of the local identity [42,43].

Research on tourism has usually been concerned with discovering the necessary destination attributes to achieve unforgettable tourist experiences. We must also determine the elements that may cause concern and unrest in the visitor [37–39,44–47] in order to limit these concerns and enhance both tourist satisfaction with the destination and its positive image. In line with the previous literature, we propose to examine the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 6 (H6).** *Motivation affects satisfaction with the tourist experience, and tourists with a more heterogeneous or diverse motivation scale have the highest level of satisfaction.*

## 3. Ecuador Tourism

The World Tourism Organization has determined that the main risks related to heritage tourism depend on the social and economic development the location has achieved. On the one hand, MEDCs (more economically developed countries) must establish strategies that allows them to exploit their cultural resources in a sustainable way and avoid just turning their heritage into merchandise. On the other hand, economically developing countries, like Ecuador, must worry about the distribution of wealth earned by the tourist activity that takes place in their resources. However, we must not forget to protect the resources they have and to avoid destroying the heritage that, itself, creates the tourist flows towards the destination [48].

The economic development strategy in Ecuador considers tourism as one of the key activities to generate wealth in an alternate economic plan, based on natural resources exports [49]. Tourism is the third most important economic activity in Ecuador, not taking into account petrol export. This activity generates in Ecuador over a thousand million dollars and only goes after banana and shrimp export. In 2015, tourism in Ecuador generated 1.017 million dollars, and, in 2016, it climbed up to 1.173 million dollars [50].

The Strategic Plan for the Tourist Development of Ecuador [51] says that more than 55% of tourist infrastructure in Ecuador is concentrated in four provinces: Pichincha (19.9%, Guayas 14.1%, Esmeralda 10.5%, and Manabí 10.1%). Manabí is, of all of them, the one with the most potential for economic growth, social growth, cultural improvement, and environmental improvement (variables in tourist supply—Table 1). To meet this potential, effective public policies must be enacted as the market demands more from the area.

**Table 1.** Relevant tourist data from the Province of Manabí [50].

Variables in Tourist Supply	Province of Manabí (% Over All of Ecuador)	Total in Ecuador
Registered hotel establishments	305 (11.47%)	2658
Amount of rooms	16,134 (9.47%)	170,411
Amount of beds	5801 (7.82%)	74,173

Source: Own elaboration.

This study was carried out in the cities of Manta and Montecristi, located in the province of Manabí (Ecuador). The coastal city of Manta is the largest economic engine of Manabí, deriving income mainly from fishing and its port. It is also one of the strategic zones of tourist development in the country, given a variety of attractions including 14 beaches located in rural and urban areas, local cuisine, and proximity to natural protected areas. The economy of the city of Montecristi, meanwhile, is based on transport and trade. It is an enclave for the handmade manufacturing and marketing of the Ecuadorian straw hat, which is its main tourist attraction and has positioned the city as the primary place to purchase said hats. The proximity of the two cities and their complementary tourist resources create a conjoint tourist offer, and Montecristi is often included as a site to visit in the tourist circuits operated from Manta. This research about tourists' motives to travel to Manabi is essential to make tourism a key development factor and to empower tourism in the province of Manabi.

#### 4. Methodology

##### 4.1. Questionnaire and Proceedings

This research is based on fieldwork and the application of a structured questionnaire to a group of tourists visiting the cities of Manta and Montecristi in the Ecuadorian province of Manabí. A closed questionnaire was used because it could be self-administered, thus guaranteeing more agility in the process. The questionnaire was based on different previous investigations that gave it an adequate validity [13–40,52]. The items initially selected were subject to a purification process in several consecutive phases: (1) An analysis of the items was done by a researcher specializing in tourism; (2) the questionnaire was then reviewed by several managers of tourism activity in the selected geographical area; and (3) finally, a pre-test was given to 50 tourists already at the destination. Through this process, a series of inconsistencies and confusing elements were detected and corrected prior to implementation in the proposed fieldwork. The final version of the questionnaire allowed for a greater clarity in the questions asked and a maximum adequacy in relation to the research objectives. The amount of time to complete the survey did not exceed 10 min, and the rejection rate was low and not significant under any concrete variable.

The questionnaire was composed of three differentiated blocks. The first block contained questions about the reasons for visiting the selected geographical area, the satisfaction achieved by the visitors, and the attitudinal loyalty reached. The second block sought to evaluate the destination's tourist resources. The third and final block included the respondents' sociodemographic variables such as gender, marital status, age, educational level and disposable income. The questions in the first block were designed to be answered using a five-point Likert-type scale. The questions were made in negative and positive forms to reduce acquiescence.

The fieldwork was developed by a group of interviewers trained for this purpose and linked to San Gregorio de Portoviejo University in Ecuador. The questionnaire was applied in both Spanish and English, so the respondent was able to choose based on mother tongue and/or country of origin. Language barriers therefore did not impede proper completion of the questionnaire. The fieldwork

was developed in different tourist places in the cities of Manta and Montecristi, with the condition that the surveyed tourists were spending at least a certain time in the destination and able to express their opinion in a well-founded way [13,14].

A total of 705 surveys were obtained, of which 675 were valid to fulfil the purpose of the study. Surveys were collected in June and July 2018 on different days and times in the cities of Manta and Montecristi, with the aim of achieving as wide a range of situations and people as possible. Non-probabilistic convenience sampling was used; this sampling method is frequently used in investigations for which the respondents are in specific places at a specific time [53].

#### 4.2. Sampling and Sampling Error

The sample for this research included tourists visiting the city of Manta who also included the city of Montecristi in their travel itinerary. According to the figures for 2016 (the latest data available), 625,000 tourists visited Manta [54]. For guidance purposes, in the case of random sampling, the sampling error for a confidence level of 95% would be  $\pm 3.77\%$ .

#### 4.3. Data Analysis

The SPSS v. 24 program was used to carry out statistical analyses. As a preliminary step, Cronbach's alpha was applied to verify the reliability of the answers to the questionnaire. The technique of grouping cases (K-means conglomerates) was applied to detect groups of tourists with similar characteristics; this was followed by a discriminant analysis to validate the segmentation performed. Once the different groups of tourists were obtained, the statistics and measures of association were used to verify the existence of relationships between the segments and different sociodemographic variables. Nonparametric mean difference statistics (Kruskal-Wallis's H and the Mann-Whitney U test) were used to study the possible differences between the study segments.

### 5. Results

#### 5.1. Motivations for Attending Manabí

Table 2 shows the factorial analysis along with the motivation items for the trip. The Cronbach's alpha for the final scale of this analysis was 0.824, which indicates a suitable internal consistency between the elements of the scale, as a value of at least 0.5 is necessary if it is a basic investigation (as it was in our case), while 0.85 is suitable for a diagnostic investigation [55].

The analysis provides an indirect indicator of the importance that travelers give to the different destination attributes. Though the interest lies in the factorial scores derived from the components to establish the strength of each visitor's motivations, it is useful to characterize the factors obtained. The first factor—relating to culture—explains more than 27% of the total variance of the motivation matrix and corresponds to visitors for whom the cultural resources of the destination are relevant at the time of travel. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.806) of the four items in this motivational dimension reveals the reliability of the subscale. The second factor is related to sports and corresponds to active visitors who seek recreational activities linked to physical exercise and sports. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.804) also indicates a reliable subscale and explains 23% of the total variance of the motivation matrix. Finally, factor number of three relates to nature and corresponds to visitors seeking space and time to enjoy contact with the natural environment. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.650) also indicates a reliable subscale, because it accounts for just over 22% of the total variance. Based on these results, the first hypothesis of the research is supported: The motivations to visit a tourist destination are heterogeneous.



**Table 2.** Factorial matrix of rotated components. Motivation to visit Manabí.

Motivations	Components			Motivational Dimensions
	1	2	3	
<b>Increase my knowledge about other cultures</b>			0.601	<b>Cultural dimension</b>
Learn how the toquilla straw hat is made			0.847	
Acquire a toquilla straw hat			0.801	
Attend cultural events			0.737	
Practice nautical sports (surfing, windsurfing, snorkeling, scuba)		0.765		<b>Sports dimension</b>
Practice paragliding		0.870		
Sport fishing		0.776		
Enjoy the beaches and coast of Manabí	0.717			<b>Natural dimension</b>
Appreciate and learn about natural protected areas	0.533			
Enjoy the atmosphere of the region's cities	0.597			
Taste Manabí cuisine in its place of origin	0.622			
Get to know new places	0.632			
Eigenvalues	2.660	2.227	2.101	
% variance explained	27.163	23.562	22.504	
% cumulative variance	27.163	50.725	71.229	
KMO		0.837		
Bartlett's sphericity test	Chi-squared = 2519.281 sig < 0.001			
Extraction method: Principal component analysis; rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser				

Source: Own elaboration.

## 5.2. Segmentation of the Sample According to the Motivations

An analysis of tourists' motivations for travelling provides a well-founded basis for the segmentation of tourists visiting Manta and Montecristi. A non-hierarchical conglomerate analysis was performed with the factorial scores of the three extracted dimensions. To maximize the variance between typologies and minimize the variance within each of them, the best solution meeting the criteria established three clusters or segments. The Kruskal-Wallis H-test was used on the basis of three possible groupings—two, three and four conglomerates—verifying that it is the grouping into three segments that provided the highest Kruskal–Wallis H values [56].

Table 3 shows the characterization of the resulting segments based on the means of the ten items measuring the reasons for the visit. The Kruskal-Wallis H statistics verify the existence of differences between the means of the different segments, although they do not identify where these differences are; this was determined via the Mann-Whitney U test.

**Table 3.** Characterization of the clusters from the average of the motivation variable.

Motivations	Tourist Clusters			Kruskal–Wallis H	
	Alternative Tourist	Passive Tourist of Natural Heritage	Active Tourist of Cultural and Natural Heritage	$\chi^2$	Sig.
Increase my knowledge about other cultures	3.11	2.95	4.41 (*)	192.615	<0.000
Learn how the <i>toquilla</i> straw hat is made	3.00 (*)	1.79 (*)	4.08 (*)	343.545	<0.000
Acquire the <i>toquilla</i> straw hat	2.87 (*)	1.95 (*)	4.12 (*)	306.312	<0.000
Attend cultural events	3.14 (*)	2.23 (*)	4.00 (*)	237.846	<0.000
Practice nautical sports (surfing, windsurfing, snorkeling, scuba)	2.66	2.42	3.93 (*)	150.315	<0.000

Table 3. Cont.

Motivations	Tourist Clusters			Kruskal–Wallis H	
	Alternative Tourist	Passive Tourist of Natural Heritage	Active Tourist of Cultural and Natural Heritage	$\chi^2$	Sig.
Practice paragliding	<b>2.69 (*)</b>	<b>2.14 (*)</b>	<b>3.39 (*)</b>	96.492	<0.000
Perform sport fishing	<b>2.58 (*)</b>	<b>1.83 (*)</b>	<b>3.41 (*)</b>	156.697	<0.000
Enjoy the beaches and the coast of Manabí	<b>2.96 (*)</b>	<b>4.56 (*)</b>	<b>4.41 (*)</b>	147.233	<0.000
Appreciate and know natural protected areas	<b>2.74 (*)</b>	<b>3.41 (*)</b>	<b>4.37 (*)</b>	199.496	<0.000
Enjoy the atmosphere of the Manabitas cities	<b>2.97 (*)</b>	4.05	4.16	102.790	<0.000
Taste the Manabí gastronomy in its place of origin	<b>3.04 (*)</b>	4.31	4.36	109.315	<0.000
Get to know new places	<b>2.99 (*)</b>	<b>4.23 (*)</b>	<b>4.51 (*)</b>	149.102	<0.000

(\*) The values in bold type present significant differences in two of three of the means clusters. To test for the significant differences between the different means, the Mann–Whitney U test was applied. Source: Own elaboration.

The first segment contains 16.7% of the tourists surveyed and is characterized by registering the lowest values in all motivational items. This segment can be called alternative tourists and corresponds to visitors with other tourism or psychosocial motivations that the study has not been able to detect. The second segment includes 28.2% of tourists in the sample and is characterized by having the highest values for items in the natural dimension and the lowest for items in the cultural and sports dimensions. These visitors seek to break with their daily routine through the passive contact and enjoyment of nature, and they can be called passive natural heritage tourists. The third group contains 55.1% of tourists and is characterized by having high values for items in all three dimensions. Such visitors, in addition to increasing their culture through the heritage they visit, consider the trip a tool to actively engage with and enjoy nature. For these reasons, this segment can be called active tourists of cultural and natural heritage. This analysis supports the second hypothesis of the investigation: Depending on the different motivations for visiting a destination, there are different types of tourists.

### 5.3. Analysis of Tourists' Socio-Economic Characteristics

The analysis of the socio-economic profile of tourists highlights that, of the 675 visitors who participated in the study, 50.8% were men and 49.2% were women, with no differences in the data collection of the fieldwork. Most of the respondents were, in general, young people, and, as shown in Table 4, more than 53% were under 35 years of age. There was no apparent association between age and the motivation to visit the site (contingency coefficient = 0.460,  $p = 0.994$ ). This result does not support the third hypothesis of the research proposed, so we cannot affirm that cultural interest in a destination increases with tourist age.

As for the components of the trip, it appears that tourists travel to Manabí accompanied by their family, although many also travel as a couple. An association is detected between the type of motivation and the company in which one travels (contingency coefficient = 0.165,  $p = 0.004$ ). There appears to be more family trips among passive tourists of natural heritage, while the active tourist of cultural and natural heritage travels is accompanied by family, a partner, or work and friendly companions. Statistically significant differences were detected between the segments (Kruskal–Wallis  $H = 8.072$ ,  $p = 0.018$ ). In terms profession, students, employees in private companies and independent professionals stood out.



The respondents possessed a high level of academic training, as can be seen in Table 4. The high percentage of university graduates (80.2% of the respondents declared having a university or postgraduate degree) should be noted. Significant differences were detected among tourists in terms of education level and age. Older tourists have a higher level of education, so, as age decreases, the presence of tourists with postgraduate studies lowers (gamma coefficient = 0.318,  $p = 0.000$ ). Segmentation differences were also detected. The segment with greater cultural motivation is characterized by a greater presence of tourists who have completed at least some university-level education (Kruskal–Wallis  $H = 6.406$ ,  $p = 0.041$ ). These differences support the fourth hypothesis relative to the greater cultural interest of travelers with higher education levels.

Regarding place of origin, most of the tourists (61.0%) were foreign; visitors from the rest of Latin America stood out (18.7%), followed by American tourists (10.7%), and European tourists (9.6%). An analysis by segments showed an association between motivation and origin (contingency coefficient = 0.216,  $p = 0.000$ ). European and North American tourists tended to have greater cultural and natural motivations, while domestic and Latin American tourists tended to have natural motivations.

**Table 4.** Sociodemographic profile of tourists in Manabí.

Variables	Categories	Tourist Clusters			Total
		Alternative Tourist	Passive Tourist of Natural Heritage	Active Tourist of Cultural and Natural Heritage	
<b>Sex</b> (N = 675)	<b>Men</b>	39.8%	56.3%	51.3%	50.80%
	<b>Women</b>	60.2%	43.7%	48.7%	49.2%
<b>Age</b> (N = 675)	Under 25 years of age	28.3%	24.7%	25.3%	25.6%
	25–35 years old	38.1%	37.4%	37.9%	37.8%
	36–45 years old	19.5%	24.2%	23.9%	23.3%
	46–65 years old	10.6%	10.5%	9.9%	10.2%
	65 years old or more	3.5%	3.2%	3.0%	3.1%
<b>Education level</b> (N = 675)	Primary education	3.5%	1.1%	0.8%	1.3%
	Secondary education	27.4%	17.4%	16.4%	18.5%
	University education	48.7%	62.6%	59.1%	58.4%
	Master/PhD	20.4%	18.9%	23.7%	21.8%
<b>Occupational category</b> (N = 675)	Businessman	16.8%	12.6%	11.6%	12.7%
	Public official	14.2%	14.2%	11.8%	12.9%
	Housework	11.5%	4.2%	4.3%	5.5%
	Private employee	15.9%	28.4%	24.7%	24.3%
	Student	21.2%	20.5%	25.3%	23.3%
	Independent Prof	14.2%	16.3%	19.4%	17.6%
	Retired	6.2%	2.6%	2.7%	3.3%
	Unemployed	—	1.1%	0.3%	0.4%
<b>Tourist origin</b> (N = 675)	Ecuador	70.8%	66.8%	55.1%	61.0%
	Rest of Latin America	18.6%	22.1%	16.9%	18.7%
	North America	5.3%	7.9%	13.7%	10.7%
	Europe	5.3%	3.2%	14.2%	9.6%
<b>Tourist origin</b> (N = 675)	Alone	15.9%	13.2%	11.6%	12.7%
	Work companions or friends	15.9%	13.2%	25.3%	20.3%
	Partner	30.1%	24.2%	27.7%	27.1%
	Family	38.1%	49.5%	35.5%	39.9%

Source: Own elaboration.

Turning to the economic impact, the analysis of the monthly family income showed that 27.2% of the visitors surveyed reported incomes lower than \$700 per month, compared to 22.0% who claimed to earn more than \$2500 (Table 5). These results suggest that tourists who come to the province of Manabí to visit Manta and Montecristi have medium-high purchasing power, because almost half of them

declared an income of more than \$1500 per month. Significant differences appear if we relate the level of income with the identified tourist clusters (Kruskal-Wallis  $H = 18.002$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). The average level of income declared by the active tourist of cultural and natural heritage is higher than the average income level of all tourists. There is also a positive relationship between family income and planned expenditure (gamma coefficient = 0.390,  $p = 0.001$ ). Visitors with a higher monthly income have higher expenditure forecasts than those who declare lower income. The results support the fifth research hypothesis: Tourists with a greater cultural interest generate a greater economic impact in the visited destination. The income derived from tourism activity supports the economy of the area, materializing in the payment of wages and salaries, the purchase of materials and services, and the improvement of tourist and general infrastructures.

The behavioral loyalty of visitors is high: Almost 85% of the respondents declared they had previously visited Manabí, which suggests that Manabí inspires a high degree of loyalty. This allows for the sustainable development for this tourist destination. The passive tourist of natural heritage registers a somewhat higher index compared to the rest of the groups: Almost 95% declared they already knew the destination (Kruskal-Wallis  $H = 18.703$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ).

Among the tourists participating in the study, only 3.3% said they did not spend the night in the province of Manabí, and 64.3% stayed at least two nights. The active tourists of cultural and natural heritage registered a higher rate of overnight stays (Kruskal-Wallis  $H = 11.116$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). This can be explained by their higher level of income and planned daily expenses. These characteristics should be considered for the sustainable economic development of the analyzed area.

**Table 5.** Characteristics of the trip.

Variables	Categories	Tourist Clusters			Total
		Alternative Tourist	Passive Tourist of Natural Heritage	Active Tourist of Cultural and Natural Heritage	
<b>Income</b> (N = 675)	Under \$H500	17.7%	8.9%	11.0%	11.6%
	From \$500 to \$700	15.9%	18.4%	14.0%	15.6%
	From \$701 to \$1500	29.2%	35.8%	25.8%	29.2%
	From \$1501 to \$2500	27.4%	25.8%	17.7%	21.6%
	From \$2501 to \$3599	8.8%	10.0%	24.7%	17.9%
	Over \$3500	0.9%	1.1%	6.7%	4.1%
<b>Daily expenditure</b> (N = 675)	Under \$30	13.3%	18.9%	9.1%	12.6%
	From \$30 to \$60	20.4%	20.0%	25.0%	22.8%
	From \$61 to \$90	22.1%	22.6%	23.9%	23.3%
	From \$91 to \$120	21.2%	10.5%	17.5%	16.1%
	From \$121 to \$150	8.8%	13.2%	9.1%	10.2%
	Over \$150	14.2%	14.7%	15.3%	15.0%
<b>Visits</b> (N = 675)	Never	9.7%	5.8%	23.4%	16.1%
	From 1 to 2 times	54.0%	44.2%	38.7%	42.8%
	Over 3 times	36.3%	50.0%	37.9%	41.0%
<b>Stay</b>	Did not stay overnight	7.1%	2.1%	2.7%	3.3%
<b>(N = 675)</b>	One night	31.9%	23.7%	18.8%	22.4%
	Between two and six nights	44.2%	56.3%	56.2%	54.2%
	More than six nights	16.8%	17.9%	22.3%	20.1%
<b>Overnight accommodation type</b> (N = 675)	Hotel	38.1%	37.4%	37.1%	37.3%
	Guesthouse	17.7%	8.9%	25.8%	19.7%
	Apartment/Hostel	14.2%	7.9%	7.5%	8.7%
	House of relatives/friends	30.1%	45.8%	29.6%	34.2%

Source: Own elaboration.

Regarding accommodation type, hotels were the most used, followed closely by houses of relatives or friends (Table 5). There are no statistically significant differences between the different identified tourism segments (Kruskal-Wallis  $H = 5.719$ ,  $p = 0.057$ ).

#### 5.4. Evaluation of Destination Attributes

In the questionnaire, several items sought to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the destinations' tourist resources (Table 6). This information is essential to determine the competitiveness of the destination to achieve sustainable development. The Cronbach's alpha (0.841) on the scale reveals a meritorious internal consistency.

**Table 6.** Values for tourism attributes.

Tourism Attributes		Mean	Ranking
<b>Services</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha (0.743) Mean (3.84)</b>	Diversity and quality of local cuisine	4.00
		Attention and quality of tourist accommodation	3.94
		Hospitality of residents	3.96
		Attention and quality of bars and restaurants	3.92
		Opportunity to buy local crafts	3.77
		Attention and quality of tourist guides	3.70
		Complementary leisure offer	3.58
<b>Attractiveness of the area and accessibility</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha (0.667) Mean (3.83)</b>	Natural places	4.15
		Urban environment	3.84
		Signage	3.61
		Tourist information	3.71
<b>Infrastructures</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha (0.683) Mean (3.68)</b>	Citizen security	3.72
		Care and cleaning	3.68
		Public transport services	3.67

Source: Own elaboration.

Tourist resources are grouped into three dimensions: Services, attractiveness of the area and accessibility and infrastructure. The Cronbach's alpha for the three dimensions reveals the reliability of the subscales. This allows us to analyze the importance that tourists give to different attributes of the province of Manabí as a tourist destination. Among the attributes that contribute to the satisfaction of the tourist and the image of the destination, 'natural places,' 'diversity and quality of the local gastronomy,' and 'hospitality of the residents' stand out. Among the points that confer a lower competitive advantage to the destination and that are opportunities for improvement, 'signage' and 'complementary leisure offer' stand out.

An analysis of the three identified tourist clusters reveals that the more heterogeneous the reasons for visiting Manabí, the greater the perceived value of the tourism resources, which reinforces the image of the destination (Table 7). This allows us to accept the sixth hypothesis: Motivation affects satisfaction with the tourist experience, and tourists with a more heterogeneous or diverse motivation scale have the highest level of satisfaction.

**Table 7.** Touristic attribute analysis of tourist clusters.

Touristic Attributes	Tourist Clusters			Kruskal Wallis	
	Alternative Tourist	Passive Tourist of Natural Heritage	Active Tourist of Cultural and Natural Heritage	$\chi^2$	Sig.
Services	3.49 (*)	3.63 (*)	4.05 (*)	100.203	<0.000
Attractiveness of the area and accessibility	3.41	3.57	4.08 (*)	111.129	<0.000
Infrastructure	3.36	3.40	3.93 (*)	75.621	<0.000
Toquilla Straw Hat	3.49	3.34	3.98 (*)	115.634	<0.000

(\*) The values in bold type present significant differences in three of four of the means clusters. To test for significant differences between the different means the Mann-Whitney u test was applied. Source: Own elaboration.

## 6. Conclusions

The recognition by UNESCO of certain customs, representations, craft expressions and ancestral knowledge as ICH represents an unparalleled valuation of said heritage and an obligation to safeguard it. This inscription also endows ICH with the power to attract for the tourist industry. ICH must then be adequately managed given the fragile balance between economic exploitation and patrimonial sustainability. The also is the case concerning natural heritage that attracts tourists for the natural habitat and biodiversity. Cultural and nature tourism are important sources of sustainable economic development for tourist destinations, especially in developing countries, where they represent an opportunity to overcome the vicious circle of poverty within local communities.

The cities of Manta and Montecristi in the Ecuadorian province of Manabí have great potential for tourism development that requires further investigation to support proper management that would guarantee both the promotion suitable tourism plans and local sustainability. An analysis of the profiles of tourists visiting these heritage sites is necessary to determine the sociodemographic variables that group them, as well as their motivations, expectations, satisfaction and loyalty.

This article contributes to the existing academic literature on the links among tourists, the cultural and natural heritage visited, and tourism behavior. This study identified the existence of three tourist clusters with different motivations (alternative tourist, passive tourist of natural heritage, and active tourist of cultural and natural heritage), which affirms that nature is an important motivation among visitors to the province of Manabí. The cluster of tourists seeking cultural heritage and nature is the most representative. This segment brings together a greater percentage of international tourists, with higher academic education and has a greater impact and contributes to the economic development of the area (higher income, higher average daily expenditure and a higher number of overnight stays). It is also evaluated, to a greater degree, the tourist resources of the province.

The present investigation clarifies the characteristics of the different groups of tourists that visit a heritage site such as the one analyzed, which allows for the promotion and concession of specific tourism products to improve destination satisfaction and loyalty among visitors. Knowing what tourists want, their interests, and their expectations makes the economic improvement of the local community possible through sustainable tourism income. It is also necessary to develop public and private coordination to provide the necessary resources responding to the needs for the interpretation of the cultural and natural heritage that is visited. The participation of the local community with adequate training plans would be of interest so that they can facilitate the interpretation of the natural and cultural heritage visited. One last relevant contribution is to encourage the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of small tourism entrepreneurs and local artisans through public programs: This helps maintain and create new jobs and generates wealth within the territory itself.

Ultimately, these finds are fundamental for the strategic management of the tourist sector in the area we are researching. The results will allow the authorities in charge of managing tourism to focus all their resources towards designing, applying and developing policies that increase the loyalty of those who visit. At the same time, the results make us understand the correlation between motives and satisfaction so those factors that improve both can be enhanced (mainly natural places, diversity, local cuisine variety, and native people's hospitality). This would allow for an optimal return of investment that would be inclusive, equal (mainly for the local community), and derived from this activity.

The main limitation of this study is the limited time period in which the fieldwork was carried out. It would be appropriate to extend the questionnaire survey throughout the year and even to other municipalities near the cities under study. As a future line of research, this study could be extended beyond the tourist perspective to illuminate the supply point of view, completing the study with qualitative techniques through research interviews.

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