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Understanding Motivations and Segmentation in Ecotourism Destinations. Application to Natural Parks in Spanish Mediterranean Area

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Abstract: Ecotourism is one of the tourism variants with more annual growth. Motivation has become a fundamental criterion for travel behavior. Segmentation is used to identify the market niches of different tourism products and services. This study collects these three elements and is designed to examine demand segmentation and motivations in ecotourism. The analysis was carried out in the Albufera and Serranía de Cuenca Natural Parks, both located in the Mediterranean area in Spain. The analysis sample consists in 349 surveys obtained in situ. For the data analysis, a factor analysis and nonhierarchical K-media segmentation were performed. The results show eight motivational dimensions: “Interpersonal relationships”, “Self-development”, “Escape”, “Building personal relationships”, “Nature”, “Ego-defensive function”, “Rewards”, and “Fun”. According to tourists’ motivations, three ecotourist segments are obtained: “Nature”, “Multiple motives”, and “Reward and Escape”. This research can assist companies and institutions to improve tourism service offers and perform efficient marketing planning.

Keywords: ecotourism; motivation; segmentation

1. Introduction

Ecotourism is one of the variants of tourism with more annual growth [1], approximately 5% worldwide, which is a threefold faster growth than tourism in general [2]. Ecotourism areas have also become important destinations, given their effectiveness in environmental protection, environmental education, fun, and job creation [3]. Both the environment and nature are the most important reasons for travelling to a nature or ecotourism destination [4,5]. Tourists seek personally enriching experiences, such as contacting local communities, learning about an ecosystem, and participating in the conservation of natural resources [6]. Therefore, tourists are increasingly careful with the environment and feel more motivated to seek attractions and activities for their environmental content [5].

Motivation has become a fundamental criterion for travel behavior and determines different aspects of tourism in relation to reasons for traveling, the specific destination, and overall satisfaction with the trip [7]. Consequently, visitors may have different preferences and motivations for each visited destination [8].

Demand segmentation has been extensively studied for some considerable time [9–12]. Segmentation has often been used to identify the market niches of different tourism products and services [13], so this strategy is significantly used by tourism research [14,15].

Segmentation according to tourist motivations is a very appropriate method when it comes to understanding the different groups that travel to protected areas [16,17]. Similarly, many empirical research works have considered motivations to be a fundamental method for tourism segmentation [8,18,19]. This is why ecotourists should not be managed as a homogeneous group because their profiles, behavioral characteristics, and motivations may differ [17,20]. Moreover, there are many advantages of segmenting demand because all world tourism operators feel pressure to ensure that customers receive the experiences they demand [21]. Accordingly, demand segmentation allows managers to identify not only the most important elements of visitors' motivations, but also appropriate information channels, and to concentrate their efforts on the desired customer groups, which helps sustainable development [22]. However, lack of information on diverse ecotourism segments complicates the efficiency of specific promotion programs [13].

Given the importance of ecotourism in wildlife protection areas, it is absolutely necessary to know demand in detail in this context. However, no studies have been conducted on these destinations at any level of depth that contributes to the scientific literature. This is why the present article analyzes motivations and segmentation in ecotourism to provide park and protected area managers with information to help them to develop programs that benefit both the destination and the community.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Motivations in Ecotourism

On the one hand, motivation causes, directs, and integrates behavior and activity [11], and is an internal psychological need of visitors that drives them to fulfill certain desires [4]. Likewise, motivations play a fundamental role that makes people perceive a psychological imbalance that can be amended through travel experience [23]; hence, motivations constitute the set of needs that influence people to participate in certain tourist activities [24]. An analysis of motivations allows us to understand the reason for travelers' choice, preferences, and needs [25], which makes motivations a fundamental factor in the decision-making process [26].

On the other hand, tourists are aware of motivations and their relation to the experience that they will enjoy at a destination [27]. Likewise, ecotourists are usually identified as "green tourists", who clearly appreciate nature tourism. This basically targets the activities to be performed in the natural environment, motivated by the firm conviction to protect it [28]. Although this attitude is frequently found in the nature tourism profile, it is not the only one because tourists have different reasons and motives for visiting various nature-related destinations [29].

Holden and Sparrowhawk [30] point out that ecotourists' main motivations are to learn about nature, be physically active and meet people with similar interests. Page and Dowling [31] indicate that some ecotourists travel to fulfill recreational and leisure needs, and to collect information on specific areas. Pearce and Lee [32] explain that motivating factors for travel include relaxation, escape, improved relationships, and self-development, among others. Jang and Wu [33] suggest that the commonest push factors are searching for knowledge, relaxation, and fostering family bonding, while the most frequent pull factors are natural and historic environments, cost, facilities, security, and accessibility. Kim Lian Chan and Baum [34] affirm that ecotourism motivations are classified as escape, cohesion, healthy activity, and learning about nature. Kruger and Saayman [35] observe six main reasons why tourists travel to National Parks: seek knowledge, experience nature, take pictures, relax and escape, experience the park's attributes, and nostalgia. Instead, Lee et al. [36] analyzed tourists from revitalized ecological parks in South Korea, and find seven motivation-related factors: self-development, interpersonal relationships, reward, building personal relationships, escape, ego-defensive function, and nature appreciation. Panin and Mbrica [37] point out the most important motivations for ecotourists in the Serbian Republic by dividing them into four groups: social activities, health and sports activities, motivations for nature, and educational and cultural activities. They argue that the main

ecotourism motivations are related to recreational and sports activities, and have a positive impact on health, e.g., walking through forests, observing, and enjoying nature.

Iversen et al. [38] observe five motivational dimensions related to nature: status, novelty, relaxation, active in nature, and social interaction. Xu and Chan [39] identify several motivational nature-related dimensions: self-enhancement, relaxation, knowledge, escapism from routine, scenery of destination, information and convenience, and various fun activities. Kamri and Radam [40] point out four motivational factors for visiting a national park: challenge excursions, social trips, nature tours, and getaway outings.

For their part, Jeong, et al. [41] conducted a study at the Kuang Si waterfall and Konglor cave in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and found four motivational dimensions: health, related to physical health and skills; nature, related to observing scenic beauty, and being in and learning from the natural environment; cohesion, related to doing things with my partner and being with family and friends; and escape, related to loneliness and getting away from other people. Another study is that of Carvache-Franco et al. [42] in Ecuador, who found six motivational dimensions in ecotourism: self-development, interpersonal relationships and ego-defensive function, building personal relationships, escape, nature appreciation, and reward.

According to the literature, the motivations in ecotourism are varied, and these are related to observing and learning from nature, self-development, escaping from routine, for novelty, and for having a social interaction. These motivations characterize an ecotourist, who travels to a destination, not only to observe nature, but for other reasons, such as those mentioned above. This differentiates ecotourism from other more conventional types of tourism.

2.2. Segmentation in Ecotourism

A Demand segmentation has become the main method used to determine which groups to go to and, thus, establish how assets can be used more efficiently by evaluating different competitive strategies [43]. Segmentation is based on knowledge about the market, which is made up of subgroups of people with different needs and preferences [44]. Segmentation can also identify specific groups of tourists, allows tour packages to be better customized and can, thus, increase satisfaction with destinations, and develop better and more efficient tourism policies [15].

In the scientific literature, different ways of segmenting tourists coexist according to geographic criteria [45], demographic characteristics [46], travel expenses [47], activities [48], benefits [18], and motivation [49]. Of these, motivation is considered one of the most widely used approaches in segmentation [50]. However, motivation is also a key element in tourism segmentation research [51]. Therefore, segmenting tourists according to their motivations allows tourism companies to create more valued products and services in destination markets [52].

Market segmentation is particularly helpful for determining the type of services, products, and experiences that tourists most value [53]. By using segmentation effectively, a tourist destination can obtain extraordinary benefits, including competitive advantage [54]; hence, identifying market segments goes beyond purely communicative and advertising purposes, as it implies a shift from marketing to market-oriented organizational management [55]. Likewise, [56] affirms that segmentation means that managers and business owners in destinations can position them better by being able to attract more tourists.

In relation to segmentation studies in ecotourism, Perera et al. [57] use a behavioral approach for visitors to ecotourism sites in the forests of Sri Lanka, and identify four different tourist types according to their behavioral and motivational characteristics: ecotourists, picnickers, egoistic tourists, and adventure tourists. However, Cordente-Rodríguez et al. [58] analyze excursionists in a specific area of the Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park in Spain, the Serranía Alta and indicate two groups: nature—those whose sole motivation is to enjoy nature and its resources; and multiple reasons—tourists have several different reasons, including enjoying nature and gastronomy, and visiting villages to discover their culture

and traditions. Sheena, Mariapan, and Aziz [59] analyze visitors to the Kinabalu Park, Sabah in Malaysia, and identify three groups: tough—the largest segment of visitors in the park, those more willing to perform activities that involve challenges and the desire to learn; soft ecotourists—who do not like physical activities, but prefer nature-guided walks; and structured—similar to the Soft Ecotourist group given their preference for the services they obtain and their marked preference for the learning component.

Barić et al. [60] studied Paklenica National Park visitors in Croatia and indicate three groups: naturalists—whose enjoyment of nature is the most important thing; escapists—who wish to escape and enjoy solitude, and are moderately interested in nature; and ecotourists—who enjoy nature and novelty, and have educational interests or are interested in learning from experiences. They are also highly motivated by the other variables of their study. Neuts et al. [61] investigate the market segments with the strongest economic impacts on ecotourism in Shiretoko of Hokkaido, Japan. They point out four segments: bear watchers—motivated by bear watching and waterfall excursion; landscape lovers—for whom landscape elements are the main reason for their visit; organized tourist groups—motivated by landscape elements and whale watching; and active explorers—tourists with varied motivations who prefer landscape and wildlife elements, such as observing bears and birds.

Another study is that of Jeong, et al. [42] at Kuang Si waterfall and Konglor cave in Lao PDR. They found four segments: nature and cohesion-seeking tourists, nature-seeking tourists, passive nature-seeking tourists, and want-it-all tourists. Another of the studies in protected areas is that of Taczanowska et al. [62] at Kasprowy Wierch within the Tatra National Park (Poland). They found four segments: group one was motivated by the recreation and admiration of the mountain views; group two (contemplative and non-consuming tourists) gave a wide range of reasons for their visit; group three was divided into two subgroups—subgroup 1, “occasional visitors”, was motivated to enjoy the views and the landscape along with the use of the cable car, and subgroup 2, “fitness visitors”, who was motivated to participate in physical activities and enjoy the views and landscapes of the surroundings; and group four was motivated by nature and landscape.

According to the literature, there are several segments in ecotourism, among them, there is a group that visits the destination just to appreciate nature. The authors, in their majority, mention a second segment, which is motivated to carry out various activities in the destination. Moreover, some authors find, in addition to the above, other segments related to activities in the destination.

3. Study Area

This study was conducted in two important natural parks in Spain for their diversity and natural resources: the Albufera Natural Park and the Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park. These two natural protected areas were selected for their environmental importance, proximity, and the large number of visitors they receive. The two protected areas represent the study population because they are similar areas to each other, with potential in ecotourism and they receive tourists with similar motivations related to observing landscapes, finding new things and enjoying nature.

3.1. The Albufera Natural Park

The Albufera Natural Park is one of the most important coastal wetlands of the Mediterranean Sea. It was declared a Natural Park in 1986, has been on the list of Wetlands of International Importance since 1990 and its area has been considered an SPAB (Special Protection Area for Birds) since 1994. This natural park in 2019 received 60,000 visitors [63] (Figure 1).

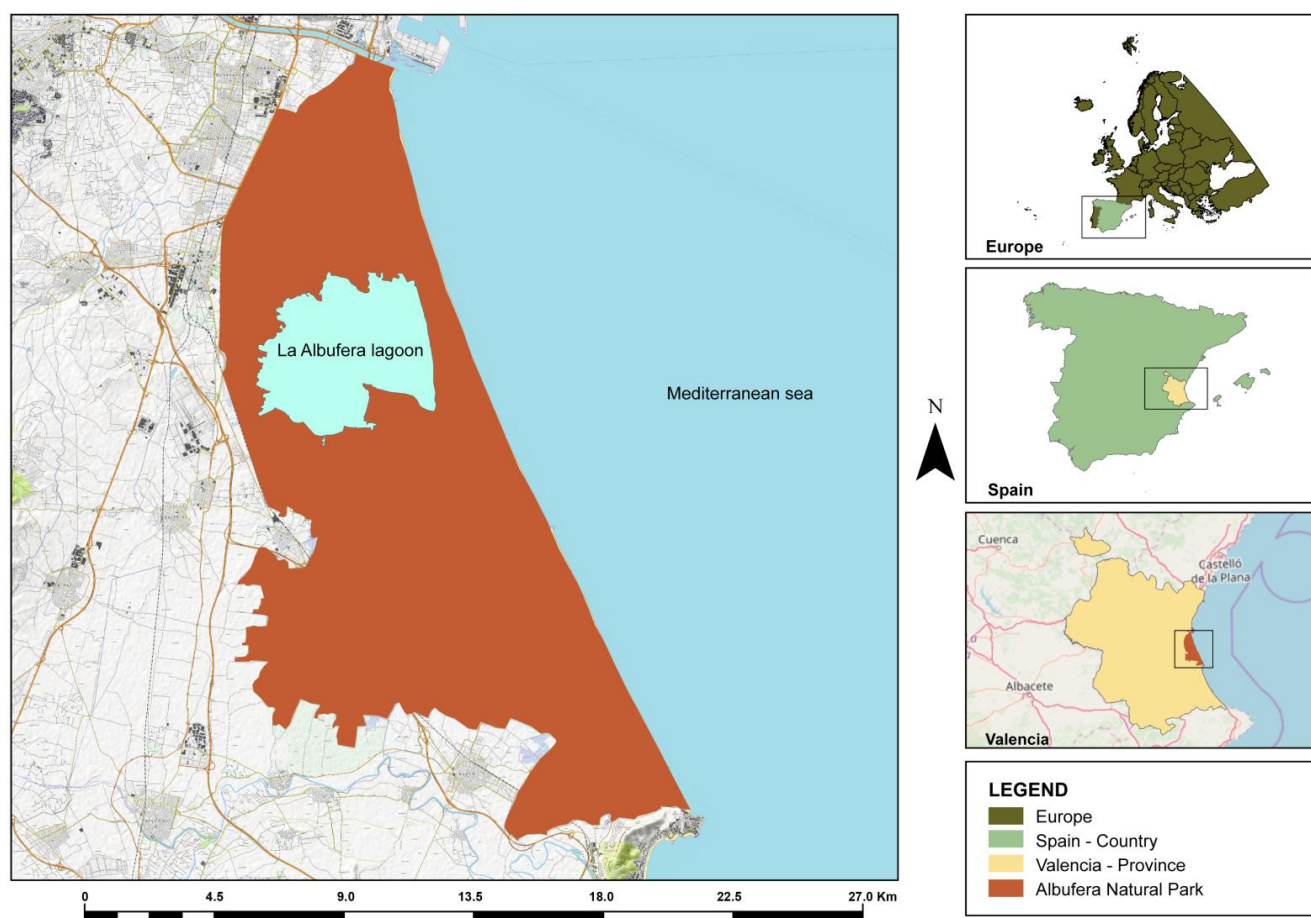


Figure 1. Albufera Natural Park (Spain).

The park covers 21,120 hectares and lies 10 km from the city of Valencia, Spain. Its biodiversity is very high and comes as three main groups:

- the sand barrier, which separates the lake from the sea;
- the Albufera Lake, for its high ecological, economic, and landscape value;
- the paddy field, which occupies two thirds of this park's total area.

Given its varied vegetation and particular characteristics, this park plays a very important role as a resting and breeding area for birds. It is also a source of wealth for its inhabitants, mainly through three traditional uses, growing rice, hunting, and fishing, whenever they are allowed.

In the park's interpretation center, "Raco de l'olla", many educational and environmental activities are carried out. You can also enjoy bird watching in its lookout tower specially in spring and autumn. Although the most popular activity is the boat ride on the lake of "La Albufera", particularly gorgeous at sunset.

3.2. The Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park

The Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park is located in the northeastern part of the Province of Cuenca, Spain. It occupies an area of 73,726 hectares and belongs to the city of Cuenca and several other municipalities. This area is protected mainly for its particular geological diversity. Its relief is characterized by very abundant karst modeling, which highlights its caves, dolinas, chasms, and lapiaces; its sickles and canyons are excavated by the Júcar and Escabas Rivers. The best-known places to visit for their geological richness are the Enchanted City, the Las Majadas alleys, and the torques of Palancares. Its abundant forest mass, formed by the Eurosiberian forests located further south in Europe, of pine, lime,

holly, and yew trees, acts as a refuge for several protected species, such as the driveway eagle, the golden eagle, moss, and vermilion.

In addition to visiting the 3 interpretation centers of the park, in Valdemeca, Uña, and Tragacete, and participating in their formative activities, you can visit the “El hosquillo” park for the recovery of fauna. Although, undoubtedly, the most popular activity is the visit to the “enchanted city”, where you can learn about the geological process of karst and admire its whimsical forms in a pleasant stroll. The number of visitors counted in the facilities of each this natural park in 2019 was approximately 40,000 people. (Figure 2).

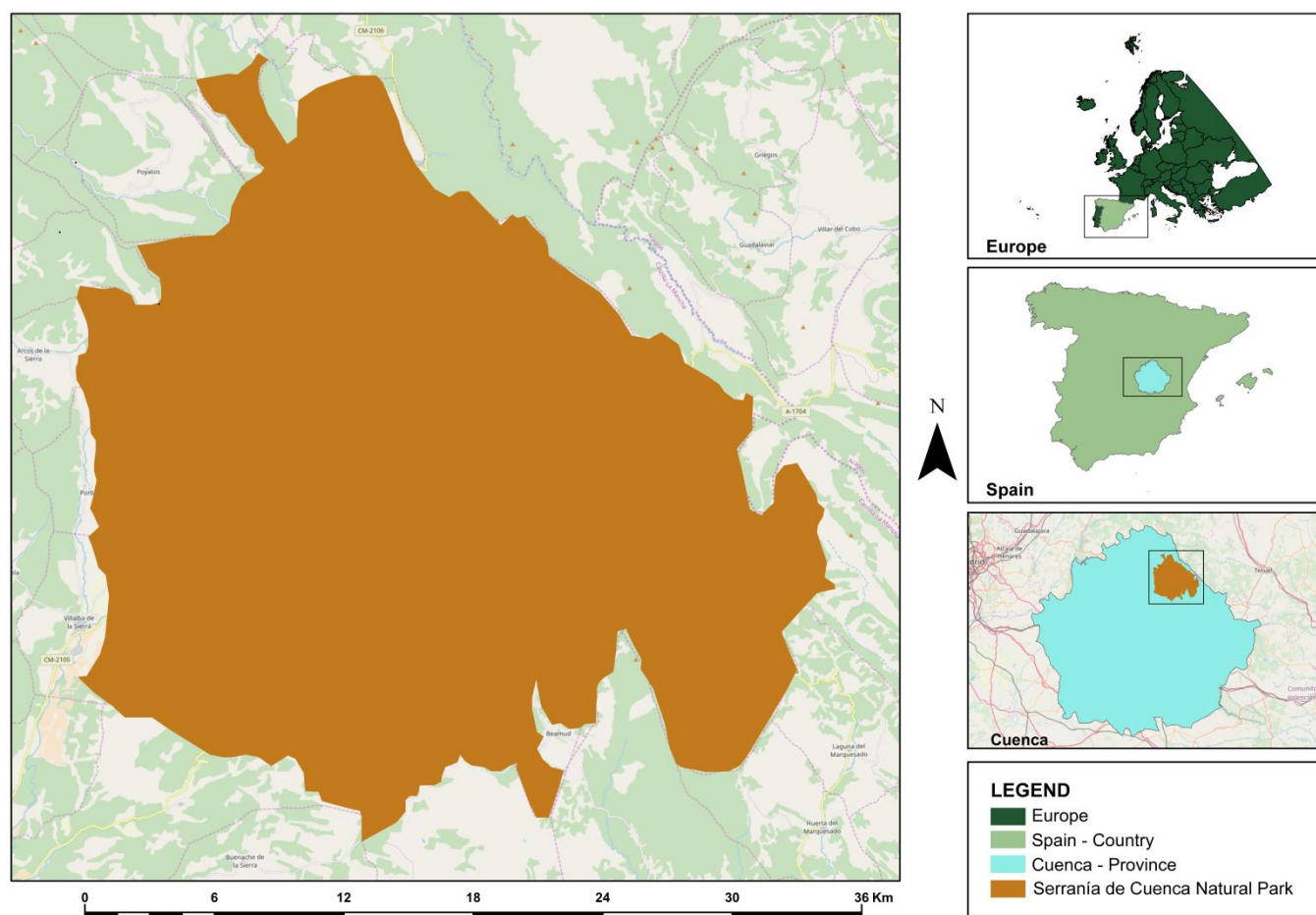


Figure 2. Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park (Spain).

4. Methodology

To achieve the research objective of the present study, a questionnaire was devised with three sections: one containing the socio-demographic and visiting characteristics of the respondents; another showing motivations on a 32-item scale based on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 denotes not much and 5 a lot; a third section with questions about general satisfaction, and intentions to return and recommend the ecotourism destination. The questionnaire was translated into English and Spanish. The measurement items developed for this research were based on several previous studies on ecotourism motivations [36,38].

The sample was obtained from the tourists visiting the Albufera and Serranía de Cuenca Natural Parks in Spain. Surveys were handed out in May and July 2019 to visitors aged over 18 who were in the protected areas at the time. The Convenience Sampling Method was used, because each element of the population can be a participant, therefore it is eligible to be part of the sample based on the proximity of the researchers when collecting the information. The sample was collected directly by the authors, who were

always available to explain any of the visitors' doubts or concerns, although respondents autonomously answered the questionnaire.

The sample size was formed by the 349 valid questionnaires obtained, 153 collected from the Albufera Natural Park and 196 obtained from the Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park. The motivations in these two parks being similar to each other, in relation to the behavior of tourists, the activities carried out and the preferences for ecotourism. Population variability was estimated at 50% ($p = q = 0.5$). The study presents an error margin of $\pm 5\%$ and a 95% confidence level. The collected data were organized, tabulated, and statistically analyzed with the SPSS 22.0 program for Windows. Cronbach's Alpha Index of the motivation scale reached 0.94, which indicates a robust index for the scale. Data were examined in two stages: first, a factor analysis was carried out to help identify the constructs underlying the variables and to provide an overview of the most important motivations; second, a factor analysis was run, which has been widely used in visitor segmentation research [64,65]. Varimax rotation was employed to facilitate data interpretation. The Kaiser criterion was applied to find the number of factors, where only factors with eigenvalues above than 1 were utilized. The KMO Index (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) and Bartlett's Sphericity Test were carried out to determine if it was appropriate to perform the factor analysis. In the second stage, the K-means grouping method was applied, which is commonly employed in tourism segmentation research and is the most frequently used method to segment participants [21].

Differences between groups were evaluated by the H-Kruskal Wallis Index. Any significant inter-group differences were assessed with the Mann-Whitney U Index. Finally, the Chi-Square analysis was used to explore significant differences between groups in terms of the satisfaction variables and intentions to return to the destination. Table 1 shows the basic characteristics of the research sample. (Table 1).

Table 1. Research Methodology.

Geographic Area	The Albufera and Serranía de Cuenca Natural Parks (Spain)
Population	National and foreign visitors
Completion time	May to July 2019
Process	The Convenience Sampling Method
Confidence level	95%
Error range	$\pm 5\%$
Valid questionnaires	349

5. Results

For the present study, with regard to sociodemographic aspects, the sample consisted of national tourists (10.3%) and international tourists (89.7%). Regarding gender, 46.7% were male and 53.3% female. Regarding age, the largest group was between 30 and 39 years old (32.7%), followed by those between 20 and 29 years old (23.5%). Regarding their level of education, the vast majority had university studies (45.8%), followed by those with secondary education (32.7%). Regarding work activity, the majority were private employees (31.5%), followed by tourists who were public employee (22.3%). The results are presented in Table 2.

5.1. Motivations in Ecotourism

A factorial analysis was carried out to reduce the motivational variables to a few factors, which allows results to be interpreted more clearly. The principal component analysis was used in the same way as for data reduction. The Varimax rotation method was followed to more clearly interpret the factors with high or low factor loads. To identify the number of factors, Kaiser's criteria were applied with own values above 1.00. Eight factors formed part of the solution and accounted for 66.9% of total variance. The KMO Index (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) was 0.91, which is an excellent value for the model. The Bartlett sphericity test was significant <0.05 , so it was appropriate to apply the factor analysis.

Cronbach's alpha index varied between 0.69 and 0.92 for the eight factors. The results are provided in Table 3.

Table 2. Sociodemographic Aspects.

Demographics	Categories	n	%
Origin	National	36	10.3
	Foreign	313	89.7
Gender	Male	163	46.7
	Female	186	53.3
Age	<20 years old	30	8.6
	20–29	82	23.5
	30–39	114	32.7
	40–49	12	3.4
	50–59	65	18.6
	>59 years old	46	13.2
Level of education	Primary	18	5.2
	Secondary	114	32.7
	University	160	45.8
	Postgraduate/Master's/PhD	57	16.3
Professional activity	Student	55	15.8
	Researcher/scientist	21	6.0
	Businessman	5	1.4
	Private employee	110	31.5
	Public employee	78	22.3
	Housework	10	2.9
	Unemployed	13	3.7
	Retired	31	8.9
	Autonomous	18	5.2
	Other	8	2.3

As shown in Table 3, the first factor was called “Self-development”. It was the most important factor in relation to the others because it represented the highest percentage of variance (35.87%). It also had a high reliability of 0.92 according to Cronbach's Alpha Index. This factor was related to motivations to understand more about myself, get a new perspective on life, have a sense of self-confidence, know what I am capable of, have the opportunity to know myself better, feel more independent, and feel harmony and inner peace. So “Self-development” was a fundamental factor for the tourists who visited these natural parks. Therefore, it is important that protected areas are destinations that increase personal development in tourists. The second factor was “Interpersonal relationships” and was related to motivations for sense of relevance, strengthen relationships with family members, reflect on past memories, reminisce about my parents' times, and contact friends/relatives who live elsewhere. This was the second most important factor, with variance (8.13%), this means that protected areas must be suitable for tourists who want to meet with friends and family. The third factor was called “Escape” and was related to motivations to get away from daily stress, escape from routine, avoid crowds and reduce interpersonal stress. This was the third most important in ecotourism, with variance (6.45%). In this sense, tourists are looking for suitable destinations to escape from the daily routine and stress. The fourth most important factor, with variance (5.30%), was called “Building personal relationships” and was related to motivations to meet people with similar interests, meet new people, meet locals, and be with others if I need them. Therefore, it is important that protected areas have adequate places for meetings between tourists with similar interests. The fifth most important factor, with variance (4.49%), was called “Ego-defensive function” and was related to the motivations to follow current events, join social discussion and join people's interest. The sixth factor according to importance was called “Nature” and was related to motivations to observe and better appreciate nature, be close to nature, and learn

about nature. This factor obtained a variance of (4.39%). The seventh factor in relation to importance was called “Rewards” and was related to motivations to explore the unknown and experience new things. This factor reached a variance of (3.47%). The eighth factor, according to importance, was called “Fun” and was related to motivations to have fun and acquire good memories. This factor obtained a variance of (3.21%).

Table 3. The motivations factor analysis.

Factor	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained (%)	Cronbach's α
Self-development		11.48	35.87	0.92
To have a chance to get to know myself better	0.769			
To gain a new perspective in life.	0.752			
To gain a sense of self-confidence	0.745			
To know what I am capable of	0.740			
To understand more about myself	0.689			
To be independent	0.647			
To feel inner harmony/peace	0.630			
To think about good times, I have had in the past.	0.557			
To find my destiny	0.517			
Interpersonal relationships		2.60	8.13	0.81
To feel that I belong	0.718			
To strengthen relationships with my family	0.685			
To reflect on past memories	0.685			
To reminisce about my parents' times	0.623			
To contact family/friends who live elsewhere	0.611			
Escape		2.06	6.45	0.86
To get away from daily stress	0.848			
To escape routine	0.828			
To get away from crowds of people	0.784			
To avoid interpersonal stress	0.625			
Building personal relationships		1.70	5.30	0.86
To meet people with similar interests	0.797			
To meet new people	0.773			
To meet the locals	0.739			
To be with others if I need them	0.564			
Ego-defensive function		1.44	4.49	0.86
To follow current events	0.794			
To join social discussion	0.788			
To join people's interest	0.704			
Nature		1.40	4.39	0.84
To better appreciate nature	0.895			
To be close to nature	0.883			
To learn about nature	0.799			
Rewards		1.11	3.47	0.80
To explore the unknown	0.857			
To experience new things	0.833			
Fun		1.04	3.25	0.69
To have fun	0.867			
To acquire fond memories	0.784			
Total extracted variance (%)			71.34	
Cronbach's α for all items				0.940

5.2. Motivation Segmentation

To perform demand segmentation in ecotourism, a nonhierarchical K-means cluster analysis was used to maximize the variance between typologies and to minimize the variance within each segment, where the solution of three clusters was obtained. To see if one mean differed from another, the Kruskal Wallis H index was used to find differences between clusters in relation to the motivational variables. The Mann–Whitney U Index was

applied to detect the significant differences of means between two segments. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Segments in ecotourism.

Variables	Multiple Motives	Nature	Reward and Escape	H-Kruskal Wallis		Mann–Whitney U
	1	2	3	χ^2	Sig.	Sig.
Nature						
To better appreciate nature	4.7	4.5	4.5	9.915	0.007	1–2.1–3
To be close to nature	4.7	4.4	4.5	9.078	0.011	1–2.1–3
To learn about nature	4.5	4.1	4.2	12.600	0.002	1–2.1–3
Rewards						
To explore the unknown	4.4	3.8	4.0	17.521	0.000	1–2.1–3
To experience new things	4.5	3.6	3.9	30.242	0.000	1–2.1–3
Fun						
To have fun	4.5	3.9	4.1	15.701	0.000	1–2.1–3
To acquire fond memories	4.7	4.0	4.3	27.765	0.000	1–2.1–3
Escape						
To get away from daily stress	4.7	2.9	4.4	136.132	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To escape routine	4.6	3.4	4.4	77.444	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To get away from crowds of people	4.4	2.9	4.0	87.810	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To avoid interpersonal stress	4.5	2.2	3.4	135.680	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
Self-development						
To have a chance to get to know myself better	4.0	1.7	2.7	156.722	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To gain a new perspective of life	4.2	2.1	3.1	123.780	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To gain a sense of self-confidence	4.2	1.7	2.8	174.803	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To know what I am capable of	4.2	1.8	3.0	162.900	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To understand more about myself	4.3	1.9	3.0	172.352	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To be independent	4.1	1.9	3.1	131.012	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To feel inner harmony/peace	4.7	2.8	3.9	119.825	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To think about the good times I have had in the past	4.2	1.7	2.6	147.614	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To find my destiny	4.0	1.4	2.5	178.432	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
Interpersonal relationships						
To feel that I belong	3.4	1.6	2.1	100.877	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To strengthen relationships with family	4.1	2.4	3.0	73.000	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To reflect on past memories	4.1	1.6	2.4	156.921	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To reminisce about my parents' times	4.0	1.6	2.4	140.848	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To contact family/friends who live elsewhere	3.4	1.5	2.3	93.502	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
Building personal relationships						
To meet people with similar interests	3.8	1.8	2.6	111.310	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To meet new people	3.5	1.8	2.6	88.397	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To meet the locals	3.9	2.3	3.1	82.994	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To be with others if I need them	3.6	1.6	2.4	124.872	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
Ego-defensive function						
To follow current events	3.8	1.7	2.7	120.309	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To join social discussion	3.6	1.6	2.6	120.469	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3
To join people's interests	4.1	2.0	3.1	135.347	0.000	1–2.2–3.1–3

As shown in Table 4, the first group was formed by visitors with high motivations in all the motivational variables of this study. This segment was related to all the dimensions or motivational factors herein found. This was why this segment was called “Multiple motives” and indicates that it was a segment of tourists with a variety of reasons for visiting the destination. The second group was made up of visitors with high motivations to observe and better appreciate nature, be close to nature and learn about nature. This segment was related to the “Nature” dimension, which is why this segment was called “Nature”. The

third segment was related to the “Rewards” dimension, with motivations to explore the unknown and experience new things, and also to the “Fun” dimension, with motivations to have fun and acquire good memories, and to the “Escape” dimension, with motivations to get away from daily stress, escape from routine, avoid crowds, and reduce interpersonal stress. This is why this segment was called “Reward and Escape”.

5.3. Relation of Segments with Socio-Demographic Variables

Pearson’s Chi-square test was run to find relations between the three segments and the socio-demographic variables of gender, age, and formal education. A 5-point Likert scale was used, where 1 denotes not much and 5 a lot. The results are presented in Figure 3.

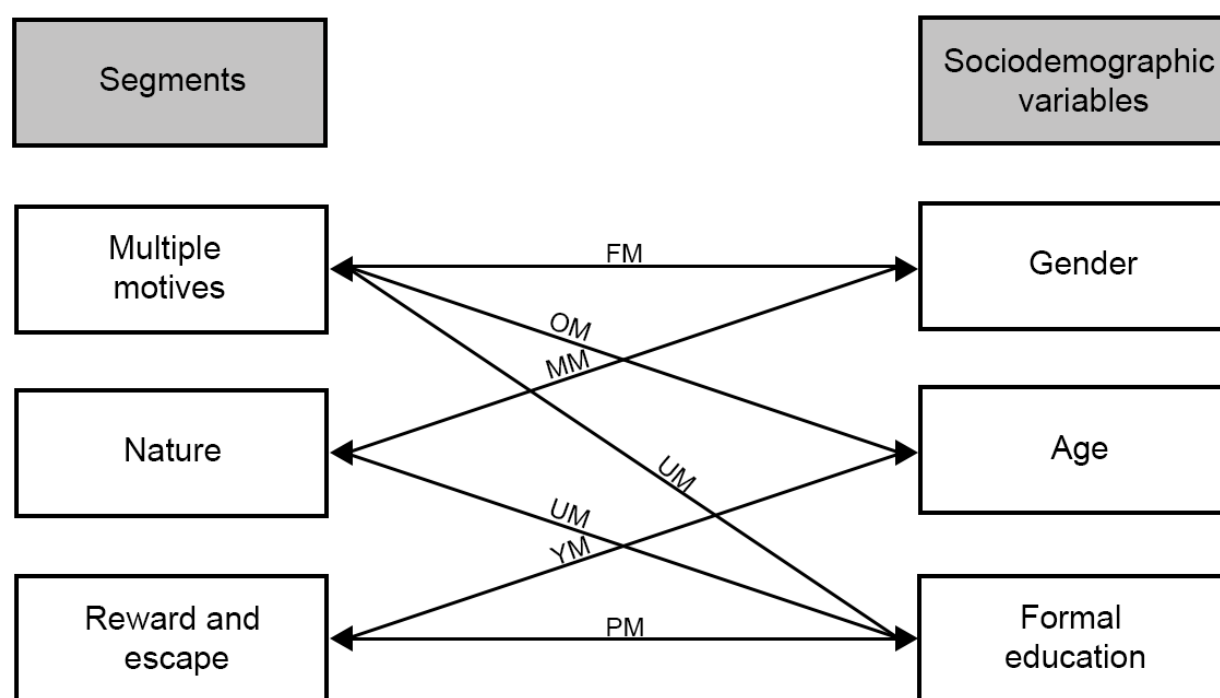


Figure 3. Relationship of the segments with sociodemographic variables. Note: OM: Older mostly. FM: Female mostly. UM: University mostly. MM: Men mostly. YM: Young mostly. PM: Postgraduates mostly.

According to the Figure 3, the three presented segments were significantly related to the variables gender, age, and educational level. However, the three segments did not present a significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) with the origin variable (national and foreign tourists), nor with the professional activity. The “Multiple motives” segment was mostly female, older, and with university studies. On the other hand, the “Nature” segment was mostly male and with university studies. While those of “Reward and escape” were mostly young and with postgraduate studies.

5.4. Relation of Segments with Satisfaction and Loyalty

Pearson’s Chi-square test was used to find relations between the three segments and the satisfaction and loyalty variables. A 5-point Likert scale was used, where 1 denotes not much and 5 a lot. The results are presented in Table 5.

As we can see in Table 5, the “Multiple motives” segment had high levels of overall satisfaction, intentions to return, recommend, and say positive things about the destination. Segments “Reward and escape” and “Nature” showed similar levels for overall satisfaction, intentions to return, recommend, and say positive things about the destination. Thus, it is necessary to implement strategies in segments “Reward and escape” and “Nature” to improve tourists’ satisfaction and loyalty to the destination.

Table 5. Relation of segments with satisfaction and loyalty.

Variables	Multiple Motives	Nature	Reward and Escape	χ^2	Sig.
	1	2	3		
Overall satisfaction	4.65	4.06	4.36	47.944	0.000
I intend to come back to this protected area	4.36	3.57	4.13	34.053	0.000
I intend to recommend this protected area	4.69	4.21	4.50	27.933	0.000
When I talk about this protected area, I intend to say positive things.	4.79	4.34	4.59	25.445	0.000

6. Discussion

This article aimed to find visitors' motivations and demand segmentation in ecotourism to develop more efficient strategies to benefit demand, and the sustainable development of the destination and the community.

The eight motivational dimensions herein mentioned are similar to those found by Lee et al. [36], who called them: self-development, interpersonal relationships, reward, building personal relationships, escape, ego-defensive function, and nature appreciation. The eight dimensions found in this study are similar to those of Panin and Mbrica [37], who found four motivational groups: social activities, sports and health activities, motivations for nature, and cultural and educational activities. Likewise, the eight dimensions mentioned herein are similar to those found by Iversen et al. [38], which they called: status, novelty, relaxation, active in nature, and social interaction. The motivational dimensions of this study are also similar to those of Xu and Chan [39], who called them: self-enhancement, relaxation and knowledge, escapism from routine life, scenery of destination, information and convenience, and various fun activities. In the same way, the dimensions of this study are similar to the study by Jeong, et al. [41], who found the motivations: health, nature, cohesion, and escape. However, the study by these authors did not take into account the motivations related to reward, analyzed in this study. Likewise, this study is similar to that of Carvache-Franco et al. [42], who found six motivational dimensions in ecotourism: self-development, interpersonal relationships and ego-defensive function, building personal relationships, escape, reward, and nature appreciation. Our findings also support other previous research into ecotourists' motivations [17,66,67].

In relation to demand segmentation, our "nature" segment, with high motivations for nature-related aspects, is similar to the "Nature" segment in the study by Cordente-Rodríguez et al. [58], with high motivations for nature. It is also similar to the "naturalist" segment reported by Barić et al. [60], for whom enjoying nature was the most important. Also, it is similar to segment 4 (nature and landscape) found by Taczanowska, et al. [62], with high motivations for nature and its landscapes. Therefore, for the "nature" segment of this study, the enjoyment of nature is the most important thing.

The "multiple motives" segment herein found, with high motivation in all the motivational variables, is similar to the segment called "Multiple motive" in the study of Cordente-Rodríguez et al. [58], with high motivations in all the motivational variables. Likewise, it is similar to segment 2 (contemplative and non-consuming tourists) found by Taczanowska, et al. [62], with a wide range of motivations for your visit.

However, we included a new segment called "reward and escape", which differs from previous studies in the scientific literature. This new segment is somewhat similar to the "Escapists" segment in the study by Barić et al. [60], with high motivations to escape and overcome loneliness, but does not present novelty motivations. It is also similar to the "Nature and novelty" segment of Iversen et al. [38], with motivations related to novelty and nature, but with no motivations related to escape; hence, adapting a range of products or services to this newly found segment, called "Reward and escape", is recommended, and is related to the dimensions "nature", "rewards", "fun", and "escape". Therefore, the present study contributes a new ecotourism segment with characteristics that differ from the scientific literature.

7. Conclusions

Motivations are defined as psychological needs that influence visitors' behavior. It is necessary to find segments in ecotourism that provide information and facilitate products being developed that adapt to each group's specific characteristics. Likewise, segmentation facilitates the development of more efficient strategies, and provides higher tourist satisfaction levels, higher return rates, and more benefits for the destination and the community.

There are eight motivational dimensions in ecotourism: "Self-development", related to the search for personal growth; "Interpersonal relationships", related to strengthening relationships with family members and friends; "Escape", related to escaping routine; "Building personal relationships", related to visitors feeling motivated to meet new people; "Ego-defensive function", related to following current events and social discussion; "Nature", related to observing, appreciating, and learning from nature; "Rewards", related to exploring the unknown and new things; "Fun", related to fun.

There are three groups of visitors in ecotourism: "Multiple motives", formed by visitors with high motivations in all the motivational variables in ecotourism; "Nature", made up of visitors with high motivations to observe, appreciate, learn, and be close to nature; "Reward and Escape", which comprises visitors with nature, reward, fun, and escape motivations.

Ecotourism segments are significantly related to the variables gender, age, and levels of education. In relation to the segments and the age variable, women are more represented in the multiple motives segment, while men feature more in the "Reward and escape" segment. Regarding age, the "multiple motives" segment is the group with more visitors of advanced age, while the "nature" segment is the group with the highest percentage of visitors of intermediate ages. In contrast, the segment "Reward and escape" is the youngest group. The "Reward and escape" segment is the group with the highest levels of education, compared to the others.

The "multiple motives" segment is the group with the highest levels of satisfaction and loyalty, compared to the other segments. Therefore, strategies should be implemented to maintain and improve tourists' levels of satisfaction and loyalty in this segment. Likewise, strategies should be developed to improve the level of satisfaction in the "Reward escape" and "Nature" segments, which would increase the number of tourists who return to ecotourism destinations and would, thus, benefit the destination and the community.

Eight motivational dimensions appear in ecotourism among the theoretical implications: self-development, interpersonal relationships, escape, building personal relationships, ego-defensive function, nature, rewards, and fun. They are similar to those reported in other studies [37–40]. Three segments appear in ecotourism, one is the "Nature" segment, which is similar to that found by [59,61]; another is the "Multiple motives" segment, which is like that reported by [59]; the third segment is a new group called "Reward and escape", with different motivations to the segments indicated by other authors. This new segment is the theoretical contribution made by this study to the academic literature.

Among the practical implications, we find that operators and companies linked to the tourism sector can better plan strategies by adapting them to each segment's specific needs, which would not only improve tourists' satisfaction and their intentions to return to the destination, but would also provide more benefits to tourists, and to the sustainable development of the destination and the community. In addition, this article will help administrators to use information to improve planning for zoning, recreational use, and designing services in protected areas. Regarding public policies, governmental and social institutional aspects should be planned and organized to improve ecotourism development, and to influence the sustainable use of natural resources, improve the quality of services, and benefit the destination and its population.

Finally, one of the limitations of this research is the temporality with which the study was carried out. One proposed future research line would be to investigate the ecotourism offer that adapts to the found demand segments.

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