

Article

Motivations and Loyalty of the Demand for Adventure Tourism as Sustainable Travel

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Abstract: Adventure tourism as a form of sustainable tourism is a potential source of social, economic, and environmental development, and the more the tourism industry is exploited in a responsible manner, the greater the development of a country. The present research proposes the following objectives: (i) to identify the motivational dimensions of demand in an adventure destination, and (ii) to determine the motivational dimensions of demand that predict the return, recommendation, and saying positive things of the adventure destination as loyalty variables. The study was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic in Guayaquil, and the participants had visited the province of Santa Elena in Ecuador, an adventure tourism destination. This quantitative study used a sample of 318 valid questionnaires that were collected online and analyzed using factor analysis and the multiple regression enter method. The results show five motivational dimensions in adventure tourism: learning, social, biosecurity, relaxation, and competence mastery. The relaxation dimension is the most important and most influential predictor in return, recommendation, and saying positive things about the demand for adventure tourism. The results will contribute as management guides for DMOs and as sources of information for companies involved in the marketing and development of post-pandemic products. The study is also a contribution to the academic literature on adventure destinations.

Keywords: post-pandemic; COVID-19; motivation; loyalty; adventure; sustainable



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1. Introduction

Adventure tourism is a crucial research topic since, over the years, it has been considered a category that is constantly examined by investors [1]. This topic requires a more significant deepening that allows a consensus on the ramifications of adventure tourism activities [2]. Thus, adventure has different concepts. For Rantala et al. [2], the definitions of adventure tourism are of different criteria, but they all include the element of risk and uncertainty. Despite this, Peacock et al. [3] included other reasons such as emotion, health and well-being, recreational mastery and personal development, and connection with others and nature.

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) [4], in this field, adventure tourism is activities carried out in a geographical space where physical activity, cultural exchange, interaction, and responsibility with nature are promoted. Giddy and Webb [5]

highlight a strong link between the environment, sustainability, and adventure tourism. For this reason, the adventure tourism industry offers highly sought-after getaways and cultural, ecological, and economic benefits to destinations [6].

According to Mackenzie et al. [7], outdoor adventure leads to greater intrinsic motivation, enjoyment, and self-determination in the practice of physical activity. Moreover, the Global Report on Adventure Tourism owned by UNWTO [8] describes two types of adventure tourists: enthusiastic or passionate adventure tourists such as cyclists, birdwatchers, and kayak lovers, who increasingly lead to athletic activity in different geographical spaces. In contrast, extreme adventurers are the base jumpers, who seek emotions and adrenaline. The report announces the division of two essential categories in adventure tourism activities: soft adventure and intense adventure. Although adventure tourism includes activities that involve risk, Janowski et al. [6] claim that nature, emotion, risk, physical activity, and challenges are the core of the adventure.

It is vital to understand why adventure tourism would be practiced since for the UNWTO [9] tourism was one of the sectors most affected by the pandemic. However, it may take between two and a half and four years for tourism to return to 2019 levels, but an increase in demand for nature and outdoor tourism activities is expected [9]. That is why different studies have been carried out on the dimensions that influence the travel intentions of tourists. Hence, for Teeroovengadum et al. [10], tourists are willing to travel, but there are certain perceived risks during the trip due to the pandemic. The perceived risks are transport, national sanitary measures, health, accommodation service, and ecotourism facilities. Therefore, it states that the reliability of the information can reduce the perception of travel risk.

Other researchers, such as Godovykh et al. [11], show that the dimensions of health risk perceptions can be classified into affective, cognitive, individual, and contextual components; therefore, influencing the risk perceptions of tourists and the intentions to re-travel. On the other hand, for Liu et al. [12], subjective norms, attitude, perceived behavioral control, and behavior of round trips positively influence the intention to travel after the pandemic. Few studies of motivations in the pandemic have been related to that of Carvache-Franco et al. [13] in which Twitter hashtags related to coastal and marine tourism were studied, finding two dimensions: escape, and the sun and beach.

Nevertheless, for Fennell [14], we are transitioning to a new era of travel and tourism based on disruptive influences of new technologies, health and safety concerns, economic losses, and environmental crises. The pandemic provides an opportunity to reimagine tourism in another way, aside from exploitation models that ignore people, places, and the natural environment, and seek tourism that has positive impacts [15]. Thus, inclusive resilience can be transformed into a new global economic order through sustainable tourism, climate action, well-being in society, and the local communities' participation [16]. In this regard, Schiopu et al. [17] highlighted that, during the pandemic, there has been an increase in the intention to use virtual reality and contribute to the sustainability of tourism.

In relation to sustainability, adequate development of nature tourism can be beneficial both for the environment and for people, and sustainable tourism is nothing more than ensuring the balance between the economic, social, and economic impact in the environment where it takes place [18], other authors agree with the above and note that through this type of tourism, social regeneration could be stimulated and conditions improved of life in rural communities [19]. In relation to adventure tourism, it is a clearly sustainable tourism modality, as exposed by Muñoz [20] by indicating that sustainable tourism encompasses different modalities, such as community-based ecotourism, adventure tourism, ecotourism, and birdwatching. In this sense, from a social and environmental point of view, tourism focusing on nature is sustainable. From the economic point of view, tourism, in all its modalities, is highly viable, and the more the tourism industry is exploited responsibly, the greater the development of a country. As the adventure tourism of this research focused on nature, it is a potential source of social, economic, and environmental development.

The province of Santa Elena, located in Ecuador's coastal region, is a destination with natural attractions for adventure tourism, and visitors can do activities such as surfing on "Montañita," diving in "Ayangué," and practice other adventure activities such as snorkeling, paragliding, water skiing, and canopy. Santa Elena is located 128 km from Guayaquil and the José Joaquín de Olmedo International Airport, the main arrival route of foreign tourists to Santa Elena.

The academic literature on motivations in adventure tourism is still scarce. Currently, there is no study of a destination that carries out adventure activities in the post-pandemic era, such as Santa Elena in Ecuador. Research on this subject is necessary to understand why visitors are encouraged to practice adventure tourism in destinations that promote various adventure activities in the post-pandemic era. Therefore, the present study aims to: (i) identify the motivational dimensions of demand in an adventure destination and (ii) determine the motivational dimensions of demand that predict return, recommendation, and saying positive things about the adventure destination as loyalty variables.

2. Review of the Literature

2.1. Motivations in Adventure Tourism

Tourist motivations are shaped by various wants and needs, which are essential to choosing and enjoying a tourist destination [21]. The motivation was gradually attenuated by incorporating cognitive and affective components in a situation where the two are mediators between the subject and the environment [22]. Yousaf [23] stated that according to Maslow's needs, once a traveler's need is Chamonix, showed that the prevailing reasons for practicing mountain tourism were the motivations of socialization, challenge, natural environment, and achievement. The reasons for socialization and challenge reflected the same percentage, so the visitors met new people and enjoyed the challenge of different mountaineering experiences with friends.

Furthermore, Beckman et al. [24] studied the motivations of rafting on the Ocoee River in Tennessee, United States, and the results showed that emotion and nature motivations generated a positive affective response to practicing adventure activities. Sato et al. [25] analyzed the travel reasons of Japanese tourists for rafting in Niseko and established four push dimensions: social, escape, family, and enthusiasm, and three pull dimensions: natural resources, culture, and rafting services. Indeed, the results showed a predominance of the social dimension that allowed meeting new people, hanging out with friends, and interacting with foreigners. The escape dimension was the second since visitors moved away from their everyday busy lives and refreshed their minds.

Moreover, Giddy and Webb [26] conducted research from Gansbaai to Tsitsikamma National Park in South Africa and showed that push and pull factors are essential for this type of adventure tourism. The scholars divided push factors into novelty, enjoying nature, environmental education, escape, excitement, supernatural, physical challenge/skill development, risk, and social. Pull factors were divided into environmental characteristics, facilities, and attraction activities. The results reflected that the environment influences the choice of an adventure destination since visitors seek interaction with nature.

Jin et al. [27] found intelligence, social, dominance of competition, and stimulation-avoidance dimensions in Chinese tourists. The stimulus-avoidance dimension prevailed as tourists wanted to relax mentally, relieve stress and tension, and avoid the hustle and bustle of daily activities. On the contrary, the social factor was the least accepted and the three most minor reasons were to be competent social, feel a sense of belonging, and earn the respect of others. Therefore, the push factor prevailed because these are internal factors of the human being.

Nevertheless, Bichler and Peters [28] established six dimensions: relaxation, recognition, challenge, socialization, creativity, and discovery in their study on the reasons that influence the practice of hiking in Germany, Australia, and Italy. The discovery dimension was the most important since it allows tourists to know new places, have an adventure, and see the stage. Relaxation was the second dimension because tourists de-stress mentally and

physically and get away from everything. Finally, Pop et al. [29] researched why young people in Romania practice adventure tourism in the post-pandemic, and the findings showed that it lowered stress and self-awareness while visitors search for new experiences and social interaction.

Participation in adventure sports tourism brings hedonic, eudaimonic, and psychological well-being by satisfying basic psychological needs and connecting with nature [30]. Therefore, research reveals that the motivations to practice adventure tourism can vary according to the internal needs of the human being and the external ones that lead to choosing that destination. The prevailing motivations were mental and physical relaxation, social interaction, nature appreciation, and emotion from practicing this type of tourism.

The variety of motivations related to adventure tourism destinations generated the first research question of this study.

RQ1: What are the main motivations for adventure tourism demand?

2.2. Loyalty in Adventure Tourism

Loyalty has been studied in three main ways: attitude, behavior, and a combination. From the behavioral approach, it is analyzed by consumption behavior, purchase sequence, or purchase probability [31]. In more detail, Jiang et al. [32] provide a concept of attitude loyalty that consists of consumers' positive assessment of the service or product but not consuming it again. On the other hand, behavioral loyalty is when the product or service is repurchased since the motivations, images and sociodemographic characteristics have a significant impact on the different types of loyalty [33].

Loyalty is the intention of the tourist to repeat the visit to the travel destination, which is characterized by positive word of mouth and the feeling of satisfaction for the positive experience they had [34]. For the tourism sector, loyalty is partially mediated by tourism motivation and is generally measured by the frequency of visits to the destination [35].

It is important to recognize certain studies that relate motivations to loyalty. Such is the case of the research carried out by Dwi Suhartanto et al. [36] in which it is made known that the motivations of tourists are key factors that determine the loyalty of the tourist. Additionally, the authors Carvache-Franco et al. [37] mentioned that there is a positive relationship between motivations and satisfaction, and loyalty. In addition, authors such as Shakoori et al. [38] identified that the effect of motivation on loyalty is given by certain dimensions. Likewise, Rybina et al. [39] found motivational factors that are significantly related to loyalty.

Indeed, Cossío-Silva et al. [40] in their study emphasize that loyalty has always been studied from global satisfaction, probability of purchase, and probability of recommending the product to other people. Therefore, the authors present a formula of tourist loyalty identifying indicators of expectations, perceived quality, overall image of the destination, satisfaction of the tourist, intention to recommend, and intention to repeat the visit. In addition, academics such as Carrascosa-López et al. [41] managed to identify loyalty variables which they divided into returning, recommending, and providing a positive word of mouth about the destination. In this sense, Mao and Zhang [35] measured loyalty by the return intention and the possibility of spreading it by word of mouth to their family and friends. Where sensory impressions can provide additional predictive power to explain destination loyalty [42], and visitors' cognitive and effective assessments of the destination have significant effects on the overall picture of destinations [43].

From a sustainable perspective, Goffi et al. [44] established that sustainability affects the satisfaction and return intention of the tourism segments of large-scale coastal packages, these groups being the tourists interested in sustainability. Furthermore, Beckam et al. [24] showed that emotion and nature generated a positive affective response to the place, promoting an attachment to the place and leading to behavioral results, either the intention to revisit the place or to transmit it by word of mouth. They flee and Nghi [45] on Kien Giang Island, Vietnam, found that novelty has a positive impact on visitors' loyalty to marine and coastal adventure tourism. Additionally, Almeida-Santana and Moreno-Gil [46]

highlighted that tourists who satisfy their short-term vision motives in a destination in the future can choose the same destination to meet their needs again. Hence, Stylos and Bellou [47] made some contributions to the interrelation of loyalty to revisit a destination and recommend it.

Moreover, Giddy and Webb [26], in the assessment of motivations, using a push-and-pull factor approach, demonstrated that the environment plays an essential role in attracting adventure tourists to specific destinations, and seeking interactions with nature. Sangpikul [48] emphasized natural spaces and the environment and influenced the destination's fidelity to the intentions of a future visit. Similarly, Park et al. [49] state that the economic and natural aspect influences tourists' loyalty to the Island of Langkawi, Malaysia. According to academics Bichler and Peters [28], the dimensions of relaxation, socialization, and discovery are the ones that most influence visitor satisfaction. However, people with less hiking experience generated a lower level of satisfaction than experienced hikers.

Sato [25] evaluated the reasons that influence people's loyalty people when practicing rafting in Niseko. The findings showed that the search for emotion and family-related needs influence loyalty due to cultural aspects. Hence, Styliadis [50] emphasized the role of familiarity in destinations since it generates revisits, and the staff's experience is a differential value in terms of service. However, for Bhat and Darzi [51] tourists who visit a destination for the first time have less experience and the perceptual image of the destination is in the initial stage. On the other hand, people who have visited a particular destination sometimes feel optimistic about the destination.

Therefore, research reveals that there are three ways to measure loyalty: attitude, behavior, and a combination. However, in the tourism sector, it is measured by the frequency of visiting the destination and word of mouth recommendations of the place to family and friends, where the varieties of motivations related to adventure tourism can influence satisfaction and loyalty to a destination.

The dimensions of relaxation, socialization, discovery, and natural and cultural spaces influence the loyalty to a destination. Despite this, more empirical evidence is required. Therefore, the following research question is proposed.

RQ2: What are the motivations that predict return, recommendation, and saying positive things about the destination as loyalty variables in adventure tourism?

3. Methodology

3.1. Area Study

Ecuador is in South America, and on its coast lies the province of Santa Elena, with an area of 3763 km² and three cantons: Santa Elena, La Libertad, and Salinas. The province's leading natural attractions invite the practice of adventure tourism. Montañita, a commune known as the "City of Surf," where Carvache-Franco et al. [52] highlighted that the motivational dimensions of visiting this beach led to the practice of water sports, social visits, ecotourism, sun, and beach. Montañita's natural resource wealth promotes adventure activities such as surfing, canopy, water skiing, parasailing, kayaking, kitesurfing, diving, paragliding, and cycling.

The province of Santa Elena, where rest and leisure activities provide the opportunity for new adventures, is visited annually by national and foreign tourists. Similarly, Ayangue "The Pacific Pool" offers tourists activities such as diving and snorkeling. Moreover, visiting "El Pelado" Island provides other adventure possibilities, which attract more tourists who love leisure or professional adrenaline. As a province on the Pacific coast, it is of vital importance to develop its tourism since the protagonist is the sea, that is, water activities.

The Peninsula of Santa Elena, as a coastal tourist destination of Ecuador, has a variety of attractions and tourist products scarcely analyzed, thus presenting the need to evaluate them, since they are part of the relevant destinations of the Costa World that the country markets abroad. After the pandemic, tourism in Santa Elena is still mainly focused on water sports and related activities, in which demand is low. However, these beach activities will always be the visitors' focus due to the offer (Figure 1).

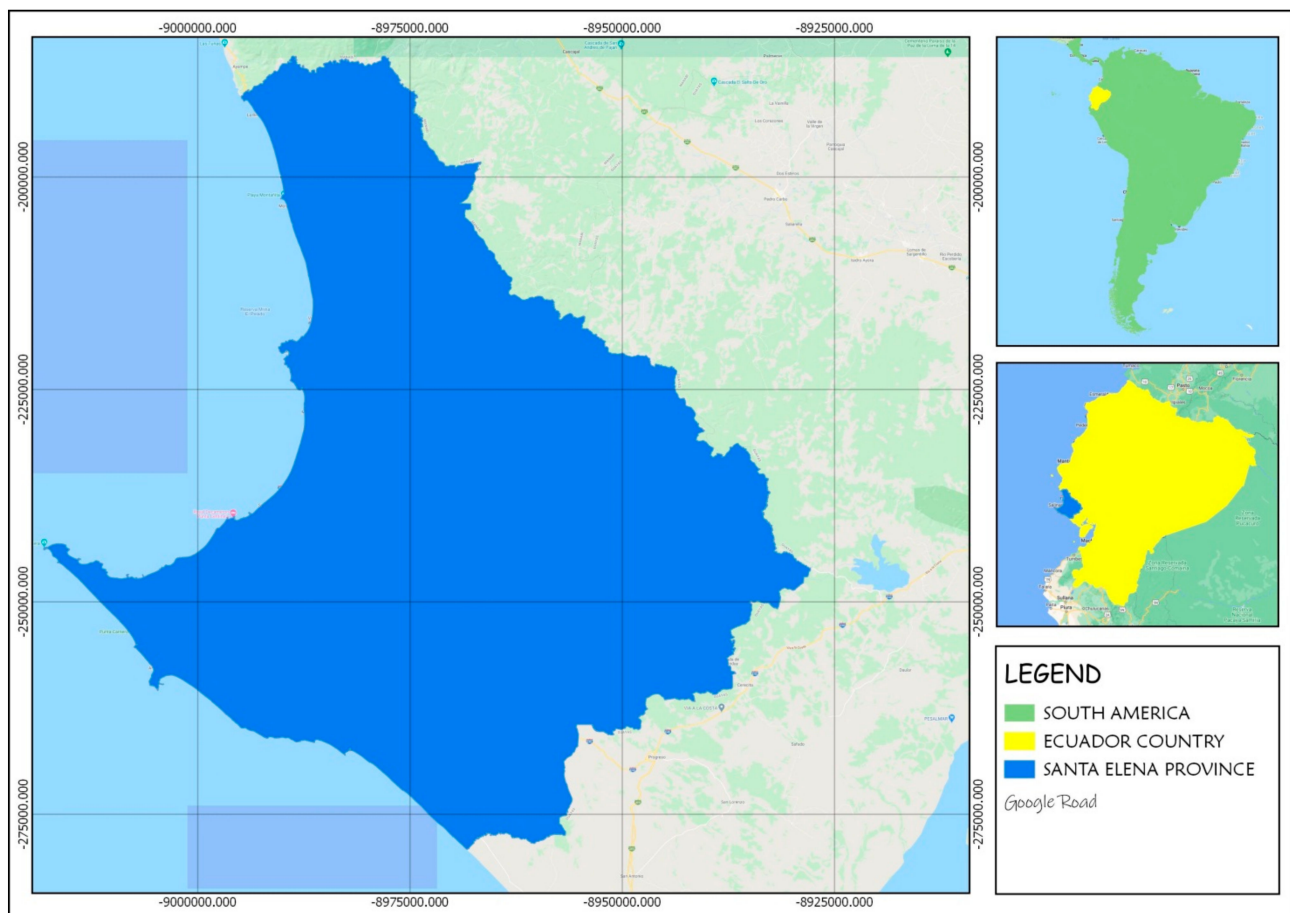


Figure 1. Santa Elena province, Ecuador.

The province of Santa Elena was one of the most visited destinations in Ecuador during the holidays that took place on 24 May 2018 with a total of 670,000 registered tourists [53]. In addition, in 2018 there were 2,907,094 overnight stays by internal tourists according to the agreement [54]. In addition, the influx of tourists in the province means that during the year 2021 it has left USD 48.1 million in sales according to the tourist information display of Ecuador [55].

3.2. Data Survey, Collection, and Analysis

The present study had the following objectives: (i) to identify the motivational dimensions of demand in an adventure destination, and (ii) to determine the motivational dimensions of demand that predict the return, recommendation, and saying positive things of the adventure destination as loyalty variables. For this purpose, a questionnaire was designed after a thorough literature review process to obtain validated scales.

The questionnaire design comprised three sections. The first section contained the sociodemographic characteristics containing 10 closed questions adapted from the study by Lee et al. [56]. The second section dealt with the motivations for making the adventure tourism trip and contained 33 items, of which 26 were adapted from the study by Jin et al. [27], and 7 items were added by a team of experts, which were motivations that revolved around biosecurity. The motivation scale was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, where one means little and five a lot. In order for the study to be applicable to the time of the COVID-19 health crisis and the results to be applicable for the Post-COVID-19 era, the authors met with experts and analyzed several scientific scales that analyzed biosecurity and chose 7 items that had mainly to do with motivations related to the biosecurity of the services and the destination, which added to the items taken from Jin et al. [27]

allowed a scientific study to be carried out. The loyalty scale contained 3 questions that were measured on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 was unlikely and 5 e unlikely. The loyalty questions were adapted from Kim and Park's study [57] and referred to the variables return, recommendation, and saying positive things about the destination.

Since data collection was performed based on a self-report questionnaire, special care was taken in its design to avoid or minimize the common-method variance [CMV] [58,59], which is often affected by the complexity of the measures, the context of the location of the items and how the scale is presented. Therefore, the construction of the items was systematically examined to avoid ambiguous, vague, and unknown terms [60]. In addition, the measures of the predictor variables and the criterion variables were separated in the questionnaire [59].

For the ex-post strategies, before the analysis of the results, Harman's unifactorial test was applied when entering all the items of the constructs in the EFA. The result was a multifactorial solution, where the first factor explained 42.24% of the total variance, below the 50% threshold, i.e., CMV is unlikely to be an inconvenience [50]. Therefore, it can be inferred that methodological bias is acceptable and that the data collected are ready for further analysis.

The present study was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the data collection process was carried out online for two months, from April to June 2021, in Guayaquil to tourists who had the intentions of doing adventure tourism in the province of Santa Elena in Ecuador. The survey was designed in Google Forms and shared using Twitter and Facebook's social networks. Respondents had to be over 18 years old, and they must have participated in adventure tourism in Santa Elena in the last 3 years. After verifying outliers, missing data, and excluding invalid questionnaires, 318 valid questionnaires from 379 respondents were used for the final analysis. The infinite population was used to obtain the ideal sample size. A margin of error of $\pm 5.5\%$, a confidence level of 95%, and a variation of 50% were proposed.

Moreover, since there is no theoretical model of motivations in adventure tourism in emerging destinations such as Santa Elena, the data analysis was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, to identify the preliminary dimensions of the scale and eliminate inappropriate elements, the 33-item scale underwent an exploratory factor analysis [EFA] based on maximum likelihood as a technique to reduce the variables to a smaller number of factors that express the same information. In addition, Promax (oblique) rotation was used to facilitate the interpretation of the data. In order to find the number of factors, the Kaiser criterion was applied, where only factors with eigenvalues greater than one were used [61]. During factor extraction, 32 of the initial 33 elements were preserved. The element "Unstructured my time" was removed because its factorial load was less than 0.4 [62]. Additionally, we use a scree plot to analyze the number of relevant factors. As shown in Figure 2, sixth eigenvalues do not cause one slope to respect the other. Therefore, five is the appropriate number of factors. The KMO value was 0.943 and Bartlett's sphericity test yielded a significant value of $= 7565.488$; $[df = 496; p < 0.001]$.

A five-dimensional 32-item scale emerged after iterative EFA rounds. Each dimension was labeled as a function of the nominal value of the manifest variables. The five-dimensional solution accounted for 62.88% of the total variance, exceeding the desirable criterion of 60% [63]. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess internal reliability. All factors were considered acceptable ($\alpha = 0.882\text{--}0.928$) and significantly above the suggested level of 0.70, indicating good construct reliability and internal consistency for basic research [64].

We performed a preliminary analysis to assess normality. Asymmetry values ranged from -2.349 (standard error = 0.137) to -0.222 (standard error = 0.137), while kurtosis values ranged from 6.231 (standard error = 0.273) to -1.225 (standard error = 0.273), showing acceptable levels below 3.0 and 8.0 for asymmetry and kurtosis, respectively, suggesting univariate normality of the measuring instrument [65].

In the second stage, the multiple enter regression method was implemented to find the most important positive or negative predictions (motivational dimensions) that influence

the intentions to return, recommend and say positive things as variables of loyalty in adventure tourism. For multiple regression analysis, the enter method was selected because, through this method, all the predictors are entered simultaneously. The IBM SPSS program, version 25 from New York, USA, and Gpower 3.1 statistical software tools analyzed the data.

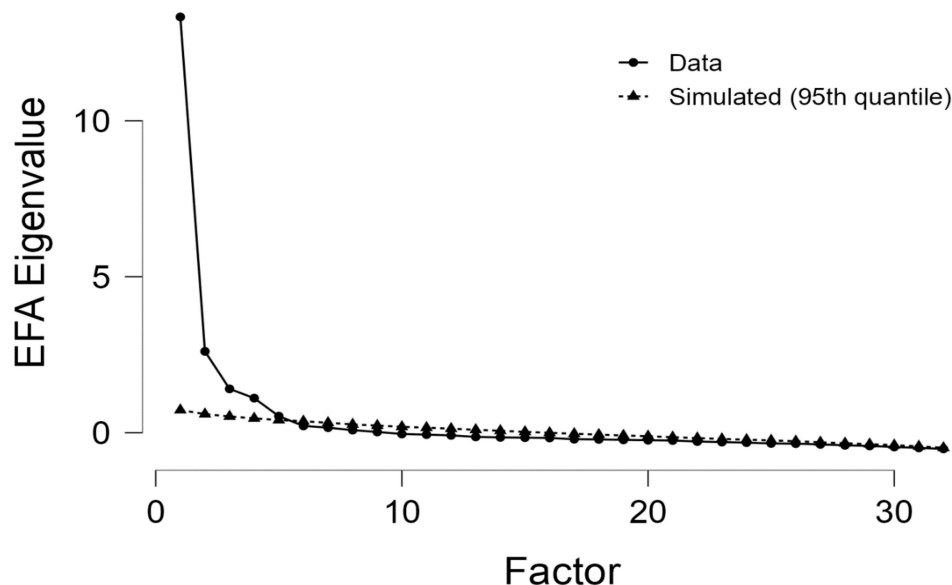


Figure 2. The number of relevant factors. Notes: x-axes: number of factors, y axes: eigenvalues.

4. Results

4.1. Sociodemographic Aspects of the Sample

For the present study, the sample comprised national tourists (97.8%) and international tourists (2.2%). The largest group was female (53.8%), followed by men (46.2%), and 84.0% were single, while 11.9% were married. Most of the tourists (58.2%) were between 21 and 30 years old, followed by tourists who were under 20 years old (16.7%) and between 31–40 years old (16.7%). Regarding education level, undergraduate students were the largest sample (68.9%), followed by tourists who have secondary education (20.4%). Concerning occupations, they were mostly students (56.3%) and employees (18.9%). Tourists preferred to travel with family (46.5%) and friends (35.5%). About the stay at the destination, most tourists spent two days and one night (48.4%) and three days and two nights (30.5%). Finally, visitors wanted to spend between USD 50.00 and USD 99 per day (42.8%), followed by those who wanted to spend less than USD 50 (29.6%).

4.2. Motivations in Adventure Tourism

Using EFA as a data reduction technique, significant and interpretable factors could be obtained using the maximum likelihood method and the Promax oblique rotation technique. Thus, the results showed five motivational dimensions regarding motivations in adventure tourism. The first factor, “Learning,” had the most significant explanatory power (42.34%) of the total variance. This dimension is related to adventure motivations such as: expanding knowledge, satisfying curiosity about adventure activities in the destination, and discovering new things and ideas. The second factor was “Social,” which reached 8.97% of the total variance. It is explained by a behavior related to the feeling of belonging and gaining the respect of other people and the desire to reveal their thoughts and feelings to others. For the third factor, “Biosecurity,” the results showed that it comprised 5.29% of the total variance. This outcome was the main contribution to the present study, and it is related to the context of the pandemic. It includes elements related to avoiding contagion of the COVID-19 virus. Thus, social distancing, biosecurity protocols in services and tourist activities, and outdoor attractions were the main elements that motivated a tourist to visit

an adventure destination. The fourth factor, relaxation, obtained 3.95% of the total variance, and it is associated with the physical and mental health of the tourist. Thus, visitors' reasons for visiting an adventure destination dealt with resting and relaxation, getting away from the hustle and bustle, and daily routines to relieve stress and tension. The last factor, "Competence-Mastery," comprised 2.43% of the studied variance. This behavioral factor implies the tourist's need to demonstrate his form and physical abilities; that is, the tourist is motivated to develop his skills and feel active. Results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Exploratory factor analysis results.

Measurement Items	Loading	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained %	α^a
Learning		13.89	42.24	0.92
To expand my knowledge	0.883			
To use my imagination	0.769			
To satisfy my curiosity	0.765			
To discover new things	0.755			
To explore new ideas	0.753			
To learn about things around me	0.733			
To be creative	0.648			
To learn about myself	0.634			
Social		3.256	8.97	0.89
To gain a feeling of belonging	0.862			
To gain other's respect	0.808			
To reveal my thoughts, feelings, or physical skills to others	0.721			
To be socially competent and skillful	0.712			
To slow down	0.636			
To improve my skill and ability in doing them	0.514			
To develop close friendships	0.444			
Biosecurity		2.040	5.29	0.90
To be in a destination with a health guarantee	0.910			
To be in a destination with biosecurity protocols	0.847			
To be attended by service personnel with biosecurity implements	0.809			
To be in disinfected and sterilized accommodations and restaurants	0.793			
To be in a destination with physical distancing in leisure services	0.665			
To be in a destination with physical distancing in adventure tourism activities	0.595			
To visit adventure attractions with enough outdoor space	0.476			
Relaxation		1.633	3.95	0.88
To rest	0.868			
To relieve stress and tension	0.836			
To relax mentally	0.758			
To avoid the hustle and bustle of daily activities	0.741			
To relax physically	0.574			
Deconstruct my time	0.337			
Competence-Mastery		1.097	2.43	0.91
To use my physical abilities	0.890			
To develop physical fitness	0.799			
To stay in a physical shape	0.765			
To develop physical skills and abilities	0.725			
To be active	0.462			

Bartlett's Test: $\chi^2 = 7565.488$; $df = 496$; $p < 0.001$. Chi-squared Test: value = 823,361; $df = 346$; $p < 0.001$. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test = 0.943; cumulative explained variance 62.88%.

The results described in Table 1 respond to our first research question, RQ1: What are the main motivations for adventure tourism demand? The study found that the motivational dimensions of the demand for adventure tourism are learning, social, biosecurity, relaxation, and competence mastery.

4.3. Motivations and Intentions to Return

Regarding the intentions to return to an adventure destination, the findings show that all the indices of significance, statistical power, and effect size are adequate and that together the independent variables predict 35.8% of the intentions to recommend. The regression model was significant in the F test ($p = 0.001$), which indicated a real relationship between the significant predictors (biosecurity and relaxation) and the intentions to return. There were no multicollinearity problems between the independent variables (tolerance > 0.2 ; VIF < 10), and it was possible to assume independence between the residuals (Durbin–Watson = 1924). Results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The motivations and intentions to return.

Model Durbin-Watson = 1924	F	R ²	ΔR ²	B	Standard Error	β	p	1 – β	f ²
Factors	34.89	0.358	0.348				0.001		
Learning				0.049	0.078	0.049	0.530	1	0.915
Social				−0.071	0.075	−0.070	0.343		
Biosecurity				0.185	0.059	0.184	0.002		
Relaxation				0.404	0.071	0.399	0.000		
Competence Mastery				0.101	0.080	0.100	0.209		

As shown in Table 2, the relaxation factor was the most significant predictor of the intentions to return ($\beta = 0.399$, $p = 0.001$), followed by the “Biosecurity” dimension ($\beta = 0.184$, $p = 0.002$). Both factors are the ones that most predict the tourist’s intention to return to an adventure destination. Therefore, the relaxation motivations should be enhanced to improve tourists’ re-visit levels. Regarding the biosecurity dimension, it suggests the importance of adventure destinations in protecting the health and safety of travelers in a post-pandemic context. Despite the intense vaccination campaign worldwide, the mutation of the virus to other variants still generates a perception of risk in travelers. The other dimensions were not significant, so their influence on the dependent variable “intentions to return” is absent.

Knowing that almost half of the participants spend only one night in the destination, we infer that the “Learning” dimension is an insignificant path towards the intention of returning because adventure-loving tourists increasingly like to explore new destinations or attractions to continue expanding their knowledge, satisfy curiosities or discover new things.

In this scenario, it is known that the perceived quality of services sometimes negatively influences the intention to return to a destination [66]. As such, although tourists went to the destination motivated by obtaining a feeling of belonging, being sociable, and gaining friendships (elements that contribute to the “social” dimension), the destination probably lacked quality attributes that provide facilities to socialize among tourists, that is, appropriate spaces that foster communication among colleagues who practice adventure activities. Consequently, these shortcomings did not allow them to fulfill their expectations and, therefore, their visit was irrelevant.

4.4. Motivations and Recommendation Intentions

The analysis of the most important predictors of recommendation intentions was performed with a multiple regression admission, which included the motivational dimensions predicted by the recommendation intentions. The results show that five factors explained R² is 40.1% of the variance, influencing the intention to recommend the destination. The model was significant in the F test ($p = 0.001$). Likewise, multicollinearity VIFs (inflation of variance factors) were less than ten, and the tolerance values were higher than 20, indicating no high correlations between the factors of the model. Finally, the Durbin–Watson indicator was 2002. Table 3 shows the results.

Table 3. The motivations and recommendation intentions.

Model Durbin–Watson = 2002	F	R ²	ΔR^2	B	Standard Error	β	p	1 – β	f ²
Factors	43.428	0.410	0.401				0.001		
Learning				0.120	0.066	0.136	0.071	1	0.925
Social				−0.007	0.064	−0.007	0.917		
Biosecurity				0.119	0.050	0.133	0.018		
Relaxation				0.361	0.060	0.401	0.001		
Competence Mastery				0.066	0.068	0.074	0.336		

As shown in Table 3, the relaxation factor was the most significant predictor of the recommendation intentions ($\beta = 0.401$, $p = 0.001$), followed by the “Biosecurity” factor ($\beta = 0.133$, $p = 0.018$). Both factors are the ones that most predict the recommendation intentions of an adventure destination. The other dimensions were not significant, so their influence on the dependent variable “recommendation intentions” is absent. Tourist behavioral intention (revisit and recommend) can often be affected by a number of variables ranging from the perceived attractiveness of the destination [67] to the actual attributes of the destination [68]. In addition, there is no consensus in the tourism literature on the direct and indirect relationships between the motivations and behavioral intentions of tourists [69]. Therefore, we infer that the motivational dimension “Competence-Mastery” and “Social” have been affected by the origin of the participants since most of the respondents were domestic tourists. That is, the absence of recommending the destination could have been caused by different reasons such as familiarity with the Santa Elena destination, the poor recommendation habit of national tourists through word of mouth or social networks, personal reasons, introverted behavior (that they do not like to share with others) or the ego related to the development of their skills and physical abilities.

4.5. Motivations and Saying Positive Things about the Destination Conclusions

With a multiple regression (enter) method, the most important predictors in the intentions to say positive things about the destination were analyzed. The results show that five factors accounted for a = 37.3% of the variation concerning the intention to say positive things about Santa Elena. The F-ratio obtained significant values. There were no multicollinearity problems between the independent variables in terms of tolerance and inflation of variance. The indicator of Durbin–Watson (2001) [70], confirms independence between the residues so that the data can be generalized. R² Results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The motivations and saying positive things about the destination.

Model Durbin–Watson = 2001	F	R ²	ΔR^2	B	Standard Error	β	p	1 – β	f ²
Factors	38.78	0.383	0.373				0.001		
Learning				0.064	0.067	0.074	0.337	1	0.935
Social				0.028	0.064	0.031	0.668		
Biosecurity				0.091	0.050	0.104	0.071		
Relaxation				0.414	0.061	0.467	0.001		
Competence Mastery				0.061	0.069	0.069	0.379		

As Table 4 shows, the relaxation factor was the most significant predictor of the saying positive things ($\beta = 0.467$, $p = 0.001$), followed by the “Biosecurity” factor ($\beta = 0.104$, $p = 0.071$). The results show that only the first factor, relaxation, has a level of significance that predicts the intention to speak well of the destination. The outcomes in Table 4 answer our second research question, RQ2: What motivations predict return, recommendation, and saying positive things about the destination as loyalty variables in adventure tourism? The results show that the motivational dimensions of relaxation and biosafety factors predict

return and recommendation as loyalty variables. In contrast, the relaxation dimension predicts saying positive things about the destination in adventure tourism.

The future or post-visit behavior of tourists is reflected in the form of recommendations and positive word of mouth [71]. In this line, the constructs “Learning”, “Social”, and “Competence-Mastery” could obtain insignificant paths, possibly for the same reasons that do not recommend it; perhaps they were not very satisfied with the services of the destination or simply found the visit to Santa Elena insipient, which did not cause an impact on their behavior after the visit.

5. Discussion

The present study had as its first objective to identify the motivational dimensions of demand in an adventure destination. Thus, to answer research question 1 (RQ1), five motivational dimensions were found: learning, social, biosecurity, relaxation, and competence mastery. Regarding the dimension identified in this study as learning, other researchers have found similar motivations, such as Giddy and Webb [26] who identified it as environmental education. Jin et al. [27] found it as intelligence. Bichler and Peters [28] classified it as creativity and discovery. Regarding the social dimension found in the present study, authors have identified it as socialization similar to Pomfret and Bramwell [72]. Several academics found that it was social [25–27]. Bichler and Peters [28] identified it as socialization. However, social interaction was found by Pop et al. [29].

Regarding the motivational biosecurity dimension of the present study, it has not been found in previous findings on adventure tourism. Perhaps this is because before the pandemic, it was not a motivation within adventure tourism. Concerning the motivational dimension of relaxation, some authors have similar findings. Naidoo et al. [73] found relax and refresh. Stimulus-avoidance was the finding of Jin et al. [27]. Bichler and Peters [28] also found relaxation as a motivation. On the contrary, a decrease in stress was the finding of Pop et al. [29]. The competence mastery dimension found in the present study aligns with Jin et al. [27]. It was discovered to be challenge by Pomfret and Bramwell [72] and Bichler and Peters [28]. Giddy and Webb [26] identified it as a skill.

The main contributions of this study to the academic literature are the five dimensions related to the practice of adventure tourism in a time of health crisis, where visitor motivations after the pandemic will vary. The five dimensions identified in this study have not been found together by other authors. In this regard, the biosecurity dimension has not been found in previous studies. Hence, the biosecurity dimension significantly contributes to the scientific literature related to adventure tourism. Moreover, the learning dimension has been labeled with other names such as intelligence [27] and environmental education [26]. Three common dimensions of other studies such as competence mastery, social, and relaxation are ratified. Therefore, the present study's findings represent an important contribution to the academic literature related to the motivational dimensions of adventure tourism.

As a second objective, the present study determined the motivational dimensions of demand that predict return, recommendation, and saying positive things about the adventure destination as loyalty variables. For this purpose, the results answering the second research question, RQ2, show that the motivational dimensions of relaxation and the biosafety factors predict return and recommendation as loyalty variables, while the relaxation dimension predicts saying positive things about the destination in adventure tourism. Therefore, the results found emphasize what was found in the literature review, since the motivational dimensions influence the loyalty variables. For example, for Jin et al. [27], the stimulus-avoidance dimension, like the motivational dimension relaxation in the present study, influenced motivations and adventure activities. Bichler and Peters [28] identified discovery as the most important dimension in loyalty, followed by relaxation. These authors claimed that the relaxation dimension generates visitors' satisfaction. So, the relaxation variable was a finding within the study since that dimension was found in the literature

review and the results of the study. Therefore, finding that the relaxation and biosecurity dimensions predict loyalty in adventure tourism is significant for the academic literature.

Loyalty theory holds that general satisfaction with the destination is an antecedent of behavioral intention [74,75]. However, in the context of domestic tourism, this assertion is not always fulfilled [69] because tourists visit their own country and usually know the attributes of the destination, which is the main reason for their trip. Thus, their level of satisfaction may not be the only determinant of their future behavior. Therefore, applying a direct relationship between motivation constructs and loyalty variables as performed in this paper becomes a finding that can support a better theoretical and conceptual understanding of internal tourism in adventure destinations. It also introduces a new research method. Thus, this study provides empirical support by identifying the motivating factors for adventure tourism in a post-COVID-19 scenario of tourists traveling within the country and their direct effect on loyalty.

As practical implications, destinations for the time of health crisis and when this pandemic has passed could improve the motivations of adventure tourism. For the learning dimension, destinations could implement courses of adventure activities to reduce risk and increase safety when carrying out this type of tourism. Courses in adventure sports techniques could also be mixed with nature learning and environmental preservation. Adventure destinations must maintain biosecurity measures such as contact personnel with biosecurity measures, clean tourist establishments with spaces for distancing, tours with distancing, and sites for hand disinfection to increase the biosecurity dimension. Group techniques where travelers can interact in games and dynamics and events such as birthdays could be celebrated to boost the score in the social dimension of adventure tourism.

Moreover, adventure sports tours could be combined with yoga techniques for relaxation, and rest and relaxation sites could also be implemented in adventure sports attractions to improve the relaxation dimension. Enhancing adventure tourism attractions of adventure tourism will be necessary by providing security to visitors and creating facilities for the realization of adventure activities such as surfing, diving, paragliding, snorkeling, hiking, and parasailing to improve the competence mastery dimension. Hiring specialized guides in adventure tourism and lifeguards on the beaches will also be necessary. It is also necessary to implement sale and rental shops of specialized equipment in adventure tourism, such as surf shops, diving, surfboard, and bicycle rental. It is necessary to keep in mind that since the relaxation dimensions mostly predict loyalty, implementing activities that increase the scores of these dimensions will encourage people to return, recommend, and say positive things about the adventure destination.

Additionally, to improve the visitor experience and advance their intentions to revisit and recommend the destination, Destination Management Organization (DMO) managers should focus on the development, conservation, and valorization of the natural activities where adventure activities are practiced. As well as paying attention to the issues related to the territory (infrastructure, technological and innovation aspects, management of the use of space and its sustainability, spatial organization of these practices) that will constitute the support and the essential resource not only for the practice of adventure activities as vectors of tourist products but also for leisure and outdoor recreation of the premises.

Internal adventure tourism is a niche market that has its specificities and limitations and allows the conformation and consolidation of the local identity of the Santa Elena destination, as well as its contribution to the economic dynamics of the country. Therefore, destination marketers should guide their strategies for promoting and marketing tourism products and understand the motivating forces of domestic tourists to carefully produce and deliver promotional packages to potential travelers.

6. Conclusions

Adventure tourism is a type of tourism where leisure activities involve some type of physical load, risk, and adrenaline, and are usually practiced in open spaces surrounded by nature. Tourists increasingly practice this type of tourism, as they promote challenging

themselves and the motivation of doing it. However, nature destinations will be the most sought by tourists after the pandemic, so it is increasingly important to carry out studies about the demand of tourists in adventure destinations. Knowing the motivational dimensions in adventure tourism in this time of pandemic is crucial for destination managers.

The adventure destination studied revealed five motivational dimensions namely learning, social, biosecurity, relaxation, and competence mastery. The dimensions that most predict loyalty are relaxation followed by biosecurity, findings showing that the tourist is changing motivations and adventure combines with relaxation and biosecurity.

As theoretical implications, a group of five dimensions together in adventure tourism has been found, identifying this study a new one called biosecurity, which was not found in previous studies, and another motivational dimension called learning that was not identified with the same name by other authors. The relaxation and biosecurity dimensions predict loyalty, which are results not found in previous studies. All these findings are a contribution to the academic literature.

As practical implications, the study contributes to the managers of adventure destinations as development and management guides and for service providers to develop adventure tourism products according to the demand found.

Finally, it is necessary to recognize that the temporality with which the sample was taken is the main limitation of the present study. It could be relevant to study the relationship between motivations and spending in an adventure destination as a future line of research.

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