Study of the satisfaction of tourists visiting a destination: the case of the state of Sonora

Estudio de la satisfacción de los turistas que visitan un destino: caso estado de Sonora

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Abstract

The State of Sonora, located in northwest Mexico, is known for its rich culture, diverse landscapes, and unique cuisine. The general objective of this study is to determine the profile of the tourist who visits Sonora, analyzing their demographic characteristics, travel reasons, preferences, consumer behaviors and satisfaccion. The methodology applied has been with a quantitative approach, non-experimental, transversal and descriptive design, the population under study is tourists who visit municipalities in the State of Sonora, a sample of 1262 people surveyed was obtained. The contribution of the study is to obtain a comprehensive vision that can be useful for the development of tourism promotion strategies in the region, thereby improving tourism activities and products of the destination based on the profile detected. Additionally, promote collaborative work between the government and the population, allowing the development of attractions that serve as a source of economic income for the population.

Objetivo	Metodología	Contribución
Determine the profile of the tourist who visits Sonora, analyzing their demographic characteristics, travel reasons, preferences and consumer behaviors.	With a quantitative approach, non- experimental, transversal and descriptive design, the population under study is tourists who visit municipalities in the State of Sonora, a sample of 1262 people surveyed was obtained.	Obtain a comprehensive vision that can be useful for the development of tourism promotion strategies in the region, thereby improving fourism activities and products of the destination based on the profile detected. Additionally, promote collaborative work between the government and the
		population, allowing the development of attractions that serve as a source of economic income for the population.

Resumen

Article History:

El Estado de Sonora, ubicado en el noroeste de México, es conocido por su rica cultura, paisajes diversos y gastronomía única. El presente estudio tiene como objetivo general determinar el perfil del turista que visita Sonora, analizando sus características demográficas, motivos de viaje, preferencias, comportamientos de consumo y su satisfacción. La metodología aplicada ha sido con enfoque cuantitativo, diseño no experimental, transversal y de tipo descriptivo, la población bajo estudio son los turistas que visitan municipios del Estado de Sonora, se obtuvo una muestra de 1262 sujetos. La contribución del estudio es obtener una visión integral que puede ser útil para el desarrollo de estrategias de promoción turística en la región, mejorando con ello actividades y productos turísticos del destino en base al perfil detectado. Además, fomentar el trabajo colaborativo entre el gobierno y la población, permitiendo el desarrollo de atractivos que sirvan como fuente de ingresos económicos para la población.

Objetivo	Metodología	Contribución
Determinar el perfil del turista que visita Sonora, analizando sus características demográficas, motivos de viaje, preferencias y comportamientos de consumo	Con enfoque cuantitativo, diseño no experimental, transversal y de tipo descriptivo, la población bajo estudio son los turistas que visitan municipios del Estado de Sonora, se obtuvo una muestra de 1262 personas encuestadas	Obtener una visión integral que puede ser útil para el desarrollo de estrategias de promoción turistica en la región, mejorando con ello actividades y productos turisticos del destino en base al perfil detectado. Además, fomentar el trabajo colaborativo entre el gobierno y la población, permitiendo el desarrollo de
		atractivos que sirvan como fuente de ingresos económicos para la población.

Perfil turista, Satisfacción, Consumo

Tourist profile, Satisfaction, Consumption

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Introduction

For people, travelling is an experience that is considered rewarding, motivating and mentally healthy, as it allows them to get to know different places, cultures, new knowledge and environments.

Tourism is considered one of the most important activities for the economic development of each country (Olmos. Almendarez and Ibáñez, 2021), because thanks to it, tourists arrive at various destinations, causing an improvement in the economy of each city, state and country in general. It should be noted that Mexico is considered the sixth most visited nation in the world (UN Tourism, 2024), and the Ministry of Tourism has indicated that during the first four months of the year 2024 it has received 14 million 700 thousand international tourists. Beaches, Magic Towns and archaeological sites are the most visited places. This has earned it recognition from international organisations for its cultural and natural wealth.

Now, on a national level, according to statistical data presented by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, 2024), Sonora closed the first quarter with an increase of 27% in the hiring of the tourism sector and also reflecting an increase of 14% in the generation of employment and economic opportunities for the population. This shows that many Sonorans depend on the tourism industry for their livelihood, through hotels, gastronomy or recreational activities. This boosts the regional economy and infrastructure development.

In addition, tourism also promotes cultural exchange by allowing visitors to learn about the traditions and customs of Sonoran communities. This not only enriches the traveller's experience, but also helps to preserve and value the local culture.

In this sense, the objective of this work is to determine the profile of the tourist who visits Sonora, analysing demographic characteristics, travel motives, preferences and consumption behaviour, which allows us to compare the level of visitor satisfaction based on their attributes. Based on the information generated by the research work, important elements are provided for the definition of the profile of the national tourist visiting Sonora, yielding useful information for decision making that will allow the offering of more complete and innovative services in accordance with the needs of travellers.

Literature review

The present research project is explained under the theoretical approach of the General Systems Theory based on the new conceptual perspective of tourism (Ibáñez and Cabrera, 2011), understood as the interrelated set of elements, which brings together an important number of relationships in its dynamics within the tourism system, generating concepts and proposals on the elements that make it up.

To understand the aspects that influence the motivations of visitors, we study them through cognitive-affective currents, related to the evolution of the tourist with the appreciation of their emotions and causal reasoning on cognitive factors related to the perception of the experience lived by the tourist (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Oliver, 1999; Ritchie and Crouch, 2005; Williams and Soutar, 2009; Femenía 2011; Moo et al., 2015). Expectation theory has also been taken, looking at the desired outcomes of visitors who end up with a comparison of what was consumed with what was actually expected (Liljander and Strandvick, 1995).

Likewise, in order to obtain a conceptual overview it is important to highlight the following concepts: tourism, tourist, tourist profile and destination according to the glossary of the UN tourism through the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics (RIET, 2008). Tourism refers to visitor activity (RIET 2008, para. 2.9). Tourist is the visitor, whether domestic, inbound or outbound, who is classified as a tourist or an overnight visitor if their trip includes an overnight stay, or a day visitor or excursionist (RIET 2008, para. 2.13). The tourist destination is the physical space, where the visitor can stay overnight.

Furthermore, Nava Jiménez et al., (2017), define the national tourist as the people who travel within the country, so that the tourist profile is the characterisation such nationality, place of residence, gender, age, income, occupation, schooling and marital status of the consumers of tourism services. In addition, depending on the socio-economic and demographic variables of the tourist, it is possible define preferences, to expectations and various needs, which allows companies to manage their services and tourist destinations (Torres et al., 2015).

On the central theme of the present study, and based on research carried out, there are studies focused on analysing the profile and degree of satisfaction, as well as the motivations of tourists who visit for cultural, beach, ecotourism, family or business visits, among others (Madrid and Cerón 2013; Robleda, Pérez, Kantún, and Jonapá, 2017; Proaño, Pazmiño, and Tapia, 2018; Estela and Pillaca, 2023; García, Thomé, González, and López, 2023).

As can be seen, there is academic empirical evidence on the interest in identifying the tourist profile and the knowledge of the perception and level of satisfaction, but for the particular case of the state of Sonora there is still a lack of research that would provide information that would contribute to decision-making about new tourism proposals that provide tools to promote innovation and satisfaction of tourists visiting Sonora.

Methodology

As empirical evidence, a sample of 1262 subjects was obtained through non-probabilistic sampling where the choice of subjects depended on causes related to the characteristics of the research (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2014). The criterion used was that the subjects had visited a destination in Sonora and were willing to collaborate. The sample was carried out through an electronic survey where the subjects were asked to read and accept the informed consent, as well as sharing it by groups related to the research, ensuring that the established criteria were met.

ISSN: 2410-4019 RENIECYT-CONAHCYT: 1702902 ECORFAN® All rights reserved. A total of 1262 questionnaires were applied and all were answered with satisfaction in the cities of Obregón, Navojoa, Huatabampo, Guaymas, Empalme, Hermosillo, Agua Prieta, Álamos, Bahía de Kino, Cócorit, Caborca, Camahuiroa, Cananea, Yecora, Nogales, Imuris, Huatabampito, Las Bocas, Yavaros, Magdalena, Melchor Ocampo, Moroncarit, Puerto Peñasco, Rayón, Ruta del Río Sonora, San Carlos, San Luis Río Colorado, Santa Ana, Siaric and Tesopaco, among others that were digitally collected throughout the state.

The analyses carried out were descriptive in nature on the most relevant variables regarding the satisfaction of tourists visiting a destination in the state of Sonora. The statistical validation of the questionnaire was carried out through Cronbach's Alpha, the results obtained in the dimensions that measure the satisfaction of tourists visiting a destination was .94, exceeding the value of .70 which is considered as a minimum for an instrument (questionnaire) to have validity and be statistically acceptable Quero (2010).

The scale used to measure the variables corresponding to the measurement of the satisfaction of visiting tourists in the state of Sonora, was a Likert-type scale of 10 points ranging from (Very dissatisfied = 1 to Very satisfied = 10), in the case of satisfaction was measured through 10 items that evaluate the concept of satisfaction of tourists visiting a destination Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (2014).

Results

Destinations, services and stay for tourists visiting Sonora

The most relevant results of the research describe aspects related to the destinations visited by tourists, as well as the levels of satisfaction regarding the services received by tourists visiting the different destinations in the state of Sonora. In Sonora, the main destinations most visited by local, national and international tourists are the main cities in the state with the largest populations located in the south of the state, such as Obregon City with 24% of the sample, Hermosillo with 14% and San Carlos Guaymas with 20%, making up 58% of the sample of tourists visiting the main destinations in Sonora.

The remaining 42% of the sample is located in other cities in the state of Sonora, distributed in less significant percentages. See table 1

Box 1

Table 1

Most visited destinations in Sonora

Destination	% Porcentage	% accumulated
Obregón	24	
Hermosillo	14	58
San Carlos	20	
Other cities in Sonora	42	42

Source: Own elaboration based on statistics

The survey asked about the time it takes both national and international tourists to plan a trip to the destinations they visit in Sonora and the most relevant response was that 54% of the sample took 1 month or less to plan their trip, compared to 24% who took between 1 and 3 months to plan their trip to a destination in the state of Sonora. See table 2

Box 2

Table 2

Duration of your stay in nights

Time/months	% Porcentage
1 a 3	24
1 month or less	54
Less than one month	22

Source: Own elaboration based on statistics

In terms of the length of stay within the destinations chosen in the state of Sonora, the highest percentage is 2 nights during their stay. However, there is an extraordinarily interesting fact: 69% of the sample stated that the duration of their stay is one day round trip, which means that the tourism that moves the most through the state is local tourism, which is the most representative in this case. See table 3

Box 3

Table 3

Duration of your stay in nights

Nights	% Porcentage
1 Night	14
2 Nights	22
3 Nights	16
4 Nights	8
6 o More Nights	9
To and from the destination	69

Source: Own elaboration based on statistics

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On the other hand, the average expenditure per person per day for accommodation services, food, transfers in the destination, attractions and entertainment, shopping, souvenirs and/or handicrafts, we have that the average expenditure for accommodation ranges from 1,100 to 1,500 and expenditure for the rest of the services such as food, transfers, attractions and shopping are less than or equal to 500 Mexican pesos. See table 4

Box 4

Table 4

Average expenditure per person per day in Mexican pesos on accommodation, food, transfers in the destination, attractions and entertainment, shopping, souvenirs and/or handicrafts

Service at Sonora destinations	Average daily expenditure in
	Mexican currency
Hospices	Ranges from 1,100 to
	1,500
Food	≥ at 500 Mexican pesos
Transfer at destination	≥ at 500 Mexican pesos
Attractiveness and	
entertainment	≥ at 500 Mexican pesos
Shopping, souvenirs and/or	≥ at 500 Mexican pesos
handicrafts	•

Source: Own elaboration based on statistics

Finally, the city, state and country of residence of tourism visiting destinations in Sonora, we can observe a very interesting fact, 70% of the sample corresponds to tourism travelling from Cd, Obregon to other destinations in the state of Sonora, followed by the city of Hermosillo which is 20% of the sample and the last 10% corresponds to the city of Navojoa within the same state of Sonora. See table 5.

Box 5

Table 5

City, state and country of residence of tourism visiting destinations in Sonora

Residence of tourists visiting destinations in Sonora	% Percentage of tourists visiting destinations in Sonora
Obregón	70%
Hermosillo	20%
Navojoa	10%

Source: Own elaboration based on statistics

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These aspects related to the destinations visited by tourists show us a profile of consumption of services by tourists visiting the state of Sonora, which we can deduce that the tourism that caused the greatest economic spillover during 2023 and 2024 is local tourism, which consumes the main services offered by the establishments in the state of Sonora and which cater to international, national and local tourism.

Satisfaction of tourism visiting Sonora as a destination

With regard to the levels of satisfaction of tourists visiting the state of Sonora as a destination, 60% of the tourists who choose Sonora as a destination are satisfied or very satisfied with the services offered in the destinations they visit in the state of Sonora.

65% of those surveyed in the sample indicated that even the access to the destination was satisfactory, choosing the response of very satisfied with the access to the destination. However, 90% of the sample made reference to the fact that they did not use any type of tour guide on their trip to the chosen destination.

The 10% of the sample who indicated that they had used a tour guide mentioned that they were very satisfied with the service provided by these experts in guiding tourists to their destinations.

Other aspects evaluated in terms of satisfaction are related to the tourist attractions of the destination, where 60% of the people who visit a destination in Sonora mentioned being very satisfied with the attractions of the destination.

However, there are four items related to the experience in the destination, expectations of the visit, the attention of the host community and satisfaction with their trip to the destination. Where the percentages of satisfaction were less than 50%, ranging between 35% and 40%, this percentage of the sample indicates that visitors to the different destinations in Sonora mentioned that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience according to the evaluation scale, their expectations of the visit, with the community that received them and satisfaction with their trip to the destination.

The data obtained in this research is of utmost importance for the tourism sector in the state of Sonora, it provides real evidence of what is happening with visitors in different destinations in the state, the information may be relevant to provide new work strategies to improve all services provided throughout the sector and to raise the percentage of local, national or international tourists satisfied with all that Sonora offers in their destinations and seek the growth of the same.

Conclusions

For Mexico, the tourism sector represents an important catalyst for the economic development of the country and the creation of jobs that will support thousands of families dedicated to this activity. According to figures for the first quarter of 2024, the quarterly indicator of the tourism gross domestic product (ITPIBT) increased by 2.4%, demonstrating once again the importance of the sector remaining strong to provide the growth that the regions require (INEGI, 2024).

This research aims to provide a profile of the tourist who brings economic benefits to the state of Sonora and who is constantly looking for quality in the destinations he or she chooses. This profile will allow tourism service providers to always look for the best opportunities to develop higher quality services to meet the expectations of their visitors in the most visited destinations in the state of Sonora and to develop the potential and capabilities and take advantage of the advantages that these cities have to grow in this sector. An interesting fact in this study is that the centre and south of the state of Sonora are the most visited destinations in the state by the same domestic market. This result may lead us to think that the promotion of the state of Sonora at a national and international level needs to be more intense.

Another important aspect is the satisfaction that visitors to the different tourist destinations in the state of Sonora have expressed. While it is true that the percentages of satisfaction are good, there is a part of the sample that is not very satisfied in terms of access, services and experiences.

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This could be a red light for the state of Sonora because they must improve in these aspects in order to look for a more demanding tourism profile, more national and international, that can provide more economic revenue in the state of Sonora and that can make use of services that are still unprotected, such as the use of tour guides, for example, which the study found to be in low demand among visitors.

Annexes

Annex 1

Box 6

Table 6

Satisfaction of tourists visiting destinations in Sonora, with respect to access, services and experiences

Satisfaction in access,	%	Level of
services and experiences	Porcentage	satisfaction
How satisfied were you		Ranges from
with the access to the	65%	satisfied to very
destination?		satisfied
How satisfied were you		Ranges from
with the destination's	60%	satisfied to very
services?		satisfied
During your visit, did you		Approximately 90%
have the opportunity to	90%	of destination
receive the attention of a		visitors in Sonora
tour guide?		do not receive this
		service.
The evaluation of the	100/	The 10% who
degree of satisfaction in	10%	receive the guide
case of having received		service are Very
the service of a tourist		Satisfied with the
guide.		service.
How satisfied were you with the tourist attractions	60%	Satisfied and Very Satisfied
of the destination?	00%	Saustieu
How satisfied were you		40% of respondents
with the destination	40%	are Satisfied and
experience?	4070	Very Satisfied with
ехрененее:		their experience.
How satisfied were you		40% are very
with your trip to the	40%	satisfied.
destination?		
According to your		Satisfaction with
expectations, how	35%	the visit ranged
satisfied were you with		from Satisfied to
your visit?		Very Satisfied.
How satisfied were you		Satisfaction with
with the attention you	35%	the host community
received from the people		ranged from
of the host community?		Satisfied to Very
		Satisfied.
How satisfied were you if		Only 2% of the
you used taxi services	2%	sample used the taxi
from the airports of		service from the
Ciudad Obregón,		airport to their
Hermosillo and Guaymas		destination and
to your destination in		were very satisfied.
Sonora?		

Source: Own elaboration based on statistics

Statements

Conflict of interest

All authors contributed substantially to the preparation of this manuscript.

Esparza-García, Irma Guadalupe: was responsible for the research design, data collection and processing.

Espinoza-Castelo, Luz María: She was responsible for statistical analysis, research design and writing up the results.

Clark-Mendivil, Yesenia: was responsible for the methodological part of the research, the handling of references in the corresponding format and conclusions.

Sánchez-Guerrero, *Marisol*: was responsible for all the literature, its writing and graphic summaries.

Authors' contribution

All authors contributed substantially to the preparation of this manuscript. From obtaining the database, literature review, method development, statistical analyses and conclusions.

Availability of data and materials

The availability of the data obtained in this research is in the hands of the lead author and the corresponding author at the following e-mail addresses: irma.esparza.garcia02@gmail.com, luz.espinoza@utslrc.edu.mx

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Background

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