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Article

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Sociodemographic aspects and satisfaction of Chinese tourists visiting a coastal city

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ABSTRACT

The present study analyzes the Chinese tourist visiting a coastal city and has the following objectives: (1) Analyze the sociodemographic profile, (2) establish the levels of satisfaction in the attributes of the visit, and (3) determine the loyalty of the Chinese tourist. The research was carried out in the city of Guayaquil and tourists were surveyed in situ who had visited the coastal province of Santa Elena in Ecuador. A questionnaire was administered to a group of 377 Chinese tourists inside the Guayaquil International airport in Ecuador. The data was analyzed through univariate and bivariate statistical calculations. It was detected that most Chinese tourists are the young whose main motivation for visiting this destination is associated with nature-related attractions. Additionally, they valued the authenticity of the local cuisine and the warmth of the host community. Regarding loyalty behavior, they also obtained high scores in intentions to recommend, say positive things, and revisit the destination. The study expands the understanding of the literature on Chinese tourists in coastal destinations and could help destination managers in their decision making.

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1. Introduction

In the tourism sector, the sociodemographic characteristics of tourists influence the characteristics of their trips (Phimmavong et al., 2015). In this way, sociodemographic aspects such as age, educational level, sex and marital status are attributes analyzed in tourism (Najib et al., 2020). About satisfaction, Researchers have established two relevant approaches: the first is based on needs, and the second is based on the assessment of experience (Tian-Cole & Crompton, 2003). From these theories, the idea of satisfaction can be conceptualized from cognitive and emotional perspectives (Albayrak & Caber, 2018). Likewise, decades of academic research (Chea & Luo, 2008; Gounaris et al., 2010; Szymanski & Henard, 2001) offers insights into customer satisfaction outcomes, including word-of-mouth referral; consumer complaint behavior; brand loyalty; perpetuation; recommendation; and repurchase intention/repeated visits.

In the tourism industry, satisfaction is a fundamental concept for comprehending how tourists behave that has been studied by academics and policymakers (Chung & Petrick, 2013; Dmitrovic et al., 2009). In tourism, satisfaction is the way in which the needs of the tourist are satisfied (Hassan et al., 2023). Additionally, satisfaction is a crucial factor in predicting loyalty, as it is closely linked to a destination and significantly affects the likelihood of visitors returning (Assaker et al., 2011; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Therefore, it is essential to understand visitor satisfaction to formulate development strategies to improve the tourist experience at the destination.

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South America presents itself as a distant destination for Chinese tourists; however, it has become an attractive destination for this market in the last five years, especially to countries such as Argentina and Brazil (UNWTO/GTERC, 2019). In Ecuador, the Chinese ranked fifth among the main segments that entered the country in 2023 with 40,543 visits with a 2.84% participation (MINTUR, 2024). Besides, a study on the foreign tourist's perception of entering the Ecuadorian Coast identified that the Chinese tourists were the ones who spent the most during their stay (Clavijo et al., 2017). In this context, the Chinese market has immense potential for developing tourism in Latin America and Ecuador in particular (Arce & Argudo, 2019). Due to the importance of Chinese tourists in Ecuador, occupying fifth place among the first places of arrivals from abroad, Ecuador has prepared marketing policies to continue attracting this market.

In this order of ideas, the lack of research in South America that analyzes the satisfaction of Chinese tourists in coastal areas is striking. Therefore, knowing the sociodemographic aspects and satisfaction of demand makes it possible to improve leisure services and develop new facilities that contribute to generating a substantial experience in the destination. Also, if we know the aspects of Chinese tourist demand, people who work in tourism can create products according to the demand found, which is why it is a benefit for the receiving community.

Therefore, it becomes crucial to study Chinese tourists' behavior in emerging destinations such as Ecuador as well as their intentions to return and recommend. In this scenario, the present study aims to analyze Chinese tourists visiting a coastal city and therefore presents the following objectives: (1) Analyze the sociodemographic profile of Chinese tourists, (2) establish the levels of satisfaction in the visit attributes of Chinese tourists, and (3) determine the loyalty of the Chinese tourist who visits a coastal city. The results are used to provide implications for public or private organizations' decision-making, given the robust growth trend towards Chinese outbound tourism.

This study is organized as follows. After this introduction, a literature review on tourism satisfaction is made. This is followed by explaining the study area, the methodology with the used tools and techniques, and the obtained results. Finally, the implications and contributions based on the obtained findings are provided, and at the end of this research, conclusions of the study are presented.

2. Literature review

2.1. Sociodemographic aspects in tourism

Sociodemographic aspects are properties of tourists that influence their travel plans, behavior, and spending (Hassan et al., 2023). These aspects include variables such as family situation, employment status, income, and educational level, which have been widely studied in tourism research (Kalabikhina & Shishalov, 2016; Phimmavong et al., 2015). Indicators for these variables include marital status, job position, annual income, and highest level of education achieved. Also, Henderson (2011), understanding these sociodemographic aspects helps in minimizing conflicts among different tourist groups. For instance, a study by Manner-Baldeon et al. (2021) on young Chinese tourists' preferences revealed that these tourists value nature exploration, local cuisine, and cultural experiences, which are influenced by their sociodemographic background.

In a study by Carvache-Franco et al. (2020) students are beach lovers and private employees are Eco-coastalists. In a study of Chinese tourists visiting Hawaii, academics Agrusa et al. (2011) found that first-time visitors showed the highest level of preference for a luxury hotel, while second-time visitors showed the highest level of preference for a budget hotel. In another study of Chinese visitors in Barcelona, the authors Tian et al. (2021) found that the perceived image of the tourist destination is influenced by its prosocial cultural environment and that visitors highly value prestige and social networks during the visit.

Given the lack of clarity regarding the sociodemographic aspects of Chinese tourists visiting coastal destinations, our first research question arises: RQ1: What are the sociodemographic characteristics of Chinese tourists visiting a coastal city?

2.2. Satisfaction and loyalty in tourism

The term 'tourism satisfaction' is derived from 'customer satisfaction' in marketing (Chen et al., 2013). Pizam et al. (1978) were pioneers in applying this concept in tourism, initially focusing on product and service quality (Macintosh, 2002). The primary variables studied in this context are tourist satisfaction and

loyalty. Indicators of satisfaction include overall satisfaction with the destination, satisfaction with specific attributes such as accommodation, food, and activities (Al-Msallam, 2020; Hosany et al., 2017). Loyalty is often measured through indicators such as the intention to revisit and the likelihood of recommending the destination to others (Castellanos-Verdugo et al., 2016; Prayag & Ryan, 2012).

Satisfaction, the psychological outcome post-destination experience (Lee et al., 2014), is influenced by both emotional and cognitive reflections on the tourist services received (Bowen & Clarke, 2002). Tourist satisfaction serves as a key indicator of destination performance (Wang, 2016) and assists in policy formulation (Yu & Goulden, 2006). Therefore, understanding visitor satisfaction is critical due to the rapid adoption of new technologies by tourists (Carvache-Franco et al., 2023; Confente, 2015; Möhlmann, 2015; Oh et al., 2007; Sharma & Baoku, 2013; Sparks & Browning, 2010). In particular, local gastronomy based on seafood, as noted by Wang and Somogyi (2018), plays a significant role in shaping positive tourist perceptions and destination valuation.

2.3. Satisfaction and loyalty of the Chinese tourist

Studies on tourist satisfaction vary widely in content, methodology, and location, including mainland China (Chen et al., 2016; Yuan et al., 2008) and regions like Taiwan and Hong Kong (Cang et al., 2017; Chan et al., 2015; Song et al., 2011), Vietnam (Truong & King, 2009), Korea (Chiu et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2011), Australia (Mao & Zhang, 2014), and the United States (Li et al., 2011). The primary variables in these studies are tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Indicators of satisfaction include the quality of accommodation, meals, itineraries, service quality, and the environment (Cang et al., 2017; Chan et al., 2015; Li et al., 2011; Song et al., 2011; Yuan et al., 2008). Loyalty is often measured through repeat visits and recommendations (Chiu et al., 2016; Mao & Zhang, 2014).

Thus, Chen & Lehto (2016) argue that vacation duration impacts tourist satisfaction and subjective well-being, while trip frequency does not. Cang et al. (2017) explore Taiwan's policies on Chinese tourist satisfaction, emphasizing accommodation, meals, itineraries, guide service, and transport services. Chan et al. (2015) show that satisfaction with tour guiding impacts overall satisfaction. Yuan et al. (2008) highlight destination attractions and tour group dynamics as satisfaction predictors. Song et al. (2011) state that service performance correlates with satisfaction and loyalty. Li et al. (2011) discuss expectations of high-quality services and cultural understanding for Chinese tourists abroad.

In foreign countries, Chiu et al. (2016) found that Korea's mental and affective images influence satisfaction and loyalty. Lee et al. (2014) connect perceived tour quality with satisfaction and the inverse relationship between complaints and loyalty. Mao and Zhang (2014) link destination satisfaction to word-of-mouth marketing. Truong and King (2009) find Chinese tourists in Vietnam satisfied with natural scenery and restaurants but less with language and signage. Andriotis et al. (2008) use factor analysis and cluster segmentation to measure satisfaction. Tsiotsou and Vasioti (2006) and Huh and Uysal (2004) highlight satisfaction in specific contexts like mountain and cultural/historical sites, respectively. In a study by Huang et al. (2021), the happiness level of a destination country is positively and significantly associated with Chinese tourist arrivals to that country. About Chinese Millennial Tourists Luo et al. (2020) found that three dimensions of perceived destination brand values (i.e. emotional, social, and epistemic values) influence destination loyalty.

These studies underline the importance of understanding the Chinese tourist's perception to assess satisfaction during trips. Satisfaction is influenced by cultural values and service performance, affecting the tourist experience and relationship with the destination. Given the unclear levels of satisfaction and loyalty among Chinese tourists visiting a coastal city, our second and third research questions arise: RQ2: What are the levels of satisfaction in the attributes of Chinese tourists visiting a coastal city? RQ3: What are the loyalty levels of Chinese tourists visiting a coastal city?

3. Methodology

3.1. Study area

The Province of Santa Elena is located in the westernmost area of the Ecuadorian coast, with 3,762.8 km² of territory. It is a destination known for its important ancestral legacy and tourist attractions, being the center of the oldest civilization on the Ecuadorian Coast.

This territory is linked to the agricultural and livestock sector, aquaculture, fishing, trade, and especially to touristic activity due to its resorts distributed in 160 km of beaches, such as Salinas, San Pablo, Punta Blanca, Montañita, among others, which are located next to the E-15 Via del Pacífico highway (GAD Santa Elena, 2015). In 2017, it was one of the territories that received 31.4% of international tourists for vacation purposes (MINTUR, 2021).

Among the relevant touristic areas, La Chocolatera in Salinas city stands out. It is known as the westernmost point of South America mainland coast. This place is one of the most popular destinations on Ecuador's central coast. This attraction is located within the protected area Santa Elena Peninsula Coastal Faunistic Production Reserve, where terrestrial and marine ecosystems meet, making it a highly biodiverse space. (MAE, 2020)

Another natural area is the Montañita Commune in the Manglaralto parish. It is known for its beach and climate. It was declared 'City of Surfing' in 2016 by World Cities Surf Network (WCSN, 2016) because its waves are suitable for surfing. In 2013 Montañita was selected to host its first surfing championship called ISA MASTER'S World Championship (ISA, 2013). Besides surfing, activities like whale watching, parasailing, snorkeling, diving, ecotourism, and visiting Plata's Island can take place.

Additionally, its cultural heritage is equally important. The peninsula has ancestral traditions, such as 'Mesa de Muertos' (table of the dead) [a way of paying tribute to the deceased by arranging a table filled with food that were beloved by the family member] (Silva Gómez et al., 2020). This event exemplifies 'spontaneous syncretism', a harmonious blending of ceremonial traditions where the Spanish Catholic veneration of the saints and pre-Hispanic worship of the deceased intertwine (Good Eshelman, 2001). Conversely, the Amantes de Sumpa museum, a museum built in situ to show Las Vegas culture's details, the oldest civilization of the Ecuadorian coast (Stothert, 1985), inhabited the area 10,000 years before the present.

3.2. Research design

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of ESPOL Polytechnic University reg. No. FIMCBOR-02-2016. Informed consent was requested in writing at the beginning of the questionnaire.

This study employs a non-experimental correlational design. The design allows for the examination of potential relationships between variables without manipulating them, thereby preserving the natural state of the variables in their real-world context (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It is appropriate for this study, as it seeks to understand the associations between sociodemographic characteristics of Chinese tourists and their travel behavior and satisfaction at a coastal destination in Ecuador.

3.3. Research subject

The study focuses on Chinese tourists visiting the central coast of Ecuador, specifically at the José Joaquín de Olmedo International Airport boarding lounges in Guayaquil. The inclusion criteria required participants to be at least 18 years of age and to have visited the central coast of Ecuador during their trip. Exclusion criteria involved tourists who were not involved in travel to the central coast during their visit or who did not fulfill the age requirement. The study was conducted from June to October 2019.

3.4. Research instrument

3.4.1. Independent variables

The questionnaire's independent variables included sociodemographic characteristics of the Chinese tourists, such as age, gender, marital status, education level, and income. These variables were adapted from Lee et al. (2018), who used similar indicators to assess the impact of sociodemographic factors on travel behavior.

3.4.2. Dependent variables

The satisfaction of Chinese tourists with various destination attributes was assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 'not at all satisfied' to 'very satisfied'. These questions were adapted from

studies by Tsiotsou and Vasioti (2006), Huh and Uysal (2004), Andriotis et al. (2008), and Manner-Baldeon et al. (2021). Additionally, behavioral intentions were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated 'strongly disagree' and 5 'strongly agree'. The behavioral intention questions were based on the study by Kim and Park (2017), with variables including intention to revisit, willingness to recommend, and positive word-of-mouth.

3.4.3. Sources of questionnaire

The questionnaire used in the study was adapted from the mentioned sources, ensuring relevance and accuracy in assessing the targeted variables.

3.5. Data gathering

A non-probabilistic convenience sampling approach was utilized to gather responses from the Chinese tourists. Before the main data collection, a pilot test with ten participants was conducted to assess the clarity and flow of the questionnaire.

Once the pilot test was deemed successful, the survey was administered in Mandarin at the José Joaquín de Olmedo International Airport boarding lounges in Guayaquil from June to October 2019. Participants were required to complete the survey in approximately 5 minutes. A total of 391 surveys were collected, with 377 valid responses after eliminating incomplete data. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 25 to evaluate the collected data, including reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha for satisfaction items and chi-square tests to compare satisfaction and behavioral differences among Chinese tourists from various administrative divisions.

4. Results

4.1. Socioeconomic variables of Chinese tourists

Table 1 presents the sociodemographic profile of Chinese tourists visiting the central coast of Ecuador. The majority of respondents were *male* (60.7%) compared to *female* tourists (39.3%). The largest group of Chinese tourists was *aged* between 22 and 28 years (30.5%), followed by those *aged* 29 to 33 years (23.3%). In terms of *education* level, 47.2% had a *university* education, and 45.9% had a *high school education*. Single

Table 1. Sociodemographic profile. (N=377).

Variables	Category	%
Gender	Male	60,7
	Female	39,3
Age	< 21	20.2
	22 – 28	30.5
	29 – 33	23.3
	34 – 40	6.1
	41 – 45	7.2
	46 – 50	2.9
	51 – 60	0.5
	>61	–
Education level	Primary Education	0.3
	Secondary Education	45.9
	University	47.2
	Master/PhD.	6.6
Marital Status	Single	57
	Married	34.2
	Civil union	2.7
	Divorced	5.3
	Widowed	0.8
Background	Province	36.5
	Autonomous Region	8.5
	Municipality	39.0
	Special Area	8.5
Type of travel	Alone	36.1
	Couple	9.8
	Relatives/Friends	54.1

tourists represented the largest marital status group at 57%, while *married* individuals made up 34.2%. Most tourists were from *municipalities* (39.0%), followed by those from *provinces* (36.5%). In terms of travel companion type, 54.1% *traveled with friends or family*, and 36.1% *traveled alone*. See [Table 1](#)

4.2. Total trip expenditure and length of stay

[Table 2](#) highlights the trip expenditure and length of stay for Chinese tourists. The majority of respondents *spent over \$950* on their trip, with 77.2% from autonomous regions (AR), municipalities, and special administrative regions (SR) reporting expenditures in this range. When assessing the *length of stay*, the group from municipalities and SR primarily stayed between 11 to 15 days (47.6% and 47.4%, respectively). Autonomous regions (40.6%) and special regions (31.3%) had a higher percentage of tourists staying between 21 to 30 days. See [Table 2](#)

4.3. Association between motivations and tourist origin

[Table 3](#) demonstrates the association between visitation motivations and the origin of tourists. Across all groups, the primary motivation for visiting was *nature, sun, and beach* (36.8%–42.2%), followed by *visiting family and friends*. *Business*-related motivations were the least frequent among tourists. The chi-square test confirmed statistically significant differences in motivational variables based on origin, though the V-Cramer test (0.196) indicated weak relevance. See [Table 3](#)

4.4. Association between preference in travel months and tourist origin

[Table 4](#) presents the association between *travel month preferences* and *tourist origin*. A majority of tourists from the province (70.2%), municipality (78.9%), and special administrative regions (78.9%) visited the

Table 2. Total trip expenditure and time spent in the Central Coast of Ecuador.

	Province	AR	Municipality	SR	Total
Expenses					
< \$350	–	3.1	–	–	.3
\$351 – \$550	1.4	–	–	3.5	1.1
\$551 – \$ 750	3.5	6.3	3.4	7	4.2
\$751 – \$950	20.6	9.4	15.6	17.5	17.2
> \$950	74.5	81.3	81	71.9	77.2
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Stay					
2 to 5 days	0,7	–	–	–	.3
6 to 10 days	5	–	8.2	7	6.1
11 to 15 day	39	21.9	47.6	47,4	42.2
16 to 20 days	20.6	40.6	25.9	19.3	24.1
21 to 30 days	24.1	31.3	10.2	10.5	17.2
> 31 days	10.6	6.3	8.2	15.8	10.1
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

AR=Autonomous Region; SR=Special Region.

Table 3. Association between visitation motivations and tourist origin.

Motivation	Province %	AR %	Municipality%	SR %	V	Sig
Nature, sun & beach	40.4	37.5	42.2	36.8	0.196	0.003
Visit relatives & friends.	25.5	25	27.9	19.3		
Business	24.1	12.5	16.3	24.0		
Education and formation	9.2	6.3	8.2	19.3		
Health & Medical attention	–	9.4	2.7	–		
Religion/pilgrimage	–	3.1	–	–		
Purchases	.7	3.1	2	–		
Transit	–	3.1	.7	–		

AR=Autonomous Region; SR=Special Region; V=V Cramer Sig. = Asymptotic significance; $\chi^2= 43.479$ Chi-square value; Contingency coefficient = .322; $p=0.003$.

central coast between June and September. However, those from autonomous regions (34.4%) preferred to travel between April and June. See [Table 4](#)

The results of [Tables 1–4](#) answer our first research question: RQ1: What are the sociodemographic characteristics of Chinese tourists visiting a coastal city?

Regarding satisfaction, various attributes related to lodging, attractions, and tourist services were analyzed through 16 statements that attempted to measure Chinese tourists' satisfaction during their visit to Ecuador's central coast. The items' reliability was established through Cronbach's Alpha, which obtained 0.88, an acceptable value, indicating that the items are reliable. The statement results are showed in descending order, ranging from the highest to the lowest mean. The highest satisfaction level was represented by the statement 'Quality of hospitality', next the statement 'Quality of marine environment' and the 'state of conservation of natural areas.' In contrast, the attributes 'Beach and sea cleanup' and the cleanliness and hygiene of the destination reach values of 4.5, followed by local gastronomy, auxiliary facilities, and the opportunity to shop at the destination. In general, tourists showed high satisfaction regarding the destination's attributes during their vacations on Ecuador's central coast. The least valued element had to do with the destination's transportation (see [Table 5](#)).

4.5. Behavioral intentions and overall satisfaction with destination attributes

[Table 6](#) provides descriptive values of variables measuring *behavioral intentions* and *overall satisfaction*. Each variable, including *recommendations*, *saying positive things*, *intention to return*, and *overall satisfaction*, exhibited a mean score above 4 points. Additionally, statistical significance was observed in the analysis of overall satisfaction among tourists based on their origin.

The results show that the variable 'saying positive things' obtained statistically significant differences ($\chi^2 = 9.078$; $gl = 3$; $p = 0.028$) between tourists coming from Municipality-Province ($r_{Municipality} = 204.67 - r_{Province} = 171.33$; $Sig = 0.20$) favorable to those from a Municipality, due to the value of the rank, i.e. these Chinese tourists will encourage their acquaintances to visit the Central Coast of Ecuador to a greater extent than the rest of the groups. The intention to return also presented significance when comparing the means of tourists by origin ($\chi^2 = 9.372$; $gl = 3$; $p = 0.025$) in the comparisons between Municipality-Province pairs

Table 4. Association between the preference in the months of visit and the origin of the tourists.

Travel preferences	Province %	AR %	Municipality %	SR %	V	Sig
January – March	7.1	12.5	3.4	–	0.170	0.000
April – June	22	46.9	16.3	19.3		
July – September	70.2	34.4	78.9	78.9		
October – November	0.7	6.3	1.4	1.8		

AR=Autonomous Region; SAR=Special Region; V=V Cramer Sig. = Asymptotic significance; $\chi^2 = 32.769$ Chi-square value; Contingency coefficient = .283 $p = 0.001$.

Table 5. Overall responses to satisfaction statements (N=377).

Attributes on satisfaction	M	DE	Reference
Quality in the hospitality industry	4.7	.54	Andriotis et al. (2008)
Quality of the marine environment	4.6	.55	Andriotis et al. (2008)
Conservation status of natural areas	4.6	.55	Tsiotsou and Vasioti (2006)
Beach and sea cleanup	4.6	.52	Andriotis et al. (2008)
Cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation	4.5	.58	Andriotis et al. (2008)
Kindness of residents and merchants.	4.5	.60	Andriotis et al. (2008)
Attractive price level	4.5	.57	Andriotis et al. (2008)
Local Gastronomy	4.4	.56	Tsiotsou and Vasioti (2006)
Auxiliary facilities (benches, medical service)	4.4	.62	Andriotis et al. (2008)
Attractions in natural environments	4.4	.63	Manner-Baldeon et al. (2021)
Opportunity to make purchases.	4.4	.65	Tsiotsou and Vasioti (2006)
Excursions and guided tours	4.3	.72	Andriotis et al. (2008)
Cultural villages	4.3	.72	Huh & Uysalt (2004)
Perception of personal safety and security	4.1	.82	Andriotis et al. (2008)
Information centers	4.1	.78	Huh & Uysalt (2004)
Convenience of transportation services	3.5	1.1	Andriotis et al. (2008)

SD=Standard Deviation; M=Mean.

($r_{\text{Municipality}} = 206.37 - r_{\text{Province}} r = 174.40$; $p = 0.28$). Similarly, significance was found between origin groups in overall satisfaction with the destination ($\chi^2 = 14.615$; $gl = 3$; $p = 0.002$), comparison between SR-Municipality pairs ($r_{\text{SR}} = 159.78 - r_{\text{Municipality}} = 204.24$; $\text{Sig} = 0.016$) and SR-AR ($r_{\text{SR}} = 159.78 - r_{\text{AR}} = 204.24$; $\text{Sig} = 0.023$) (see Table 7).

4.6. Association between behavioral intentions and tourist origin

Table 7 presents the association between *behavioral intentions* and *tourist origin*. Analysis of the data showed statistically significant differences between tourists from different regions in terms of intentions to say positive things ($p = 0.028$), intention to return ($p = 0.025$), and overall satisfaction ($p = 0.002$).

The results of Tables 5–7 answer our second and third research questions: RQ2: What are the levels of satisfaction in the attributes of visiting Chinese tourists visiting a coastal city?. RQ3: What are the loyalty levels of Chinese tourists visiting a coastal city?.

5. Discussion

This study addresses the profile of Chinese tourists visiting a coastal city, responding to RQ1. The results indicate that the majority of Chinese tourists visiting the Central Coast are young individuals under 33 years old, consistent with findings from Manner-Baldeon et al. (2021) regarding the Chinese youth market in Ecuador. A significant proportion of these tourists travel with friends or family, suggesting a preference for group travel, which aligns with prior research (Manner-Baldeon et al., 2021).

Motivations for visiting Ecuador include enjoying nature-oriented activities and leisure pursuits, such as the sun and beach, corroborating the findings of Cang et al. (2017) and Manner-Baldeon et al. (2021). Additionally, the bond with family and friends plays a powerful role in motivating Chinese tourists to visit due to word-of-mouth influence (Mao & Zhang, 2014). Business-related motivations are also significant in driving Chinese tourists to emerging destinations like Ecuador.

5.1. Satisfaction levels with destination attributes

In response to RQ2, the results show that Chinese tourists exhibit high satisfaction levels concerning the quality and conservation of beaches and marine environments, along with the destination's cleanliness and hygiene, consistent with the findings of Cang et al. (2017) and Manner-Baldeon et al. (2021). Residents and merchants' friendliness and competitive pricing are additional elements that contribute positively to tourist satisfaction (Song et al., 2011). Local gastronomy, based on seafood, also plays a

Table 6. Behavioral intentions and overall satisfaction.

Behavioral intentions	KS ^a	Asymmetry	Kurtosis	Z_s/Z_c	M \pm SD
Expectation	0.408***	−1.123	0.273	−8.9/1.08	4.62 \pm .558
Recommend	0.308***	−0.532	−0.183	−4.2/−0.72	4.42 \pm .588
Say positive things	0.329***	−0.683	−0.073	−5.41/−.28	4.46 \pm .596
Intention to return	0.330***	−1.057	2.355	−8.37/9.3	4.47 \pm .606
Overall Satisfaction	0.331***	−0.253	−0.149	−2.0/−.59	4.29 \pm .590

KS = Kolmogorov-Smirnov.

^aLilliefors significance correction.

***Significance at the 0.001 level.

Zs = Symmetry; Zc = Kurtosis; M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation.

Table 7. Association between behavioral intentions and provenance.

Behavioral intentions	Province	AR	Municipality	Kruskal Wallis	Sig
Expectations	4.55	4.72	4.7	4.53	0.109
Recommend	4.45	4.44	4.44	4.32	0.592
Say positive things	4.35	4.53	4.57	4.42	0.028
Intention to return	4.39	4.47	4.59	4.39	0.025
Overall satisfaction	4.21	4.47	4.39	4.11	0.002

AR = Autonomous Region; SR = Special Region; Sig_{Bonferroni} = Significance level is 0.05.

crucial role in shaping tourists' positive perception, as noted by Wang and Somogyi (2018). However, transportation infrastructure received the lowest satisfaction rating, suggesting a need for improvement in public and private transport systems.

5.2. Behavioral intentions and loyalty

In response to RQ3, the study finds that behavioral intentions such as promoting the destination through positive word-of-mouth and recommending it to others are critical for Chinese tourists. These actions can be leveraged as tools to influence potential tourists through word-of-mouth advertising, as suggested by Mao and Zhang (2014). Additionally, tourists' intention to return is closely linked to reconnecting with family members, underscoring the importance of family bonds in tourist behavior.

Overall satisfaction with the destination varies significantly based on tourists' origin. Tourists from autonomous regions, who tend to spend more on their trips, exhibit higher overall satisfaction compared to those from special administrative regions. This insight suggests the need to develop premium travel packages tailored to tourists from autonomous regions, as well as loyalty programs to encourage repeat visits (Manner-Baldeon et al., 2021).

5.3. Theoretical implications

This study makes several significant contributions to the academic understanding of Chinese tourists visiting coastal cities. First, it enriches the existing literature on tourist demographics by highlighting the profile of Chinese tourists, particularly their youthful age and preference for traveling in groups. This insight adds depth to the theoretical frameworks concerning tourist behavior, particularly those focusing on demographic influences on travel preferences.

Second, the study contributes to the body of knowledge on tourist motivations. It identifies key motivational factors for Chinese tourists, such as a strong desire to engage in nature-oriented recreational activities and leisure pursuits like enjoying the sun and the beach. This finding aligns with and extends prior research by demonstrating the importance of these motivations in a new geographical context, thus offering a broader understanding of Chinese tourist behavior.

Third, by examining the satisfaction levels of Chinese tourists with various attributes of the coastal destination, this research provides valuable insights into the elements that significantly impact tourist satisfaction. Specifically, it emphasizes the high value placed on the quality and conservation of natural environments, cleanliness, and local hospitality. These findings contribute to the theoretical discourse on service quality and satisfaction in tourism, suggesting that these factors are critical in shaping positive tourist experiences.

Finally, this study opens new avenues for future research by suggesting the need for further exploration into the segmentation of Chinese tourists and their economic impact on tourism destinations. By identifying gaps in the current understanding of this tourist group, the research sets the stage for more detailed studies that could examine the nuances of Chinese tourists' preferences and behaviors across different types of destinations and tourism products.

Overall, the theoretical implications of this study lie in its ability to enhance the academic understanding of Chinese tourist profiles, motivations, satisfaction determinants, and the potential for targeted future research. These contributions provide a solid foundation for academics and researchers aiming to delve deeper into the dynamics of Chinese outbound tourism.

5.4. Practical implications

To enhance the tourist experience, there is a need to consider personalized tourism experiences for tourists from different regions, adapting activities, tours, and services to better align with cultural expectations and preferences. Investment in improving public and private transportation infrastructure and services could enhance satisfaction, particularly considering that transportation was rated the lowest in satisfaction. Additionally, developing more integrated dining experiences, such as culinary tours or food events, could elevate the perception and enjoyment of local cuisine.

Strategic alliances with travel agencies in various Chinese administrative regions could be established to promote tourist packages adapted to the spending preferences and length of stay of tourists from different regions, thereby attracting more visitors. Furthermore, encouraging brand ambassador programs for tourists from municipalities could leverage positive experiences to generate word-of-mouth promotion.

Implementing rigorous and continuous cleaning and maintenance programs on beaches and marine areas could further enhance satisfaction and contribute to environmental sustainability.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

This research provides insights into the profile of Chinese visitors on the Ecuadorian coast, offering a valuable understanding of their demographics, motivations, and satisfaction levels. The findings contribute to the formulation of public policies and decision-making in the tourism sector. For instance, enhancing tourist information services, transportation, and mobility can improve overall visitor experience. Additionally, leveraging the destination's strengths, such as the natural environment, gastronomy, and warmth of local residents, can foster innovative tourism products that blend cultural and natural experiences.

Key observations from the study include the identification of the Chinese visitors as a predominantly young demographic with university-level education. Their primary motivation for visiting was nature-oriented activities, including sun and beach. The quality of hospitality services stood out as a highly valued attribute. Moreover, the intention to recommend the destination, speak positively about it, and revisit scored highly among respondents. These findings highlight the overall positive sentiment and strong engagement of Chinese tourists with the destination.

Enhance the quality and accessibility of tourist information services to assist Chinese visitors, helping them better navigate and understand the attractions and facilities available. Improve public and private transport infrastructure and services to ensure smooth and convenient travel for visitors, enhancing overall satisfaction. Develop innovative tourism products that link cultural and natural experiences, taking advantage of the destination's unique strengths. Conduct market segmentation of Chinese tourists to better understand their diverse preferences and spending patterns. Further analysis of the economic impact of Chinese tourism on the country is also recommended.

By addressing these areas, tourism service providers and policymakers can continue to improve the overall experience for Chinese tourists, thus enhancing the destination's competitiveness and tourism quality.

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The published manuscript focuses on segmenting Chinese tourists based on their satisfaction and sociodemographic characteristics, as well as evaluating their intention to revisit, recommend, and speak positively about the destination. While the present manuscript aims to identify the factors that influence the satisfaction of Chinese tourists.

Author contributions

Miguel Orden-Mejía: Work designing; Drafting the work; Final approval of the version to be published; Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring the accuracy of the questions. Mauricio Carvache-Franco: Work designing; Drafting the work; Final approval of the version to be published; Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring the accuracy of the questions. Only Carvache-Franco: Work designing; Drafting the work; Final approval of the version to be published; Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring the accuracy of the questions. Wilmer Carvache-Franco: Work designing; Drafting the work; Final approval of the version to be published; Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring the accuracy of the questions.

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Data availability statement

The corresponding author can provide the data presented in this study upon request

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