

## QUALITY OF THE BEACHES OF SUCRE AND SAN VICENTE IN MANABI ECUADOR AND THE IMPACT ON THE ECONOMIC AND TOURISTIC SUSTAINABILITY OF THE REGION

Elizabeth del Carmen Ormaza Esmeraldas<sup>1</sup>, Victor Hugo Nevarez Barberan<sup>2</sup>, José Ricardo Macias Barberan<sup>3</sup>, Emilia Melani Gautherot Hernandez<sup>4</sup>, Vicente Eduardo Pazmiño Chica<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí, Facultad de Ciencias Administrativas, Contables y Comercio, Proyecto de Investigación Vulnerabilidad socioambiental de la comunidad “El Pajonal” del cantón Sucre frente al cambio climático, elizabeth.ormaza@uleam.edu.ec

<sup>2</sup>Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí, Facultad de Ciencias Administrativas, Contables y Comercio, Proyecto de Investigación Vulnerabilidad socioambiental de la comunidad “El Pajonal” del cantón Sucre frente al cambio climático, jose.nevarez@uleam.edu.ec

<sup>3</sup>Universidad Técnica de Manabí Instituto de Posgrados, Departamento de Física, jose.macias@utm.edu.ec

<sup>4</sup>Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí, Facultad de Ciencias Administrativas, Contables y Comercio, Proyecto de Investigación Vulnerabilidad socioambiental de la comunidad “El Pajonal” del cantón Sucre frente al cambio climático, emilia.gautherot@uleam.edu.ec

<sup>5</sup>Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí, Facultad de Ciencias Administrativas, Contables y Comercio, Proyecto de Investigación Vulnerabilidad socioambiental de la comunidad “El Pajonal” del cantón Sucre frente al cambio climático, Vicente.pazmino@uleam.edu.ec

### *Abstract*

The general objective of this article is to describe the relationship between the quality of the beaches of the cantons of Sucre and San Vicente in the province of Manabí, Ecuador, and the impact on the economic and tourism sustainability of the region. According to previous studies, there is a relationship between the quality of coastal regions and the visits that these places receive from tourists, where not only visual elements such as the attractiveness of the beaches are involved, but also the state of their elements in terms of health and conservation. In this article, a quantitative research methodology has been used, with a data collection instrument applied digitally via e-mail to the selected

sample, which corresponds to officials of the mayor's office in the cantons of Sucre and San Vicente de Manabí. The results and conclusions were that at present it is not possible to economically sustain the region only with the tourism element as a way to do so, in addition to not having the conditions on the beaches, neither has the corresponding promotion of these resources been carried out for its exploitation in a suitable way, from the official entities.

Key words: beaches, tourism, quality, tourism promotion, visitors.

## INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations - UN (1970), natural resources include "everything that man finds in his natural environment and that he can in some way use for his own benefit" (p.5); therefore, when referring to natural resources as a common good, it is emphasized that in order for them to be used by the greatest number of people and users, including tourists, they must be conserved and maintained so that their benefit is sustainable in the course of time.

The beaches have been a referentially attractive element, with great repercussion in the economic, social and cultural development of important regions at world-wide level, nevertheless, even in the present time many zones have neglected the due use that, to these spaces, which if it is well taken advantage of can be granted an important value within the local, regional and national economy. The lack of proper use and maintenance reduces the potential they represent for the development of large cities, as well as the tourist use that can be given, not only to the beaches but also to the other natural resources that are found around them.

Considering the above, beaches as a natural resource have always been seen as a tourist attraction that can be used in the broadest sense by the community and by the governmental entities themselves for the purpose of expansion and progress of the economic engine of the different regions. In this respect, the concept of tourist attraction is defined as the set of material and/or immaterial elements that are susceptible of being transformed into a tourist product that has the capacity to influence the tourist's decision-making process, causing him to visit through flows of displacements from his usual place of residence to a certain territory. The latter is thus transformed into a tourist destination (Rivera, 2008).

Thus, in principle, it is valid to point out what a beach is, when speaking of this term, the definition given by Grunberger (2004)

From the point of view of the qualities attached to the geomorphological element, the advantage of the term beach, in a broad sense, lies in its neutrality. A beach can have parts with saline efflorescence or not; it can

have a permanent lake or not, it can have a vegetation cover or not, etc. The range of terms used to signify a beach often refers to an accessory quality that makes the expression ambiguous, in a general sense. (p.2)

The variability of "beaches" affects the definition that many authors express about this type of formation, which includes a number of other natural resources. Which represent an important element of the assets of each nation and region, for the Environmental Protection Agency of the United States (2021)

A beach is the shore of a body of water that has sand, pebbles, or rocks. Types of beaches vary considerably, especially depending on location. When we think of a beach, most imagine a wide ocean beach with sand, aquatic plants and dunes on the bottom, where waves break, wind blows and seagulls fly overhead.

Beaches as a natural asset belong to a coastal system, which in turn includes other shores. These often constitute an entire coastal zone. In relation to the concept from the geographic context of "beach", the following is expressed in the Ecured portal (2021)

It is a geographical feature formed from the accumulation of sediments not consolidated by the action of waves. Sediments are usually sands, but there are also rocky beaches. This characteristic turns the beach into a dynamic geographic feature that is in permanent change. Tides, storms and erosion cycles can modify the physiognomy of the beach and even make it disappear.

Thus, the elements found in these regions are of great richness not only in terms of beauty and splendor, but also represent a component of various elements of detrital origin, products of the disintegration of pre-existing rocks. Such resources increase the value of the beach in the geographic context where it is located, which allows establishing types of classifications that generate interest of various kinds, highlighting fundamentally the tourist order, because it is possible through the study to delimit the quality of the elements present on the beaches.

In Ecuador there are numerous tourist regions of great beauty, two of the most beautiful cantons in terms of beaches and coastline that can be exploited for tourism purposes are: precisely the Canton Sucre and Canton San Vicente, within the Province of Manabi close in terms of geography, with common elements of great wealth.

According to Goraymi (2021)

San Vicente is the youngest canton of the Province of Manabí, in Ecuador. It is surrounded by sea, hills and estuary, of enterprising, hardworking and friendly people, its accessibility is multiple by air, land and sea given the privilege of the geographical location. It is an important international, national and provincial tourist destination. It has several tourist sites for sun and beach, countryside, bird watching

and panoramic views from the different viewpoints. It is bordered to the north by the Pacific Ocean and Canton Jama; to the south by the estuary of the Chane River; to the east by: San Isidro Parish of Canton Sucre and Canton Chane; to the west by the Pacific Ocean: Pacific Ocean.

According to Carvajal and Lemoine (2017).

The existing tourism resources in the database of the tourism department of the government of the area in order to identify and define the number of the activities that are elaborated in the same, where the Muchacho River resource shows 30% of the activities that are carried out followed by the resources Canoa River and Chane Estuary that represent 13% of the number of activities. In the classification of the existing attractions in the zone, they were divided into types and subtypes, where the most representative at the classification level were the natural sites with 63% of representation followed by cultural manifestations which represented 31%, at the type level the geomorphological ones represented 56% followed by the urban spaces with 25% of the total. By subtype, 50% was represented by coastlines and 19% by viewpoints, which were the most representative. It is concluded that the resources and attractions classified as geomorphological are the most representative, where 30% are represented in urban areas and only 10% are located in mountainous areas of the canton.

According to Carvajal y Lemoine (ob. cit.)

The province of Manabí is privileged for its 350 km of beaches, from Ayampe (in the south) to Cojimies (in the north), it is considered a tourist destination for its natural diversity that is reflected in its cliffs, mouths, estuaries, islets, islands, slabs and rocks that show beautiful landscapes along our coastal geography, which is the main tourist attraction of our province region. The San Vicente canton has approximately 33 km of white sand beaches, 18 km from the beach of Los Perales, Punta Napo, Briceño, Canoa, and 15 km from Cabo Pasado, Punta Chinita and Cabuyal, its waters are suitable for surfing, skiing, banana rides and jet skis (Decentralized Autonomous Government of the canton San Vicente, n.d.).

For its part, Canton Sucre, with 742 km<sup>2</sup> is another very attractive destination for its natural beauty, being part of a privileged group of cantons located in the coastal region of the region of Manabí, Ecuador. Where it is possible to offer to own and visitors a number of own resources of the beaches and its benefits with a view to the economic use.

In the coastal region is located the province of Manabi, consisting of 22 cantons, one of these is Sucre formed by two urban parishes being the cantonal head of Bahía de Caráquez and Leónidas Plaza. Among the rural parishes are Charapotó and San Isidro. Both with typical infrastructure of

the area and culture that has transcended from ancient times that are reflected from gastronomy to handicrafts. Sucre is the fifth canton of the province of Manabi, its cantonization date is November 3, 1875, has an area of 764 km<sup>2</sup>: 33 km<sup>2</sup> urban area and 682 km<sup>2</sup> rural area. It is bordered to the north by the Pacific Ocean, estuary of the Chane River and the canton San Vicente, to the south by the cantons Portoviejo and Rocafuerte, to the east by the canton Tosagua and to the west by the Pacific Ocean (Ministry of Tourism, 2015).

This is how these two regions of the province of Manabi, represent valuable resources with outstanding qualities in terms of natural and cultural own coastal area in which they are located, from the context of the tourism engine, especially for the coastal fence that is located in them. Where it is possible to highlight not only the beauty of many of the beaches that are in these two areas Sucre and San Vicente, which are close, but also has other benefits for recreation such as sand and water elements present in the mentioned areas Manabitas, highlighting a marine fauna and many birds that converge in the beauty of both cantons.

Thus, it is necessary and possible to consider the grouping of an important number of beaches, within the typology of compounds that can be found in it, which also increases the richness of these, highlighting its value for tourism, geological, geographic, among others. The concept of coastal system arises then, which is important to describe in this order of ideas, given its relationship with the beaches and their quality, within which many regions of the country Ecuador are located for Romero (2020)

The coastal system or coastal zone is one of the most complex, diverse and productive on the planet, it is integrated in the transition between the marine and terrestrial, which is why it is particularly complex as a coastal subsystem. Each coastal subsystem is open, although they interact as a single whole, which requires an eco-systemic (holistic) approach to understand its functioning, hence the importance of achieving a management that includes all areas and activities (integral) that in one way or another are related to the coast and its resources (beaches). (p.12).

On the other hand, Cortez et al. (2020) refers that

It is necessary to develop more basic research with the objective of knowing the current state of ecosystems, the ecosystem services they provide and their responses to observed and projected future changes in order to define local, national and regional adaptation actions. (p. 3).

This element is fundamental in the search to provide stability to the tourism apparatus of the regions due to the fact that the environmental problem faced by coastal ecosystems is changing the way in which their resources are managed. In the 1980-2000 period, special attention was

paid to the economic aspect, ignoring the ecological and social peculiarities of each area. But now the objective is to achieve the sustainable use of coasts (Yáñez, Day and Reyes, 2013).

Thus, sustainable development is tourism that involves the conservation of the environment, i.e. the search for a balance between the visitor, the tourist environment and the local community. A process of economic development and social and cultural progress, which occurs in harmony with its environment or surroundings (urban or rural areas), adjusting to present needs but preserving the same tourism resources for the future (Yépez,V., 2011, p.172).

Beaches and coastal regions have been used as a means of sustainable development in the course of time for cities, towns and villages in isolated conditions, so that progress in the adequacy of accommodation conditions, additional natural resources surrounding the beaches, population growth, among other factors have been linked to the development of regions in potentially tourist areas.

Therefore, we take into consideration what Romero (ob. cit.) says

Local development seeks answers that are triggers for it and that are related to sustainability, three different approaches have been defined:

a) Part of the neoclassical debate that argues that markets are the best resource managers and that, therefore, it should be left to the market the responsibility of promoting local development, so that according to this approach, the action of the state is limited to remove the obstacles that in those zones, areas and localities, in which markets could have for the proper functioning.

B) The developmentalist approach, is an approach that bets on a strong external intervention of the state, to build communication, economic, education, health, etc. infrastructures. In this approach, it is assumed that, having this set of externalities, these areas will be in a position to develop economic activities more and better linked to the overall economy.

C) That of endogenous development, in which the participation of the state is assumed to be indispensable in order to provide these areas or localities with the externalities necessary for their development, while at the same time making it necessary to promote the use of their own resources or endogenous potentialities, of the local socioeconomic framework, of human resources and of the local institutional framework.

In this sense, it is important to mention that for a development to be sustainable and real, it is necessary that the beaches have quality criteria that in effect benefit the selection aspects that people may have when deciding whether or not to visit a beach of this nature, Thus, García (2009)

By means of the matrix that relates the environmental impacts with the habits of visitors, the impacts generated by visitors to the beach were established, as follows:

Hydrospheric Component: discharge of hydrocarbons, decrease in dissolved oxygen, PH variation, increase in the concentration of suspended solids, increase in the concentration of pathogenic organisms, increase in the concentration of fats and oils.

Lithospheric component: Increase in the concentration of pathogenic organisms, generation of solid waste, increase in the concentration of fats and oils in the sand. (p.9).

All these elements are considered in the classification and evaluation of the quality of healthiness and use that can be had of the beaches that are visited or that can be promoted by means of the tourist spectrum of a certain region, it is not possible to separate the quality of the components of the water, the sand, the sediments that are in it of the visit that these can have, because everything affects the level of acceptance and promotion of the tourism. Above all, when the importance of the natural resources in open areas is glimpsed, it has been considered in Ecuador in recent studies made by the Ministry of Tourism of the Country (MINTUR) the relevance that has for the economic component to guarantee the stability of the regions exposed to the sun and the sea, as a means for the acquisition of economic resources, in order to empower the nation by offering improvements in this order. This is how, "sun and beach tourism continues to be an evolving trend and is highly appreciated in Ecuador" (MINTUR, 2015).

There are criteria so that in terms of promotion of the regions and their tourism exploitation, the means are given to achieve the longed criteria of stabilization of the economy of tourist areas, these are in the words of Ortiz and Peralta (2020)

#### Good Climate

It is evident that, "the first aspect that characterizes a sun and beach destination is the climate", so the hotel establishment, although it does not include its guarantee of good weather, should try to look for dates when there is sun or summer for this type of tourism.

#### Quality of the Beaches

Other aspects are observed such as the tranquility of the waters of the beaches, the type of sand, the amplitude, security or proximity to all the places that the visitor visits.

#### Diverse Tourist Services

It is known that "most sun and beach tourists pay attention to services related to the bathing area", from renting sun beds or umbrellas, to the existence of bars, restaurants and others.

#### Security

It is important to safeguard the tourist, during the vacation, "which includes security in the beach area, as well as the existence of a nearby health center" (TURISMO, 2016), this is an indispensable factor to take into consideration.

#### Leisure

It has to be perceived that there are commercial spaces, for the tourist's shopping, as well as it has to include beach activities, extreme sports and other kind of attractions that the client perceives to catalog the sun and beach tourism as quality.

Due to the above mentioned, it has been necessary to carry out a study on the relationship between the quality of the beaches and the visits that these places receive from national and international tourists to the region of Sucre and San Vicente in the province of Manabí, Ecuador. Where important marine faunal resources are highlighted in addition to great beauty on the beaches and recreational places. Therefore, the general objective of this work is to describe the relationship between the quality of the beaches of Sucre and San Vicente in the Province of Manabí, Ecuador and the impact on the economic and tourist sustainability of the region.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The present research was developed within the quantitative paradigm, being a study with a transactional non-experimental design. In this sense, studies of this type are according to Hernández Sampieri (2018)

Non-experimental designs are classified, according to the number of times they collect data, into transactional and longitudinal. Transactional designs make observations at a single moment or time. When they collect data on a new area without predefined ideas and with openness, they are rather exploratory; when they collect data on each of the categories, concepts, variables, contexts, communities or phenomena, and report what those data yield, they are descriptive; when they also describe links between categories, concepts, variables, events,

Contexts or phenomena are correlational, and if they establish causal processes between such terms they are considered correlational-causal (explanatory). (p.227).

On the other hand, theoretical references were used to obtain information concerning the topic addressed on tourism and the

influence of the quality of the beaches located in the cantons of Sucre and San Vicente. Data were selected from official sources in Ecuador on the official statistics regarding the rate of visitors registered in the aforementioned regions.

According to Hernández Sampieri (ob. cit.)

There is a great diversity of sources that can generate research ideas, among which we can mention: individual needs and experiences, both their own and those of others, written materials (books, articles in scientific or popular science magazines, newspapers and theses), audiovisual elements and radio or television programs, information available on the Internet (within its wide range of possibilities, such as web pages, discussion forums, social networks and others), theories expressed in different media, discoveries, technological developments and products resulting from research; personal conversations, observations of facts, your own classes with your teachers, beliefs and even intuitions and presentiments. Of course, the sources of ideas are not necessarily related to the quality of the ideas.

Data collection instrument used

The diagnostic stage was carried out through data collection with a digital instrument, which was sent to the sample, which are officials of both municipalities or cantons, in which official monitoring is carried out by the Mayor's Office of each one, both in Sucre and San Vicente cantons, in order to verify the aspects related to the proposed research. Thus, the questionnaire was structured in Google Forms with a total of nine (9) questions with closed answers (Yes/No). About the record of the use and quality of the beaches in the regions described above, in order to know in what way the elements present in these resources provide interest for tourists to visit or not to visit both areas of Manabí.

## RESULTS

The following is a summary of the results of the surveys applied to tourism officials in the mayor's office of Cantón Sucre and Cantón San Vicente, which have provided official information on the aspects concerning the diagnosis of the quality of the beaches and sustainable development of both regions:

1. From their perspective: Does the transformation of human activities have environmental effects on the quality of the beaches?

**Table 1.** Effects of human activities on beaches

Answer	%Fr.
Yes	95
No	5

Source: The data collection instrument (2021).

As can be seen in the results shown in Table 1. 95% of the sample of public officials from the two cantons of Sucre and San Vicente in the province of Manabí, Ecuador agree that the transformation of human activities, in this case, the modification of labor activities that are executed around the region's beaches has an effect on their quality.

2. Can San Vicente y Sucre at present only carry out tourism activities and depend economically on the visit of people for these purposes?

**Table 2.** Possibility of economic dependence on tourism in the canton

Answer	%Fr.
Yes	43
No	57

Source: The data collection instrument (2021).

On the other hand, when asked if there is a possibility of sustainable development from the economic exercise of tourism alone by taking advantage of the beaches of San Vicente, 57% of those surveyed stated that it is not possible at present to depend solely on the coastal resources of the canton. On the other hand, 43% stated that they do have the resources to sustain the municipality's economy only by taking advantage of the tourist attraction of the beaches.

3. Is the promotion of tourist sites in San Vicente y Sucre Canton adequately promoted by official organizations to increase the number of national and international tourists?

**Table 3.** Promotion of tourist sites in San Vicente and Sucre by official organizations.

Answer	%Fr.
Yes	47
No	53

Source: The data collection instrument (2021).

According to the results, 53% of those surveyed stated that the region's tourist attractions are not adequately promoted by official organizations; only 47% stated that adequate publicity work is being done to meet the canton's requirements.

4. Is there a need in the region to promote ecotourism in order to provide mechanisms for self-care of the beaches?

**Table 4.** Need to promote ecotourism

Answer	%Fr.
Yes	89
No	11

Source: The data collection instrument (2021).

As shown in the table above, 89% of the respondents expressed the need to provide self-care for the beaches through ecotourism in the region.

5. Has the official maintenance management of the beaches of San Vicente and Sucre been adequate for their sustainability?

**Table 5.** Adequate official maintenance management of the beaches of San Vicente and Sucre.

Answer	%Fr.
Yes	47
No	53

Source: The data collection instrument (2021).

According to 53% of those surveyed, there has not been adequate maintenance of the beaches of both Sucre and San Vicente cantons by official organizations; only 47% affirmed that there has been proper management work in the maintenance of natural resources.

6. Can the tourism context of the beaches of San Vicente and Sucre Canton be economically sustained at present only with the record number of visitors received on a daily basis?

**Table 6.** Possibility of self-sustainability of the cantons with daily visits.

Answer	%Fr.
Yes	43
No	57

Source: The data collection instrument (2021).

According to the results obtained, 57% of those surveyed agree that there is no possibility of sustaining the municipality's economy, not even in terms of days, by means of the income the canton receives from visitors every twenty-four hours, while the remaining 43% agree that it is possible.

7. Has the quality of the beaches of San Vicente y Sucre been verified by specialized health institutions?

**Table 7.** Official maintenance management of the beaches of San Vicente y Sucre has been verified.

Answer	%Fr.
Yes	43
No	57

Source: The data collection instrument (2021).

According to 57% of those surveyed, there is currently no certification of the quality of the beaches in the sanitary context, an aspect that is fundamental to provide safety mechanisms for the visits received by internal and external tourists, not only to the province but to the country in general.

8. Are tourism workers in the coastal region of San Vicente and Sucre trained in beach care?

**Table 8.** Training of tourism workers in the coastal region of San Vicente and Sucre.

Answer	%Fr.
Yes	53
No	47

Source: The data collection instrument (2021).

Regarding the training received by employees in the tourism sector, 57% of those surveyed agreed that workers in both cantons have been trained in the care of the beaches, considering the commercial activities and boat rides that are provided in many of the beaches and that are an attraction for the arrival of visitors, but that it is an activity that requires the conscious exercise of resource use. Meanwhile, 47% stated that there is no proper training of employees in these areas.

9. Are there currently any tourism care and promotion programs to increase the sustainability of Cantón San Vicente and Sucre?

**Table 9.** Care and tourism promotion programs

Answer	%Fr.
Yes	36
No	63

Source: The data collection instrument (2021).

According to the results obtained to date, there are no self-care programs for the municipalities of Sucre and San Vicente that encourage residents and tourists to carry out beach preservation activities.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

The tourist attractions of the cantons Sucre and San Vicente are evident, however, as Alvarez (2012) refers, these are the basis on which the tourist activity is developed and are constituted by those attractions that, in a tourist destination, can generate the interest that influences the choice of the same and motivating the displacement or visit by the potential consumer. But one of the most relevant aspects is precisely the certification of the quality of the beaches in order to ensure that they have the minimum conditions of acceptance and guarantee for the users of these is the "Blue Flag" which according to the World Tourism Organization (WTO) is a symbol of tourism eco-quality for the distinguished area. It certifies compliance with certain standards such as water quality or adequate environmental management, but also accessibility to these areas for people with reduced mobility and the existence of sanitary and rescue services. In the case of the study presented, it was verified that many of the beaches of Sucre and San Vicente cantons do not have such a bastion. According to Reis, Stojanovic and Smith, (2014). Since the 1970s, the concept of integrated coastal management (ICM) was introduced as a guide for the sustainable management of coasts and seas.

In this regard, the Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador (2014), points out that Ecuador has countless tourist attractions, which have not been developed as competitive products and services on an international scale, nor have they been properly promoted through coordinated strategies of great impact in the areas of human talent development, quality improvement and innovation of tourism products. In the present study it was evidenced, according to the results of the diagnosis that in effect there are no criteria from the official organizations for the self-care of the beaches of the region nor for the promotion of the goodness that the beaches and the entire coastal region of both cantons Sucre and San Vicente in the province of Manabí, Ecuador have. According to Boscan (2015) the planning aspect of tourism activities should be grounded in principles that offer not only economic viability and social justice, but also ecological and environmental balance, and importantly, the conservation and enhancement of its historical and cultural heritage, in order to manage sustainable tourism. Thus, in terms of self-sustainability, it is not possible at present to consider that from the tourism engine it is possible to obtain representative income for the region, so as suggested by Sanchez and Vargas (2015) in their work, the criteria for self-care of natural resources, including beaches, should be reformulated as environmental, social, economic, political or cultural crises arise.

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