






“New tourist needs and perceptions on sustainability during the pandemic: An analysis of Paracas National Reserve, Peru”

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NEW TOURIST NEEDS AND PERCEPTIONS ON SUSTAINABILITY DURING THE PANDEMIC: AN ANALYSIS OF PARACAS NATIONAL RESERVE, PERU

Abstract

Tourism has shown relevance worldwide due to its economic and social significance. However, the pandemic has given rise to new perspectives on sustainable development. Thus, it is vital to identify new tourist needs and impressions about tourist attractions. The Paracas National Reserve attracts thousands of people yearly and seeks to protect the marine-coastal ecosystems home to extraordinary biological diversity. The study aims to define the perception of sustainability and the emerging needs of tourists from Lima, the capital of Peru, when visiting the Paracas National Reserve during the pandemic. The paper is non-experimental, quantitative, explanatory, and transversal research. A survey was applied to 83 respondents from Lima who had visited the Paracas National Reserve before and during the pandemic. For data collection, the survey technique with Google Forms was used; quantitative data were analyzed using MS Excel. The findings show that 88% of tourists prefer to travel with family or friends, 88.24% consider it essential to reduce the number of groups, 69.41% value social distancing, 60.2% note that the Reserve is well attended, 75.9% are satisfied with the activities carried out, and 94% find it a professional and entertaining experience. It is concluded that tourists from Lima are aware of valuing the biodiversity of the Paracas National Reserve during the pandemic and care for its environment. In addition, they care about staying healthy, considering all the recommended protocols.

Keywords

tourism perception, management, marketing, natural protected area, tourist satisfaction, sustainability, Covid-19

JEL Classification

I15, M31, O13, Q01

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an activity carried out by people during their trips and stays in different areas away from their familiar environment, with a duration of less than one year, for business or entertainment purposes, not linked to the development of a remunerative activity in the place visited (MINCETUR, 2019).

Tourism activity shows relevance and perspectives worldwide since it promotes the arts and crafts of a country to safeguard the beauty of nature, its cultural heritage, and its history and to promote the process of national union and world fraternity. Moreover, tourism is an alternative for the economic diversification of many developing countries (Morillo & Coromoto, 2009; Torres Matovelle et al., 2019). The UNWTO expected to reach 1.6 billion international tourist arrivals by the end of 2020. In Peru, tourism in 2018 represented 3.9% of the Gross Domestic Product and 4.6% in Lima. In 2019, it was predict-

ed that by 2026 the contribution of tourism to GDP would be 7.2% on average (National Chamber of Tourism of Peru, 2019). Unfortunately, this was interrupted by Covid-19.

The pandemic has had a devastating impact worldwide, affecting people's health and wellness (Salazar-Rebaza et al., 2022). One of the most outstanding features of the current emergency is the magnitude of its impact on consumers' lives and behavior in every aspect of their lives (Rocha-Vallejos et al., 2022). In addition to growing health and hygiene concerns, the economic recession and the consequent decline in consumption (Fabius et al., 2020; Petrushenko et al., 2022; Cordova-Buiza & Paredes-Vasquez, 2022).

According to Yeoman (2020 cited in Schweinsberg et al., 2021), Covid-19 means that the future of tourism is a blank slate. Peru has not been exempting from this reality, and a new perspective of tourists on the biodiversity of nature destinations is foreseen. This study seeks to identify feelings, perceptions, and opinions after confinement. Therefore, the following research problem is presented: What are the new needs and sustainability perceptions of tourists from Lima, the capital of Peru, when visiting the Paracas National Reserve during the pandemic?

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Perception is the interpretation of the stimuli received by the senses. For Leonardo Oviedo (2004), perception is a tendency to mental order. Initially, perception indicates the input of information. Secondly, it ensures that the information extracted from the environment allows the formulation of abstractions (categories, judgments, concepts, etc.). Tourist perception is an essential reference for the operation and management of tourist destinations and is one of the criteria for evaluating the performance of tourist destinations (Agapito et al., 2013). The tourist experience could influence a more positive perception of the tourist destination's economic, cultural and environmental aspects (Olavarria-Benavides et al., 2021; López-Guzmán et al., 2019).

On the contrary, Nogué i Font (1992) defines perception as something more complex than a simple mechanism of visual capture of the world. The study demonstrates that the process of perception involves at least three closely interrelated but clearly differentiable phases: sensory experience, cognition, and evaluation or preference. The first one concerns the role of senses in the perception of the environment; cognition encompasses a whole set of processes through which the information received by sensors is structured; finally, perception encompasses an evaluative phase, referring to preferences and attitudes to what has been previously apprehended and structured. Alcívar Vera (2018) reports that tourism perception can be per-

ceived from two scenarios, one from the perception of the entrepreneur or direct beneficiary, and another from the collectivity, or those people who are not involved and do not participate in tourism; that is, the neighbor, the owner, the community where the resort is located, the hotel, among others. This paper focuses on the direct beneficiary, the tourist from Lima, and his or her perception of Paracas National Reserve.

Zhang et al. (2020) offer the natural, human, and economic environment as components of tourism perception. The natural environment corresponds to the aspects of nature and landscape that the tourist values. The human environment comprises the facilities and safety, and the economic environment – the economic characteristics of the destination and personal characteristics.

The construction of destination image influences the decision-making when traveling, either positively or negatively (Cordova-Buiza et al., 2022). Some components of image construction are the visual elements, such as photography and videos, as well as the qualification of its attractions, services, accessibility, and prices (Hunt, 1975; Lohmann & Beer, 2013; Mackay & Couldwell, 2004). According to Crompton and Giltenson (1979 cited in Paül i Agustí, 2018), destination image can be defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination. Following this line, Martínez et al. (2018) comment that the cultural landscape as a destination image is critical in the current situation because it

attracts cultural and nature tourism. Its enhancement as a tourism product involves economic and social development for the area, preservation, and conservation of the heritage.

Additionally, it is part of the cognitive or perceptual, affective or emotional, and cognitive or behavioral components developed before the trip is made, which can be modified by external factors (Rajesh, 2013). Calantone et al. (1989 cited in Rodríguez & Alonso, 2009) note the importance of understanding tourist perception since this allows for determining appropriate marketing objectives, tourism promotion, and positioning strategy. Tourists' perceptions and experiences are critical in identifying satisfaction with tourist sites. Perceived value on product quality, price, emotions, and social characteristics are vital to measuring tourist perception. Measuring tourists' perception at any site helps to recognize and identify the attributes of weaknesses and deficiencies related to fulfillment. Finally, the tourism perception of the Paracas National Reserve helps with the preferences of local and foreign tourists for the different tourist areas within the Reserve itself (Otoya, 2017).

The study takes the Paracas National Reserve as the area of research and tourists from Lima as the object of research to determine the tourist perception of the protected natural area and tourist satisfaction. In a press conference, Peru's Minister of Culture, Rocio Barrios Alvarado, expressed that an average of local and foreign tourists prefers national destinations in a post-pandemic scenario. Therefore, one of the favorite candidates would be the city of Paracas due to its incredible biodiversity and proximity to Metropolitan Lima. Therefore, Paracas will be an anchor destination in the reactivation of domestic tourism (MINCETUR, 2020a). In 2019, 83 745 tourists were received, out of which 75 347 were national tourists and 8 398 were foreign tourists (MINCETUR, 2020b).

Otoya (2017) documented the perception of visitors from Lima and abroad of the Paracas National Reserve, with a sample consisting of 85 foreign and 35 national tourists in the Paracas National Reserve, Ica, Peru. The results indicate that Peruvian tourists were delighted with their visit, with an average of 8.35, and foreign tourists

had an average of 7.53, indicating a high level of satisfaction.

Moreover, Zhang et al. (2020) researched tourist perception of Koh Lan Island, Thailand, with similar characteristics to the Paracas National Reserve. Promoting ecological protection and diverse tourism is recommended to improve the homogenization of the building and inadequate service facilities. Cabel et al. (2020) found that the population, tourism operators, and artisanal anglers in the Paracas National Reserve need a higher understanding of non-formal environmental education. In contrast, they are interested in training on this topic because they believe it is fundamental to solving the environmental issues and sustainability of the Paracas National Reserve.

Within this literature review, it can be summarized that by determining the tourist perception, it will be possible to measure the satisfaction and the image that the destination projects.

2. AIM AND HYPOTHESIS

The objective is to determine the emerging needs and perceptions about sustainability of tourists from Lima, the capital of Peru, when visiting the Paracas National Reserve in times of pandemic. Likewise, the study elaborates on the following hypothesis:

H1: Tourists positively perceive the Paracas National Reserve, appreciating nature and showing respect for the environment; it is based on the awareness taken due to the pandemic.

This paper presents a new tourist perspective on the Paracas National Reserve based on the three environments of perception, each composed of multiple features that evaluate the perception and satisfaction of visitors from Lima. The following environments are the natural environment, human environment, and economic environment. Correspondingly, this study will help to implement or improve some of the tourist activities in the Paracas National Reserve, taking into account the conservation of the natural attributes that make up its attractiveness.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study has a descriptive, non-experimental, cross-sectional design. In a non-experimental study, no situation is created, but existing situations are observed. Thus, different situations in the areas of the Paracas National Reserve and how visitors from Lima manage to interact are observed. This will help to determine new tourist perceptions and improve the new tourist profile.

3.1. Participants

The population for this study is integrated by tourists from Lima who have visited the Paracas National Reserve. The representative sample is made up of a total of 83 centennials or millennials. The data correspond to a universe of 1,584,512 centennials or millennials from the city of Lima (PromPerú & Turismo In, 2019). The inclusion criterion is the socioeconomic level, where it was taken into consideration that the participants had made a trip during the pandemic to the Paracas National Reserve.

3.2. Sources and instruments for data collection

Bibliographic information was obtained from different databases, in which the latest study of tourist perception of the Paracas National Reserve was encountered (Otoya, 2017). On the other hand, to obtain primary data for the study, the tourism perception survey was applied to evaluate the new perception of visitors from Lima of the Paracas National Reserve, as well as the desired and undesired perceptions. A pilot instrument was adapted from Zhang et al. (2020). The questionnaire is structured with 14 questions, with multiple and dichotomous response alternatives. Data collection was conducted between January and July 2021.

3.3. Procedure

For the survey development, questions were first structured based on three aspects: the human environment, the natural environment, and the economic environment. Then, the scale and the number of questions were examined by pre-test, determining the final structure of the questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of three parts: basic characteristics, behavioral characteristics, and the evaluation of the percentage of tourist satisfaction. It also contains questions about the cultural, natural, and economic environment of the Paracas National Reserve in three sections to examine the state of the tourism environment.

Subsequently, the survey was published on the official Facebook page of the Paracas National Reserve and tourism blogs, indicating the criteria for its development. Finally, the results were collected using Google Forms, and the tabulation of the instruments' results was done in Microsoft Office Excel.

4. RESULTS

General data were found to identify tourists' perceptions of the Paracas National Reserve. Figure 1 shows that the sample primarily comprised women (53%), and men only represented 47%. Regarding their district of residence, 65% were from northern Lima (Figure 2); as for age, 81% were between 18 and 29 years old (Figure 3).

As for obtaining information about the Paracas National Reserve, 34% noted advertising on social networks, while 30% discovered this site through travel agencies.

Another critical factor is that 88% prefer to travel with family or friends. In addition, 84% express

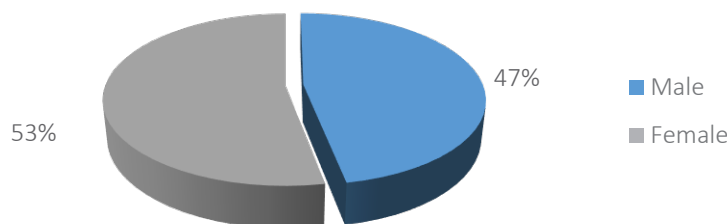


Figure 1. Gender

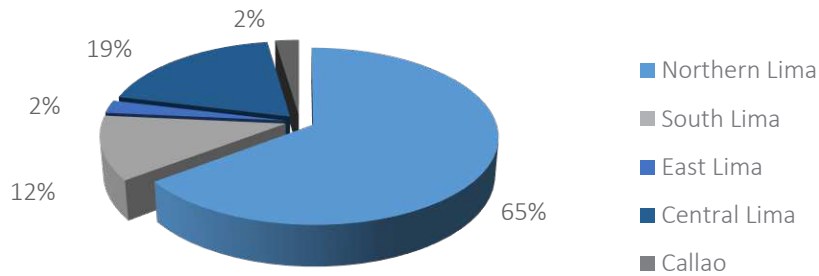


Figure 2. Place of residence

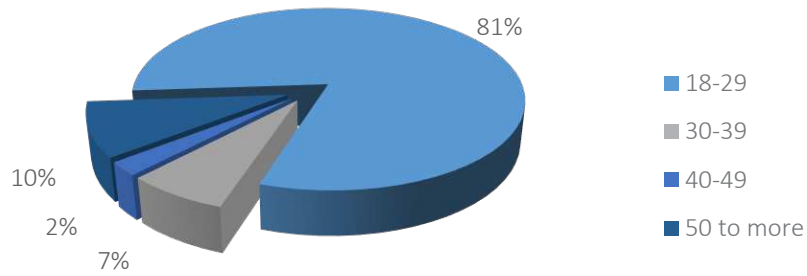


Figure 3. Age range

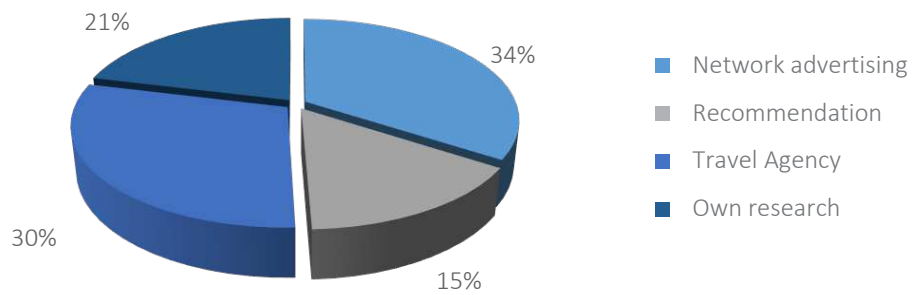


Figure 4. Means of information about the site

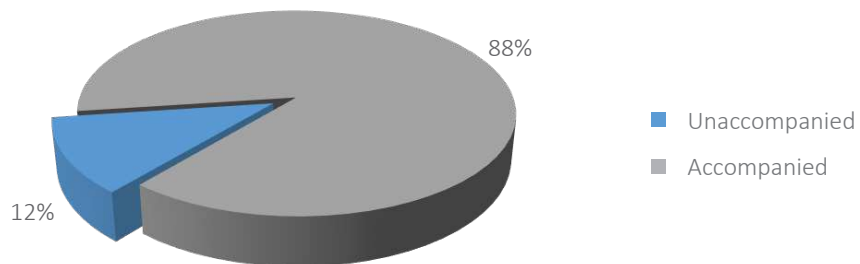


Figure 5. Travel preferences

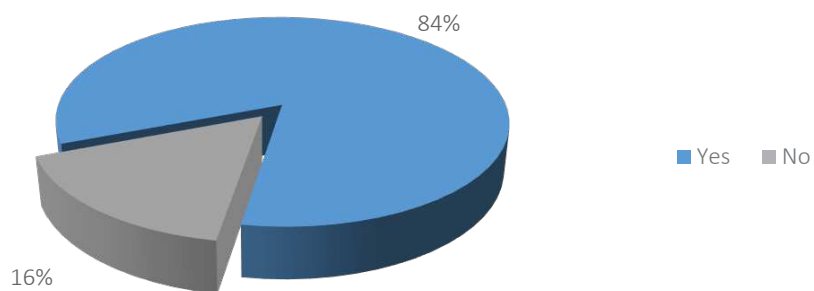


Figure 6. Are you financially independent?

Table 1. Satisfaction with the Paracas National Reserve

No. of respondents	Paracas National Reserve			
	Perception of biodiversity care		Satisfaction with tourism activities	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
85	60.2%	39.8%	77.2%	22.8%

that they consider themselves financially independent in traveling.

Likewise, 60.2% of respondents stated that they perceived that the Paracas National Reserve was well cared for, which is what they expected, so this is related to the research they had done before going to the Reserve. The survey also showed that 75.9% were satisfied with the activities they did as tourists.

Regarding the changes made in times of Covid-19, as shown in Figure 7, 88.24% consider the reduction of the number of groups essential, 69.41% value social distancing, 68.24% – repeated disinfection, and 60% – disinfection of places. According to the respondent’s experience with the service during the visit, 94% find it professional and entertaining, as shown in Figure 8.

In Figure 9, regarding the duration of travel during the Covid-19 pandemic, 52% have not changed their trip duration. Figure 10 shows the main reasons respondents chose the Paracas National Reserve, where biodiversity is in the first place.

Regarding the recommendations provided by the respondents to improve their stay in the Paracas National Reserve, the following aspects stand out: getting information about the place before visiting it, security protocols, and planning. In conclusion, respondents were asked if they would go on a tourist trip again during Covid-19. 78.3% responded “Yes,” which shows that the tourist essence of the country has not disappeared.

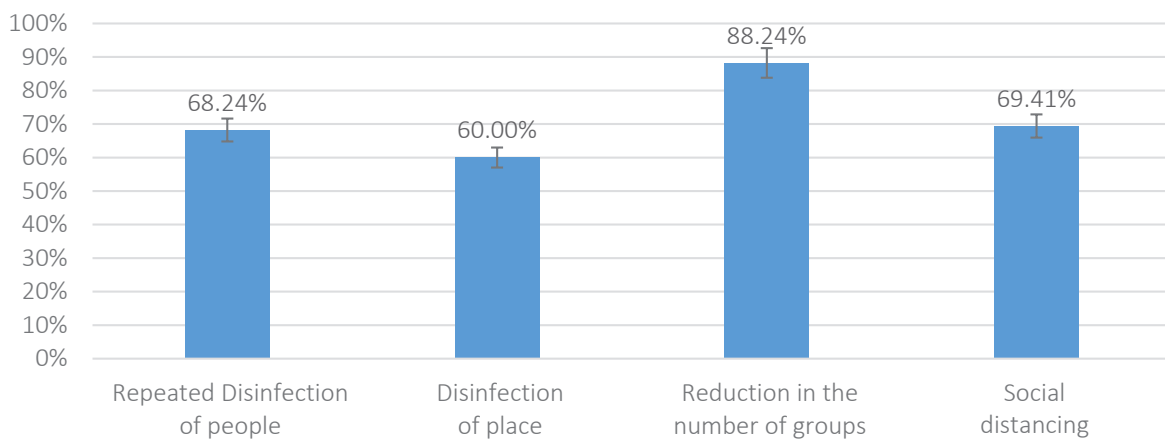


Figure 7. Post-Covid-19 travel changes

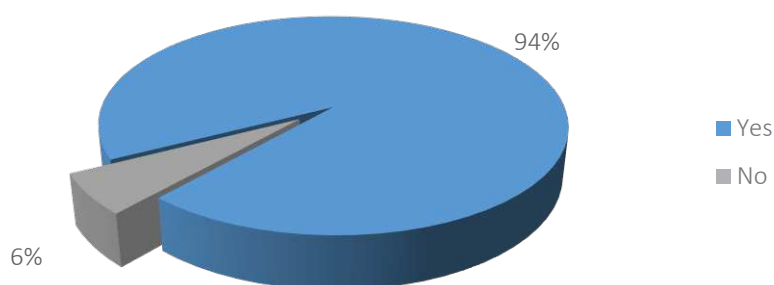


Figure 8. Do you find the service during the visit professional and entertaining?

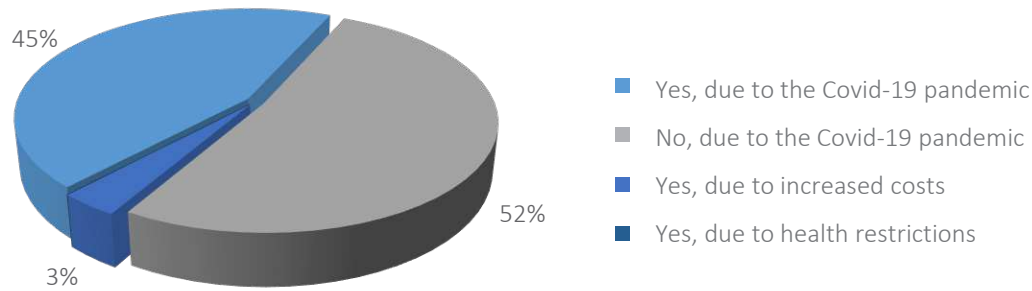


Figure 9. Has your trip duration changed?

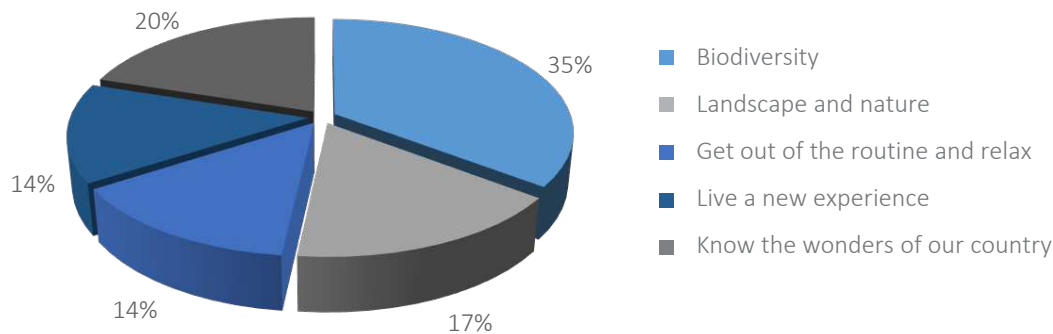


Figure 10. Reasons to choose a specific tourist destination

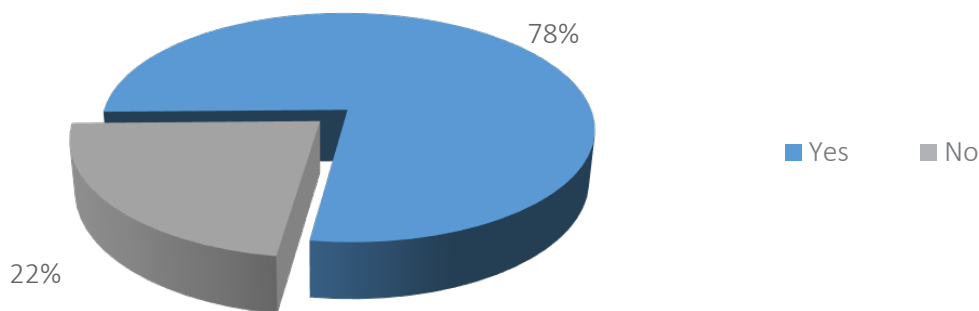


Figure 11. Desire to travel again in Covid-19 times

5. DISCUSSION

According to Huang et al. (2021), travel preferences (motivations) have not changed due to the pandemic, which is reflected in this study. The main reasons for tourists from Lima to visit the Paracas National Reserve is to explore new places and observe biodiversity, which coincides with Otoyá (2017), who demonstrates it as the main reason for visiting the Ballestas Islands. It also indicates that other vital reasons were the climate, exploring new place (5.0%), viewing nature (4.2%), enjoying the sun (3.3%), and observing animals (3.3%).

The analysis found that, for tourists, the primary sources of information about the Paracas National Reserve are provided by the internet through so-

cial networks and websites. This coincides with Huamán and Martínez (2019), who indicated that the leading social network through which tourists discover the Paracas National Reserve is its official Facebook page, which has 24,181 followers. For Nanni and Ulqinaku (2021), these technological media should be strengthened as an element of interaction in order to increase the intention to visit this site.

Furthermore, most respondents made the trip with their family members or friends, showing coincidence with Otoyá (2017); thus, tourists visit the Paracas National Reserve in groups. On the other hand, respondents indicated that they save money focused on the trips they will make, indicating pre-trip planning.

Similarly, tourists appreciate the reduction of the number of groups, social distancing, repeated disinfection, and disinfection of the places visited. According to Zhiyong et al. (2020), this is due to the fear related to Covid-19. However, it is not only a health risk but also a psychological risk. The tourist has anxiety or mental discomfort rooted in fear of becoming infected, so spatial and hypothetical distance is highlighted.

Yang et al. (2021) describe that the visitor experience triggered by tourist attractions is not destroyed by the pandemic, so their emotional, real-time, and on-site experience should stay the same after the reopening of tourist destinations. However, the results confirm that the Covid-19 outbreak had a negative impact on the real-time emotional experience of tourists. Even if tourist destinations are reopened, the real-time emotional experience does not reach the level of satisfaction prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, which generates a desynchronized recovery of the number of tourists and their experience of this global crisis. On the contrary, the study indicates that the level of satisfaction with the visit to the Paracas National Reserve reaches 75.9%, which goes hand in hand with the natural landscape and soundscape that relaxes the tourist, forgetting the noise of the city.

It is relevant to note that there are factors that displease tourists, such as dirt, poor waste collection, environmental degradation, scarcity of restrooms, and lack of improvements. This coincides with Fernandez de Macedo and Sousa-Dantas (2010) and Cruz Romero et al. (2021), who state that in important nature destinations, there is also deficient garbage collection, environmental degradation, broken sidewalks, and lack or absence of surveillance.

Nevertheless, the quality of a tourist destination is determined by the work of public and private managers, who must pay attention to visitors' needs (Alonso, 2009). On the other hand, visitors also throw trash on the sand and sea, polluting the ecosystem. Hence, the development of tourism activity requires shared participation. Therefore, a local social organization becomes important within a standard policy of integrated development, coordinated by the institutions involved, whose role should be the technical and administrative advice as well as the control of all recreational activities, preserving the aesthetic value of the beach and its surroundings (Portal Valenzuela et al., 2013; Pérez y Sosa et al., 2021; Issahaku, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study was to determine the emerging needs and perspectives of tourists from Lima regarding their visit to the Paracas National Reserve during Covid-19. In this sense, the analysis determined that visitors from Lima have a positive perspective (cognitive and affective aspects) about the Paracas National Reserve during the pandemic. The average stay of 5 days has remained the same, and tourists are now concerned about staying healthy, considering the government's established protocols. However, the challenge for the Paracas National Reserve is to make tourists aware of the need to take care of common areas such as restrooms, showers, and roads and to respect the areas designated for visits by the National Service of Natural Areas Protected by the State (SERNANP).

The hedonic benefit for tourists will be a consequence of their aesthetic and visual experiences while visiting the Paracas National Reserve. In this sense, natural attractions should be preserved in the best possible way. On the other hand, comfortable accommodations, good food and beverages, fast and timely transportation, agile travel agencies, easily accessible commerce, and multiple payment alternatives should be offered. Undoubtedly, a place with a tourist offer based on a uniform combination of the leading and accessory components will be capable of meeting the needs of tourists, achieving better functional benefits than other destinations. However, efficient and differentiated marketing must be generated to create a relationship between the Paracas National Reserve and tourists, creating memorable experiences. For this, technological tools must be used effectively, which are the only alternatives for communicating with the outside world amid the health crisis that the planet is currently experiencing.

In general, the stakeholders involved in the Paracas National Reserve should focus their actions on providing the best leisure experience for tourists. For this purpose, it is essential to count on the participation of all the stakeholders involved in the Paracas National Reserve (travel agencies, hotels, the community, SERNANP, etc.) for a good organization and coordination of tourism attributes, generating significant benefits for the Paracas National Reserve and its surroundings. In this way, a sustainable tourist destination is shown, creating bonds of reliability with tourists in the natural, human, and economic environment.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Marjorie Riofrio-Carbajal, Franklin Cordova-Buiza, Daniel Amadeo Robles-Fabián.

Data curation: Heber Luis Olavarria-Benavides.

Formal analysis: Heber Luis Olavarria-Benavides.

Investigation: Franklin Cordova-Buiza, Daniel Amadeo Robles-Fabián, Heber Luis Olavarria-Benavides.

Methodology: Franklin Cordova-Buiza.

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Validation: Marjorie Riofrio-Carbajal, Daniel Amadeo Robles-Fabián, Heber Luis Olavarria-Benavides.

Writing – original draft: Franklin Cordova-Buiza.

Writing – review & editing: Marjorie Riofrio-Carbajal, Franklin Cordova-Buiza, Daniel Amadeo Robles-Fabián, Heber Luis Olavarria-Benavides.

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