

Feasibility Study of Ecotourism Certification Scheme

Financing Proposal for the Program "Climate Change: The New
Evolutionary Challenge for the Galapagos"

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1. Executive Summary

The feasibility study of the Ecotourism Certification Scheme for Galapagos allows us to identify the importance of adopting a certification scheme in the face of the great challenges to support the pillars of an ecotourism model, in particular energy, water and local consumption, becoming a tool that commits the different actors of the tourism industry to the consolidation of a new development model for Galapagos under which the islands' high dependence on the use of fossil fuels, on the consumption of imported food from the continent, can be reversed, promoting a social, tourist and productive adaptation to new patterns of consumption and local production; as well as towards a clean and sustainable energy transition capable of promoting renewable investments,

This study begins with an analysis and contextualization of the problems that the islands are going through, delving into the current situational environment within which a political, institutional, normative, social, technological and environmental X-ray is achieved that allows us to interpret and conclude on the main challenges and opportunities presented by this environment for the adoption of a sustainable tourism certification scheme, highlighting the importance of the tourism industry in the economic development of the islands, its impact on the consumption of fossil fuels; as well as the fragility of the different Galapagos ecosystems that are constantly exposed to various environmental threats such as: climate change, pollution, overfishing,

We continue with the analysis and characterization of the offer of tourist services, deepening the size and distribution of the tourist industry according to the different typologies established by the Ministry of Tourism as well as according to its geographical distribution in each of the islands, highlighting its importance in the generation of jobs, in the accommodation capacity of the destination; as well as in the characteristics of the movements between islands, confirming that the offer of tourist services plays a strategic role in the search for adaptation actions to the challenges posed by climate change.

Likewise, the analysis of previous certification experiences in Galapagos is deepened, highlighting the Ecotourism Certification Program promoted by the Ecuadorian Ecotourism Association ASEC and the Ministry of Tourism that began in 1999; as well as the Smart Voyager Sustainable Tourism Certification Program promoted by the Conservation and Development Foundation in 2000 and the Galapagos Tourism Quality Program promoted by WWF, Ministry of Tourism and the Galapagos Chamber of Tourism promoted in 2009, ending with an analysis of experiences of international certifications based on the analysis of the Sustainable Label Program "Distinction of Sustainable Tourism" implemented in Chile in 2010 by the University of Columbia

To contextualize the Galapagos problem, we conclude with a feasibility analysis that focuses on the analysis of the supply of certification schemes that exist in the market, deepening the analysis of their objectives, scope and above all through a multi-criteria analysis with experts. the tourism sector at the level of applicability of each certification scheme and standard identified in the tourism sector; as well as its contribution to differentiation, competitiveness and its contribution to climate change using ranges of high, medium and low applicability that have been selected based on the criteria of experts consulted.

Regarding the analysis of the demand, the feasibility of the certification scheme is analyzed based on the findings of the applied surveys, delving into the main obstacles to keeping a certification in force, the availability and interest in an environmental or tourism certification, the importance of certifications in the business, interest in communicating good environmental practices, interest and involvement with sustainable practices; as well as non-reimbursable technical cooperation needs.

Next, the intervention proposal of the certification scheme is presented, highlighting the management model to be followed, the intervention components, the accreditation process to be followed by the SAE Accreditation Service; as well as the detail of the expected results and activities and concluding with a detail of the work plan and budget for the adoption of the certification scheme.

Finally, it is important to highlight that the Galapagos Islands is one of the most internationally positioned tourist destinations, its recognition, the high sensitivity and vulnerability of its ecosystems; as well as its high dependence on products imported from the continent, have made Galapagos a laboratory not only for evolution

but also for the adaptation of certification schemes and quality standards that have had and have as their fundamental objective the transition towards a sustainable development model

2. Introduction

The feasibility study of the Certification Scheme in Ecotourism for Galapagos is an instrument that allows us to identify the importance of certification in the face of the great challenges of climate change, becoming a strategic tool in the development and implementation of a self-sufficient system in the chain value of tourism that allows generating incentives and benefits towards a clean and sustainable energy transition capable of promoting renewable, efficient and responsible investments in the tourism industry.

Similarly, it is important to highlight that the feasibility study of the Galapagos Ecotourism Certification Scheme is a response to the need to identify competitive differentiators in the destination and in the tourism value chain of the Galapagos archipelago that are capable of motivating the transition towards clean and sustainable business models in which the implementation of good tourism practices can become the best response to the challenge posed by climate change.

Undoubtedly, there are several challenges facing the Galapagos Islands, among which stand out the high dependence on imports of food and fossil fuels from mainland Ecuador, being necessary to work on policies and actions that allow adapting local consumption and production patterns to the challenges of climate change; as well as increasing the resilience of the islands considering the high sensitivity and vulnerability of their ecosystems without neglecting the need to prepare and adapt the destination to impacts, reducing the ecological footprint generated by the tourist value chain.

Likewise, it is also important to promote a transformative change towards a system of self-sufficient islands with low carbon emissions and with a greater capacity to adapt to climate change, promoting innovative financing models that are capable of directly addressing the challenges that climate change presents us. multiplying and empowering local agents of change, accelerating the transition towards a low-carbon sustainable tourism development model and strengthening local and institutional capacities.

We cannot fail to mention several travel trends that have appeared strongly in the world, with a preference for destinations with environmentally friendly practices, which are increasingly gaining ground along with important trends related to brands with a social purpose; as well as the preference for destinations with low social concentration and the preference for having greater contact with nature, Galapagos being an important destination that can respond to these new trends not only because of its vocation as a natural tourist destination but above all because of its vulnerability and importance, being the ecotourism certification scheme for Galapagos a strategic tool to reflect the commitment of the destination and the tourism value chain with climate change and with the reduction of carbon emissions.

It is in this sense that the Feasibility of the Galapagos Ecotourism Certification Scheme should respond to several concerns, including whether or not its implementation will allow the tourism value chain to be adapted to the challenges of climate change, generating competitive differentiators through the application of friendly, clean and efficient practices; as well as whether its implementation will make it possible to direct a transition from the traditional business models of the tourism industry towards a model of sustainable, efficient and low-emission tourism development

Methodologically, the feasibility of the certification scheme delves into the analysis of the offer of certification schemes within which its objectives, scope are analyzed and, above all, through a multi-criteria analysis with experts from the tourism sector, the applicability of each scheme of certification and standard identified in the tourism sector; as well as its contribution to differentiation, competitiveness and its contribution to climate change using ranges of high, medium and low applicability that have been selected based on the criteria of experts in the tourism sector.

Regarding the analysis of the demand, the feasibility of the certification scheme is analyzed based on the findings of the applied surveys, delving into the main obstacles to keeping a certification in force, the availability and interest in an environmental or tourism certification, the importance of certifications in the business, interest in communicating good environmental practices, interest and involvement with sustainable practices; as well as non-reimbursable technical cooperation needs

Finally, this study analyzes the feasibility of implementing an ecotourism certification scheme for the Galapagos Islands based on the behavior of its supply and demand in an analytical context of the current situation that tourism activity is going through in Galapagos, in Ecuador and in the world. , deepening the need to develop a certification scheme as an alternative for the tourism industry to respond to the current challenges posed by climate change.

3. Analysis and context of the problem

The high dependence that the Galapagos Islands have on the consumption of food and the use of fossil fuels has undoubtedly been one of the central problems facing the archipelago, which have been intensified by the growth of tourist activity and the flow of visitors putting in risk to a highly sensitive and vulnerable ecosystem.

It is in this sense that the adaptation of local consumption and production patterns to the challenges that climate change presents us become one of the priorities of this destination, within which the empowerment of public and private actors becomes an issue. determining, being important to understand the current situation of the political, economic, social, technological and environmental environment of the islands; as well as the characterization of the existing tourist offer and the identification of challenges, challenges and good practices of previously implemented certification experiences.

3.1. Surrounding analysis¹

The analysis of the environment is based on the PESTA model under which the current and real situation of external elements that will influence the implementation and sustainability of the certification scheme can be understood and clarified, the scope of each of these elements being the following:

Political-legal: They are governmental and institutional factors that arise from the scope of a regulation and that affect or influence the performance of the different actors of a given destination

Economical: They are factors that affect the economic behavior of the different actors in the destination and that are influenced by interest rates, inflation rates, levels of employability, poverty, local consumption, gross domestic product, etc...

Socio-cultural: They are factors that are related to the behavior of society, with its traditions, tastes, preferences, motivations and the consumption habits of society such as age, total disposable income, growth rate of society, education levels.

Technological: It is based on the incidence of technology in society and in the different actors of the destination both from the perspective of the level of technological connectivity, digital divide, rate of internet use in the population, etc...

Environmental: These are factors that analyze the environmental situation of the destination both from the characteristics of its main ecosystems, protected areas, flora and fauna, as well as from its situation in the face of climate change.

3.2. Political-legal environment

The political and legal environment of Galapagos is subject to a set of regulations that directly influence the political and institutional management of the archipelago, the most important of which is described below:

- **Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador²**

The Political Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, in Article 14, Title II, Chapter Two, states that: "The right of the population to live in a healthy and ecologically balanced environment is recognized, which guarantees sustainability and good living, Sumak kawsay"

¹ Analysis of the business environment 1967, FRANCISCO AGUILAR.

² Official Gazette 449 2008, NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF ECUADOR.

On the other hand, article 284 states among the objectives of economic policy: "To encourage national production, systemic productivity and competitiveness, the accumulation of scientific and technological knowledge, strategic insertion in the world economy and complementary productive activities in regional integration" (National Constituent Assembly, 2008).

Likewise, in reference to the province of Galapagos, due to its unique characteristics, Article 258 provides that: "It will have a government with a special regime. Its planning and development will be organized according to strict adherence to the principles of conservation of the natural heritage of the State and of good living, in accordance with what the Law determines."³(National Constituent Assembly, 2008).

We can observe that the recognition of living in a healthy and ecologically balanced environment constitutes a fundamental pillar that strengthens the need for a certification scheme as an instrument that allows guaranteeing the implementation of sustainable and environmentally friendly practices, in the same way as the Government of Galapagos is part of a special regime, without a doubt, the applicability of the certification scheme has a greater territorial focus and specialization.

- **National Development Plan 2017 - 2021 - A Lifetime**

The "National Development Plan 2017-2021" is a national planning instrument whose objective is to strengthen the decentralized system of territorial planning and contribute to the progressive fulfillment of constitutional rights and the objectives of the development regime through the implementation of policies, projects and interventions that are framed on two pillars that are environmental sustainability and equitable territorial development, policy 9.4 stands out, which proposes: Position and empower Ecuador as a mega-diverse, intercultural and multi-ethnic country, developing and strengthening the offer national tourism and cultural industries; promoting receptive tourism as a source of foreign exchange and employment, within a framework of protection of natural and cultural heritage.

Undoubtedly, the strengthening of the national tourism offer and the promotion of receptive tourism as a source of foreign exchange and employment within a framework of protection of the natural and cultural heritage established in the National Development Plan reflects the importance of tourism activity in Galapagos and strengthens the need to develop a certification scheme that allows us to protect the natural heritage from an adaptation scheme to the current challenges that climate change presents to us.

- **Organic Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomy and Decentralization**

The Organic Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomy and Decentralization COOTAD establishes the political-administrative organization of the Ecuadorian State in the territory; the regime of the different levels of decentralized autonomous governments and the special regimes, in order to guarantee their political, administrative and financial autonomy

In article 41 of the aforementioned legal body, Chapter III, First Section, the functions for the GAD are defined in literal g) "Regulate, control and promote the development of the cantonal tourist activity in coordination with the other decentralized autonomous governments, promoting especially the creation and operation of associative organizations and community tourism companies"(Official Gazette Supplement No. 206, 2018).

The establishment of administrative and financial autonomy, in the different decentralized autonomous governments in the Galapagos Islands, allows direct actions for the implementation of a sustainable certification scheme, promoting the development of a sustainable and efficient tourism activity.

- **Tourism Law**

In Art. 3, the principles of tourism activity are defined, literal b) The participation of the provincial and cantonal governments to promote and support tourism development, within the framework of decentralization.

On the other hand, in terms of tourism promotion, Art. 76.- On promotion, provides that the Ministry of Tourism "shall dictate the policies and the referential framework in order to position the country as a tourist destination, the management of the promotion tourism corresponds to it in conjunction with the private sector. The promotion and marketing means will be conventional channels such as fairs, workshops, familiarization trips,

³ Constituent Assembly 2008, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ECUADOR.

journalists' trips, congresses, exhibitions, among other non-conventional ones such as tourist information services, internet and promotional material, etc.”.

The establishment of the different tourist activities that are regulated by the Tourism Law, allows identifying the actors of the tourism value chain who can be reached with a sustainable tourism certification scheme, in the same way it allows highlighting tourism promotion actions linked to the application of clean, efficient and sustainable practices in each of the players in the country's tourism industry.

- **Organic Law of Special Regime of the Province of Galapagos**

The LOREG establishes a set of measures to regulate the special regime of the province of Galapagos and establishes the administrative legal regime to which they are subject, within the scope of their powers both from the Governing Council of the Special Regime of the province of Galapagos, and from the Decentralized Autonomous Governments and the agencies of all functions of the State, as well as from all natural and legal persons, nationals and foreigners who are within or who carry out activities in the province of Galapagos, in accordance with strict adherence to the principles of conservation of the natural heritage of the State and Good Living.

In this law, Title VI, Chapter II, Art. 61, provides that “Tourism in the province of Galapagos will be based on the strengthening of the local value chain and the protection of the user of tourist services, as well as on the principles of sustainability, environmental limits, conservation, safety and quality of tourist services”.

The establishment of a special regime in the Galapagos Islands allows to focus the strengthening of the local value chain and the protection of the user of tourist services towards principles of sustainability and towards the application of good clean, efficient and renewable energy practices, thus achieving an important regulatory support that promotes a tourism certification scheme that contributes and highlights the sector's commitment to climate change.

- **Regulation of the Organic Law of the Special Regime of the Province of Galapagos**

This regulation, in Title IX, Chapter I, Art. 50 states that “sustainable tourism will be understood as a model that responds to the current needs of tourists and the province, while protecting and improving the opportunities of the future. It is focused on the proper management of all resources, so that they satisfy economic, social and conservation needs; within the framework of respect for cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems”.

Similarly, Article 51 establishes that tourism in the province of Galapagos is based on "the principles of sustainability, environmental limits, conservation, public use, safety and quality of tourism services."

The recognition of the Tourism Development Model in the Regulation of the Organic Law of the Special Regime of the Galapagos Province allows highlighting the importance of sustainability as part of the tourism development model in the Galapagos Islands, thus strengthening the need for the chain of tourist value reflects its best practices through a certification scheme.

- **Special Regulation of Tourism in Protected Natural Areas RETANP**

RETANP establishes a set of policies for the regularization and control of tourist activities in the Heritage of Natural Areas of the State, highlighting the development and promotion of sustainable tourism; as well as citizen participation in the cultural, social, educational and economic benefits generated by the exercise of tourist activities in the Heritage of Natural Areas of the State; as well as the conservation of ecosystems and their resilience against the impacts of climate change and the sustainable use of natural resources; and the minimization of the negative impacts that result from the exercise of tourist activities in the Heritage of Natural Areas of the State.

The promotion of the conservation of ecosystems and their resilience against the impacts of climate change and the sustainable use of natural resources; as well as the minimization of the negative impacts that result from the exercise of tourist activities in the Heritage of Natural Areas of the State constitute an important support for the implementation of a sustainable tourism certification scheme that strengthens and highlights the best practices that the tourism sector implements .

3.3. International declarations

- **Chengdu Declaration on Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals⁴**

The Chengdu Declaration on tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals mentions in its Numeral 6.- "To advance and comply with the Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2030 and beyond, it is necessary to establish and adopt tourism planning approaches aimed at improve resource efficiency of tourism stakeholders. " Numeral 14.- "Governments, the United Nations, international organizations, financial institutions, as well as philanthropic foundations and the private sector, should increase financial support for tourism infrastructure, tourism planning and training" (World Tourism Organization, 2017).

The need to establish and adopt tourism planning approaches aimed at improving stakeholder resource efficiency established in the Chengdu Declaration on Tourism and the SDGs allows us to identify important guidelines that strengthen the need to promote efficient use of resources. fully complying with the principles of the sustainable tourism certification scheme.

- **Sustainable Development Goals 2030**

The Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) are an initiative promoted by the United Nations that were born as a response to the need raised in the Development Agenda to promote global objectives and goals that allow us to attack the problems related to climate change, social and economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, are made up of 17 objectives and 169 goals.

The SDGs undoubtedly constitute an important framework that justifies the need to generate initiatives that respond to the needs related to the sustainable consumption of resources and climate change, with the sustainable tourism certification scheme being an important response in the Galapagos Islands to the objectives and goals raised in the 2030 SDGs.

3.4. Institutional framework and unions

- **Governing Council of the Galapagos Special Regime**

The Governing Council is the body responsible for the administration of the province, the planning and Territorial Ordering, the management of resources and the organization of the activities carried out in Galapagos, to guarantee the conservation of the natural heritage of the State and the Good living.

As CGREG is the body responsible for planning and land use in the Galapagos Islands, we can identify a strategic actor in the establishment of guidelines that promote sustainable development and conservation of natural heritage in the archipelago, in this sense the certification scheme is makes it a key program to guarantee the conservation of resources from the approach of adopting measures that mitigate climate change.

- **Galapagos National Park Directorate**

The Galapagos National Park Directorate is the institution in charge of the administration and management of the archipelago's island ecosystems, within the limits of their resilience, to ensure the conservation of their ecological integrity and the rational use of environmental goods and services that they generate for the population.

Undoubtedly, the involvement of the Directorate of the Galapagos National Park in the management of island ecosystems constitutes a great opportunity to position the certification scheme as an allied tool in ensuring conservation, ecological integrity and the rational use of environmental goods and services of the tourist value chain.

⁴ Chengdu Declaration (World Tourism Organization, 2017).

- **Ministry of the Environment**

The Ministry of the Environment is a key institution in the development of the Galapagos Islands whose mission is to strengthen environmental management by ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources.

The strengthening of environmental management and the search for a harmonious relationship between the economic, social and environmental axes, undoubtedly constitute objectives that are directly related to the objectives set by the certification scheme (PUNTO VERDE) reflecting an important institutional ally for the positioning of the ecotourism certification program.

- **Ministry of Tourism**

The Ministry of Tourism is the institution in charge of exercising the leadership, regulation, control, planning, management, promotion and dissemination of the country's tourist offer in order to position Ecuador as a sustainable tourist destination due to its exceptional cultural, natural and experiential diversity. .

The Ministry of Tourism, as an institution that promotes the sustainable tourism development of the country, undoubtedly becomes a strategic institution to promote the implementation of a sustainable tourism certification scheme, turning the certification scheme into an opportunity for the generation of a Tourism Product Club that can be promoted nationally and internationally.

- **Ministry of Agriculture**

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock is the institution in charge of promoting agricultural and livestock production, in the case of Galapagos, upgrade sustainable agriculture and livestock which assist rural development, the sustainable growth of production, and the development of producers, in particular represented by peasant family farming.

- **Ministry of Production, Trade, Investments and Fisheries**

It is the institution in charge of promoting the development of national industry production by promoting the strengthening of micro, small and medium enterprises; as well as entrepreneurs and artisans, in the same way it is the institution in charge of promoting the internationalization of the country's productive offer.

The promotion of local production through the development of clean, efficient and sustainable productive initiatives constitutes an opportunity to increase the scope of the certification scheme, towards the productive sector, considering all above one of the biggest problems of the Galapagos Islands is the entry of goods from the continent, being important to strengthen the local production component.

- **Decentralized Autonomous Governments of Santa Cruz, San Cristóbal and Isabela**

They are the institutions in charge of local economic development, in the case of Galapagos they have an impact on the islands of Santa Cruz, San Cristóbal and Isabela, they make up the territorial organization of the Ecuadorian State and are regulated by the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador (Art. 238 -241) and the Organic Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomy and Decentralization (COOTAD).

One of the great challenges presented by the Decentralized Autonomous Governments in the Galapagos Islands undoubtedly has to do with the establishment of sustainable, clean and efficient local economic development policies, which can find an ally in the tourism certification scheme, generating differentiation and competitiveness in businesses that are part of the tourism value chain.

- **Galápagos Provincial Chamber of Tourism**

CAPTURGAL, is a private non-profit organization created in 1996 (Ministerial Agreement No. 0013). This instance represents the tourist activities and operations of the Galapagos Islands, Puerto Ayora. Its field of action is legal advice to the union, technical assistance, arbitration, training and all those related to the productive development of the sector.

- **Cantonal Chambers of Tourism**

CAPTURCRIS AND CAPTURISA, institutions created from the registry of tourist companies of the San Cristóbal and Isabela islands, respectively, which are currently carrying out procedures for their legalization before the competent authorities.

Its main mission is the strengthening and support of the tourism sector, with emphasis on the search for the sustainability of the territory and the adaptation of companies in this framework in order to be competitive and use ecosystem services in a balanced way for productive use.

3.5. Economic environment⁵

The economic environment of Galapagos reflects the impact of the main activities on the economy of the islands and their importance in the local gross domestic product, reflecting the high dependence that tourism activity has on the generation of foreign exchange, sources of employment and investments in the archipelago.

Local Sales and Exports in Galapagos



Local sales and exports according to data from the Internal Revenue Service (period 2016-2020) show that in 2019 318.1 million USD were generated, which means a growth of 13.7% in relation to the previous period in which income was generated for 279.8 million USD, however, in 2020 the income in Galapagos due to the COVID-19 pandemic has a drop of 72.9%, reaching 86.2 million USD.

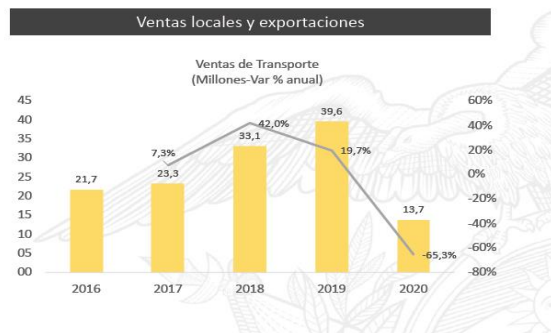
Sales of Operators and Tourism Intermediation in Galapagos



Regarding tour operators and intermediation (period 2016 - 2020), the sales generated in 2019 represented 245.7 million USD, reaching a growth of 14.2% in relation to the previous period in which revenues of 215.2 million USD were generated, reflecting a constant historical growth as of 2016; However, in 2020 revenue was 63.8 million USD, reflecting a 74.1% drop compared to 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁵ Local Sales 2019, SRI

Sale of Passenger Transport in Galapagos



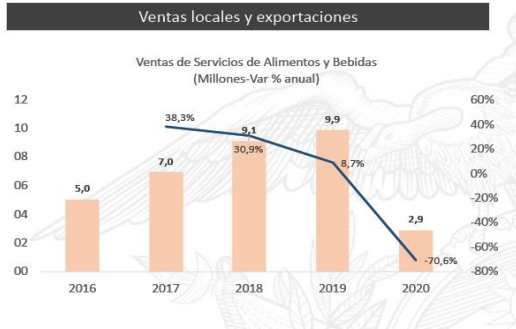
Sales related to passenger transport according to data from the Internal Revenue Service (period 2016 - 2020) reflect that in 2019 they reached 39.6 million USD, achieving a growth of 19.7% in relation to the previous year in which income was generated for 33.1 million USD, however, in 2020 the income in Galapagos from passenger transport was 13.7 million USD, reflecting a drop of 65.3% in relation to the previous period due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

Sales of Tourist Accommodation in Galapagos



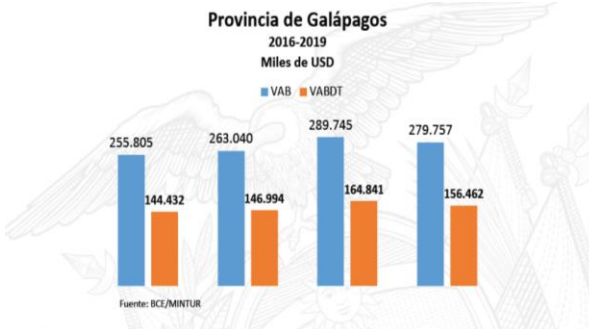
Sales related to tourist accommodation according to data from the Internal Revenue Service (period 2016 - 2020) report that in 2019 they reached 22.8 million USD, registering a growth of 2.1% compared to the previous period, in which income was generated by 22.4 million USD, which reflected a constant growth in the generation of income since 2016, however, in 2020 the income from tourist accommodation was 5.8 million USD, showing a reduction of 74.4% compared to the previous period due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sale of Food and Beverages in Galapagos



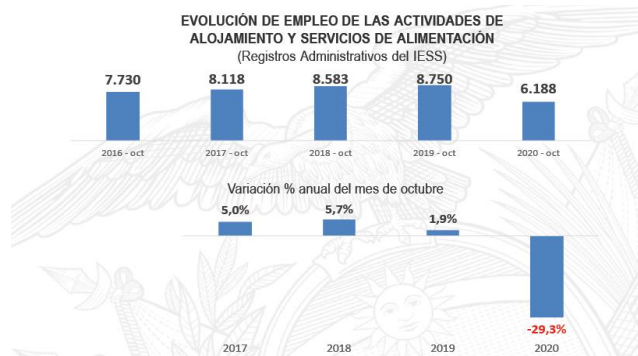
Sales related to food and beverages according to data from the Internal Revenue Service (period 2016 - 2020) reflect that in 2019 they reached 9.9 million USD, achieving a growth of 8.7% in relation to the previous year in which income was generated for 9.1 million USD which undoubtedly reflected a constant growth in the generation of income since 2016, however, in 2020 the income for this concept was 2.9 million USD, reflecting a fall of 70.6% in relation to the period above for reasons of the pandemic.

Tourism Direct Gross Value Added



The participation of tourist activity within the set of economic and productive activities of Galapagos reflects the importance of the sector in the economic dynamics of the islands and its population, reflected in a participation of 55.92% in 2019, 56.89% in 2018, 55.88% in 2017 and 56.46% in 2016.

Employment evolution of accommodation and food services activities in Galapagos



The importance of tourist activity in the generation of sources of employment in the Galapagos Islands denotes a contribution of 8,750 direct jobs in 2019, 8,583 in 2018 and 8,118 in 2017, with the behavior of 2020 being atypical due to the pandemic, year in which 6,188 sources of employment were registered, which explains a drop of 29.3% in relation to 2019.

Although the economic situation of tourism activity has reflected a significant drop in sales and in the arrival of visitors to the Galapagos Islands due to the pandemic, the World Tourism Organization predicts that they will return to the same income levels of 2019 to from the year 2024⁶ reflecting the need to reactivate companies and businesses that are part of the tourism value chain, for which a sustainable tourism certification scheme can become the seal of trust and choice to travel responsibly to sensitive and vulnerable destinations in the Which can be reflected in the commitment of all its actors to promote a transformative change towards a self-sufficient system with low carbon emissions, with a greater capacity to adapt to climate change.

3.6. Socio cultural environment

- **Social structure**

The Galapagos Islands are a reflection of the multiculturalism that characterizes the social structure of Ecuador (according to Ospina studies), which has contributed greatly to development and economic growth, as well as to the improvement of the quality of life at the local level. and national⁷, in particular, in terms of generation of sources of employment, job stability and development of enterprises.⁸

The main activity of the inhabitants of the Galapagos Islands is tourism, followed by artisanal fishing in small boats, and agriculture to a lesser extent. In relation to the gastronomic component, there is the predominance of many foods extracted from the sea, such as fish, shellfish and mollusks, which are combined with certain vegetables such as bananas and cassava, as well as fruits that are produced locally or are brought from the continent. .

⁶ Forecasts 2024 (World Tourism Organization, 2020).

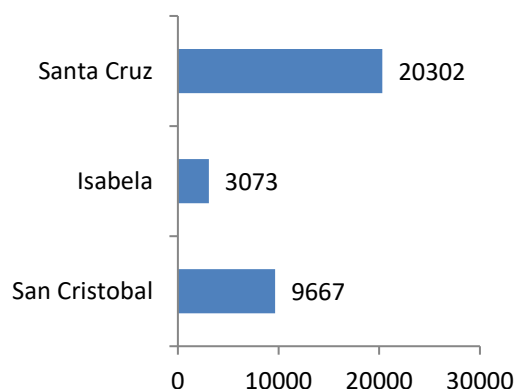
⁷ It is very important to highlight that the beginning of permanent human settlement in the province of Galapagos is considered to be the population of migrants who arrived between the years 1879-1904 as workers and relatives of Mr. Manuel Julián Cobos, who established in the place, a sugar mill that bore the name that the parish of El Progreso, San Cristóbal canton preserves today.

⁸ According to the 2019 Galapagos Tourism Observatory report, there are 874 active businesses formally registered. Whose distribution corresponds to: Accommodations 313, Travel agencies 231, Boats without overnight stay 110, Boats with overnight stay 77, Transportation 7. The guide service consists of 789 active guides. Regarding employment: accommodation on land and on board account for 61% of all direct tourism jobs on the islands. The number of formally registered jobs in 2019 is distributed as follows: 1,404 Accommodation, 984 boats with overnight stay on board, 707 Food, 488 Travel agencies, 332 boats 29 Land transportation.

Undoubtedly, the population growth and the social structure of Galapagos is one of the elements that causes the greatest pressure on the conservation of the islands' resources and ecosystems, which is why it is necessary to maintain the different environmental education campaigns and programs through which each of the inhabitants become agents of change that promote the adaptation of the destination to the challenges of climate change.

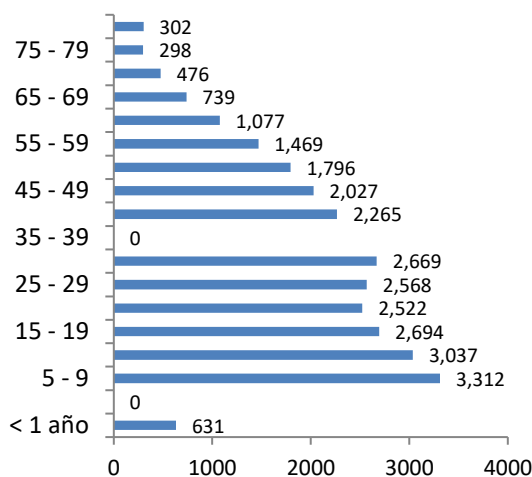
- **Population structure**⁹

Galapagos population



The population structure of the Galapagos Islands reflects a population of 33,042 inhabitants distributed 20,302 in Santa Cruz, 3,073 in Isabela, 9667 in San Cristóbal, reflecting an important concentration in Santa Cruz.

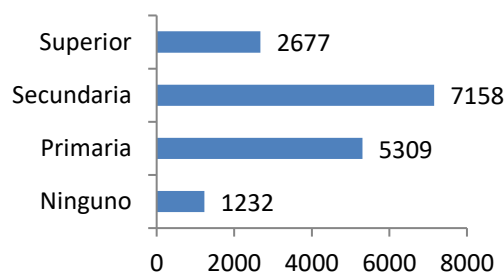
Average age in Galapagos



The average age of Galapagos does not allow us to see that in the age range between 20 and 60 years there are 15,316 people, corresponding to an economically active population, which is equivalent to almost half of the total population of the islands.

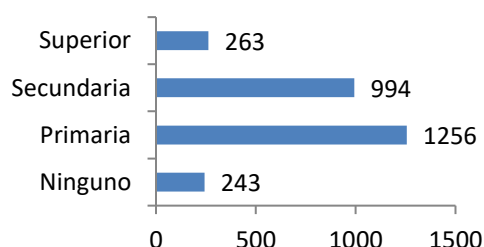
- **Education level**

Level of education in urban areas of Galapagos



The level of education in the urban areas of Galapagos shows us that there is a low level of professionalization of the population, with 2,677 people with higher education while the rest of the population has primary and secondary education and no type of training.

Level of education in rural areas of Galapagos



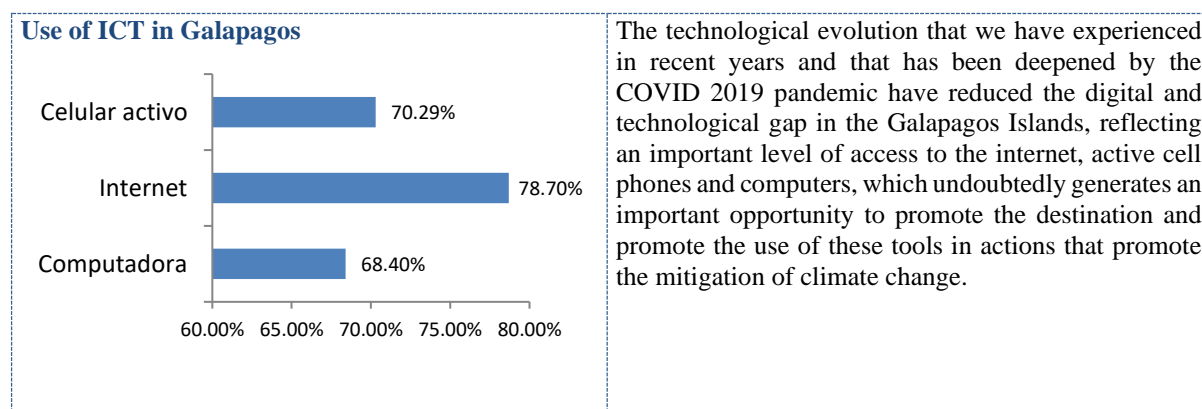
The level of education in the rural areas of Galapagos shows us that there is a low level of professionalization of the population, with 263 people with higher education while the rest of the population has primary and secondary education and no type of training.

⁹ 2010 Economic and Social Census Projections, INEC.

3.7. Technological environment¹⁰

The technological incidence in the Galapagos Islands has undoubtedly become a determining factor in the improvement of the connectivity of the islands both with the continent and with the different destinations in the world, directly influencing economic, social, environmental and economic development. In this sense, the latest published figures show us that 79.29% of the population has an active cell phone, 78.70% has access to the internet and 68.40% has access to a computer.

In this sense, the technological environment becomes an ally in the implementation of a certification scheme, ensuring connectivity and technological traceability of the actors in the tourism value chain.



3.8. Environmental environment

The Galapagos Islands are constantly exposed to various environmental threats, which could cause the degradation of their ecosystems, mainly due to several factors such as: environmental pollution, illegal fishing (illegal industrial fishing trend), the introduction of invasive species and the change climate.

Likewise, the population that lives on the islands and the floating population exert pressure on ecosystems and increases the potential for environmental damage, with negative consequences for the conservation of endemic and native fauna and flora, mainly the introduction of species (emphasis on ship cargo entering from the mainland) is considered the greatest threat to healthy ecosystems in Galapagos (World Heritage Committee and International Union for Conservation of Nature, 2010).

Another factor that currently significantly affects the conservation of the Galapagos Islands is the presence of plastic waste dragged by the waters of the oceans from different parts of the planet, and that arrive on the coasts of all the islands, endangering the balance of its ecosystems. In this regard, with the participation of some public and private actors, academia and activists for the defense of the environment, research, protection and sanitation actions of the marine environment have been carried out, in order to establish adequate procedures for the prevention of this kind of pollution in this destination.

In particular, the pressures of the tourism sector are focused on areas of infrastructure construction for their performance, in the case of hotels and restaurants, which demand sanitary facilities, water and energy, in the latter mainly the demand for fossil fuel for boats tourist. On the other hand, the high demand for products from the continent that enter on ships must be taken into account, this is demand for imported fuel, as well as food to supply tourist ships with a floating population, which affects possible increases in introduction of species due to the weak load control system that currently exists despite the efforts and investments made in this field.

¹⁰ Connectivity in Galapagos 2019, MINTEL.

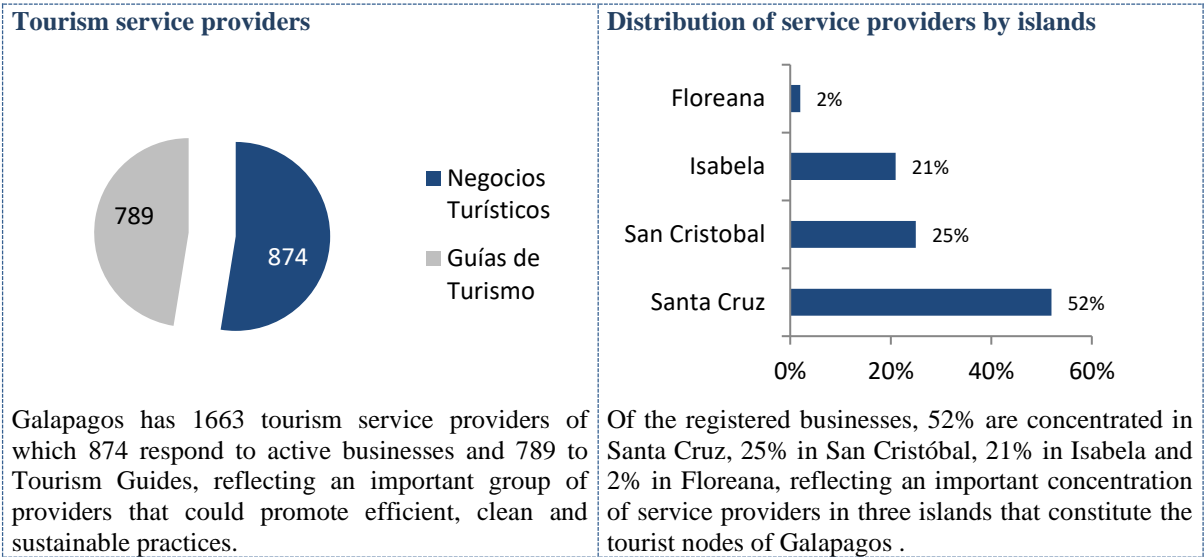
Regarding the visit sites that are regularized in their uses and controlled by the Galapagos National Park Directorate, it can be noted that the greatest impacts occur in recreational areas located in urban areas and that have joint management with local authorities. In another order, and according to studies carried out in certain diving areas (especially on the seabed), damages or impacts are observed that although it is true at the moment are not serious, they do require greater awareness and orientation campaigns. tourists who enter these sites (Ministry of the Environment, 2013).

In this sense, the high sensitivity and vulnerability of the ecosystems in the Galapagos Islands and their risk in the face of climate change become the main reason to promote innovative proposals, with tangible adaptation and mitigation measures associated with an ecotourism certification model, that is adapt efficiently and promote profound changes in production and consumption patterns, reducing the carbon footprint in the destination and consolidating Galapagos as a model of sustainable development.

4. Analysis of the supply of tourist services¹¹

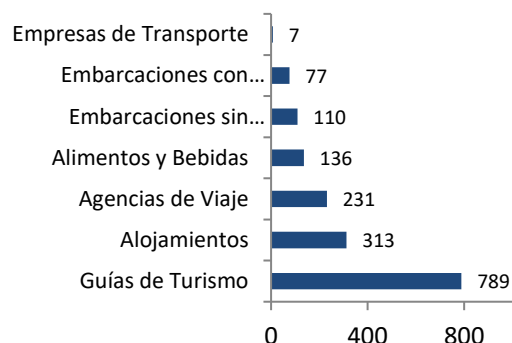
The analysis is based on the identification of the main characteristics of its offer, achieving a complete characterization of the existing tourist services, as well as the level of interest and importance of the demand for an eco-tourism certification scheme.

Undoubtedly, the level of participation and commitment of the tourism value chain in Galapagos is decisive to promote a transformative change that allows the adoption of low-emission technologies for energy generation, food production and provision of services to national visitors. and foreigners; Thus, increasing the resilience of the destination, reducing its carbon footprint and above all reducing its dependence on the consumption of fossil fuels and food become the main challenges that the tourism industry and especially its service offerings must promote in order to adapt. to climate change.



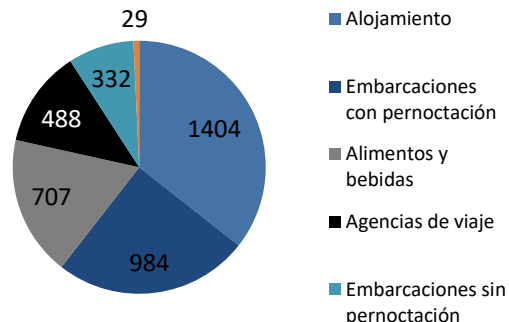
¹¹ Galápagos Tourism Offer Characterization Survey, WWF-CAF-MINTUR.

Distribution of service providers according to activity



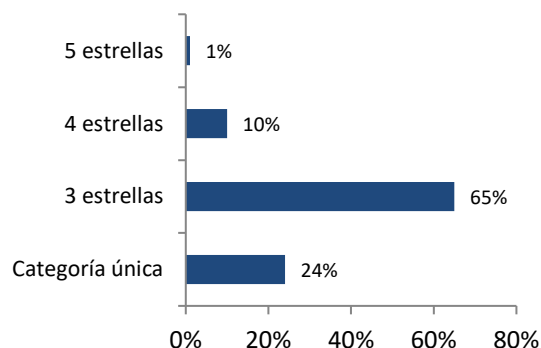
47% of the tourism service providers in Galapagos are Guides, followed by accommodations, reflecting a universe of 789 tour guides, 313 accommodations, 231 travel agencies, 136 food and beverages, 110 boats without overnight stay, 77 boats with overnight stays, 7 land transport companies, managing to identify service providers that have common characteristics to be able to adopt low-emission technologies.

Direct jobs



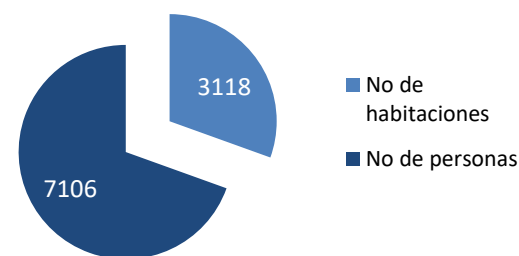
61% of direct tourism jobs are concentrated in accommodation services on land and on board, corresponding to 3,944, while in terms of direct jobs, disaggregated accommodation services generate 1404 direct jobs, while overnight vessels They generate 984, food and beverage services 707, travel agencies 488, boats without overnight stay 332 and ground transportation 29.

Accommodation categories



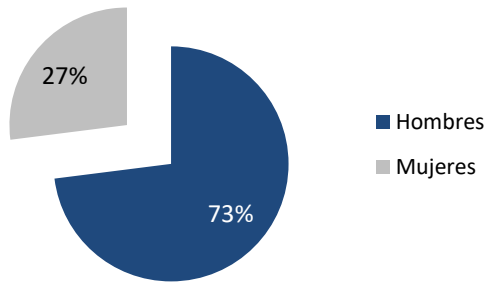
Of the total of 313 accommodations on land, 24% are single category and 65% are three stars, 10% are 4 stars and 1% are 5 stars, making the certification scheme a key alternative to improve efficiency and reduce the impact of accommodations that are in the different categories.

Accommodation capacity



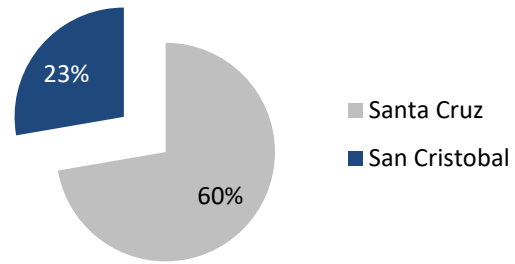
Of the total registered accommodations, the existence of 3,118 rooms can be observed, which can accommodate 7,106 people at the same time, reflecting the scope of lodging units that can be part of the adoption of clean technologies that can be transformed into green, efficient and sustainable rooms. .

Tour Guides Genre



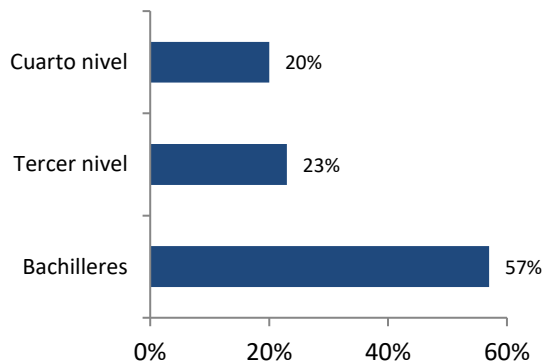
Of the total number of registered Tourist Guides, 27% are women, 73% are men, reflecting an important group that can be part of the group of Change Agents to directly influence tourist providers and visitors in the need to rethink the traditional tourism model towards a transformative, self-sufficient and sustainable model.

Tourist Guides Address



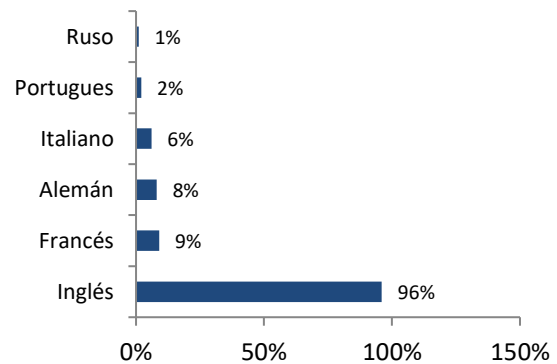
60% reside in Santa Cruz, 23% in San Cristóbal, their average age being 43 years, this reflects the importance that these two islands have in the registration and domicile of tourist service providers; as well as the average age of its representatives who can be reached with climate and environmental awareness programs.

Educational level of Tourist Guides



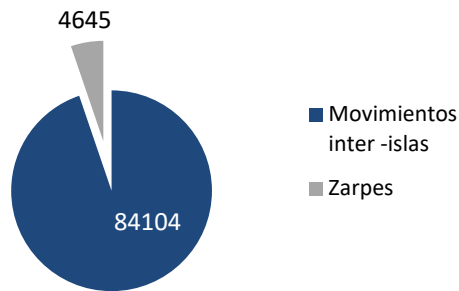
Regarding their level of education, 57% are high school graduates, 23% have third level degrees, 20% have fourth level degrees, 51% of the Guides are affinity with the areas of tourism and the environment, reflecting the great gap educational and professionalization that exists in the islands which undoubtedly becomes a barrier to promote a change in the development model of the islands.

Languages spoken by Tour Guides



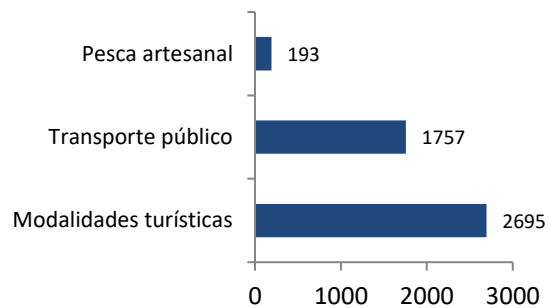
96% of tour guides speak English, 9% speak French, 8% German, 6% Italian, 2% Portuguese, 1% Russian, this undoubtedly reflects a great opportunity in language proficiency for be able to transmit the best tourism practices that the destination and the service providers promote to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Inter-island movements



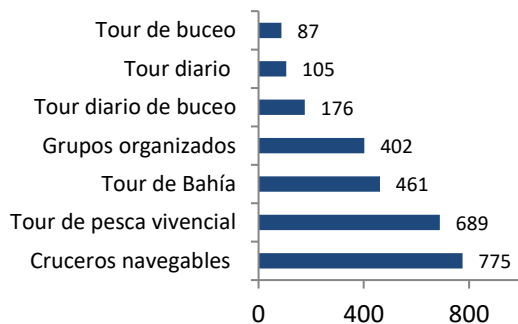
Regarding inter-island movements, 84,104 people mobilized between islands in the period August 31 to December 31, 2019, corresponding to 4,645 departures, this undoubtedly allows us to identify the impact on the generation of emissions by inter-island movements and above all the opportunity to gain efficiency with the adoption of clean technologies.

Inter-island movements according to typology



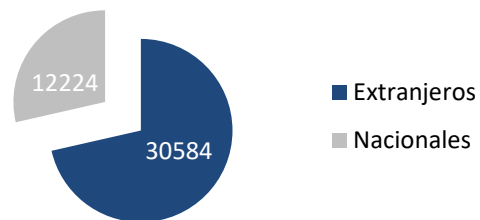
58% (2,695) respond to tourist modalities, 38% to public transport (1,757) and 4% (193) to artisanal fishing and water taxis, being able to make visible the impact generated by the inter-island movements of tourist modalities and their importance in adopting new technologies to reduce their emissions.

Claw behaviors



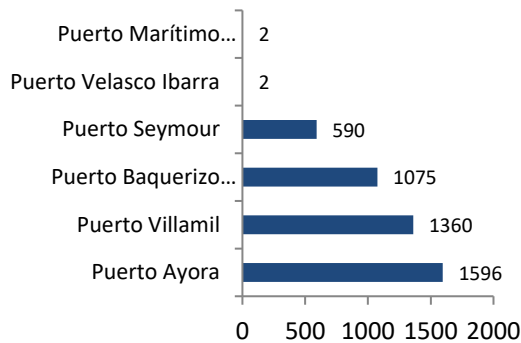
Regarding the behavior of departures of tourist modalities, 17% (775) respond to navigable cruises, 15% (689) to experiential fishing tours, 10% (461) to bay tours, 9% (402) to organized groups, 4% (176) on a daily diving tour, 2% (105) on a daily tour and 2% (87) on a navigable diving tour.

Origin of passengers in tourist modalities



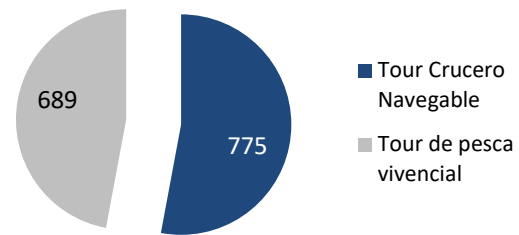
Regarding the origin of passengers in tourist modalities, 71% (30,584) are foreigners; while 29% (12,224) are national, reflecting the direct impact generated by international tourism and the opportunity that they can be part of a new model of tourism development.

Trips according to port of arrival



Regarding the number of trips according to the port of arrival from Puerto Ayora, it can be seen that 1596 boats arrive at Puerto Ayora, while at Puerto Villamil, 1360; to Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, 1075; to Port Seymour, 590; to Puerto Velasco Ibarra, 2; and, to Puerto Marítimo Guayaquil, 2.

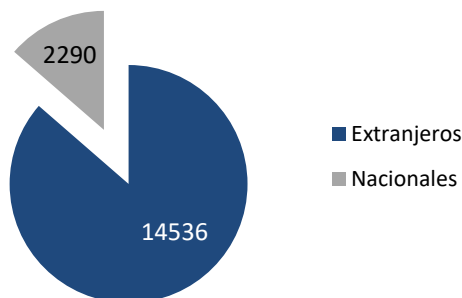
Boat behavior



Regarding the behavior of vessels, 775 trips corresponding to a navigable cruise tour and 689 trips corresponding to experiential fishing tours can be observed, managing to observe the amount of navigable tour trips and experiential fishing tours; as well as making visible its level of impact on the generation of emissions.

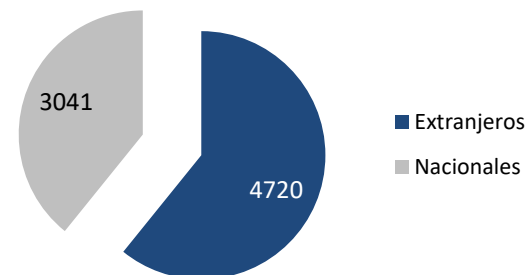
5. Tourism demand analysis

Travel passenger origin of the navigable cruise ship tour



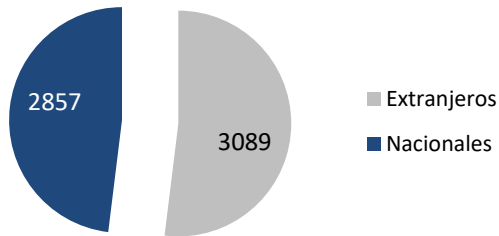
Of the total trips of the Navigable Cruise Tour, 86% (14,536) foreign passengers and 14% domestic passengers (2,290); noting that the majority of consumers are foreign and whose consumption profile is aligned towards the consumption of products and services that are friendly to the environment, becoming an opportunity for the adaptation of the transport system towards a sustainable model.

Origin of travel passengers of the experiential fishing tour



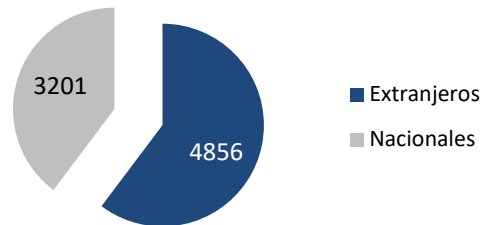
Regarding experiential fishing tour trips, 61% (4,720) of passengers are foreigners and 39% (3,041) are nationals, reflecting the pressure generated by both national and international visitors in the consumption of fossil fuels for their mobilization in experiential fishing tour trips.

Origin of passengers of trips of the bay tour



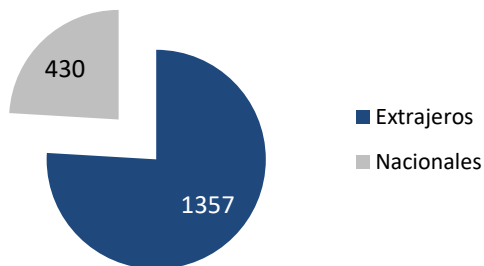
Regarding the bay tour, 461 trips can be evidenced, of which 52% (3,089) correspond to foreign passengers and 48% correspond to national passengers (2,857), reflecting the pressure generated by both national and international visitors in the consumption of fuels fossils on bay tour trips.

Origin of passengers of organized group trips



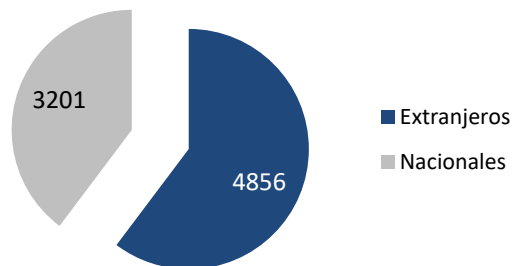
Regarding organized groups, it can be evidenced 402 trips of which 60% (4,856) correspond to foreign passengers and 40% (3,201) correspond to national passengers, reflecting the pressure generated by both national and international visitors in the consumption of fuels fossils for mobilization in organized group trips.

Origin of daily dive tour travel passengers



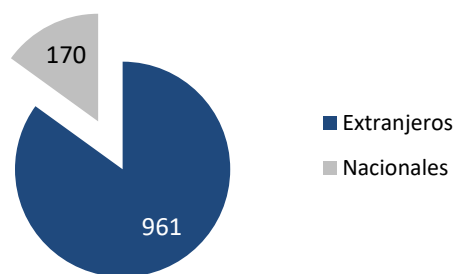
Regarding the daily diving tour, 176 trips can be evidenced, of which 76% (1,357) correspond to foreign passengers and 24% (430) correspond to national passengers, reflecting the pressure generated by both national and international visitors in consumption of fossil fuels on daily dive tour trips.

Origin of passengers of daily tour trips



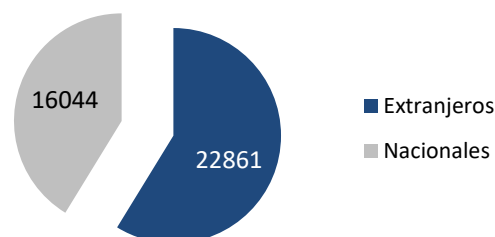
Regarding the daily tour, 105 trips can be evidenced, of which 82% (1,065) correspond to foreign passengers and 18% (235) correspond to national passengers, reflecting the pressure generated by both national and international visitors in the consumption of fuels fossils on daily tour trips.

Passenger Origin of Navigable Diving Tour Trips



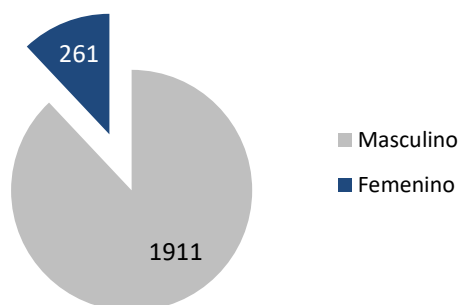
Regarding the navigable diving tour, 87 trips can be evidenced, of which 85% (961) correspond to foreign passengers and 15% (170) correspond to national passengers, reflecting the pressure generated by both national and international visitors in the consumption of fossil fuels on boating dive tour trips.

Origin of passengers of public transport trips



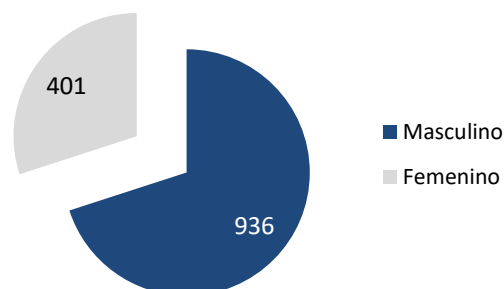
Regarding public transport, 1,757 trips can be evidenced, of which 59% (22,861) correspond to foreign passengers and 41% (16,044) to national passengers, reflecting the pressure generated by both national and international visitors in the consumption of fossil fuels in public transport trips.

Gender of passengers in tourist modality trips



88% (1,911) of passengers of tourist modalities respond to the masculine gender; while 12% (261) respond to the female gender, reflecting a high representation of the male gender in trips of tourist modalities, which allows targeting actions in this group tending to position the importance of the certification scheme.

Gender of passengers on public transport trips



Regarding public transport, 70% (936) respond to the male gender and 30% (401) respond to the female gender, reflecting a high representation of the male gender in public transport trips, which allows targeting actions in this group aimed at positioning the importance of the certification scheme.

6. Analysis of previous certification experiences in Galapagos and continental Ecuador

In the Galapagos Islands, various certification schemes and quality standards are registered that have had and have as a fundamental objective to support tourism initiatives in the implementation of good practices, improving the impact on the environment and their efficiency in the consumption of resources.

Part of the first experiences in the implementation and arrival of quality schemes and norms have to do with the Technical Norm of Ecotourism, a quality standard promoted by the Ecuadorian Ecotourism Association, which was implemented in several operations at the continental level and in the Galapagos Islands from 1998 to 2004; Likewise, sustainable tourism certification schemes have had an important presence in the Galapagos Islands, such as the Smart Voyager certification promoted by the Conservation and Development Foundation,

6.1. Smart Voyager¹²

It is a sustainable certification program focused on tourism operations, it began its implementation in the Galapagos Islands in 2000 certifying several vessels, achieving in 2002 an important recognition by UNESCO as an example to be implemented in all the natural heritages of The humanity.

The certification covers criteria related to sustainability, contemplating a set of standards in the environmental, socio-cultural and economic fields. It was created knowing the reality of the tourism market and with the active participation of the actors in the value chain, which provided confidence and security to the tourism market.

Smart Voyager certified up to 2012, sixty-two tourism operations between boats and accommodation establishments. Aerogal, the local airline of the Galapagos Islands, the British Embassy that opted for sustainability in its management, and thirty-seven small companies were also certified under the Smart Voyager Express program. The main causes of the termination of the certification analyzed were the lack of budgetary availability to maintain the certification, particularly for small companies, as well as the absence of benefits from obtaining the seal.

The certification was created by the Conservation and Development Foundation, who were in charge of the audit and certification process in Ecuador.

6.1.1. Smart Voyager Certification Standards¹³

The Smart Voyager standard is structured around thirteen principles. Each principle is made up of criteria. The criteria describe good environmental and social management practices that are evaluated or measured through audits.

Smart Voyager standards apply to all tourism operations regardless of size or orientation. To verify compliance with the standard, interviews, field observation and documentation review are carried out.

Based on this methodology, the tourism operation is evaluated, for this there are parameters of non-conformities, compliance, partial compliance or not applying each criterion. The operation must meet all critical criteria, at least 50% of each principle and reach 80% or more total to be certified or recertified.

Company policy	Conservation of Natural Ecosystems
Tourism land operations must incorporate into their policy compliance with national legislation, international conventions, related to tourism with a defined socio-environmental strategy and with their respective procedures.	Land tourism operations have to support and promote the conservation of the environment, the protection and good use of natural resources, implementing a sustainable management of their operation.

¹² Certification Program in Sustainable Tourism for Tourism Operations 2010, CC&D

¹³ Standard of the Certification Program in Sustainable Tourism for Tourism Operations 2010, CC&D

Reduction of Negative Environmental Impacts <p>Land tourism operations must prevent, mitigate and compensate for environmental damage that may be caused to the environment.</p>	Reduction of the risk of introduction and extraction of species <p>Tourism Operations must prevent the introduction of species in protected areas, unique and fragile ecosystems; and, avoid the extraction of natural resources in the places where tourism activities take place.</p>
Fair and Correct Treatment of Workers <p>Land Tourism operations should raise the socioeconomic well-being and quality of life of workers and their families.</p>	Staff training <p>All personnel involved with land tourism operations must continuously receive education and training on environmental issues, tourism sustainability and cultural, according to their specific functions, to reduce the possibility of generating negative impact.</p>
Community Relations and Local Wellbeing <p>There must be an active commitment from tourism operators, seeking and promoting the well-being of the local community, where tourism activities take place. This will generate participatory strategies for socio-economic development, between tourism operations and the community.</p>	Strict control in the use, supply and storage of inputs <p>Tourism activities must plan and control the consumption, supply and storage of inputs, considering the well-being of guests, workers, local communities and the conservation of natural ecosystems.</p>
Integrated Waste Management <p>Facilities holding tourism operations must have a comprehensive management plan that includes the reduction, reuse, recycling, treatment and proper final disposal of solid and liquid waste.</p>	Tourist's Commitment <p>Land Tourism Operations must reduce the impact of tourists on the environment, and on the community in which activities takes place. Tourists must be willing and committed to respect the natural and cultural resources visited, follow the rules established by operators, in order to avoid possible negative impacts. Tourists are key actors contributing on existing programs, and contributing on operation-related socio-environmental conservation and development programs.</p>
Safety <p>Land Tourism Operations must guarantee the safety of all individuals involved.</p>	Planning and Monitoring <p>Land tourism activities have to be planned, monitored and evaluated, considering their technical, economic, social and environmental aspects.</p>
Quality system <p>Land tourism activities must have a quality system innate to its services, ensuring and continuing the improvement of the process that provides tourism services.</p>	

6.1.2. Certified companies in Galapagos until 2012

Tourist operator	Location	Province
Beagle	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
Beluga	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
Sperm whale	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
Celebrity Xpedition	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
Daphne	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
Eclipse	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
Ecoventura	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
Eric	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
Finch bay	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
Flamingo	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
Hosteria Miconia	San Cristobal	Galapagos
Letty	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
Isabella	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
M / N Santa Cruz	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
M / N Expedition	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
Montserrat	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
Royal palm	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
Sagitta	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
Sky Dancer	Santa Cruz	Galapagos
Mary Anne	Santa Cruz	Galapagos

Lessons Learned from the Smart Voyager Certification

1. The certification made it possible to improve the levels of application of good sustainable tourism practices in various tourist activities on the islands. It's considered that improvement actions remained as part of the operation once the companies entered the certification process. However, the problems in their maintenance occurred due to lack of resources, especially of small companies, as well as to the absence of benefits when obtaining the certification. These problems should be addressed in future certification programs, by proposing financial mechanisms, and the design of tax and non-tax incentives, which motivates the participation of the all the actors in the tourism sector and contribute to the sustainability of initiatives in the long term. .
2. The tourism sector is interested in a seal that highlights its commitment to sustainability.
3. It's important to continue and enforce any certification effort that may arise.
4. Articulated work with anchor companies that can influence suppliers to achieve certification is decisive
5. The certification was recognized by UNESCO as an example to be implemented in all the natural heritages of humanity, reflecting the importance of this type of scheme in the care of vulnerable ecosystems.
6. The link with cooperation programs is decisive, enabling co-finance in the implementation of certification schemes
7. Financial lines with special conditions to access both the certification scheme and its implementation never existed, which stopped the access of most of the operators in the sector

6.2. PRONEC National Ecotourism Certification Program¹⁴

The National Ecotourism Certification Program (PRONEC) is an initiative that responded to the certification needs of sustainability schemes in tourism activities, by supporting the sustainable development of ecotourism in Ecuador and of all the actors involved in its value chain.

The Program began in 1999 on the basis of an agreement with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, and a coordinated effort with the Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador, declaring the program a national priority. During the implementation of the program, it was possible to develop a participatory work with key actors of the activity, who concluded that it was not necessary to create a new certification, and chose to develop a set of minimum standards for environmental, social and service quality, enabling access to a special category of ecotourism enterprise, recognized by a set of Ecotourism and Sustainability Regulations, issued by the Presidency of the Republic of Ecuador on June 4 of 2002.

In June 2002, the Netherlands Ministry of Development through its embassy in Ecuador began direct support for the Program through financial cooperation, managing to implement the standard created in various tourism initiatives in Ecuador, making the country an international benchmark in the management of ecotourism, and especially, in the recognition of ecotourism companies that comply with the minimum standards set by the regulations.

This program sought to differentiate and position all ecotourism companies in Ecuador in the market, generating at the same time a strong process of raising sensitization, consciousness and education, aimed at strengthening ecotourism in Ecuador under a framework of participation, equity and transparency.

The tourism activities that could opt for the special category of ecotourism include:

Accommodation for Ecotourism
Food and Drinks for Ecotourism
Transportation for Ecotourism
Guidance for Ecotourism

Regarding the benefits of PRONEC, Article 17 in the Ecotourism Regulation indicates that certified ecotourism companies will be subject to the following incentive regime: direct access to tax incentives established in the Tourism Law, preferably within the promotional planning of the country, carried out by the Ministry of Tourism.

6.2.1. Standards of the National Ecotourism Certification Program

Quality of services and Responsibility with the Visitor	Conservation and management of natural resources
The ecotourism company must direct its efforts to the satisfaction of its visitors and make sure to obtain their perceptions to work on the continuous improvement of its services and infrastructure.	The company must support the conservation processes of the area where it carries out its activities and, if applicable, the area belonging to the SNAP, through active cooperation with the conservation efforts in the area where activities are performed.

¹⁴ National Ecotourism Certification Program 2003, ASEC

<p>The ecotourism company must be responsible to its visitors in the information provided, in the service offered and in their safety during their stay.</p>	<p>In the case of those companies that operate in buffer zones, they must obey and apply to the regulations of the nearest Protected Area.</p>
<p>Environmental and cultural impacts</p> <p>The activities carried out by the ecotourism company will try to minimize the possible impacts caused on natural and human resources in the area where it carries out its activities. Keeping of wild animals in captivity will be acceptable only under conditions of temporary recovery or for reproduction purposes, under adequate scientific supervision.</p>	<p>Garbage and waste treatment</p> <p>Organic and inorganic waste, gray and black, waters will be managed with the most appropriate techniques in order to tend towards their recycling and / or elimination without adverse impacts in the ecotourism operating zone, areas of influence, or in others areas which said waste and waters are transferred, its management chain must be ensured.</p>
<p>Visitor group size</p> <p>According to the characteristics of the sites where ecotourism activities take place, the ecotourism company will observe technical recommendations on the size and frequency of the groups. It's important to note that mass tourism operations in natural areas are not framed within the principles and norms of Ecotourism.</p>	<p>Respect for human groups</p> <p>The purpose of the visit to human groups settled in areas where ecotourism activities take place will be to show and appreciate their culture and way of life. Ecotourism activities must not interfere with, or alter the traditions of the communities visited. If work personnel are required, local communities within or adjacent to the ecotourism site will benefit.</p>
<p>Respect for historical places and archaeological remains</p> <p>The care and preservation of signs and evidences of human history and archaeological remains will be promoted. Looting and destruction of historical sites and archaeological remains will not be allowed.</p>	<p>Cultural simulations</p> <p>Simulations and exhibitions of local cultures carried out by people or entities outside the specific cultural groups will not be presented as authentic, unless they are for educational, artistic and informative purposes with prior knowledge of the visitor.</p>
<p>Promotion</p> <p>The promotion must not make offensive allusions towards local cultures and will be carried out through texts, photographs and / or audiovisual media that show the reality of the promoted place, with species of flora and fauna easy to observe.</p>	<p>Guides and interpretation</p> <p>Guides will tend to the conservationist conscience of the visitors through adequate environmental interpretation. Visitors will also be educated on issues important to the conservation and management of natural resources and the culture of the area.</p>
<p>Transport</p> <p>The adverse effects on natural and human resources produced by means of transport used in ecotourism activities will be minimized. This will be achieved using the most advanced technology available in the country, also guaranteeing the safety of passengers.</p>	<p>Accommodation</p> <p>The Ecotourism Company that provides accommodation services in natural areas, whether they are hotels, hostels, cabins, lodges, flotel, boats or camps, must follow all the applicable regulations to avoid negative impacts on human groups and / or ecosystems in the short term, medium and long term.</p>

6.2.2. Certified companies in Ecuador

COAST
Alandaluz / Manabí
Cerro Blanco / Guayas
Puerto Hondo Guayas
Macaw Bay Tour
ANDES
Yunguilla / Pichincha Community
Maquipucuna / Pichincha
Bellavista / Pichincha
Land of the Volcano / Cotopaxi
Black Sheep INN / Cotopaxi
AMAZON
Manatee Amazon Explorer / Orellana
Kapawi / Pastaza
Yachana Lodge / Orellana
Cabins Aliñahui / Orellana
GALAPAGOS
Canodros / Galapagos

Lessons learned from the PRONEC National Ecotourism Certification Program

1. The only company certified in Galapagos with the seal under analysis was Canodros Cía. Ltda. Navigable tourist boat. It should be noted that the certification was not kept due to the preference of the operator for seals with higher market positioning. The aforementioned fact guides future certification programs to develop strategies to occupy a distinctive place, not only in the local or national market, but also in the international context. Among other strategies, one must opt for the accreditation of the certifying body under the competent national authority, and under recognized bodies such as the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.
2. The principles established in the Technical Norm of Ecotourism managed to reflect what the concept of ecotourism represents through the fulfillment of minimum standards.
3. The support and accompaniment of international cooperation and the central government through the Ministry of Tourism, was decisive for the success of the program.
4. The Ecotourism Technical Standard gained a lot of international visibility, being taken to several countries in Central and South America to replicate and adapt it.
5. The representativeness of the Ecuadorian Ecotourism Association was of outmost importance, giving continuity to implementation projects in par with Ecuador's standard.
6. The accompaniment of a technical team specialized in the tourism sector allowed opening the doors for pilot enterprises to be part of the program.
7. The development of Guides and Manuals of Good Sustainable Tourism Practices facilitated the implementation of the principles of ecotourism.
8. The trainer of trainers program bolstered the scope of the Ecotourism Technical Standard and made it possible to reach more companies and organizations.
9. The existence of Ecotourism Regulations issued by the Presidency of the Republic was decisive in the institutionalization of ecotourism in the country.
10. The extinction of the Ecuadorian Ecotourism Association incurred in the no continuation of this process.

6.3. Galapagos Tourism Quality Program¹⁵

The Galapagos Tourism Quality Program was a program that promoted the improvement of quality standards of the Galapagos tourism service providers and the transition to a new model of tourism development seeking to position Galapagos as a quality destination, born from the support provided by WWF in 2009 to the Galapagos Tourism Quality Pilot Project (DSSPG BID Fomin project), carried out between Capturcal, MINTUR, DPNG, Municipal Government of Santa Cruz, whose purpose was to promote the quality of the destination in accommodation companies, food and boats focused on environmental care, customer service, social responsibility, efficiency, hygiene and safety. Until January 2011, 40 companies subscribed to the program were registered.

In December 2012, the Good Practices Program was officially launched by the Galapagos Provincial Technical Directorate of MINTUR (Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador) with the support of WWF (World Wildlife Fund), in order to guarantee the sustainable management and operation of tourism services in the Galapagos Islands, encouraging the tourism establishments on the islands to apply Good Practices in environmental issues, hygiene, food handling and customer service.

The program began with the development of guides and on-site distribution materials for tourism service providers, focused on issues of water management, electricity, local consumption and use of plastic; as well as with the edition and publication of information brochures for tourists. Additionally, we worked on training, focused on environmental issues, enabling the program to continue its operation during 2013, unfortunately in the first semester of 2014 the program could not continue due to lack of funding .

Scope of the Standard

Customer Support
Hygiene and food handling
Environmental care and
Local consumption

Sectors

Navigable tour boats
Tourism operators and agencies
Accommodations and providers
Food and beverage services.

Lessons learned from the Galapagos Tourism Quality Program

The “Galapagos Tourism Quality” recognition, facilitated the implementation of good practices associated with quality, particularly for micro and small tourism businesses. However, the trend of medium and large operations, keen for certifications with a more comprehensive scope (criteria linked to sustainability and competitiveness); led to the seal not being requested in the long term. On the other hand, the institutionalization of the program and the establishment of an efficient management model constituted unsolvable challenges, which led to the finalization of the initiative. In this context, it is mandatory that the scope of future certification programs include a comprehensive approach adapted to the reality of the various operations on the islands. So too, it's of outmost importance the commitment of national and local public entities to boost and institutionalize new proposals for tourism certification.

¹⁵ Galapagos Tourism Quality Program 2009, MINTUR.

Promotion

There was no promotion or dissemination at international level, which weakened the importance of the seal, becoming a local initiative with no capacity to empower the international visitor.

Institutionality**Incentives**

Incentives that inspire companies to be a part of good practice initiatives should be considered

Commercialization

It's important to strengthen the commercial component of the program, turning it into a strategic axis that motivates decision-making and improves the differentiation and competitiveness of the tourism establishment.

Program Results

Among the achievements reached: 68% of compliance with the actions recommended in the improvement plans (83% of compliance in tourist boats; 68% in execution in accommodation establishments; and 52%, in food and beverage establishments).

Promoters

Promoters in good practices were a fundamental pillar to promote, disseminate and provide support in the implementation of good practices in tourism operations located in the different islands.

Letter of engagement

Subscription to the program through the signing of a letter of commitment, allowed the involvement and empowerment of each of the initiatives that decided to be part of the program, achieving in the case of Galapagos 144 signed agreements.

Training and Technical Advice

The training and assistance program allowed tourism operations to access new knowledge that was complemented with specialized technical assistance.

Good practices

The implementation of good practices improved the efficiency in the consumption of water and energy. Similarly, it made the management of good practices visible with visitors.

Communication

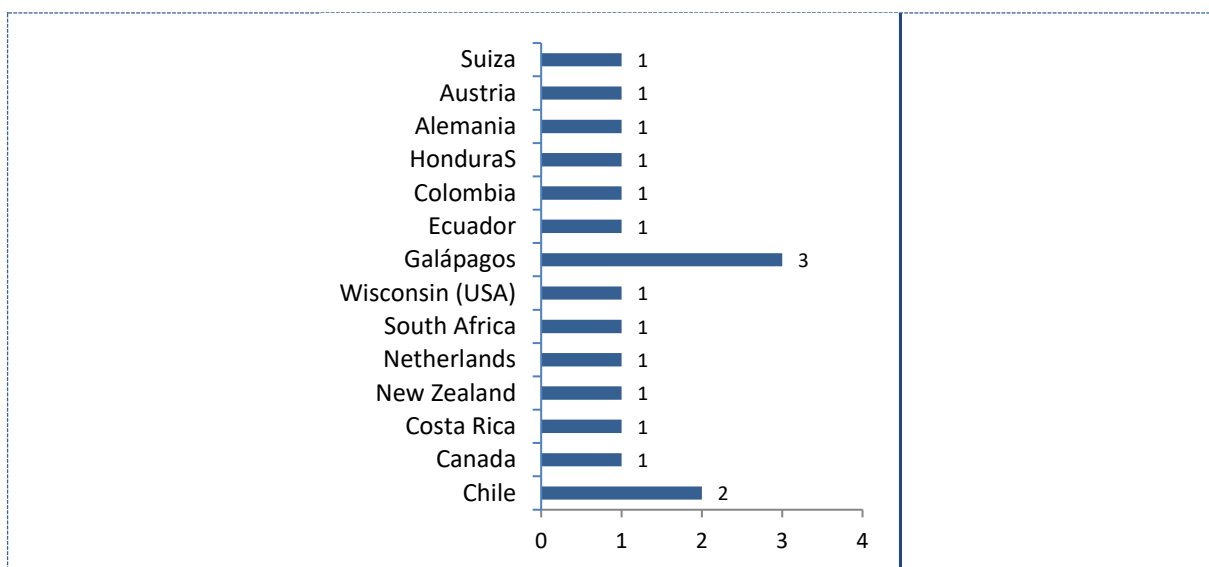
The development of a communication strategy allowed a better understanding of the importance of the program and, above all, of how to access and implement friendly practices in each tourism operation.

6.4. International experiences

This section presents key information on 11 seals in 14 countries with experience in sustainable tourism certifications that in some cases exceeds 20 years, according to data from a comparative study carried out by Columbia University, in which an integral review of certifications was carried out, with the objective of generating recommendations for a program of sustainable label in Chile "Distinction of Sustainable Tourism¹⁶".

¹⁶ Sustainable label program in Chile "Distinction of Sustainable Tourism" 2010, Columbia University.

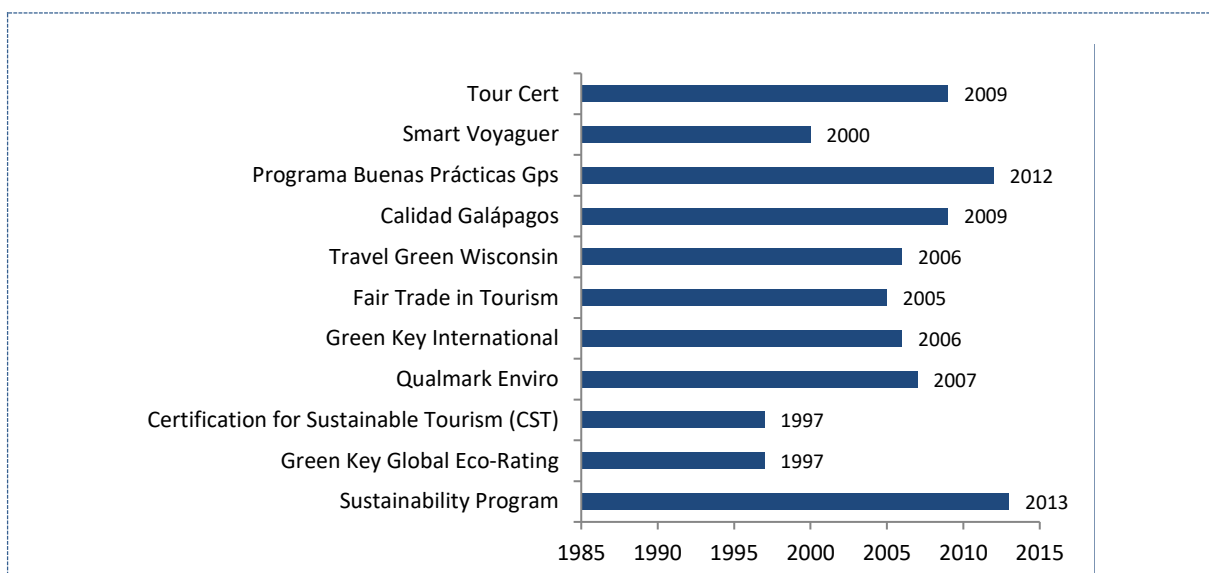
6.4.1. Certification seal in sustainable tourism



As seen, Galapagos has been one of the most selected destinations for the implementation of certification schemes in: sustainable tourism, craft, vulnerability and international recognition that undoubtedly influence it to be an ideal destiny for the implementation of this type of schemes.

As seen, Galapagos has been selected more times as a destination for the implementation of certification schemes in: sustainable tourism, craft, vulnerability and international recognition that undoubtedly influence on it to be an ideal destiny for the implementation of this type of schemes.

6.4.2. Certification seals experience according to year of initiation

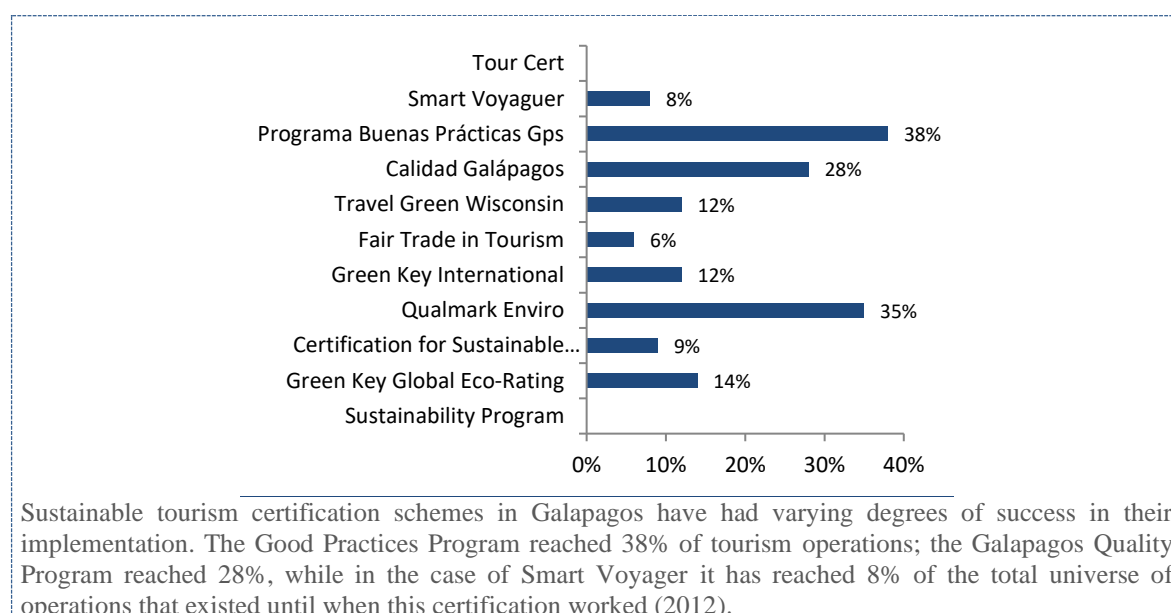


The certifications that are mainly promoted on the islands are four: TourCert, Smart Voyager, Galapagos Good Practices and Quality Program, implemented since 2000.

Regarding the scope of each of the identified seals, it can be observed that these have reached between 6% and 38% of the total tourism operations in each of their jurisdictions, managing to identify that the focus of all the certifications analyzed has to do with the search for sustainability in the economic, socio-cultural and environmental spheres (Columbia University, 2010).

According to the comparative study carried out by Columbia University in which a review of 12 certification programs was carried out with the aim of generating recommendations for a sustainable label program in Chile "Distinction of Sustainable Tourism"¹⁷. It was possible to identify a series of seals with key information on the scope of each one, managing to identify the existence of 11 seals in 14 countries with experience in certification in sustainable tourism that in some cases exceed 20 years.

6.4.3. Scope in the implementation of certifications in sustainable tourism



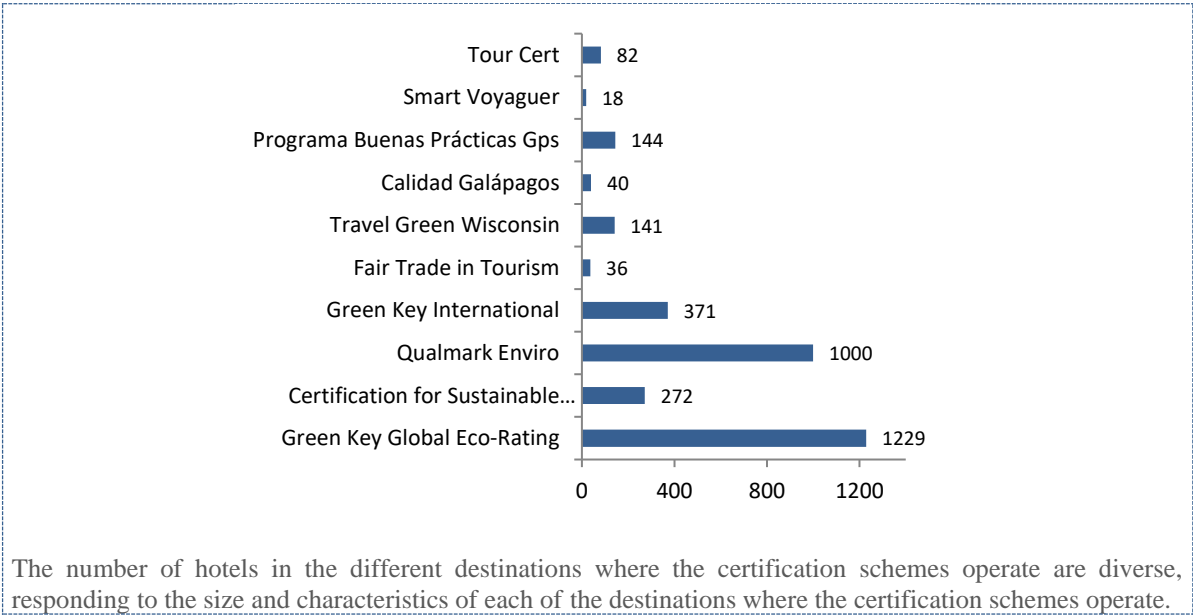
6.4.4. Types of auditors by certification program

Sustainability Program	Independent contractors
Green Key Global Eco-Rating	Provincial hotel associations
Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST)	Program Administrator (ICT)
Qualmark Enviro	Independent contractors
Green Key International	Independent contractors
Fair Trade in Tourism	Program Administrator
Travel Green Wisconsin	Independent contractors
Galapagos quality	Program Administrator
Gps Good Practices Program	Program Administrator
Smart Voyager	Program Administrator
Tour Cert	Independent contractor

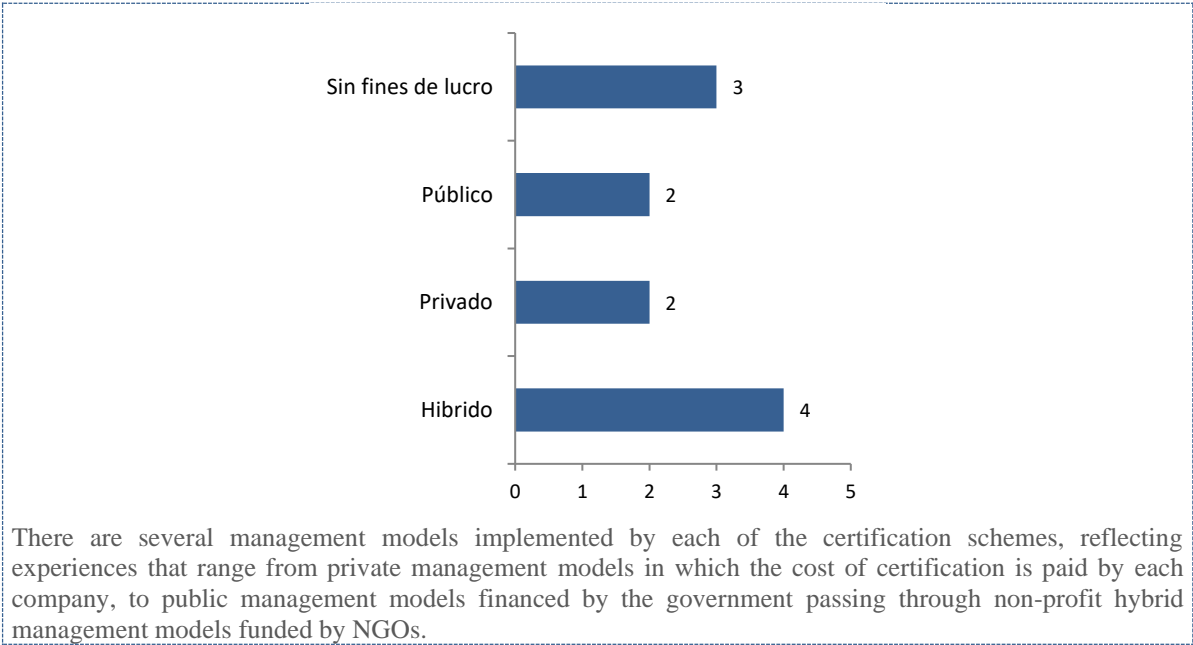
¹⁷ Sustainable label program in Chile "Distinction of Sustainable Tourism" 2010, Columbia University.

The number of hotels and the management model implemented in each certification scheme has a direct relationship in the identification of sustainability strategies for each program, the private management model being ideal in destinations with a high number of hotels, while in sensitive destinations, with fewer accommodations, the ideal management models are public or those financed by NGOs.

6.4.5. Number of hotels in the destination



6.4.6. Certification management model



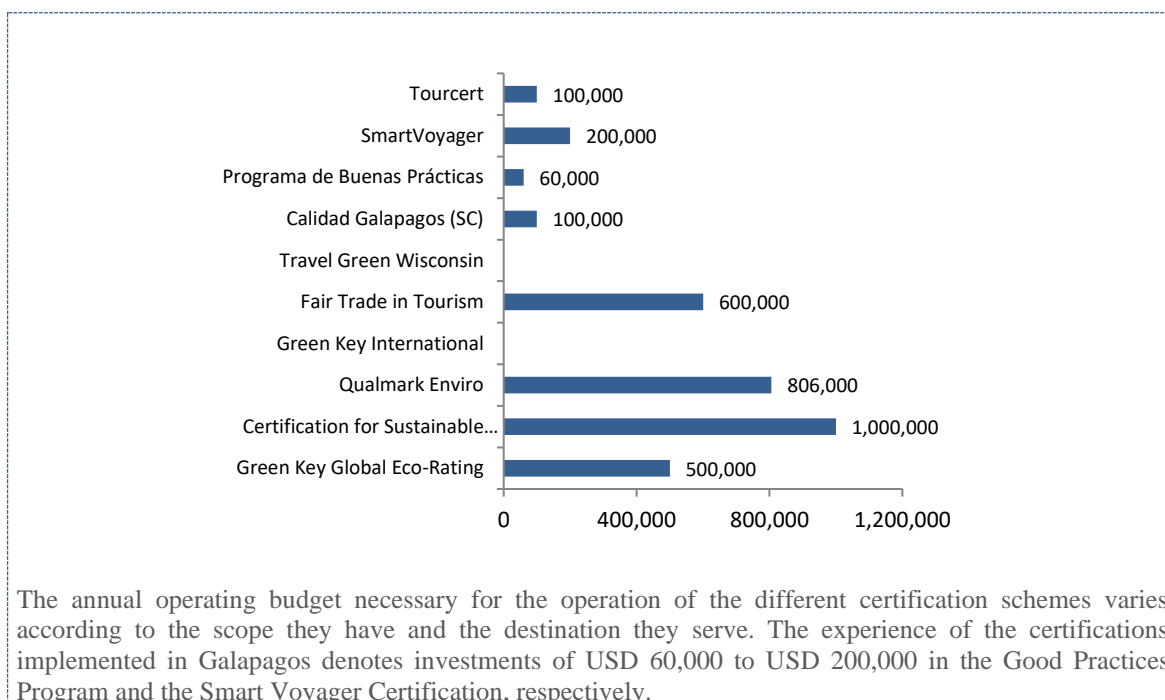
6.4.7. Penetration of certifications by country in the accommodation sector

Country	Total Hotels & Lodges	Total Rooms	Total Hotels in Program	Program start year	Total% of Hotels & Lodges
Canada	8,508	461,537	1,229	1997	14%
Chile	4,126	73,132	...	2013	...
Costa Rica	2,497	45,531	231	1997	9%
Netherlands	3,100	97,108	371	1998	12%
New Zealand	2,874	n / a	1,000	1993	35%
South Africa	1,077	61,000	62	2002	6%
US / Wisconsin	1,137	80,333	141	2007	12%
Ecuador - Galapagos (Pilot quality)	313	3118	16	2009	31%
Ecuador - Galapagos (program (BP))	313	3118	89	2012	82%

Source: Columbia University, 2010

Certification Programs in Sustainable Tourism exist at a country level reaching significant percentages ranging from 6% to 14% as is the case in South Africa and Canada, even reaching 35% as is the case in New Zealand. However, in the case of Certification Programs carried out in specific smaller destinations such as Galapagos, the scope of the implemented programs has reached 31% of the total coverage of accommodation, as is the case of the Galapagos Quality Program, reflecting great acceptance for this type of programs.

6.4.8. Annual budget for the certifier



If the intervention of the Program is not carried out by promoting a sustainable tourism certification scheme in Galapagos, the commitment and involvement of the tourism industry in being part of a transformative change towards a system of self-sustainable islands with low carbon emissions and with the capacity to adapt to climate change would undoubtedly be weakened. This will be manifested by an increase in the levels of consumption of fossil fuels, the consumption of products that come from the continent and the carbon footprint generated by tourism in Galapagos

In the same way, if the best energy efficiency practices are not adopted and, above all, the reduction of high dependence on the consumption of fossil fuels and food consumption from the continent, the vulnerability of the natural ecosystems of Galapagos would be put at risk. It is important to note that as the Galapagos tourism sector represents more than half of the total energy consumption in the islands, the risk of adaptation to the challenges posed by climate change becomes more critical.

The observed trends and future projections indicate that the climatic conditions will suffer a great alteration, generating a continuous increase of the sea water surface and the air temperature, generating a stronger and more aggressive seasonality, causing these changes a warmer dry cold season, this combined with a wetter and warmer wet season, which could affect a change in tourist seasonality, also affecting the arrival of visitors, the production of foreign dividends and sources of employment.

The Galapagos archipelago is a highly sensitive system to human impact, which has been affected in recent decades due to the combined effects of climate change, habitual tourism development, unsustainable agriculture and fishing practices, and invasive species; putting the ecosystems and the economic and social benefits that they generate at risk. Since tourism is strongly interrelated with climate change, the effects on both ecosystems and destination could be devastating.

Tourism contributes to global climate change through the emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) related to accommodation, activities and transport. At the same time, by altering the processes of ecosystems and emblematic species, climate change could have a profound impact on the tourism industry, marine ecosystems would be affected, causing a change in the industry's productivity model and affecting the sector's value chain.

7. Certification scheme feasibility

The feasibility of the certification scheme delves into the analysis of the supply of certification schemes that exist in the market, their objectives, and scope, all made through a multi-criteria analysis.¹⁸ With experts from the tourism sector, the applicability of each certification scheme and identified norm is evaluated; as well as its contribution in differentiation, competitiveness and its contribution to climate change using ranges of high, medium and low applicability that have been selected based on the criteria of experts in the tourism sector.

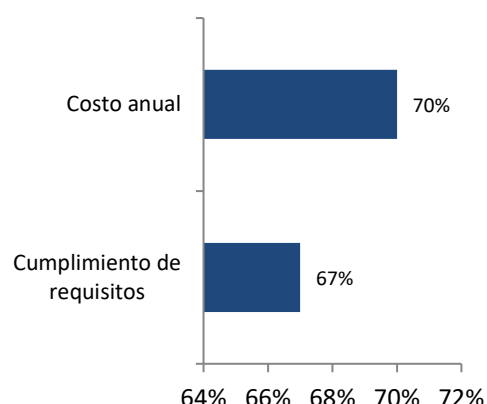
Regarding the analysis of the demand, the feasibility of the certification scheme is analyzed, based on the findings of the applied surveys, delving into the main obstacles that keep a certification in force, the availability and interest in an environmental or tourism certification, the importance of certifications in the business, interest in communicating good environmental practices, interest and involvement with sustainable practices; as well as non-reimbursable technical cooperation needs

7.1. Demand analysis - Feasibility of the certification scheme based on the findings of applied surveys

7.1.1. Main obstacles to keep a certification in force

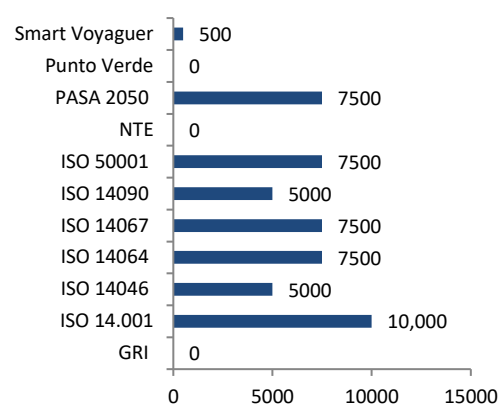
¹⁸ Focus Group of tourism experts on the applicability of certification schemes, 2019, MINTUR.

In your opinion, what are the main obstacles to keep a certification in force?



Among the main obstacles for maintaining a certification in force are: 67% compliance with requirements and 70% the annual cost for certification renewals.

What are the average annual costs to renew a certification?



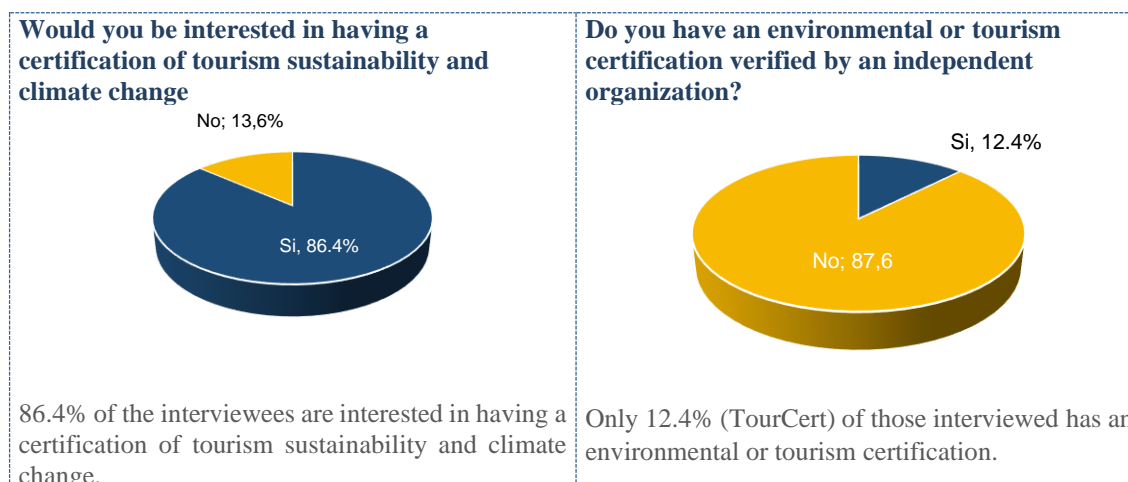
The costs for the annual renewal of a certification or regulation scheme are diverse, which responds to the type of regulation and its scope. Although the standards managed by public entities, such as Green Point and Ecotourism Technical Standard, do not record a cost for the final beneficiary; These costs have been absorbed with institutional budgets within the framework of the annual operational schedules. It is important to note that in addition to the cost to renew the certification, tourism operations incur in other niches to make improvements related to the performance criteria of the certification standard.

- **Compliance with requirements**

Although 67% of tourism service providers highlight that compliance with requirements is one of the main obstacles that influence the maintenance of a certification, this high percentage generates an opportunity for inter-institutional articulation for the accompaniment and technical assistance aimed at the compliance of these requirements. This support could be led by public or cooperation institutions in Galapagos. It is important to consider that the more tourism operations there are with certifications, the competitiveness of the destination and its contribution to climate change will be more evident.

- **Annual cost to renew certification**

When analyzing the different costs of annual renewal of the certification schemes and applicable standards in Galapagos, we found that these schemes costs vary between 2,500 USD, 5,000 USD up to 7000 USD (only certification costs), which means, in some cases, great access restrictions due to the costs to certify, as well as costs for the implementation of improvements.



7.1.2. Availability and interest in an environmental or tourism certification

- **Availability of an environmental or tourism certification verified by an independent organization**

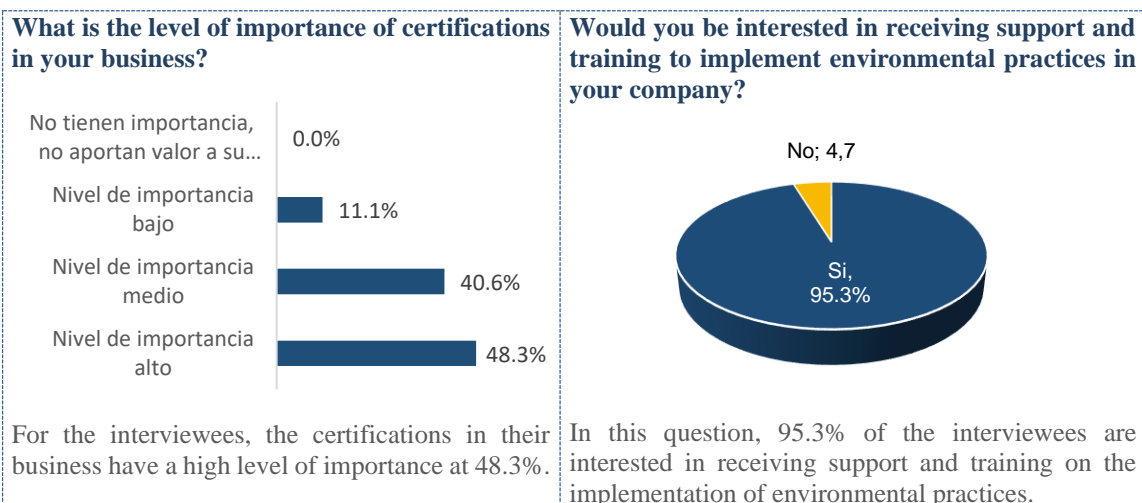
According to the data collected, it can be seen that only 12.4% of the tourism establishments interviewed have some environmental or tourist certification, which denotes a great opportunity to increase the number of certified tourist establishments, which could be reached with a certification and an incentives package, that allow an increase in the differentiation in the market and reflect environmental and social practices in the destination.

Of this global data (12.4%), 10% of companies in the hotel area said they have an environmental or tourism certification, of this group making, a distribution by island, we have that, 56% of this total is in Santa Cruz, 33% corresponds to Isabela and 11% to San Cristóbal. Regarding boats, 30% of the surveyed companies have environmental or tourism certifications verified by an independent organization, in this case 100% are located in Santa Cruz.

- **Interest in having a certification of tourism sustainability and climate change**

It can be seen that 86.4% of tourism establishments are interested in having a tourism sustainability and climate change certification, reflecting their commitment to sustainability and climate change in the destination.

In this analysis, when making a distribution by sector and by islands, it's found that 44% of the accommodation sector in Santa Cruz shows interest in having a certification of tourism sustainability and climate change, while 17% of interested parties are located in San Cristóbal, 30% in Isabela and 9% in Floreana. In the case of the boat sector, 60% of those interested in a certification of tourism sustainability and climate change are located in Santa Cruz, 7% in San Cristóbal and 33% in Isabela.



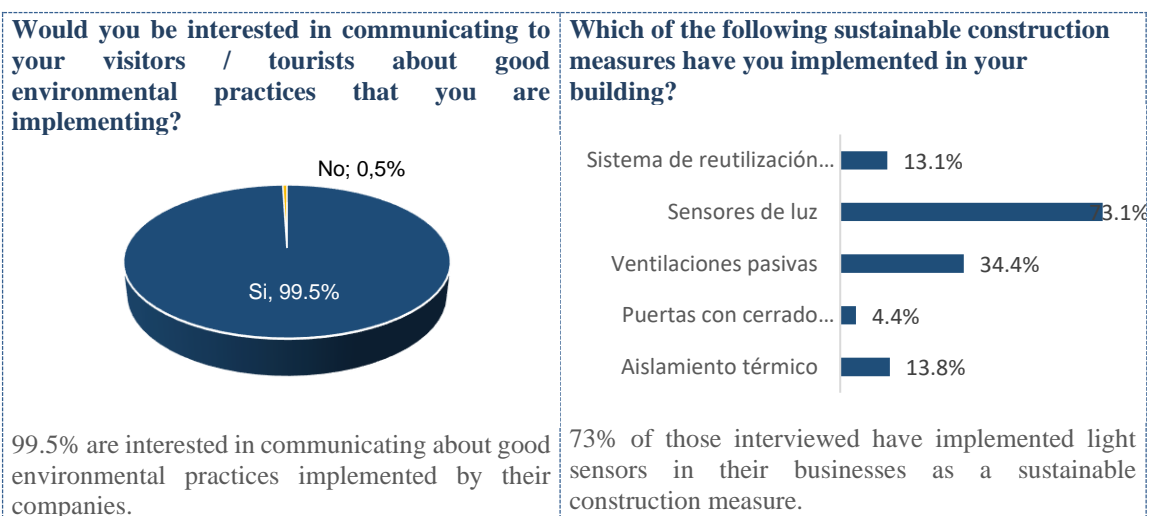
7.1.3. Level of importance of certifications in the business

- Level of importance of certifications in your business**

According to the data collected, it can be seen that in 48.3% of the tourism establishments interviewed there is a high level of importance regarding the certifications, which if we add to the group that expresses that they reflect an average importance, that is 40, 6%, show us that more than 80% consider it important to maintain a certification for their business. This creates a great opportunity to promote highly visible certification schemes that contribute to the differentiation of the business, the destination and, above all, allows for the best environmental practices to be implemented.

- Interest of accompaniment and training to implement environmental practices**

It can be seen that 95.3% of tourism establishments are interested in receiving support and training on the implementation of environmental practices, which becomes a great opportunity to generate technical assistance, support and promotion programs for a culture of quality in tourism industry; as well as in institutionalizing environmentally friendly tourism certification schemes in Galapagos. It is important to highlight that this type of trends and preferences allows reducing the risk in the implementation of programs that promote the adoption of certification schemes by opening the sector to receive support and training.



7.1.4. Level of interest in communicating good environmental practices

- **Level of interest in communicating to visitors about the implementation of good environmental practices**

According to the data collected, 99.5% of tourist establishments show great interest in communicating the good environmental practices that their company is implementing. This undoubtedly allows meeting the needs of diversification of activities and experiences through communication, interpretation and participation of tourists and visitors in the different practices to be implemented; in the same way, it creates a great opportunity for an environmental or tourist certification that can give legitimacy to these practices.

- **Sustainable construction measures implemented**

As seen, 73% of the tourist establishments interviewed have implemented measures related to the efficient consumption of electricity; as well as 34.4% have implemented passive ventilation and 13.8% thermal insulation. This shows the existence of several sustainable construction measures that can be used in the strategic communication of a business and especially in the involvement of the visitor, so it can be part of their experience.

7.1.5. Level of interest and involvement with sustainable practices

- **Level of interest in initiatives from local producers**

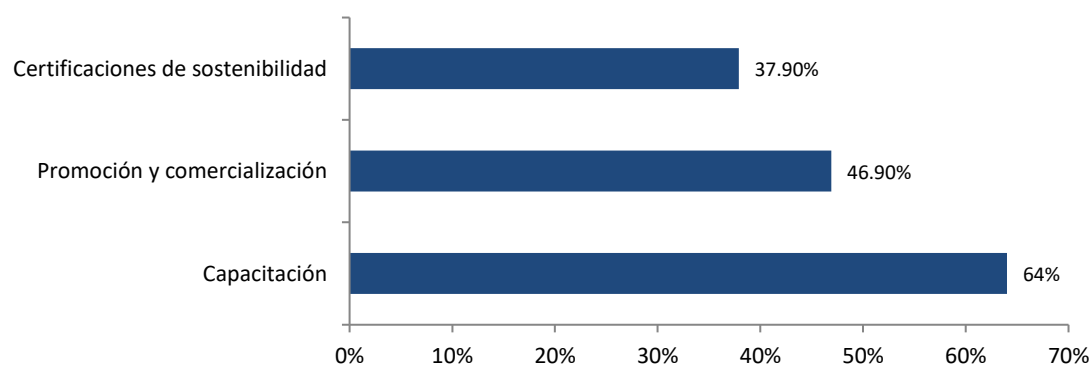
According to the data collected, 97.7% of tourist establishments show a great interest in getting involved with the initiatives of local producers, which reflects the willingness of the industry to comply with sustainable practices. This will undoubtedly make it possible to meet the requirements of different certification schemes and, above all, make these practices visible in the tourism market.

- **Level of interest in initiatives from female producers**

According to the data collected, 98.1% of tourist establishments show a great interest in getting involved with initiatives of women producers, which reflects a great commitment of the tourism sector in supporting this type of initiatives and in making their friendly practices visible as part of their strategy of communication and differentiation.

- **Non-reimbursable technical cooperation needs**

Thinking about 2021, which are your non-reimbursable technical cooperation needs, in order for your business to be directed towards the sustainable development of the sector?



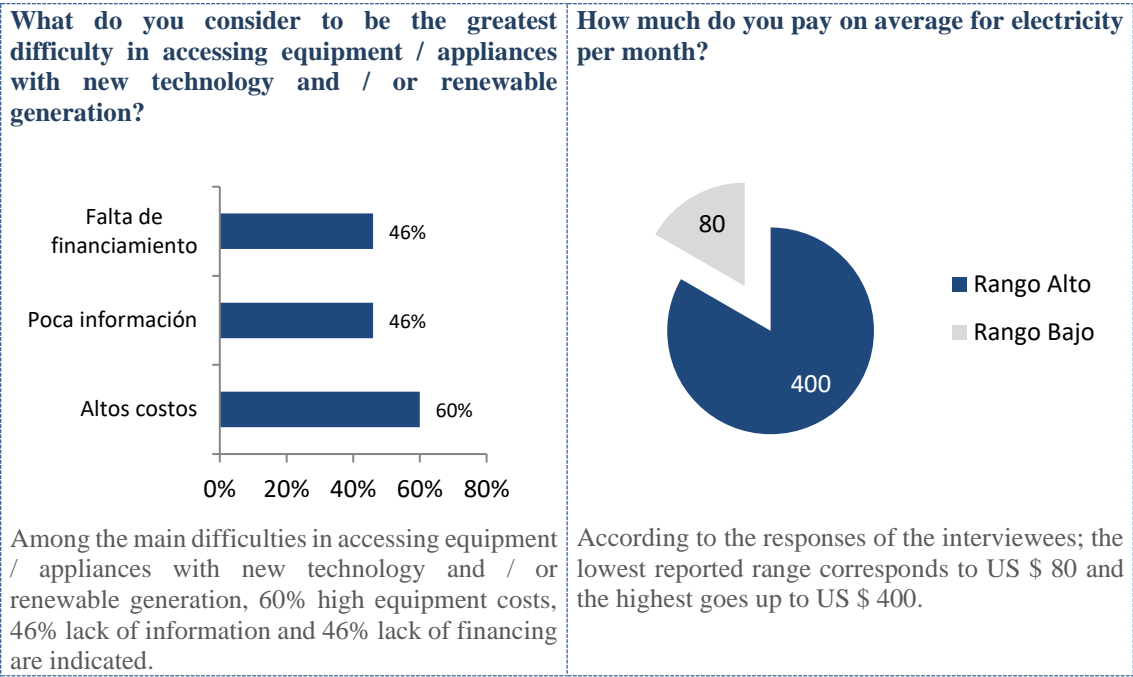
Regarding the non-reimbursable technical cooperation needs in order for business to be directed towards a sustainable development of the sector, the interviewees consider 64% that training is required, 46.9% assistance for promotion and marketing is required and 37.9% require access related to sustainability certifications.

According to the data collected in the territory, 64% of tourism establishments show non-reimbursable technical cooperation needs in terms of training, in the same way 46.9% refer interest in promotion and marketing issues and 37.9% report interest in cooperation to promote sustainability certifications. This data shows an important segment of tourism establishments interested in promoting certification schemes with the support of cooperation; as well as promoting and marketing their establishments, which will help the different actions implemented in terms of certification schemes to be sustained over time.

When relating to non-reimbursable technical cooperation needs to each sector and island, the following percentages of companies interested in receiving support from cooperation are observed to strengthen the performance of their operations:

- (i) Boat sector: Santa Cruz: training, 38%; promotion and marketing, 31%; and, sustainability certification, 31%. San Cristóbal: promotion and marketing, 60%; and, sustainability certification, 40%. Isabela: training 36%, Promotion and marketing 39% and sustainability certification 25%.
- (ii) Accommodation sector: Santa Cruz: training, 24%; promotion and marketing, 15%; and, sustainability certification, 61%. San Cristóbal: training, 64%; promotion and marketing, 21%; and, sustainability certification, 15%. Isabela: training, 41%; promotion and marketing, 36%; and, sustainability certification, 23%. Floreana: training, 37%; promotion and marketing, 26%; and, sustainability certification, 37%.
- (iii) Tourism operation sector: Santa Cruz: training, 56%; promotion and marketing, 22%; and, sustainability certification, 22%. San Cristóbal: training, 33%; promotion and marketing: 33%; and, sustainability certification, 34%. Isabela: training, 25%; promotion and marketing, 25%; and, sustainability certification, 50%.

7.1.6. Difficulty level in accessing equipment and appliances with new and / or renewable technology and average electricity costs



- **Difficulty level to access equipment and appliances with new and / or renewable technology**

According to the data collected, 60% of tourism establishments state that high costs is one of the reasons that makes it difficult for them to access to equipment and appliances with new technology and / or renewables, in the same way 46% refer to the lack of information on offers of said equipment as one of the main reasons that prevents access to new technologies; while 46% also refer to the lack of financing as one of the main reasons that limits their access. Allowing us to see opportunities to articulate with public and private banks in the generation of financing lines at low interest rates; as well as the power to access tax initiatives according to national norms and above all sensitize the tourism sector on how to benefit from these kind of technologies and equipment in reducing fixed costs due to electricity consumption.

- **Average electricity costs**

When analyzing the results of the tourism establishments interviewed, it can be seen that the average monthly payment for electricity consumption is in a range between 80 USD and 400 USD per month depending on the size of the establishment, which allows us to see an important weight in the structure of fixed costs in the business. This could be optimized with the use of efficient equipment, achieving an impact not only on business costs but more importantly on its differentiation in the market by applying sustainable tourism practices.

Based on the analysis of: (i) previous certification experiences in Galapagos and continental Ecuador, (ii) international experiences; and, (iii) demand based on the findings of surveys applied to establishments in the islands' tourism value chain; It is evident that, at an institutional level, the certification programs implemented in the island territory lacked an efficient management model, oriented towards the institutionalization and sustainability of the programs, within the framework of public-private agreements. Likewise, in the generality of the executed initiatives, financing mechanisms have been absent, both to implement measures related to the fulfillment of ecotourism criteria, as well as to renew the certification; a fact that has particularly affected small local businesses. The experiences analyzed have not had benefits for those companies that have obtained the various ecotourism or sustainable tourism seals. On the other hand, the promoted programs have shown weakness in the application of positioning strategies both in national and international markets. Finally, the scope of certain certifications has been limited to a specific area, without integrating holistic criteria linked, for example, to sustainability and competitiveness.

In another issue, we should take into account that, in September 2010, at the First Sustainable Tourism Summit, more than three hundred public and private actors agreed on a new destination management system, ecotourism was defined as the sustainable tourism development model for Galapagos, based on heritage conservation, visitor satisfaction and community well-being. After the Sustainable Tourism Summit, in December 2010, the Governing Council of the Galapagos Special Regime, as the highest rector of provincial governance (Art. 258 of the Constitution and Title II, Institutional Regime, Chapter I, on the role of the CGREG in the province - LOREG), through Resolution No. 035-CGREG-2010, resolved to determine ecotourism as the sustainable tourism management model for Galapagos. Thereby, starting 2011 the actors of the archipelago assumed this as public policy and helped modifying past practices that guided the tourism activity.

In this sense, the lessons learned from the implemented certifications, together with the clear will of the local actors to guide the exercise of the tourism activities of Galapagos, towards a model of sustainable tourism development, leveraged in the typology of ecotourism, guides the need to generate a new ecotourism certification scheme adapted to the Galapagos tourism industry, which considers practices and standards that contribute to improving consumption and production patterns in the tourism sector in the islands. Said scheme must go beyond the mere delivery of a seal for tourism establishments, on the contrary, it will address the various phases of a certification model that contributes to its long-term sustainability. For this, it will be crucial to take into account at least basic aspects related to: management model under public-private agreements, institutionalization strategy of the initiative; strategy for the recognition of certification in the local, national and international markets; and, design of a portfolio of benefits for tourism entrepreneurs, fundamentally expressed in: positioning, differentiation of offer and greater competitiveness; improvement of business management by identifying inefficient areas of operation in the various tourist activities (energy use, water management, sustainable construction, etc.); and strengthening links with tourism demand sensitive to the impacts of climate change and post-COVID-19 sustainable trends.

8. Intervention proposal

8.1. Objective

Design and implement an ecotourism certification scheme, based on a public-private management model, that promotes compliance with standards for sustainable consumption and production patterns in the tourism value chain, and that contributes to the strengthening of competitiveness of the tourist destination of the Galapagos Islands.

8.2. Product

Ecotourism certification scheme, implemented, to embrace the best practices and international standards for sustainable consumption and production patterns in the Galapagos tourism value chain.

8.3. Activities

Activity 1. Design and establish a local certification scheme administered through a public-private partnership.
Activity 2. Identify and train local auditors on concepts, standards and procedures of the ecotourism certification.
Activity 3. Information and capacity building of tourism business, on the concepts, standards and procedures to obtain the ecotourism certification.
Activity 4. Design an certification plan for each tourism business from a first set (pilots) of business, inscribed to work towards the certification.
Activity 5. Provide technical assistance to pilot business for the compliance of the certification standards.
Activity 6. Assist the implementation of audits of compliance to the first set (pilots) of business inscribed to receive the certification.
Activity 7. Identify and incorporate adjustments in the certification scheme, based on pilot implementation.
Activity 8. Scale-up the implementation of the ecotourism certification.

8.4. Indicators

- In the second year, an established management model and financing mechanism for the sustainability of the program.
- In the second year, 150 tourist establishments are registered in the ecotourism certification program.
- In the third year, a pilot group of 50 tourist establishments achieves ecotourism certification.
- In the fifth year, at least 30% of the establishments in the Galapagos tourism value chain are registered and working towards obtaining ecotourism certification.

8.5. Phases of the certification scheme

Methodologically, the scheme will be applied through seven stages or phases:

Phase 1: Design of a definitive ecotourism certification scheme based on the formulation of a public-private management model, which potentially considers the Governing Council of the Galapagos Special Regime (CGREG) - Productivity Directorate, as the actor that could institutionalize the program, by virtue of its powers of planning, ordering and generator of sustainable public policy. The definitive certification scheme, including the processes and procedures for each of the phases; as well as the management model, will be built and

validated in workshops with the active participation of the various actors in the tourism sector. In this phase, standard criteria for ecotourism certification will also be designed.

Among other points, the management model will include a detail of institutional arrangements necessary to promote the implementation of the program in the long term; including the accreditation process of the certifying body before the Ecuadorian Accreditation Service, as well as the process for the certification of tourism companies in Galapagos.

The technical and legal framework that would empower the CGRG as the potential actor to institutionalize the ecotourism certification program is detailed below:

- **Applicable technical framework**

1. The Plan for Sustainable Development and Territorial Ordering of the Special Regime of Galapagos 2015-2025, identifies that, faced with the vulnerability of the island system due to the incidence of climate change, has crafted a series of specific measures and activities for the Province of Galapagos. These are linked to the National Climate Change Plan, in correspondence with the policies that the Ecuadorian State is developing within the framework of mitigation and adaptation.
2. Sustainable Development Objectives: The Plenary of the Galapagos Government Council recognized what was established by *galapagueñan* society (Multisector Dialogue, made up of representatives of different sectors: public, academic, social, business, indigenous nationalities, social groups, women, and youth) regarding prioritization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for the Galapagos Islands: Quality education (SDG 4), Water and sanitation (SDG 6), Reduction of inequalities (SDG 10), Sustainable cities (SDG 11). This last objective considers the construction of policies and actions that lead to the sustainability of cities or populated areas, this implies actions and advocacy with other SDGs, sustainable energy (SDG 7) and water and sanitation (SDG 6) and waste in the islands.

- **Applicable legal framework**

Article 5 of the Organic Law of the Special Regime of the Province of Galapagos, establishes as attributions of the Government Council of the Special Regime of Galapagos, for the fulfillment of its purposes:

1. The determination of provincial policies for research and innovation of knowledge, development and transfer of technologies, necessary and appropriate for provincial development, within the framework of national planning and in accordance with the regulations and policies defined by the competent national authority.
2. Issue guidelines and standards for the environmental sanitation of the province, and tend to their improvement, through the joint action with state agencies, autonomous decentralized municipal governments of their jurisdiction, to monitor and to control compliance.
3. Determine the provincial policies for research and innovation of knowledge, development and transfer of technologies, necessary and appropriate for provincial development, within the framework of national planning and in accordance with the regulations and policies defined by the competent national authority.
4. Promote food sovereignty and security and agro ecological production, in accordance with the provisions of current legislation, the Plan for Sustainable Development and Land Management of Galapagos and the regulations and policies defined by the competent national authority, in compliance with applicable environmental legislation. 20. Promote provincial economic and productive activities within the framework of the sustainability of provincial territory.

The Organic Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomy and Decentralization, on article 42, establishes exclusive powers for the provincial decentralized autonomous governments, “without prejudice to others that are determined:

- a) Plan together with other public sector institutions and actors in society, the provincial development, and formulate the corresponding land planning, within the scope of its powers, in a manner articulated with national, regional, cantonal and parochial planning, in the framework of interculturality and plurinationality, and respect for diversity;
- b) Plan, build and maintain the provincial road system, which does not include urban areas;
- c) Execute, in coordination with the regional government and the other decentralized autonomous governments, works in basins and micro basins;
- d) Provincial environmental management;
- e) Plan, build, operate and maintain irrigation systems in accordance with the Constitution and the law;
- f) Promote provincial productive activities, especially agricultural ones; and,
- g) Manage international cooperation for the fulfillment of its competences”.

As part of the management model of the ecotourism certification scheme, the incentives to be granted to the companies that participate in the program should be defined, with a view to sustaining the seal in the long term.

Phase 2: Generation of local capacities through specialized auditors: the training of local auditors is foreseen, who may be members of public institutions or local people interested in improving their knowledge and finding new work spaces. This training will be subject to liaison and cooperation with external actors with knowledge and experience in sustainable tourism certifications. Among others, it is recommended to manage this phase with QUALITUR, at the local level, and with INTECO of Costa Rica, at the international level. As indicated in phase 1, the design of the final certification scheme and the program management model will include the processes and procedures for each of the phases. Prior to the selection of auditors, the following programs will be designed: an auditor training program, a work toolkit for auditors, and, bases for the convocation and selection of auditors.

Phase 3: It contemplates the development of capacities of tourism establishments (accommodation, food, operation and tourist transport activities - boats), in concepts, criteria of the ecotourism standard and procedures to obtain certification. Prior to the development of the training, the following will be designed: a training program for tourist establishments, a work tool kit for the trainer, a work tool kit for the training beneficiaries, and bases for the convocation and selection of companies to train.

Phase 4: Includes the design of an ecotourism criteria improvement plan for each company that is part of the certification program, which will be developed by consultants specialized in the criteria to be improved. The aforementioned plans will be based on an initial audit of compliance with ecotourism criteria, in charge of the local auditors who were trained in phase 2.

Improvement plans are defined as a set of systemic measures of change to improve the current situation of sustainability of the company compared to the goal set in the standard. They will be structured in a personalized way through scheduled planning, with dates to execute the corrections, prevent impacts and improve actions in the management and operation of the company.

Methodologically, they must contain at least the following:

- Objectives: That which needs to be achieved in a determined time.
- Actions: Concrete actions that must be carried out to achieve the objective. Each objective can be specified in one or more actions.
- Responsible: Person or position entrusted with the task of designing the actions, taking care of their monitoring, monitoring compliance with deadlines, etc.
- Resources: Means available to develop an intervention.
- Work procedure: It is the way in which the planned action will be developed.
- Calendar: Specify how much time is going to be devoted to each action.

- Indicators: They are means of objectively checking if we are approaching the planned objective and if the interventions have been developed as planned. The indicators must make it possible to verify and prove their compliance.

Audits: companies will be prioritized for each sector, and assessment tools will be applied according to the designed standard. This phase would be instrumented by local auditors trained in phase 2.

Phase 5: The implementation of the ecotourism criteria improvement plan, by each company, will have the technical assistance of specialized advisers, in order to promote compliance with the certification standards and sequentially achieve one or more objectives defined in the improvement plan. . During the implementation of the plan, the participating companies will require financing for the execution of corrective or improvement measures, related, for example, to the acquisition of eco-efficient equipment or technologies for water management.

Phase 6: It includes (exit) audits for each of the companies that have implemented their respective improvement plan, within the framework of the ecotourism certification program. This phase will be under the responsibility of the local auditors who were trained in phase 2. As a result of this phase, the participating companies will be able to access the ecotourism certification, which will come from the accredited body (potentially the CGREG), once meet the compliance of the requirements established in the norm or certification standard.

Phase 7: It includes the identification and adjustments to the certification scheme, based on the lessons learned in the pilot program. Likewise, it involves monitoring the operations that have achieved ecotourism certification. After this phase, the implementation of the program will scale until at least 30% of the establishments in the Galapagos tourism value chain that are registered and working towards obtaining ecotourism certification.

9. Expected impact on the sustainability of mitigation and adaptation actions in Galapagos

- In the second year, a management model and a financing mechanism are established, for the sustainability of the program.
- In the second year, 150 tourism establishments are registered in the ecotourism certification program.
- In the third year, a pilot group of 50 tourism establishments achieve ecotourism certification.
- In the fifth year, at least 30% of establishments in the Galapagos tourism value chain are registered and working towards obtaining ecotourism certification.

10. Budget

The ecotourism certification scheme has its starting point on the design and validation of a certification scheme administered under a public-private participation model. This phase (activity 1) includes the design of the following products: definitive ecotourism certification scheme, management model of the certification program, standard of criteria for ecotourism certification, and development of a toolkit for local auditors and beneficiaries of the certification program. A coordinator and a support technician will be in charge of the management of this phase, while the aforementioned products will be managed through a specialized consultancy.

The subsequent phase (activity 2) involves the selection and training of local auditors in concepts, criteria of the ecotourism standard and certification procedures; process that will be controlled by an organization specialized in certification and ecotourism, through a consultancy.

The next phase (activity 3) contemplates the development of capacities of tourist establishments (accommodation, food, operation and tourist transport activities - boats), in concepts, criteria of the ecotourism standard and procedures to obtain certification. This phase will be managed through a specialized consulting contract.

The next phase (activity 4) includes the design of an ecotourism criteria improvement plan for each company that is part of the certification pilot program, which will be developed by consultants specialized in the criteria to be improved. The aforementioned plans will be based on an initial audit of compliance with ecotourism criteria, managed by local auditors who were trained in one of the preceding phases, who will be hired under the modality of professional services.

The implementation of the improvement plan to meet the criteria for ecotourism certification (activity 5) will be assisted by specialized technical advisers, hired through a specialized consultancy.

Next, exit audits (activity 6) will be carried out for each of the companies that have implemented their respective improvement plan. This phase will be under the responsibility of the local auditors who were previously trained, who will be hired under the modality of professional services.

The last stage (activity 7) comprises the identification and adjustments to the certification scheme, based on the lessons learned in the pilot of the program. Likewise, it involves monitoring the operations that have achieved ecotourism certification and the design of a strategy for the scalability of the program. This stage will be managed by a program coordinator and a support technician.

Activity	Total (USD)
Activity 1. Design and establish a local certification scheme administered through a public-private partnership.	\$ 121.000,00
Activity 2. Identify and train local auditors on concepts, standards and procedures of the ecotourism certification.	\$ 50.000,00
Activity 3. Information and capacity building of tourism business, on the concepts, standards and procedures to obtain the ecotourism certification.	\$ 60.000,00
Activity 4. Design an certification plan for each tourism business from a first set (pilots) of business, inscribed to work towards the certification.	\$ 60.000,00
Activity 5. Provide technical assistance to pilot business for the compliance of the certification standards.	\$ 15.000,00
Activity 6. Assist the implementation of audits of compliance to the first set (pilots) of business inscribed to receive the certification.	\$ 115.000,00
Activity 7. Identify and incorporate adjustments in the certification scheme, based on pilot implementation.	\$ 59.000,00
Total Budget (USD)	\$ 480.000,00

11. Social and economic benefits derived from the proposed intervention

The implementation of the program will allow:

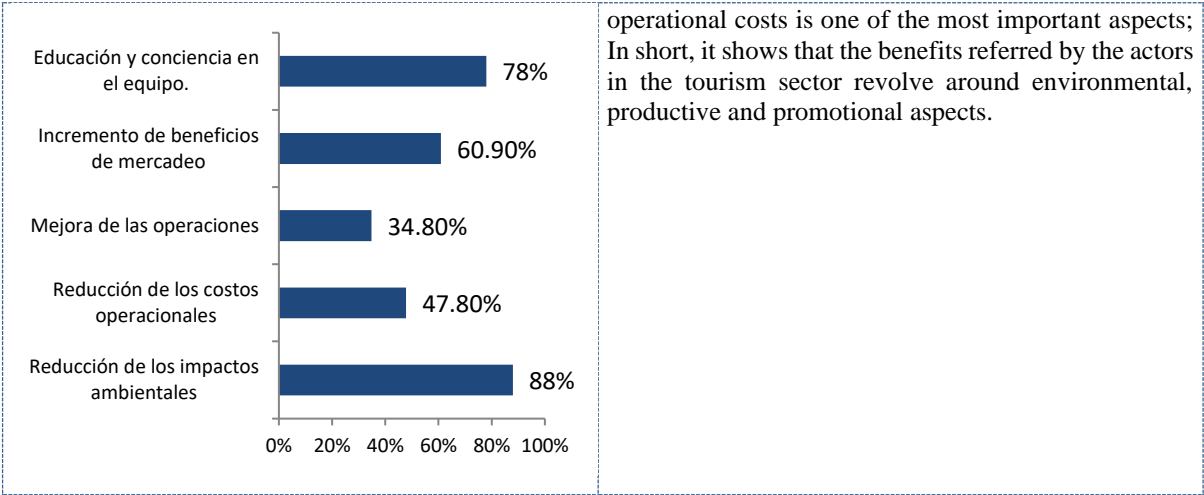
- Accelerate the change of the energy matrix in the islands through the implementation of renewable, efficient and clean energy generation systems; promoting the development of an integrated energy system on each island and complementing the existing generation sources.
- Strengthen the adaptation capacities in the tourism system by accelerating the adoption of sustainable production and consumption practices, through technical assistance, technology transfer and access to special financing lines, promoting a favorable political and institutional environment and financing mechanisms tailor made for each user.
- Reduce carbon emissions and mitigate GHGs related to tourism, especially related to energy generation and food consumption, promoting the implementation of adaptation measures in areas of high ecological value, and in sensitive processes in the tourism activity.
- Strengthen the food chain of the Galapagos Islands and improve livelihoods through the implementation of adaptation measures in selected farms and artisanal fisheries.
- Reduce the impacts of tourism in visiting areas, through adaptation measures integrated to key aspects in the operation of the sector, promoting a paradigm shift in tourism activity towards the consolidation of a new tourism development model that is resilient to climate and low emissions in Galapagos.
- Reactivate the tourism industry by positioning itself as a leading activity in the implementation of good sustainable tourism practices and in the consolidation of a new low-emission, self-sufficient development model with greater capacity to adapt to climate change.
- Reinforce the technological capabilities of infrastructure and human talent, key to assess the impacts of climate change and guide adaptation measures.

11.1. Tourism Industry Perception

According to the perception survey carried out within the framework of the study "Distinction of Sustainable Tourism" developed by Columbia University for the development of a sustainable label program in Chile, the perception of the tourism industry about the possible benefits gained by entering into A Sustainable Tourism Certification Program focuses on five aspects: reducing environmental impacts, reducing operational costs, improvement in operations, increasing marketing benefits, and, education and team awareness.

Perception Survey on the Benefits of Sustainable Tourism Certification ¹⁹	Distribution of service providers by islands
	It can be seen as a result of the perception survey carried out that 88% of the tourism industry thinks that the most important benefit in accessing a Sustainable Tourism Certification Program is the reduction of environmental impacts; while 78% think that the education and awareness of the team is a key aspect. Likewise, 60.90% think that access to this type of programs will improve the company's marketing benefits and 47.8% consider that the reduction of

¹⁹ Perception Survey of the Sustainable Label Program in Chile "Distinction of Sustainable Tourism" (Columbia University, 2010).



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