

# An Approximation to the Cruise Tourist Profile in Los Cabos, Mexico

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In order to offer a range of tourism products and services, it is necessary to identify and build the profile of the tourists who visit a certain destination, thus satisfying their tastes and preferences. In accordance with the above, and through a descriptive and exploratory study, quantitative information was collected, which is necessary to characterize the cruise tourist who visits the tourist destination of Los Cabos. Results show that 70% of tourists visit the destination as a way to rest and 13% to discover new places. From this research exercise, it is pertinent to note that the strategies or actions that are established should tend to increase the economic benefit without leaving aside the experience and satisfaction of the tourist.

*Keywords:* profile of the tourist, cruises, tourism, Los Cabos

## Introduction

According to the World Tourism Organization's (2017) UNWTO Annual Report, the tourism sector contributes 10% to the world gross domestic product, creates one in ten direct or indirect jobs, generates export revenue of \$1.4 billion of dollars and is responsible for 7% of worldwide exports and 30% of exports of services. During the last seven years, tourism has experienced a solid and sustained growth, well above the predictions of the UNWTO; approximately, this sector has a 4% annual growth. Considering the dynamics of growth and development that tourism has experienced, it is expected that by the year 2030, international tourist arrivals will rise to 1,800 million worldwide. It should be underscored that as of 2016, a total of 1,235 million arrivals were recorded. The above shows that tourism has consolidated as a strong economic sector, which is resilient and promoter of development in those localities that have it as the main productive and economic vocation.

Tourist cruises are one of the different modalities and practices of tourism. According to the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association, since the 1980s, this modality has had a steady growth in the annual passenger numbers. Moreover, since the 1990s, more than 200 million cruise tourists have been recorded sailing around the world, through different shipping lines. This growing industry has shown the ability of innovating in terms of management and organization, cost reduction and improvements in the service, which translates into the addition of more tourists and the loyalty of the existing ones. On the other hand, the incorporation of constant innovations and improvements has promoted the steady growth rate in the cruise industry, without denoting signs of fatigue or deceleration. Likewise, new vessels with a greater capacity of cargo, along with new facilities and attractions and tourist activities on board are entering the service.

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The objective of this paper is to characterize the cruise tourist who visits the tourist destination of Los Cabos in Baja California Sur, Mexico. The importance of establishing and analyzing the tourist profile, based on their socio-demographic data, gives the possibility of developing products and services fit to the visitors' tastes and preferences. The above affects the level of satisfaction that the tourist may experience during his/her short visit to the tourist destination. It should be remembered that cruises are part of a type of "maritime resort" where their relationship with the destinations is often divergent, as a result of the attractions and activities available to tourists while sailing. For a greater understanding, this study is structured into five sections. The next section discusses the theoretical heritage that underlies the study and construction of the tourist profile. The third section details the research methodology. In the fourth section, field work results are displayed, and the last section is dedicated to the final reflection or conclusion.

### **Literature Review**

With the aim of conceptually addressing the profile of the tourist, we start from the notions about research in the field of marketing, in order to deepen the different meanings that aim to define the consumer behavior, as a starting point in the definition of the consumer profile. Finally, the profile of the tourist is discussed, which, after reviewing the literature, emphasizes that there is little literature on the profile of tourists from a theoretical-conceptual perspective.

For Kotler and Armstrong (2013), marketing research consists of the design, compilation, analysis and report of a situation or specific scenario which the organization is facing. However, Landa (2012) emphasized that this type of research carries implicitly the scientific connotation, having in mind that the development of this leads to the acquisition of new knowledge related to the surroundings of the organization. Similarly, it allows us to know the behavior, trends, expectations and future needs of consumers. Therefore, since its beginning, consumer research has become an extension of the studies related to marketing and over time, has become a fundamental tool for the study of consumer behavior. From the above, it is possible to predict and anticipate the tastes and preferences of the consumers, in order to be satisfied with the dissemination of goods and services more appropriate to market demands (Schiffman & Lazar, 2010).

Analyzing consumer behavior, Solomon (2008) stated that this field covers many areas and defined it as "the study of the processes involved when a person or group selects, purchases, uses or disposes products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires" (p. 7). It follows that studying and analyzing consumer attitudes and purchasing habits provides the necessary information that allows us to understand the market. In the same way, one can recognize how and why certain phenomena appear in the market and its significance for the organization (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In short, Fernández Valiñas (2009) referred to consumer behavior as that observable behavior that directly or indirectly influences the purchase decision.

The bases of modern marketing and the reorientation of its strategies provide the framework for the analysis and understanding of consumers. For this reason, the strategies derived from the study of the consumer give evidence of the efforts that marketing must make to offer goods and services oriented to the satisfaction of the tastes and the preferences of a specific market segment. According to the above, consumer profile, as a parameter of consumer characterization, allows us to study it thoroughly in order to recognize its importance within the marketing strategies (Novillo Maldonado, 2012; Arellano, 2002).

The profile of the consumer can be understood, on one hand, as the set of characteristics inherent to a consumer that distinguishes it from a group or a segment and, on the other, as a tool for describing the segment of the market where the strategies will be directed (Solomon, 2000). According to the above, profiling provides an accurate picture of the people who consume the goods and services of a company, which, once the consumers are identified and profiled, socio-demographic data are obtained, such as social class, gender, age, level of income, marital status and profession, thus facilitating the segmentation and personalization of the goods and services that are offered (Martinez & Chang Muñoz, 2007; Ávila Suarez, 2014). It should be noted that the needs, tastes and preferences of the consumers are closely associated with socio-demographic variables, which, for companies, are easier to study and measure than the rest (Orjuela Silva & Chaparro, 2008).

Consumer profiling is used to enumerate its important characteristics, generating a complete photograph of the potential consumers, in order to determine which is the target market that most resembles the defined profile. Hence, the profile of the consumer directly impacts what and how a customer buys (Lerma Kirchner & Castro Márquez, 2010; Allen & Meyer, 2011). Similarly, the definition of the profile, beyond helping to know the consumer, promotes strategies that aim to sell more goods and services, while ensuring that the customer is more satisfied through personalized attention. The collected data allow the client to be treated as if he or she were known personally (Nettleton, 2003).

According to Matos Rodríguez (2010), the profile of the tourist is constituted by a series of characteristics based on which a group of individuals can be identified, taking into account geographic, demographic, psychographic and behavioral factors that they share among themselves. Based on the above, Molina Collado, Consuegra Navarro, Estaban Talaya, and Díaz Sánchez (2007) considered that, in order to consolidate relationships with potential consumers and strive to improve the provision of services, it is necessary and important to identify and study the characteristics of tourism demand, to eventually classify tourists from a destination, so that defined segments can be created for an easier study and satisfaction. And the need to dedicate to a group of specific tourists arises from the experience-expectations relationship. Expectations that are linked and influenced by many factors must be studied and adapted according to the profile of the visitor (Mata, 2012).

The importance of the study and analysis of the profile of the visitor lies in the possibility of being able to diversify the tourist offer, where the tourist profile serves as a characterization of a destination. Fundamentally, tourist profile studies are based on socioeconomic and demographic variables, through which the needs, tastes and preferences of the visitor are recognized. Thus, supply of goods and services can be improved, assuming that tourists are more demanding (Rodríguez Campo, Fraiz Brea, & Alén González, 2013; Andrade Delgado, 2016). Moreover, with the profile of the tourist, the characterization of the tourist destination is inferred, taking into account that by recognizing the tastes and preferences of visitors, the organizations can improve their management and, therefore, the competitiveness of destinations (Pat Fernández & Calderón Gómez, 2012).

### **Methodology**

This study is descriptive and exploratory, with the purpose of gathering the necessary quantitative information to identify the cruise tourist who visits the tourist destination of Los Cabos. The spatial scope of the study was in the City of Cabo San Lucas in the State of Baja California Sur in Mexico, while the temporal scope included the time frame between May and June 2016. Regarding the population and the study sample, according to the National System of Statistical Information of the Tourism of Mexico sector - DATATUR, during 2015, 383,729 passengers arrived at the port of Cabo San Lucas. From there on and through the means of systematic

probabilistic sampling, where a confidence level of 95% and an error of 4.99% were established, a sample of 768 tourists was determined. As a technique of information compilation, two criteria for the selection of persons were determined: visitors over 20 years old arriving by cruises and tourists who had contact or interacted in the destination. Tourists were interviewed in the Integral Port Administrator (API) harbor of Cabo San Lucas. The operationalization of the variables used in this methodology is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Operationalization of the Variables*

Variable	Indicators
Gender	Masculine, feminine
Country of residence	Open question
City where they live	Open question
Name of the cruise	Open question
Employment situation	Full-time, part time, retired, housewife, student, other
The reason for travelling	Leisure, honeymoon, business, visit friends/family, just to know new places, other
Particular reason for choosing the cruise	Open question
Previous trips on cruises	Yes, no
Previous visit to Los Cabos	Yes, no, how many times
Duration of visit in Los Cabos	Number or hours
Duration of the cruise	Number of days
Travel group	Alone, as a couple, family, friends, co-workers, other
People travelling with you	Number of adults and children
Payment for the cruise	Expense in dollars for each adult or child
Pre-planned excursion	Yes, no
Excursion information	Cruise webpage, the cruise, Internet, travel agency, other
Services included in the tour	Transportation, tour guide, meals, events, other
Recommendation of the destination	Yes, no
Activities carried out in the destination	Trekking, hiking, shopping, beach activities, group activities, bars, restaurants, other
Rating of the visit to Los Cabos	Completely satisfactory, more or less satisfactory, satisfactory, not satisfactory, a disaster
Rating of the characteristics of the destination	Excellent, good, regular, bad
Total spent by the travel group.	Number in dollars

*Note.* Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Based on Table 1, a structured information compilation instrument to characterize the cruise tourist was elaborated which consisted of 18 questions. The variables that made up the instrument are related to the profile, the reason for traveling, the evaluation of the stay, and the activities and expenses during the stay.

## Results and Discussion

### Visitor Profile

Figure 1 shows that the group of tourists aged between 30 and 39 years old has a greater participation, followed by those with ages between 40 and 49 and the group with ages between 50 and 59. Among the groups, 79.7% of the sample is concentrated between 30 and 59 years of age which represents an opportunity for the destination, since it tends to offer goods and services focused on satisfying the tastes and preferences of that particular group of tourists. Additionally, regarding the gender of the tourists, a balance was evidenced, where 51% were men and the remaining 49% were women.

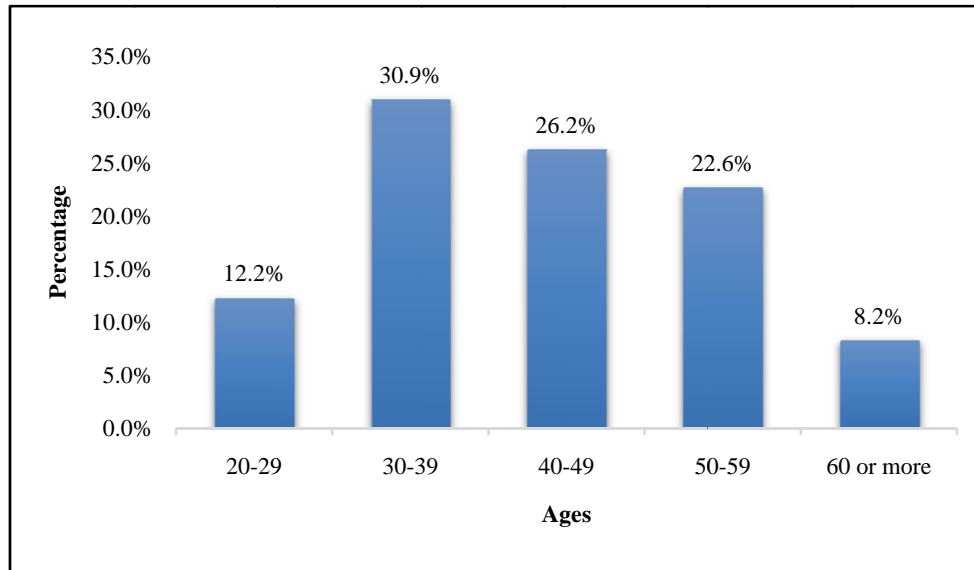


Figure 1. Distribution of cruise tourist ages. Source: Elaborated by the authors.

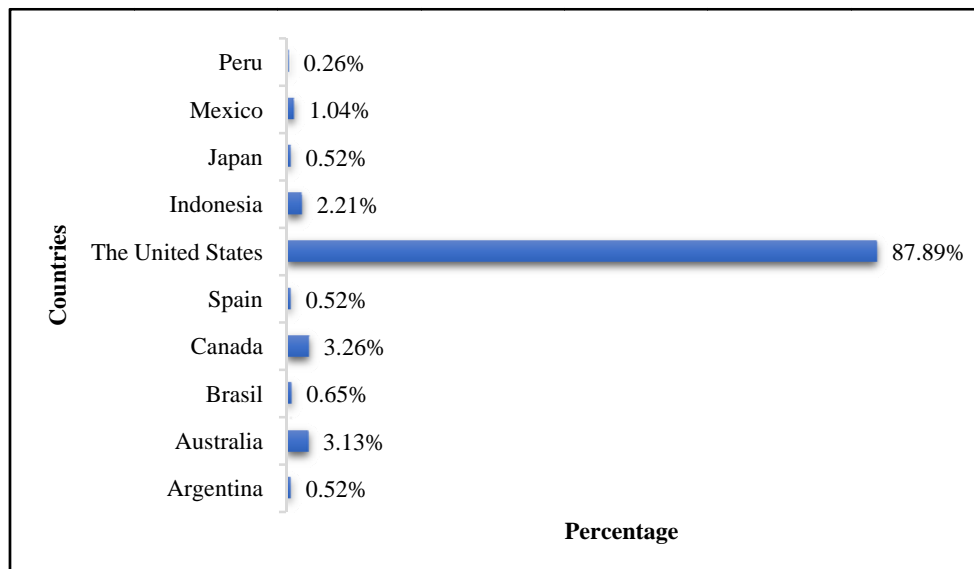


Figure 2. Country of residence of cruise tourists. Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The nature of the United States as a cruise tourist emitter and the proximity of the tourist destination to that country are some of the reasons that explain the behavior of Figure 2. As shown in Figure 2, 87.89% of the tourists visiting Los Cabos come from the United States while 3.26% come from Canada. In particular, 47.3% of the tourists reside in the state of California and the closest city to Los Cabos is San Diego, located 1,682 km away by land. Likewise, a cruise following the San Diego - Cabo San Lucas - San Diego route lasts approximately four days. The fact that 87.89% of the tourists of cruises are American represents a challenge for the tourist destination when it comes to training the different service providers in a second language and in the diversification of the tourist offer and of services, so that it fits to the tastes, preferences and other characteristic features of this type of tourist.

As shown in Figure 3, another feature of the cruise tourist is that 67% of the visitors in Los Cabos are economically active, that is, they are workers, while 24% are retired. Moreover, 70% of the tourists visit the destination as a way of rest and 13% to discover new places. The tourist destination of Los Cabos became established as the premium destination of the Mexican Pacific, to the point of being considered a world class destination and above all luxurious. The fact that 67% of the tourists are workers means that the people can pay considerably expensive services that the destination market sets with the purpose of having a luxurious leisure time in Los Cabos.

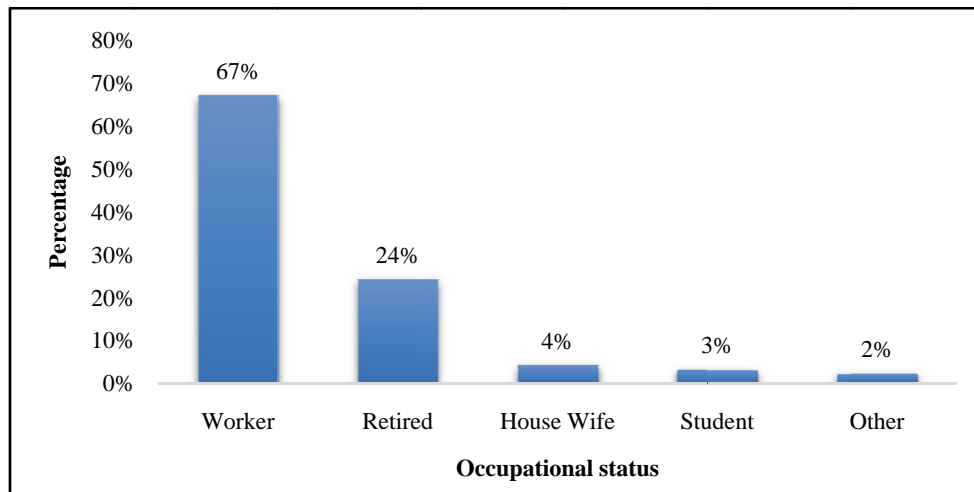


Figure 3. Occupational status of cruise tourists. Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 4 clearly shows that 83% of the tourists prefer to travel as a couple or in family. This gives another opportunity for the specialization and diversification of the goods and services offered in Los Cabos. On one hand, there can be a market targeted for people who like to travel as a couple and on the other, there can be a market for people who prefer to travel as a family. In both cases, the outlay that the tourist can make is conditioned to the activities employed, to the size of the group, and of course, to the time of permanence in the place. It must be taken into account that 49.7% of the tourists did not organize previously their cruise trip, which is the reason why they are more likely to do recreational and tourist activities outside of the cruise.

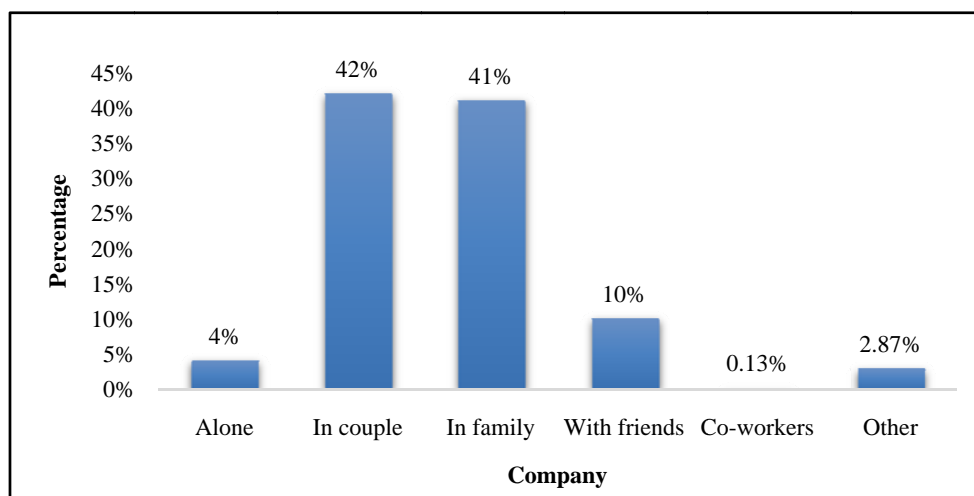


Figure 4. Company during the trip of the cruise tourists. Source: Elaborated by the authors.

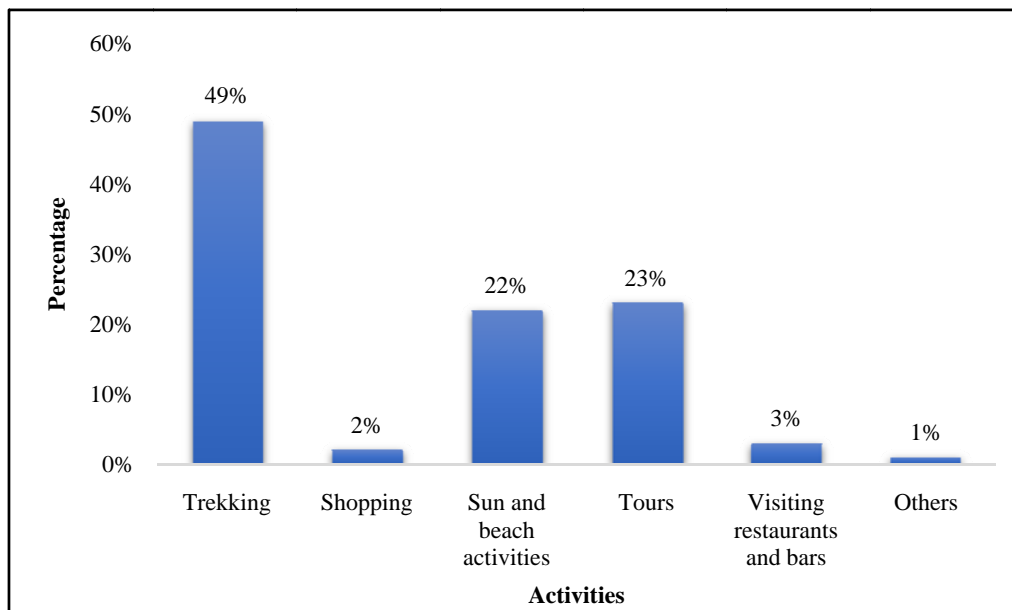


Figure 5. Activities carried out in the tourist destination during the trip. Source: Elaborated by the authors.

As shown in Figure 5, of the activities carried out by the cruise tourist, 49% are trekking, while 23% are tours and only 2% shopping. It is useful for the tourist destination of Los Cabos that the strategies are focused for shopping, visiting restaurants and bars or hiring a tour to increase the benefits or the economic income and consequently, consolidate the destination as a shopping and rest place. Through this study, it was determined that 30.9% of the tourists spend between US \$1 to US \$100 and 25.7% spend from US \$101 to US \$200.

On the other hand, in terms of satisfaction and on a scale of 0-10, where 0 represents non-satisfied at all and 10 represents completely satisfied, the satisfaction rate of cruise tourists was 9.6, that is, totally satisfied. The beaches and the destination itself were the most qualified aspects. It follows that 99.5% of tourists who visited and interacted with the tourist destination of Los Cabos express that they would recommend the destination to their family and friends.

## Conclusions

Although the present study is only an approach to the profile of the cruise tourist who visits the tourist destination of Los Cabos, it lays the foundations for planning and formulating actions according to the tastes, preferences and motivations of the visitors. With this approach, it was possible to detect areas of opportunity for the improvement of the destination, such as the domain of the English language by the service operators and the diversification of the tourist and services offer. On the other hand, despite the boom of the cruise industry, they can sometimes become a direct competition for the same destinations. Therefore, the strategies or actions that are established must tend to increase the economic flow without leaving aside the experience and satisfaction of the tourist.

From these results, it is possible to establish that the profile of the cruise tourist who visits the tourist destination of Los Cabos is: a US citizen between the ages of 30 and 39, worker, who prefers to travel in family or in couple and their main reason for travelling is to rest.

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