



## Language tourism as a development opportunity for Olón, Ecuador

### El turismo idiomático como oportunidad de desarrollo para Olón, Ecuador

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**Abstract:** Olón is a beach in Ecuador, located on the spondylus route in the Manglaralto parish, this locality is characterised by its white sand and typical seafood, it is one of the favourite beaches for relaxing and surfing, this sport and the tranquillity attracts tourists from different countries, which could represent a development opportunity for Olón, for this reason the objective is to determine the strategies that will make Olón an attractive destination for language tourism, For the selection of the sample, the techniques of cluster and intentional sampling were applied, giving a total of 100 tourists, 45% of whom indicated that they visit Olón to learn Spanish, and consider this beach to be a good tourist destination for linguistic immersion in Spanish due to its landscapes, hospitality and prices, since language tourism is characterised by its high costs.

**Keywords:** tourism, culture and development, Spanish, foreign language.

**Resumen:** Olón es una playa del Ecuador, ubicada a la ruta de spondylus en la parroquia Manglaralto, esta localidad se caracteriza por la arena blanca y la típica comida de mar, es una de las playas favoritas para relajarse y también surfear, este deporte y la tranquilidad atrae a turistas de diferentes países, lo cuál podría representar una oportunidad de desarrollo para Olón, por tal motivo el objetivo es determinar las estrategias que potencialicen como destino atractivo a Olón para el turismo idiomático, se desarrolló esta investigación bajo un enfoque mixto y tiene un alcance de nivel exploratorio y descriptivo, para la selección de la muestra se aplicó las técnicas de muestreo por conglomerados e intencional, dando un total de 100 turistas, quienes el 45% indicaron que visitan Olón para aprender español, y consideran que esta playa es buen destino turístico para realizar inmersión lingüística del español debido a sus paisajes, hospitalidad y precios, ya que el turismo idiomático se caracteriza por sus altos costos.

**Palabras clave:** turismo, cultura y desarrollo, español, lengua extranjera.

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is Ecuador's third largest source of income, surpassed only by banana and shrimp exports, yet tourism promotion has focused on attracting foreign capital and favouring private rather than social accumulation. As a result, it is precisely the communities on the margins of development that have shown the highest resilience in the face of natural resource scarcity (Monterroso Salvatierra, 2017).

Over the last six decades, tourism has undergone continuous expansion and diversification, making it one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world (Arce Bastidas et al., 2019). The client moves, which, in itself, contains the purpose of being able to enjoy the place and the services different from those of his place of origin. This therefore explains the interest in the diversity and concentration of products and services according to the prevailing demands, which makes a destination more or less competitive (Mullo Romero et al., 2019).

Language tourism, which is nothing more than a form of cultural tourism whose main attraction and motivation is the learning or improvement of a language. World Tourism Organization (1991) defines language tourism as: activities undertaken by people during their travels and stays in places other than their natural environment for a consecutive period of less than one year, for the purpose of language immersion in a language other than that of their natural environment (Sánchez Huerta, 2022).

Spanish is the third most studied foreign language in the world, behind English and French and ahead of German.

Spanish is the third most popular language among internet users, for this reason there is a growing interest in learning it. Olón beach has beautiful landscapes, a diversity of seafood, good waves for surfing and for this reason it is one of the favorite beaches for foreign tourists, but it is important to develop and promote additional services to meet the demand of current tourists who are looking for linguistic immersion in Spanish.

A tourist destination should work on shared strategies for the training and development of human resources, so that they become fundamental tools for the economic consolidation of its destinations, and therefore greater attention should be paid to their cultural background, treatment, academic training, languages, attitude, among others. (Zárraga Cano & Cano Rábago, 2016), for this reason, the research aims to determine the strategies that will make Olón an attractive destination for language tourism in order to promote the visit of Spanish language students.

## METHODOLOGY

Development of this research was under a mixed approach and has a scope of exploratory and descriptive level, for sample selection techniques were applied cluster and purposive sampling, giving a total of 130 tourists, surveys were applied to tourists who visited the beach Olón on the holiday of November 2, 2022, for the analysis of the survey results were used descriptive statistics and graphical analysis.

Following techniques were used to collect information:

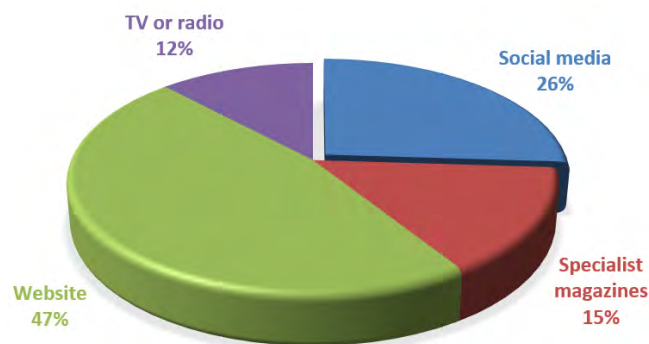
- Survey: The questionnaire was structured with dichotomous and polytomous questions to find out the perception of language tourism.
- Field technique: Allows observation in direct contact with the object of study, as well as the collection of testimonies (Monroy Mejía, 2018).

SWOT analysis, also known in Spanish-speaking countries as DAFO or DOFA and in English-speaking countries as SWOT, is a key tool to make a detailed evaluation of the current situation of an organization or person based on its weaknesses and strengths, and on the opportunities and threats offered by its environment (Sánchez Huerta, 2020).

## RESULTS

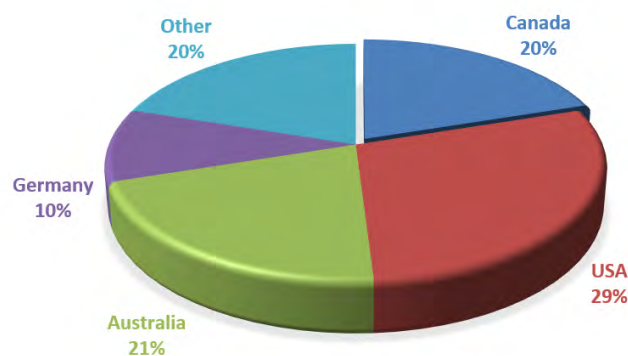
### *Survey Results*

The 47% of the tourists surveyed indicated that they found out about Olón beach through the website, only 20% found out about this beach through the social media channel.



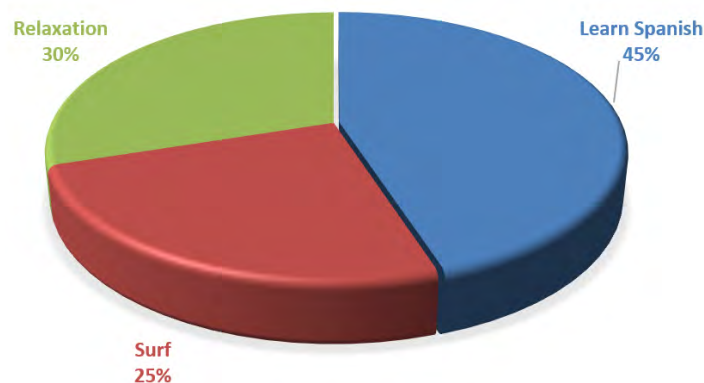
**Figure 1.** Medium in which he learned about Playa Olón

The 29% of respondents indicated that their country of residence is the United States, followed by Australia with 21% and Canada with 20%, countries where their native language is not Spanish.



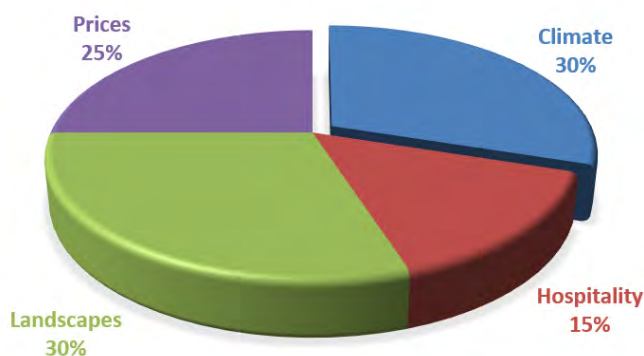
**Figure 2.** Country of residence.

The 45% of the tourists surveyed mentioned that their reason for visiting Olón Beach was to learn Spanish, while 30% did so for relaxation and 20% for surfing



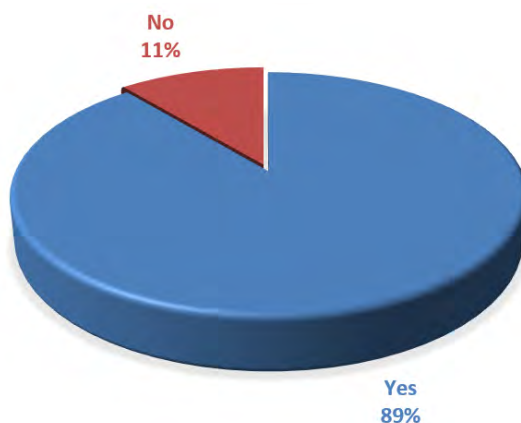
**Figure 3.** Reason for the view of Olón Beach

Tourists surveyed mentioned that they consider Olón Beach as a good tourist destination for Spanish language immersion because of the scenery (30%), the climate (30%) and the price (25%), because Spanish language immersion is important but the costs in other tourist destinations are very high.



**Figure 4.** Playa Olón as a good tourist destination for Spanish language immersion

Vast majority of tourists if they were to return to Olón Beach, 89% responded that they would return because the beach has beautiful scenery, surfing, a variety of seafood, tranquility and they can also practice the Spanish language.



**Figure 5.** Tourists who would return to Olón Beach

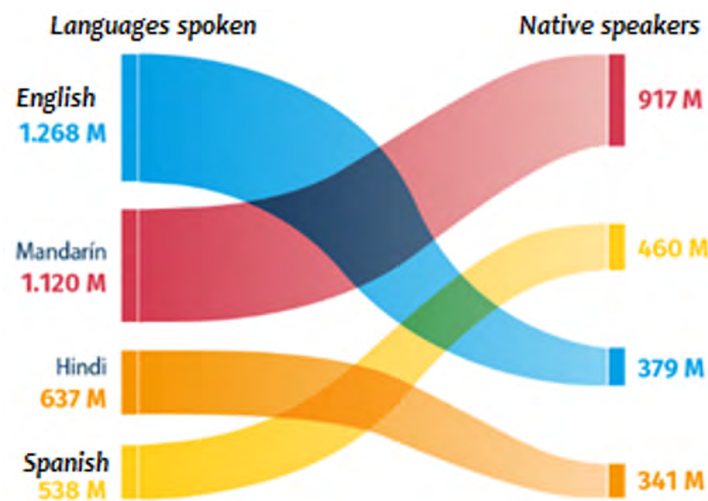
**SWOT strategy analysis**

Table 1 shows the SWOT analysis, which shows the strategies developed to make Olón beach an attractive destination for language tourism. The growing trend of learning the Spanish language is an opportunity for Olón beach to generate more income through the development of shared accommodation, since the language tourist seeks this type of accommodation to be able to practice more the Spanish language.

**Table 1. SWOT Strategies**

		<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
<b><u>THREATS</u></b>	Increase in tourist destinations that promote Spanish language immersion.	Waves of the sea are good for surfing.	Low number of shared accommodation
		<b>Strategy FA</b> Develop tourist packages where the Spanish language is taught as well as surfing, this mix would be highly competitive.	<b>OD Strategy</b> Promote the culture of the need to align tourism activity to the current demand of a highly demanding and fickle market.
<b><u>OPPORTUNITIES</u></b>	Growing tendency to learn the Spanish language.	<b>Strategy FO</b> Promotion and publicity of Olón beach as a language tourism destination on social networks.	<b>DA Strategy</b> Development of non-hotel shared tourist accommodation in private homes.

Figure 7 shows that Spanish is the second native language and occupies the fourth place as the most spoken language in cyberspace, so it is important to consider also the OD strategy that indicates the need for promotion and publicity of Olón beach as a language tourism destination in social networks.

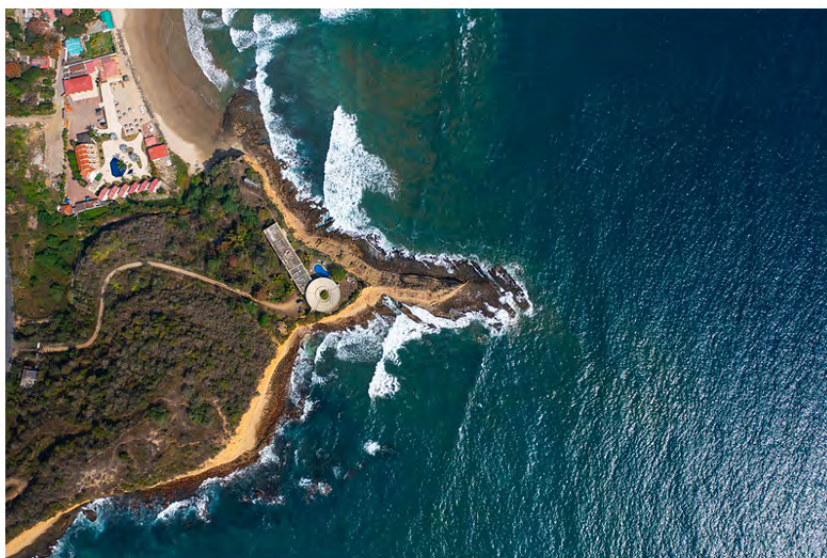
**Figure 7. Top 4 languages and their native speakers**

Source: (UNESCO, 2021)

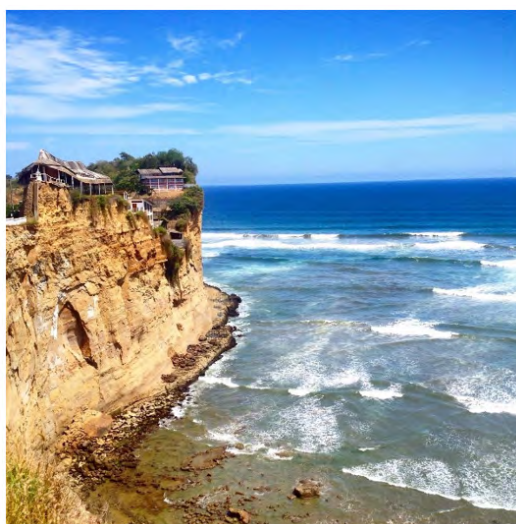


## DISCUSSION

Tourism market is highly competitive and variable, which is why it is so important to develop new services and products that make a destination attractive. Figure 8 and 9 shows Olón beach, for the province of Santa Elena as a sun and beach destination, it is difficult to break out of this pigeonhole, making it difficult to adapt new tourism products, due to poor public management and low appreciation of natural and cultural resources (Arce Bastidas et al., 2020).



**Figure 8.** Olón Beach  
*Source: (Beach Life Ecuador, 2019)*



**Figure 9.** Olón Beach  
*Fuente: Tripadvisor*

Growing trend of learning the Spanish language generates opportunities to diversify the products and services offered by a destination, due to the fact that language tourists have different characteristics to other tourists, for example they require shared accommodation to practice Spanish and their stay is also longer. Aligning processes to market demands is a prerequisite for any business to remain relevant. Process analysis is the act of conducting a thorough review and arriving at a complete understanding of a business process (or part of it) with the objective

of maintaining or achieving process excellence or achieving incremental or transformational improvements in a business process (Merchán-Galarza et al., 2021). In addition, the use of social networks for the promotion and advertising of Olón beach as a tourist destination is also important to promote digital culture, smartphones, smart devices, APPs and social networks have become strategic allies to publicize a product and/or service in the 21st century (Rendón et al., 2022).

## CONCLUSIONS

Of the tourists surveyed, 45% indicated that they visited Olón beach to learn Spanish, 25% selected this destination for its affordable prices, as language tourism is characterized by high costs.

Promotion and publicity of Olón beach as a language tourism destination on social networks is important, only 26% of tourists had found out about Olón beach through this medium, this percentage is low, taking into account that social networks are the most used medium nowadays. Growing trend of learning Spanish could be approved by Olón beach through the development of tourist packages where the Spanish language is taught and also surfing, this mix would be highly competitive, because this beach is recognized by foreign tourists due to its waves that are good for practicing this sport.

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