

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES



SUCHITOTO LOVERS TOURS

PRESENTED BY

LUIS ARNOLDO GARCIA MIRANDA GM17035

ESTEFANY FABIOLA MAYORGA MARROQUÍN MM17061

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LIC. MIGUEL ÁNGEL CARRANZA CAMPOS, MSE

GENERAL COORDINATOR OF THE GRADUATION PROCESS

**UNIVERSITY CAMPUS, DR. FABIO CASTILLO FIGUEROA, SAN SALVADOR, EL
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GENERAL COORDINATOR OF THE GRADUATION PROCESS

LIC. FRANCISCA AGUILLÓN RIVERA

SPECIALIZATION PROFESSOR

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Abstract

The present work shows Suchitoto Lovers Tours as a tour operator that has the intention of providing a relaxing and captivating experience to national and international tourists allowing them to know Suchitoto respecting their roots and their inhabitants. The objective as tour operator is to promote tourism from a perspective focused on the culture and charm of the resources that the municipality has to offer. This idea has been translated by taking into account various aspects that align with sustainable development strategies. In addition, to learn about the tourism sector, it was investigated how tourism has been developed over the years. Similarly, the natural resources and elements that make up the cultural identity of the inhabitants of Suchitoto were identified. Subsequently, a plan was devised that aims to get the tour operator to attract a constant flow of customers. Another important aspect was the definition of the profile necessary to successfully overcome the difficulties that arise when undertaking, at the same time as assuming the responsibilities corresponding to the position. Also, the area in the market to which Suchitoto Lovers Tours is focused was established, based on this, it is also detailed the most appropriate way to interact with customers and allies. On the other hand, the distinctive elements and values of the tour operator were identified. In conclusion, taking into account all the aspects mentioned above, Suchitoto Lovers Tours can create an experience by which tourists can get involved in a unique journey knowing the colonial architecture, cultural heritage and natural wealth that Suchitoto has.

Keywords: Sustainable development, tourism, natural resources, cultural identity, undertaking, customers, allies.

Introduction

Tourism is taking the risk of leaving our environment to discover attractive and interesting places, learning through traditions and culture, traveling to connect the mind and the heart, contributing not only to the talent and economy of artisans and entrepreneurs but also to the environment; for me, tourism is the activity that transforms our lives by filling them with memorable experiences. (Monge, 2023)

Nowadays, tourist activity is an important factor for the development of the country since it generates various benefits; on the other hand, Suchitoto is a city with many tourist places of interest. Therefore, a tourist service profile is presented in order to provide the customers new experiences, better contact with culture, nature and local economy.

The first stage of chapter I contains the objectives, including the general objective alongside specific objectives. Second, the reasons behind the tour operator are explained, emphasizing the importance and benefits of this service. Third, it is the description of the tourist service profile, which presents the name of the tour operator, the location, the different tourist circuits available for the visitors, tourist service attributes and tourism typology. Finally, at the end of the first chapter, there is a brief description of the way in which the tourist service is applied to the objectives of sustainable, responsible and inclusive development.

In chapter II, the first stage includes a summary of the history of tourism in general. Second, how tourism in El Salvador has developed over the years is explained. Third, there is a mention of the natural resources of Suchitoto, including Los Tercios waterfall as well as Suchitlán lake. Four, it is the description of the cultural identity found through gastronomy, legends, festivities, syncretism and stories of the municipality. Eventually, it has also been determined what actions to take and its distribution in order to have a close relationship with customers, at the same time it is specified how the tour operator will seek to maintain a quality service that allows it to attract customers.

First, in chapter III, it is detailed the profile of the entrepreneur, providing a definition along with the typology with which Suchitoto Lovers Tours is identified, then

it is included the elements in the ecosystem of the entrepreneur of the tour operator, as well as a description of the characteristics and competences that must be possessed when undertaking; similarly, the barriers and factors that will determine the success of a business are mentioned. Second, it is expressed what it means to be an entrepreneur, including the responsibility towards customers, employees, society, the environment and oneself; likewise, how can the tour operator meet the Corporate Social Responsibility is exposed. Third, there is an explanation of the niche market of the tour operator, addressing the concept of this, as well as its relationship with the strategy of the blue ocean; also, to define the niche market are included the elements that were analyzed and the characteristics that it has. Four, strategies for good customer management have been defined. Finally, the reason why vertical strategic alliances will be sought, including the criteria to be considered to create lasting alliances and the benefits expected from them.

Then, chapter IV included in its first stage information about the logo, detailing the meaning of each element of it. Second, there is the slogan that would accompany the tour operator. Third, there is the mission followed by the vision. After that, the values that characterize Suchitoto Lovers Tours are exposed.

Last of all, in chapter V is shown the bibliographical references of all the resources used from chapter I to IV.

CHAPTER I

TOURIST SERVICE PROFILE

1.1. Objectives

1.1.1. General Objective:

- Design a tourist service focused on cultural tourism and its subdivisions in the municipality of Suchitoto, department of Cuscatlán.

1.1.2. Specific Objectives:

- Develop tours appreciating the cultural richness of this town and respecting the identity of its inhabitants.
- Set up tourist circuits that show the streets and natural environments of this municipality in a captivating way, using various means of transportation such as boats and the turtle train.
- Apply the objectives of sustainable development raising awareness about the importance of conserving these places for the planet and local population.
- Boost the local economy through the purchase of handicrafts, products made from indigo and making use of the services in museums, art galleries, restaurants, among others establishments.

1.2. Justification

The beautiful city of Suchitoto is a place rich in culture, marked by a heritage since the early years of the republic; being appreciated by national and international visitors mainly on weekends. It is for this reason that this municipality was chosen as the object of study of this service.

The tour operator is important since the visit to each museum, church, restaurant, art gallery or natural environments, leads to identifying the cultural heritage that gives its inhabitants belonging and which also reflects part of the identity of Salvadorans.

Besides, it is intended to work based on the objectives of sustainable development that are important to maintain a balance between environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects; in other terms, sustainable objectives provide a safe and livable future for all.

The importance of this work also lies in the sense that it is working in the most complete way (applying what is being studied in the course) to then start it up, it means it could be the future entrepreneurship of the members of this team.

1.3. Description of the tourist service

1.3.1. Name of the tourist service

The tour operator is called **Suchitoto Lovers Tours**. It refers to the city in which the tours take place, aimed at those who are lovers of nature, customs, traditions and the wonderful colonial structure that surrounds this beautiful town (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

Municipality of Suchitoto



Note. Cuscatlán in El Salvador [Image], by TUBS, 2011, Wikimedia Commons (<https://images.app.goo.gl/98tyeADZzgaxZeEf6>). CC BY 3.0

1.3.2. Location

Concerning the location, Suchitoto Lovers Tours will not have an office; however, customers will have access to this tourist service through an online modality, which means using its social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Email to make reservations or consult any information of the tours.

1.3.3. Tourist circuits

Suchitoto Lovers Tours will offer its service to salvadorans and foreigners; it is also requested that customers be young and adults between the ages of 15 and 50. Also, in order that each tour can be carried out, each of them must have a minimum of 8 participants. The following circuits are the ones that will be available for the clients of Suchitoto Lovers Tours:

Table 1*Tourist circuit #1: Cave and City*

Time	Activities	Location	Notes
8:00 am - 10:00 am	Pick-up	San Antonio Abad Street, San Salvador	Please arrive at the meeting place at least 15 minutes in advance.
10:00 am -11:50 am	Hiking	Ermitaño cave	To get to the Ermitaño cave, you will take a boat ride. Please bring water and comfortable shoes.
11:50 am - 1:30 pm	Lunch	Casa 1800	Lunch expenses are not included in the tour. Please bring your own money.
1:30 pm - 2:00 pm	Visiting a museum	Museum of 1000 plates	The place does not allow the income of food.
2:00 pm - 3:00 pm	Walk around the park and souvenir shopping	Suchitoto central park	They offer products like indigo dyed shirts and typical sweets.
3:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Drive back to San Salvador		
5:00 pm	Drop-off	San Antonio Abad Street, San Salvador	

Note. Own elaboration. Circuit available on Saturdays and Sundays. Circuit duration: 9 Hours, from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Table 2*Tourist circuit #2: Train Ride and History*

Time	Activities	Location	Notes
8:00 am - 10:00 am	Pick-up	San Antonio Abad Street, San Salvador	Please arrive at the meeting place at least 15 minutes in advance.
10:00 am-11:00 am	Walk around the park and souvenir shopping	Suchitoto central park	They offer products like indigo dyed shirts and typical sweets.
11:00 am - 12:10 pm	Train ride	The city of Suchitoto	
12:10 pm – 1:40 pm	Lunch	Suchimex Restaurant	Lunch expenses are not included in the tour. Please bring your own money.
1:40 pm – 2:10 pm	Visiting a museum	Museo de la moneda	The place does not allow the income of food.
2:10 pm - 3:00 pm	Souvenir shopping and learning about the city thought the inhabitants	Casa del adulto mayor	
3:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Drive back to San Salvador		
5:00 pm	Drop-off	San Antonio Abad Street, San Salvador	

Note. Own elaboration. Circuit available on Saturdays and Sundays. Circuit duration: 9 Hours, from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Table 3

Tourist circuit #3: Waterfall and Church

Time	Activities	Location	Notes
8:00 am - 10:00 am	Pick-up	San Antonio Abad Street, San Salvador	Please arrive at the meeting place at least 15 minutes in advance.
10:00 am - 11:45 am	Hiking to a viewpoint and to a waterfall	Los Tercios waterfall	Please bring insect repellent, water and comfortable shoes.
11:45 am - 1:40 pm	Lunch	Suchimex Restaurant	Lunch expenses are not included in the tour. Please bring your own money.
1:40 pm - 2:10 pm	Souvenir shopping	Suchitoto central park	They offer products like indigo dyed t-shirts and typical sweets.
2:10 pm - 3:00 pm	Visiting a church	Santa Lucía church	Its architecture can be appreciated.
3:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Drive back to San Salvador		
5:00 pm	Drop-off	San Antonio Abad Street, San Salvador	

Note. Own elaboration. Circuit available from Wednesday to Sunday. Circuit duration: 9 Hours, from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Table 4*Tourist circuit #4: Art and Views*

Time	Activities	Location	Notes
10:00 am - 12:10 pm	Pick-up	San Antonio Abad Street, San Salvador	Please arrive at the meeting place at least 15 minutes in advance.
12:10 pm - 2:00 pm	Lunch	Posada Restaurant	Lunch expenses are not included in the tour. Please bring your own money.
2:00 pm - 2:25 pm	Hiking to a viewpoint	San Martín Park	
2:25 pm - 3:30 pm	Light snack	Donde Polo restaurant	Please bring your own money.
3:30 pm - 4:10 pm	Visiting an art gallery	Casa Clementina	
4:10 pm – 5:00 pm	Souvenir shopping and learning about the city through the inhabitants	Casa del adulto mayor	
5:00 pm - 6:00 pm	Tour around the park and souvenir shopping	Suchitoto central park	They offer products like indigo dyed shirts and typical sweets.
6:00 pm - 7:00 pm	Visiting a church	Santa Lucía Church	At nightfall, the church can be seen with beautiful lighting.
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm	Drive back to San Salvador		
9:00 pm	Drop-off	San Antonio Abad Street, San Salvador	

Note. Own elaboration. Circuit available on Saturdays and Sundays. Circuit duration: 11 Hours, from 10:00 am to 9:00 pm.

Details of the offer

- Comfortable transport by a private vehicle
- Tour guide
- Entrance to the tourist attractions that are part of the tour

Non included expenses

- Lunch
- Light snack
- Souvenirs

Cancellation policy

- To receive a full refund, customers must cancel their reservation at least 24 hours prior to the start of their tour by sending an email to Suchitoto Lovers Tours
- Any cancellation within 24 hours or if the customer does not show up for the tour, no refund will be allowed.
- If the tour does not meet the minimum number of participants required to take place, the visit will be canceled and the person may request a rescheduling of the tour to another date or a refund.

1.3.4. Service attributes

Suchitoto Lovers Tours will be mainly characterized by its flexibility and safety for its customers. First, flexibility in terms of languages, as the tours will be available in three different languages: Spanish, English and French (See Figure 2); so that, Suchitoto Lovers Tours can have a greater reach among its customers offering them an experience that suits the language in which customers feel comfortable.

This flexibility will also be reflected in schedules and location; since customers will be able to make reservations through social media platforms and this can be during the work schedule of any day of the week.

Figure 2
Languages



Note. Hello Goodbye [Image], by MacLean, 2009, Flickr (<https://flic.kr/p/6pvQNC>).
CC BY 2.0

Additionally, the tour operator will offer tours at affordable prices, which means that a lot of people will have access to tourism without thinking that traveling is a luxury.

Finally, in terms of safety, the transport service contracted by the tour operator will have insurance, which provides the customer protection from any risk, accident or emergency during the tour.

1.3.5. Tourism typology

The tour operator will be oriented towards cultural tourism. This kind of tourism aims to analyze the experiences and traditions of a region in order to learn about its history, gastronomy and the most common activities that are carried out.

Also, it is very attractive for national and foreign visitors who seek to have a different perspective from their usual environment. Likewise, this is subdivided into a lot of categories; however, in the case of Suchitoto Lovers Tours, it will only focus on the following subcategories of cultural tourism: gastronomic tourism, natural tourism, architecture tourism, religious tourism and artistic tourism.

➤ Gastronomic tourism

Gastronomic tourism focuses on the culinary culture of a particular tourist site, including the tasting of typical dishes or any food representative of a place regardless of the food establishment (Chavez, 2022).

In the case of Suchitoto Lovers Tours, the places included in the circuits will offer a wide range of dishes to offer visitors such as sopa de pata, chicken soup, artisan pizza, yucca with pork rinds, alboroto, chilate, nuégados, empanadas and coconut candies that can be found not only in the central park of this community but also in the following restaurants: Casa 1800, Posada restaurant, Donde Polo and Suchimex restaurant. This will give customers the opportunity to enjoy a culinary experience with beautiful views that convey a sense of warmth and tranquility.

➤ Nature tourism

This type of tourism is understood as trips in direct contact with nature that include recreational activities related to the cultural expressions of a place, while

maintaining a commitment to know, respect, enjoy and participate in the conservation of natural and cultural resources (Turismo de Naturaleza, 2018).

The municipality of Suchitoto is characterized by having natural attractions to offer visitors in which they can feel the connection with the environment and in the same way enjoy beautiful landscapes among which can be mentioned: the Ermitaño cave and Los Tercios waterfall (See Figure 3).

These places not only have a natural value but also a cultural one, since it is surrounded by legends and facts that mark the history of this place. For example, Los Tercios waterfall has as part of the oral tradition the legend of “the little goldfish” and “a warehouse of fabrics that became rocks” (Gaceta Suchitoto, 2017b); likewise, it is worth noting the case of Manuel Lemus Martinez, a fisherman from Metapán originally from Guija Metapan, who decided to isolate himself from the world until the day he died on the island and who is the reason why he is known today as “The Ermitaño Island” (Orellana, 2021).

Figure 3

Natural Resources in Suchitoto



Note. Lago Suchitlan, El Salvador [Photograph], by Itzhak, 2007, Flickr (<https://flic.kr/p/RJ7z5>). CC BY-NC 2.0

Taking into account the above, Suchitoto Lovers Tours aims to establish a connection with the environment and cultural heritage, also seeks to involve visitors with the commitment to appreciate, respect and above all protect natural areas, so that in the future more people can continue enjoying these natural attractions that have a lot to offer.

➤ **Architectural tourism:**

Architectural tourism refers to the architecture as a reflection of the culture, ideology and way of being of the inhabitants of a certain place (Viajes Continental, n.d.).

Starting from this, it is understood that architectural tourism has the purpose of visiting cities, buildings or monuments so that visitors can appreciate the expressions

of cultural diversity and the way in which they have influenced the history of different regions.

The tour operator will focus on the city of Suchitoto as it will offer visitors the opportunity to analyze its colonial architecture, its cobblestone streets and adobe-based buildings. For example, Santa Lucía church has six columns and half arches; on each of its sides there are two towers and in the middle of these a triangular wall. Inside, its original design in wooden columns with a baroque and rococo style is still preserved (Gaceta Suchitoto, 2019).

➤ **Religious tourism:**

Religious tourism involves traveling to learn about relics, buildings, structures and other objects of the church; likewise, it refers to the acquisition of general knowledge of the culture and religion of a particular place (Ceupe, 2020).

Suchitoto Lovers Tours seeks to include places related to religion in a modality motivated by faith and spirituality in its tours. In the case of Suchitoto, it has a tourist destination that may be of interest to visitors.

Santa Lucía church, in its beginnings, was built with straw; however, at the end of the 17th century, it was rebuilt because it was the victim of a fire, for which some repairs were necessary (Gaceta Suchitoto, 2017d).

➤ **Artistic tourism:**

Art tourism is a form of travel that revolves around engaging with artistic and cultural activities, in touristic or historical settings. Sometimes referred to as creative tourism, it involves visiting destinations that also feature art display. It offers a unique travel experience and contributes to the conservation and reappropriation of cultural spaces that might have otherwise been lost. (Benjamin, 2023)

The purpose of this type of tourism is to seek the acquisition of knowledge and sensations in relation to cultural heritage, such as paintings, buildings, crafts, sculptures, etc. Through Suchitoto Lovers Tours, visitors will appreciate art through handicrafts in the central park and la casa del adulto del mayor, where they can easily

find various products made by Suchitoto artisans in which they express their identity; similarly, in this city is the Casa Clementina, an art gallery that seeks to promote art and cultural exchange (Diferenciador, 2022).

The Casa Clementina is divided into two rooms that are accessible to visitors; in the first one, it can be seen different expressions of art such as handicrafts and photographs; the second room, for its part, has electronic games and feature films (Casa Clementina, n.d.).

1.4. Application of strategy for human development and sustainability

“Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities” (UNWTO, n.d.-e).

To make this possible, three strategies associated with biodiversity, climate change and the One Planet program will be incorporated in the tour operator (See Figure 4):

1.4.1. Biodiversity

“UNWTO strives to promote tourism development that supports, in equal measure, the conservation of biodiversity, the social welfare and the economic security of the host countries and communities” (UNWTO, n.d.-a).

Suchitoto Lovers Tours pretends that potential customers know the biological diversity that exists in this municipality; for example, the tour of the Ermitaño cave aims to inform visitors about the conditions in which Suchitlán Lake is since many people are unaware that this lake has a certain degree of pollution, this situation is alarming because it affects in various ways to the city of Suchitoto.

In the first instance, there is the deterioration of the ecosystem, in the case of Suchitlán Lake, the marine wildlife are affected given that the contamination does not allow them to grow up healthy, these in turn damage the birds that feed on them; furthermore, these are not the only ones affected, since there may also be damage to other animal species that consume the water of this lake; it also affects plants as some die and on some occasions these are no longer suitable to be consumed by animals as they can cause some diseases.

Secondly, the contamination of the lake also affects people because those who are engaged in fishing have difficulty selling the fish since many people distrust their healthiness, since if they are contaminated they can harm their health; another

Figure 4
Sustainable Human Development



Note. Planeta verde [Illustration], Vectorportal, 2016, Vectorportal (<https://vectorportal.com/storage/green-planet.jpg>). CC BY 4.0

consequence of contamination in the water is that by accidentally swimming or drinking from it, people can run the risk, for example, customers that buy contaminated merchandise can acquire a disease; likewise, the plants are irrigated with this water and during their growth they absorb it, so it can affect the health of the people who feed on them.

If this situation continues in the tourism sector of Suchitoto, this may cause the visit to some tourist destinations to no longer be suitable for visitors, as a result some inhabitants will be affected indirectly because they will not be able to obtain any economic benefit generated by tourism.

Thus, the tour operator would play a role of raising awareness among those who request this service, safeguarding the care of these natural areas to prevent further damage to the state in which they are found. Another aspect to take into consideration is the welfare of the animals. Since these are sensitive to loud sounds, Suchitoto Lovers Tours will ensure that visitors do not disturb their environment through noise pollution. At the same time, it is intended to preserve the flora and fauna, since care will be taken so that visitors who request the service respect the places that are part of the circuit and will not contaminate them with inorganic waste such as plastics, glass, bags of chips, rubber, etc; as they take many years to decompose and contaminate the soil causing it to become infertile, damaging the ecosystems.

Following the biodiversity strategy that has as a principle the economic security of the host countries and communities, local commerce will be promoted since the tour operator will look to produce an income paying for the entrance of the tourist attractions such as museums, Los Tercios waterfall, Ermitaño cave, etc. In addition, through this income, the places visited can continue to preserve the state in which these sites are. For example, when paying the entrance fee to Los Tercios waterfall, it indirectly supports that those in charge of the place have the monetary resources to continue preserving this place for future visitors.

1.4.2. Climate change

“Tourism has to define its own “high-ambition scenario”; a scenario where tourism would transform towards low emission and highly efficient operations” (UNWTO, n.d.-b).

One of the reasons why carbon dioxide is emitted is because to visit a place, many people rent or use their own vehicle, this increases air pollution to a certain degree since each vehicle produces smoke that pollutes the environment, due to this it is intended to reduce the emission of this type of gas since when requesting the Suchitoto Lovers Tours service, visitors will be transported to their destination by means of a vehicle that has the capacity to mobilize them with comfort to all people who participate in a certain tour.

Another way in which it contributes to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is thanks to the proximity of the tourist destinations that are part of the tour, since they are located in the city of Suchitoto, moving from one place to another through of small walks will help to reduce the excessive use of a means of transport for tourism; resulting in being responsible with the environment.

1.4.3. One Planet

“When responsibly planned and managed, tourism has demonstrated its capacity to support job creation, promote inclusive social integration, protect natural and cultural heritage, conserve biodiversity, generate sustainable livelihoods and improve human wellbeing” (*UNWTO*, n.d.-d).

Following the purpose of this strategy, not only the elderly who create and market their handicrafts such as bracelets, necklaces and tablecloths will be helped to obtain an economic income, but they also will have the opportunity to share their stories with visitors, which helps to maintain their cultural identity. In the same way, visitors will be recommended to respect the customs and traditions that the inhabitants can share with them during the trip since for them their cultural identity is very important and telling their stories shows the pride, they feel in belonging to the city of Suchitoto.

CHAPTER II

CONDITIONING ELEMENTS OF THE

TOURIST SERVICE

2.1. History of tourism

To understand the origin of tourism, Forero (2016) considers necessary to go back to different times of antiquity, for example in the Paleolithic, people traveled on foot through forests and swampy lands in order to meet their basic needs such as water, food and shelter; but these trips required great care since it turned out to be very dangerous. Then, as a result of the discovery of fire, they learned about its use, as well as the handling of tools and later they acquired the ability to build temporary shelters; thus, they extended the distances traveled on trips (Forero, 2016).

Advancing towards the Neolithic stage, the towns were established in permanent zones and agricultural communities were formed, it was in this stage that several innovations appeared that changed the way in which the trips were made. For example, Forero (2016) mentions that sailboats appeared, which allowed journeys across the water and the invention of the wheel by the Sumerians in 3500 BC that permitted people, materials and other elements to be mobilized more easily. In addition, the growth of agricultural communities allowed the storage of food and water, which provided some security for travelers by strengthening the exchange of goods for food, artifacts, and weapons. Later, culture and religion emerged, strengthening travels for religious and spiritual purposes (Forero, 2016).

According to many historians and anthropologists, business trips were very common among ancient civilizations, with the first trips between Mesopotamia, China, India, and Egypt. These trips caused a cultural change, for example, the Romans adapted and developed elements of the Greek culture, which led to the origin of Greco-Roman culture (Forero, 2016).

Another event that also influenced the development of travel is the fall of the Roman Empire during the Middle Ages, as this event caused a setback as travel continued to focus on barter and trade; however, a new way of traveling arises due to Islamism and Christianity pilgrimages (See Figure 5), which gives rise to the crusades whose objective was to take the sacred territory of the Arabs for the Christians (Forero, 2016). Merchants who often financed religious companies also traveled on pilgrimages, making excursions to the Holy Land, Venice and the road to Santiago de Compostela possible. This event gave rise to the creation of maps and pilgrimage routes which showed all kinds of services to travelers (Forero, 2016).

Figure 5

The incidence of Crusades in Tourism



Note. The Crusaders Reach Jerusalem (from a set of Scene from Gerusalemme Liberata) [Illustration], Wikimedia Commons ([https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Crusaders_Reach_Jerusalem_\(from_a_set_of_Scenes_from_Gerusalemme_Liberata\)_MET_DT202036.jpg](https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Crusaders_Reach_Jerusalem_(from_a_set_of_Scenes_from_Gerusalemme_Liberata)_MET_DT202036.jpg)). CC0 1.0

During the Renaissance, the era was characterized by culture, change and exploration. The pilgrimage expeditions continued, and the history goes that more than 1,000 of them died in Rome as a result of the bubonic plague (Forero, 2016). In this same period the concept of hotel arises, these accommodations were intended for great personalities and courtiers (Forero, 2016). Likewise, maritime expeditions were created, resulting in mercantilism and the economic expansion of the great powers. Subsequently, geography as a science emerged, bringing with it interest in knowledge and travel. For their part, the companies in charge of carrying out these expeditions were organized by maritime powers such as Portugal, Spain, England and France (Forero, 2016).

At the end of the 16th century, the custom of sending young English aristocrats to make the grand tour as a reward for completing their studies arose with the aim of

complementing their academic training to be able to acquire new experiences; the duration of this trip was more than two years. Some historians consider the grand tour as the initiator of modern tourism (Forero, 2016).

Then, the industrial revolution caused changes in the economy of nations from being agricultural to an urban industry. At the end of the 19th century, tourism developed as an economic activity focused on leisure, rest and pleasure, since the changes caused by the industrial era allowed the bourgeoisie to have more economic resources.

Forero (2016) expresses that it is in these same years, when Thomas Cook, considered the father of tourism, made the first trip in history in groups, thus emerging the first tourist package; this train trip was made with 600 people at a reduced cost. Later, Cook created the first travel agency in the world, Thomas Cook & Son, who is also credited with creating the voucher, a document that allowed tourists to use hotel services through an agency as an intermediary. Given these facts, Cook was without a doubt a man who revolutionized tourism that we know today (Forero, 2016).

Arriving in contemporary times, when the first and second world wars had ended, Europeans set out to travel to forget the disasters caused by conflicts. The tourism industry is booming and the first automobiles begin to appear; then, the creation of the commercial airplane arose, which further boosted tourism by shortening distances and amplifying the number of destinations (Forero, 2016).

Tourism has experienced a significant decline in recent years due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. This virus halted tourism because it was not possible to travel due to the risk of infection. Fortunately, tourism has been on the rebound and people are now seeking authentic experiences that are characterized by the cultural and natural wealth that each country has to offer (Valera, 2023).

2.2. History of tourism in El Salvador

Although tourism is currently considered an important economic activity for the country, it has gone through a long process starting in 1924. In this year, President Alfonso Quiñónez Molina made efforts to know the cultural and historical value of the country with the purpose that tourism could help in the acquisition of foreign currency and increase trade (Flores, 2017). Similarly, in an attempt to promote tourism, the First Board for the Promotion of Tourism and Agricultural and Industrial Propaganda was created (Flores, 2017).

On 1930, Flores (2017) mentions that it was necessary the creation of the first National Tourism Board; which was a link between the Government and the Departmental Road Boards, situation that allowed the Consulates to issue tourist cards so that foreigners could travel in the country for a period of 9 days or a month if an extension of their validity was requested.

Then in 1939, an Ornament Board was created, which had the objective of promoting tourism through the maintenance of roads, spas, walks and public gardens (Flores, 2017). In 1947, the National Tourism Board was created and through a combination of government and private enterprise efforts, it aimed to promote the material and cultural development of the country (Flores, 2017).

In addition, it is important to emphasize that the National Tourism Board was made up of Mr. Raúl Contreras, who is credited with carrying out various tourist works (ISTU, 2023). Among which, Barrera (2020) mentions the construction of recreational parks and tourist centers such as:

- Apulo, on Ilopango lake, 1948
- Atecozol, in Sonsonate, 1956
- Ichanmichen, in San Vicente, 1956
- Los Chorros in 1959

In 1961, the changes in the tourism sector continued with the creation of the Salvadoran Institute of Tourism and the issuance of its own law (Barrera, 2020). The ISTU¹ main functions promoted the development of tourism stimulating family, social,

¹ Spanish acronym meaning: Instituto Salvadoreño de Turismo.

and hiking recreation (EcuRed, n.d.-c). Regarding the Law of the Salvadoran Tourism Institute, Diario Oficial reported that this law included 50 Articles (ISTU, 2023).

Another advance in the tourism sector occurred in 1963, when the Salvadoran Institute of Tourism was in charge of classifying hotels from one to five stars so that there could be a better order of the structure of the hotel industry (ISTU, 2023).

Then in 1967, during the administration of Colonel Julio Adalberto Rivera, the Law for the Promotion of the Tourism Industry was created, which was in charge of promoting tourism from institutions that provided a service in this same area such as hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, among others (ISTU, 2023). Later, in the 70s, policies were implemented to make possible the construction of the Camino Real, Ritz, Alameda, Terraza and one more in Cerro Verde (Flores, 2017).

But without a doubt, the fact that allowed El Salvador to attract the most attention in the world was the Miss Universe beauty pageant, which attracted 293,000 tourists to the country (Flores, 2017). Likewise, local art was promoted and the Don Bosco Salesian Orchestra was able to show their talent during the award ceremony. On the other hand, this was only the prelude to the armed conflict that would occur later and that would mark the lives of all Salvadorans (Barrera, 2020).

Despite the tense atmosphere, Barrera (2020) mentions that during the last years of the 70's, tourism continued with some advances such as the development of the coastal zone, an example of this was Costa del Sol. On the other hand, the 80's began with the inauguration of the Comalapa International Airport (Barrera, 2020). However, all these advances met a major obstacle, the civil war (See Figure 6). Moreover, Flores (2017) states that El Salvador was considered so dangerous that there were even countries that warned that it was not advisable to enter the country due to the armed conflict. In addition, during this time the measures to grant visas

Figure 6
Civil War



Note. Gorilla leaders during the general offensive of 1981 in El Salvador [Photograph], by Government of El Salvador, 2022, Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gorilla_leaders_during_the_general_offensive_of_1981_in_El_Salvador.jpg). CC BY 3.0

became stricter to prevent the entry of any member of the FMLN who came from outside the country (Flores, 2017).

During the period of this conflict, tourism in El Salvador did not achieve any growth; however, in 1992, with the signing of the Peace Accords, a new opportunity arose for the tourism sector by receiving foreign delegations during the process of this agreement who demanded a quality tourist place (Barrera, 2020). Likewise, referring to this time, Barrera (2020) expresses that Ruta de las Flores begins as a multi-destination and takes advantage of the biodiversity of the territory. Subsequently, on July 25, 1996, the Salvadoran Tourism Corporation, was created (CORSATUR, 2020). Among its responsibilities was the promotion and development of tourism abroad (EcuRed, n.d.-b).

At the beginning of the 21st century, the reception of tourists increased so that in 2003 the entry of 857,378 tourists was registered and in 2004 this figure had an increase, having a total of 966,416 visitors (LMT, 2005). This year also brings with it the creation of the Ministry of Tourism, which was assigned the task of determining and ensuring compliance with the Policy and the National Tourism Plan (ISTU, 2023). Later, the Tourism Law came into force, its objective in its first article: Art. 1.- The purpose of this Law is to foster, promote and regulate the tourism industry of the country and services provided by national or foreign individuals or legal entities (Legislative Decree No. 899, 2010).²

The educational area also presents advances related to tourism, by consolidating the academy for tourism training, so that tourism would not be limited only to being an economic activity, but would become a vocation and tourism resources would be shown, including identity and local culture (Barrera, 2020). In 2005, the contribution of the Tourism Law can also be appreciated, since it boosted tourism through the creation of the National Tourism Registry (RNT³); its objective was to provide legal security and registry publicity to companies and their owners, which provide tourist services in the national territory, in the areas of food, accommodation, recreation, information and transportation (CORSATUR, 2021).

² Adapted from Ley de Turismo (p. 2), by Legislative Assembly of the Republic of El Salvador. 2010.

³ Acronym in Spanish for "Registro Nacional de Turismo".

In 2008, the Law of the Salvadoran Tourism Institute was reformed so that the attraction of visitors together with the promotion of family recreation and hiking became part of its functions (ISTU, 2023). But it was not until 2009 that a breakthrough occurred in favor of tourism with the creation of Pueblos Vivos program, which due to its great incidence and success, today there are various editions of this same program (LAM, 2022). Another program created to promote local identity and entrepreneurship was Un Pueblo y Un Producto (Barrera, 2020).

At the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, efforts have been made over the years so that tourism can continue to develop and improve the economy of the country. This fact was evident in the third tourism investment forum, in which it was reported that in 2014, the tourism sector generated an average of 48,415 direct jobs. In addition, during the first quarter of 2005, a growth of 5.8% in the reception of international visitors was reported compared to 2014 (Diario Co Latino, 2015).

In 2018, when the second decade of the 21st century was ending, foreign tourism revenues were \$1,472.52 million, which meant a growth of 16% compared to 2017 (La Prensa Gráfica, 2019a). Then in 2019 this figure increased by 88,281 people, 5.26%; receiving tourists mostly from Guatemala, the United States of America and Honduras (Datosmacro, n.d.).

However, after making progress in the tourism sector, an event occurred that the government could not predict, the arrival of COVID-19 in 2020. This event marked a before and after in all areas in the life of everyone, including the tourist sector. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 120 million jobs were lost worldwide, and in the case of El Salvador, 120 jobs were lost in the tourism area (Barrera, 2020).

Faced with this pandemic, each country took its biosecurity measures, in El Salvador borders were closed, travel was suspended and the mobility of people was limited. All these actions affected the tourism sector because this health emergency occurred when the population was preparing to receive tourists during Holy Week (ALBASUD, n.d.). As a result of these constraints, \$1 billion less in foreign currency was reported in external tourism (Revista Summa, 2020).

At the end of 2020, the Minister of Tourism, Morena Valdez, called for restaurants, hotel bars and tourist places to continue implementing the biosecurity measures recommended so that the economy could be reactivated (Revista Summa, 2020).

Although El Salvador was one of the last countries to reactivate its economy in the face of the pandemic, the measures taken by the government succeeded in making the country an attractive and safe tourist destination (Presidencia de la República de El Salvador, 2021). This was confirmed by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), which certified El Salvador as a “safe destination” to travel after the coronavirus pandemic (Voz de América, 2020).

By 2022, Morena Valdez confirmed that the tourism sector had had a post-pandemic recovery of 81% (Forbes Staff, 2022). In addition, this same year, Forbes Magazine, as well as the Lonely Planet Travel Guide, included El Salvador in their lists of favorable destinations to travel in 2023, mainly because of the Salvadoran beaches since as Lonely Planet mentions that they are considered one of the most important destinations for surfers internationally (Presidencia de la República de El Salvador, 2022).

This year the tourist activity of the country has presented improvements, comparing the figures of tourists who have entered the country during the first quarter of the last three years, there has been an increase compared to 2019 and 2022 with 2023. According to the figures provided by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in 2023 the entry of 511,168 tourists was reported, that is, there was an increase of 21.74% compared to the 400,043 tourists who entered in 2019 and 26.01% more than last year that 378,229 tourists were registered (Genoves, 2023). In addition, according to the Minister of Tourism, the tourist activity has also benefited from the XXIV Central American and Caribbean Games; generating an increase in visitors who have arrived to the country (Expreso, 2023).

2.3. Natural resources

Biologist Lara Moriana (2021) refers to natural resources as elements or goods that nature provides to human beings and that are found in the natural environment without being altered by the action of man, in other words, man does not intervene in its production.

Natural resources in El Salvador include agricultural, hydrological, and forestry products. Agricultural products cover the different crops in the country; hydrologic resources include the generation of electricity and potable water; and wood from various types of trees is a part of forest resources (El Salvador mi país, n.d.-b).

Natural resources can also be classified as renewable and non-renewable. The first one is infinite because they can recover over time and the non-renewable natural resources are those that once consumed are exhausted until they disappear (Gestión en Recursos Naturales, 2017).

In the case of Suchitoto, its inhabitants attach great importance to its natural resources, especially the water resources that are under the protection of the Municipal Ordinance for the Protection and Conservation of the Water Resource of the Municipality of Suchitoto (Gaceta Suchitoto, 2022).

Suchitoto Lovers Tours aims to showcase the natural beauty of the renewable natural resources of this town, reason why some of the tours will include visits to two tourist destinations that are part of the water resources of the municipality; the first one is Los Tercios waterfall, which is part of the third tour and second one is the lake of Suchitlán, which is included in the first tour, since tourists will cross this lake by boat to reach the Ermitaño cave.

2.3.1. Los Tercios waterfall

This waterfall is formed by a vertical wall of rocks with hexagonal geometric figures, on which water falls from a height of 10 meters (EcuRed, n.d.-a). This tourist attraction is located about 45 km from the capital, San Salvador in the municipality of Suchitoto, department of Cuscatlán, right in the ravine Las Ánimas, on the road to Cinquera.

The climate is distinguished by two climatic seasons, summer and winter. In the rainy season, tourists can better appreciate the view of the water falling on the rocks of the waterfall; while in summer, the influx of water is scarce and only the rocky structure can be observed (Viajar El Salvador, n.d.).

The flora of this area can be viewed from the trail to the waterfall. The road is surrounded by tall trees and other plants that make the area particularly attractive in winter. Despite the absence of a wide range of animals in the area, tourists can still appreciate numerous bird species that bring a special charm to the place with their beautiful singing that resonates among the trees (Viajar El Salvador, n.d.).

2.3.2. Suchitlán lake

Suchitlán lake, also known as Cerrón Grande Reservoir (See Figure 7), is formed from the creation of the Cerrón Grande Hydroelectric Plant in 1976; it is located 78 km north of San Salvador, on the Iempa river, limited by the departments of Chalatenango, Cabañas and Cuscatlán. Its extension is 135 km² with an altitude between 182 and 234 meters above sea level, depending on the season of the year (Lago Suchitlán, 2019).

Figure 7

View of Boat Ride in Suchitoto



Note. El Salvador 17 11 2013 D Lago de Suchitlán (168) [Photograph], by Archbishop Romero Trust, 2014, Flickr (<https://flic.kr/p/mnenfr>). CC BY 2.0

This artificial lake was declared a RAMSAR site in November 2005 and is ranked 1,592 according to the list of the Convention on Wetlands (Gaceta Suchitoto, 2021). In addition, Reyes (2023) states that on the shore of this wetland, there are

some floating aquatic plant species, as well as 144 tree species spread on the site; among them, the presence of water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) is the most notable. On the other hand, the fauna encompasses a large number of waterbirds, both resident and migratory, and it is the place that houses the largest duck population in the country (Reyes, 2023). Other species that can be found in the Cerrón Grande Reservoir are a variety of fish, including 12 of the 14 species of native fish of El Salvador; this area is also home to 23 species of mammals, 48 species of reptiles, and 18 species of amphibians. Similarly, this location is inhabited by the green iguana, which is categorized as an endangered species (Reyes, 2023).

An interesting fact of this place is that the Ermitaño island was formerly known as Copapayo, but it was renamed because a man chose to isolate himself from the world by taking refuge on it (Orellana, 2021).

2.4. Cultural identity

In order to comprehend cultural identity, it is necessary to understand the terms cultural and identity. National geography defines culture as the characteristics that a group of people share, which can include their values, beliefs, gastronomy, religion, social behaviors and so on (Cultural Identity, n.d.). Regarding identity, Victoria Wilson suggests that it is about recognizing what is acceptable and true for oneself (Wilson, 2023). Therefore, it can be deduced that cultural identity is part of everyone as it includes the beliefs, values and other aspects related to culture that each person decides to adopt as his or her own.

Suchitoto for example is a place where its inhabitants take pride in its culture including its gastronomy, legends, festivals and the syncretism that surround this place. Therefore, to publicize these aspects, Suchitoto Lovers Tours will focus its trips on tourist destinations that transmit the identity that characterizes Suchitoto.

2.4.1. Gastronomy

The UNWTO⁴ (n.d.-c) defines gastronomy as the reflection of “the culture, heritage, traditions and sense of community of different peoples. It is a way of promoting understanding among different cultures, and of bringing people and traditions closer together”.

The gastronomy of El Salvador has been influenced by the native peoples. Corn, rice, yucca, beans, coffee, and other ingredients harvested in the country are the main ingredients used in Salvadoran gastronomy. The local cuisine also incorporates beef, chicken, and pork (Euroinnova Business School, 2022).

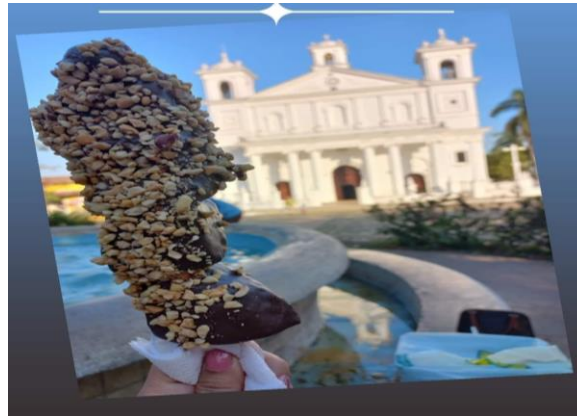
Suchitoto also incorporates the aforementioned ingredients in its dishes. The splendor of Salvadoran cuisine shines during some festivals (See Figure 8); for example, in the corn festival a variety of dishes and drinks derived from corn are offered, also during the indigo festival, tourists can buy fried yuca, panes con pollo, and they can also buy coffee from local entrepreneurs to prepare it and enjoy an exquisite cup of coffee from the comfort of their own homes. The preparation of traditional dishes in Suchitoto is not limited to the festivities, as many restaurants also

⁴ Acronym meaning: World Tourism Organization.

include these Salvadoran delicacies on their menus. The restaurants included in the tours that Suchitoto Lovers Tours will provide are an example.

Figure 8

Enjoying the Gastronomy of Suchitoto



Note. Photograph of a local delight of Suchitoto provided by Laura Monge.

The **Casa 1800** menu includes grilled meat dishes, along with vegetables, tortillas, and cheese. However, for those who are looking for local flavors, chicken soup is the ideal choice. In addition, its menu offers sandwiches that are named after popular legends from El Salvador, such as Amate, Siguanaba, and Cipitío. As for the desserts, these include traditional quesadillas and torrijas (Casa 1800, n.d.).

In its entrances, **Suchimex** offers cojutepeque chorizos, which are accompanied by casamiento, fresh cheese, avocado, and fried tortilla. Among the specialties are meat dishes, chicken, pork, and pu'tacos, which are a combination of pupusas and tacos accompanied by the desired meat (Menu - SUCHIMEX, n.d.).

In the menu of **La Posada**, there are enchiladas, fried yuca, chicken soup, bean soup and dishes of different types of meats such as beef tenderloin, puyazo, pork rib, pork loin and chicken (Menú a la carta La posada de Suchitlán, 2023).

Donde Polo offers chicken soup, grilled chicken, and grilled beef loin, along with rice, salad, guacamole, cheese, chimol, and tortillas. In addition, the restaurant provides dishes that can be shared between 2 or 3 people, including beef loin, chicken breast, grilled chorizos, and their respective accompaniments. As for dessert, quesadillas made with a special recipe are available (Donde Polo Suchitoto, n.d.).

2.4.2. Legends

The hispanic philologist, Elía Tabuenca (2020) defines the term legend as a story that is based on history, but includes fantastic elements of literature. In this type of story, we can find that real and true facts are mixed with supernatural ones that cannot take place in our world. The legendary stories have been handed down from generation to generation thanks to oral literature.

A touristic destination that will be included in the tours of Suchitoto Lovers Tours is Los Tercios Waterfall, which is linked with two legends.

The first legend is a warehouse of fabrics that have become rocks, which explains the origins of the beautiful stones that appear to be sculpted and that characterize this waterfall. The legend depicts a curse and lovers whose love was not enough to stay together.

According to the inhabitants of Suchitoto, legend has it that there was a warehouse where fabrics were sold in ancient times. The owner had a daughter who fell in love with an Indian, but his parents prohibited the relationship because of his poverty, so by not granting him the hand of the damsel, the Indian put a curse on the father of the girl, which consisted of turning all his wealth and his warehouse into rocks. Thus, rocks are the ancient scrolls of cloth (Tejada, 2022).

The second legend is less known by the inhabitants of the municipality, but it is still part of its oral tradition. Legend has it that at the bottom of the pool there is a magical place where a little goldfish lives and when winter arrives, this little fish gives life to the waterfall allowing the water to run freely in it (La Prensa Gráfica, 2021).

In addition, it is said that no one can see the little golden fish and those who see it will have one of two endings, they will end up losing their sanity or life (La Prensa Gráfica, 2021).

2.4.3. Festivities

Festivity is defined by the ABC dictionary (n.d.) as acts or cultural events in which the human being prepares to celebrate, thank, commemorate, or honor certain circumstances. Furthermore, festivities can vary due to their connection to the culture of each region.

A significant number of festivities are held every year in Suchitoto, which are very important for the inhabitants of this municipality and reflect their interest in maintaining their roots and culture.

The **Permanent International Festival of Art and Culture in Suchitoto** began for the first time in 1991 under the vision of Alejandro Cotto. The event is hosted at the theater that bears his name and was previously known as Teatro de las Ruinas. National and international artists participate in this event, making this festival a good choice for art lovers. They can enjoy symphonic orchestras, ballet, dance, theater, music, as well as folkloric presentations (CORSATUR & MITUR, 2015).⁵

The **Corn Festival** was created after the conclusion of the Peace Accords (Martínez, 2022). The Thanksgiving procession is the beginning of this event, in which people can admire corn tusa costumes and women carry corn cobs as offerings to God. Afterwards, a Mass is held to express gratitude for the fruits that the land provides (Martínez, 2022).

Furthermore, presentations of cultural events take place in the central square of Suchitoto, while corn dishes are on sale. The proceeds acquired during the festival are destined to student scholarships that the church grants to young people of the municipality (Martínez, 2022).

The **Torch Festival** is held every September 14 by the National Institute of Suchitoto (INSU⁶). The festival begins with a parade through the main streets of the municipality, which is headed by approximately 100 students who are part of the band together with clubs and dancers who move to the sound of music. Behind them, they are accompanied by students wearing costumes that depict the happiness, joy and optimism of the locals through the lights they wear on their clothes.

The parade concludes in the central square where the principal of the National Institute of Suchitoto expresses gratitude to those who participated in the festival (Gaceta Suchitoto, 2017a).

⁵ Adapted from “*SUCHITOTO: PLAN MAESTRO PARA EL DESARROLLO TURÍSTICO MUNICIPAL*” (1st ed., p. 41), by CORSATUR & MITUR, 2015.

⁶ According to its acronym in Spanish.

The municipality of Suchitoto together with Casa Clementina and other organizers provide the opportunity to enjoy **the Suchitoto International Film Festival (FICS)**. The event has been held since 2012, its opening includes a red carpet; international films are also screened as well as documentaries that can be enjoyed in cafes, restaurants and even outdoors, according to the places allocated by the festival administration (CCESV, n.d.). Film screenings are not the only reason to come to this festival, there are also theatrical performances and concerts (Hernández, 2022).

The **Indigo Festival** is a two-day event that is held in the central square of Suchitoto, and it features demonstrations of the process of dyeing indigo in clothing. The festival has a catwalk where local artists showcase their creativity and talent by displaying clothes that honor Indigo (Reencuentro Tv, 2022). In the central square, people can also enjoy live music in a festive environment while enjoying delicious dishes and drinks on sale (Reencuentro Tv, 2022).

For those who want to get a souvenir from this festival, they can come and buy handicrafts or products from other entrepreneurs that participate in the festival (Orellana, 2022).

2.4.4. Syncretism

Scientific journalist Sarah Romero (2023) describes syncretism as a cultural event during which two different societies eventually share or combine two or more traits of different origin. This phenomenon exists in various spheres of society.

Religious syncretism can be observed in Suchitoto, as some of its festivities combine cultural characteristics of the native peoples with the Catholic religion of Spain.

In Suchitoto, **Holy Week** is a crucial week for all parishioners who participate in various activities to commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus. The streets decorated with palm trees, the carpets made by members of the community and Palm Sunday are some of the main activities through which they show their faith (Gaceta Suchitoto, 2020).

The Palm Sunday procession is a symbol of Christ entering Jerusalem. In Suchitoto, this celebration is the most outstanding during this week, it begins when the

priest blesses the palms in the church to later begin the procession through the main streets of Suchitoto while the parishioners sing songs. The procession ends at Santa Lucía church (See Figure 9), where a Mass is held to mark the start of Holy week (Orellana, 2019).

Figure 9

Santa Lucía Church



Note. Photograph of the night view of Santa Lucía church provided by Laura Monge.

In the Independent newspaper, Soledad Villa (2023) explains the syncretism behind the origin of Holy Week, which is considered the most important celebration in Christianity. The celebration coincided with spring to replace the pagan holiday celebrating the feminine power and fertility of the goddess Ostara, to whom they paid tribute in Europe. It is for this reason that Holy Week does not have a fixed date since it depends on the beginning of the spring equinox (Villa, 2023).

In Suchitoto, the **Festival of Altars of the Cross** is never missed, with altars decorated with colorful garlands and seasonal fruits such as mangoes, zapotes, jocotes, lemons, pineapple, bananas and cashews adorning the municipality (Orellana, 2023). In addition, as a gesture of gratitude to keep this tradition alive, those who participate in the Day of the Cross receive a diploma of recognition for their efforts (Orellana, 2023).

In Barrio La Cruz, a workshop is held to teach the inhabitants of Suchitoto how to make ornaments for the altars as a way to celebrate the Day of the Cross and tours are available in schools to view their altars. The festival culminates with a Mass at the church of Barrio La Cruz (Orellana, 2023).

Many people relate this festival to Catholicism; however, this tradition has a religious syncretism because its origin goes back to the original peoples of Mesoamerica who presented offerings to the god Xipe Totec (Ministerio de Cultura, 2021). This tradition, which was reinterpreted and oriented towards Christianity, was adopted by the Spanish when they arrived in America, and Xipe Totec was replaced by a cross (La Prensa Gráfica, 2019b). This god was formerly known as “Señor el Desollado” and symbolized vegetation (Ministerio de Cultura, 2021).

During eight days from December 6th to 13th, Suchitoto celebrates the Virgin Saint Lucía during its festivities, the **Patron Festivities**. The district of the municipality is responsible for organizing cultural and religious activities. Some of the activities that take place are, “the awakening” or serenades that announce the beginning of the party with fireworks; other activities include Masses, parties for children, a float parade, and the election of the queen of the patron festivities (Gaceta Suchitoto, 2018a). Additionally, there are traditional games like the “palo encebado”, which consists of placing a greased high stick with a prize at its top for anyone to climb up and take it (El Salvador mi país, n.d.-a).

The syncretism of this festival is due to the combination of religious aspects inherited after the Spanish conquest and cultural activities in honor of ancient peoples. The goal of the Masses in honor of Saint Lucía is to unite the population to support each other and celebrate their faith. On the other hand, the cultural manifestations are found in the folklore of Suchitoto, sharing the traditions and customs that distinguish this place such as its handcrafts, typical dances, songs, theatrical performances, among others (Gaceta Suchitoto, 2018b).

Clearly, all these festivities unite two aspects that are important for the cultural identity of the inhabitants of Suchitoto.

2.4.5. Story

A story or narrative is a connected series of events told through words (written or spoken), imagery (still and moving), body language, performance, music, or any other form of communication. You can tell a story about anything, and the events described can be real or imaginary; covering both fiction and nonfiction; and leaving no topic, genre, or style untouched. (Literary Terms, 2018)

One of the most well-known stories of the citizens of Suchitoto is the story of Carlos Manuel Lemus Martínez, who decided to isolate himself from the city and the people by going to live on the island of Ermitaño from 1989 to 2012. The name of this island, which was once known as Copapayo island, was changed because of the long stay of Lemus on it (Orellana, 2021). In addition, some people mention that in the past Carlos Lemus was a fisherman originally from Metapan but according to other versions he was a former custodian of a prison in Metapan (Orellana, 2021; Minero, 2023).

Despite the uncertain past of Lemus, his stay on Ermitaño Island is a fact and as a reminder of this, Nelson Reyes, his current inhabitant gives tourists the opportunity to see a photograph of Lemus (Orellana, 2021).

2.5. Strategy plan

2.5.1. Recommendations to improve

Customer acquisition is vital for a business to succeed and grow to get stability, so it can continue to operate even when obstacles may arise. To achieve this goal, a series of activities need to be carried out to turn potential customers into paying customers.

Suchitoto Lovers Tours will focus its efforts on making the tour operator recognized and stand out among others. To make this possible, customers must be informed of the services offered by the company. Reaching people who already have a passion and interest in traveling can be achieved through social networks, which is why the company wants to position itself on TripAdvisor, as well as on Instagram and Facebook to be known by the general public.

TripAdvisor is a social network that concentrates on the tourism industry, providing information about hotels, restaurants, tour operators, and other related enterprises. This platform also gathers opinions, recommendations, and advice from users about the companies on this platform. By making use of TripAdvisor, Suchitoto Lovers Tours will be more likely to be selected to travel if the tour operator has good reviews and offers a variety of tours that are of interest to potential customers.

Instagram and Facebook are perfect platforms for sharing photos and images of the places that will be included in the tours to ensure potential customers are aware of the tour operator and it possible to share information about the promotions that will be available.

Through these two platforms, the company will be able to reach people who do not seek to travel immediately but may find the tours of Suchitoto Lovers Tours attractive, these people will increase web traffic, providing the opportunity to approach potential customers. Consequently, some people may be interested in the services of the tour operator, consult information about the tours and require the hiring of the services of the company.

The communication channels required to make reservations for the tours are another important aspect, since if the reservation process is complicated and

exhausting for potential customers, it can lead them opting out because they are not familiar with them. For this reason, Suchitoto Lovers Tours will make available to its customers the platforms of e-mail and WhatsApp, so that people can use the communication channel they are most comfortable with.

Secondly, for the previous actions to be properly developed these have been divided according to the skills possessed by Arnoldo Garcia and Estefany Mayorga to have greater efficiency while each activity takes place. All social networks that will be used by the tour operator will be managed by Arnoldo Garcia, sharing information about Suchitoto Lovers Tours services and visual content that conveys the type of experience that would be acquired when hiring the services of the tour operator; Garcia would also be in charge of regularly updating digital content on TripAdvisor, Instagram and Facebook. The management of tour reservations will be handled by Estefany Mayorga using a computer program, Microsoft Excel, so that it can be a better organization of the information of the customers. Likewise, she will resolve all questions raised by e-mail and WhatsApp about the services provided by the company.

Lastly, the promotions that will be offered by Suchitoto Lovers Tours will distinguish them from other tour operators because it will have the purpose of attracting the attention of potential customers while seeking to thank the loyalty of those who already make use of the service. Raffles, discounts, and free travel will be offered as part of the promotions of the tour operator on special dates like anniversaries, Fiestas Agostinas, Mother and Father's Day, and others.

The table 5 provides a summary of the actions to be taken, as well as the respective responsible for each activity and the promotions that provide an improvement to be better placed in the tourism sector.

Table 5*Actions and Activities to Position the Tour Operator in the Market*

Action	Person in charge	Improvement
Use TripAdvisor to reach a target group with an interest in travel.	Arnoldo Garcia: He will create an account on TripAdvisor website to enable people who are planning a trip to consider the services provided by the tour operator. Also, he will be responsible for sharing digital content such as photos and videos on social networks updating it periodically so that potential customers can know the tours and promotions available.	Promotions will be implemented so that some customers can receive some free souvenirs originating from Suchitoto, which is where the tours will be focused, during celebrations such as Mother and Father's Day.
Increase web traffic on Instagram and Facebook to attract customers.		During Fiestas Agostinas, the first 5 customers who request the service will receive a 10% discount.
Facilitate communication through multiple channels, including e-mail and WhatsApp, to ensure that customers can easily communicate and reserve their tours without any difficulty.	Estefany Mayorga: She will be responsible for reviewing and answering messages requesting information on tours and prices that are made via e-mail and WhatsApp. Additionally, she will be responsible for managing the scheduled reservations and maintaining control over them using Microsoft Excel to	A special event will be held for the anniversary of the tour operator in which customers who have already contracted the service may have the opportunity to obtain one of the 3 free trips, bringing a companion with them to any of the tours available as a

	enhance the organization of information.	gesture of gratitude for their loyalty and their preference in choosing Suchitoto Lovers Tours to travel.
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Note. Own elaboration. This table provides the most important points of the recommendations to improve.

2.5.2. Strategic plan for quality design

Instituto Aragonés de Fomento defines the **strategic plan of quality** as the process by which a company defines its reason for being in the market, its desired state in the future, and develops the objectives and concrete actions to reach the desired state (Calidad Total, n.d.). Before starting to design a strategic plan it is necessary to be clear about some terms such as quality, quality management, customer service and customer satisfaction.

Quality is defined as the ability that a product or service offers to meet the needs of customers according to the established parameter of each person according to what this means by quality. To evaluate whether a service is of quality, people compare the elements of this with other services that are carried out in the same business (Lugo, 2022).

Quality management is a strategic tool that allows to keep under control the management of finance, data, accounting, among others. So that it can ensure good internal management of the organization, while evaluating the expectations of the public to provide greater satisfaction (Sydle, 2023).

Customer management refers to the ability that a service or product has to meet the expectations of customers achieving that they have a positive image of the company through effective planning, management and communication (What is Customer Management, 2023).

Customer service is the support that is provided to people before, during or after ordering a service or product. To provide good customer service, the company must be prepared to respond with kindness, empathy, responsibility and agility to any

inconvenience that may be presented to the customer (Servicio de atención al cliente, n.d.).

Customer satisfaction is about the conformity of customers concerning a service or product, this can be determined through surveys and ratings that will help a company identify which areas should improve or change for the customer to be satisfied (WHAT IS CUSTOMER SATISFACTION?, n.d.).

Having an understanding of these terms, Suchitoto Lovers Tours has designed its strategic quality plan to be able to maintain its customers and attract new ones (See Figure 10). First the needs of the customer will be identified, for this purpose, the comments left by them on the TripAdvisor page will be taken into account and a survey will be sent to customers so that they can express their opinion about the services of the tour operator, so that it can continue implementing the aspects with which customers are satisfied and apply improvements in areas where there is a deficiency to provide good service.

Figure 10

Strategic Plan of Suchitoto Lovers Tours



To provide a better service two aspects will be taken into account: communication and customer expectations. Active communication based on good customer service is important because this will help both parties to interact with respect, kindness and empathy, allowing personalized communication in which the person who helps the customer can be proactive and anticipate the needs of the customer. In addition, for communication to be agile, customer service schedules will be established so that the waiting period for a response is reduced and people do not have to wait for hours before receiving a response. Providing good customer support will make people recognize Suchitoto Lovers Tours for this, helping to increase the credibility of the company and therefore building a good reputation that will help the tour operator be more competitive in the market.

Meeting the expectations of the customers is also important because this means that they will be satisfied that they have been given a good experience, receiving the services that the tour operator promised without incurring any deception as additional expenses, false propaganda regarding promotions or non-compliance with return policies; as a result, the tour operator will achieve a positive image that will also create the basis for a good reputation.

A good reputation will build trust, which will help create a long-term bond with customers, as they will be sure of the kind of service they will get when hiring Suchitoto Lovers Tours. This will help the tour operator to obtain the loyalty of customers, which will be able to bring a benefit to the company by providing good references; that is, that the same customers will attract more, so the company will have a constant flow of customers.

As a final result, Suchitoto Lover Tours will be able to obtain financial stability that makes the tour operator more profitable so that it can continue operating.

CHAPTER III

ENTREPRENEUR RESPONSIBILITY

3.1. Profile of the entrepreneur

3.1.1. Definition of entrepreneur

Being an entrepreneur involves making the decision to make the dream business of someone a reality, despite the obstacles that may arise, and looking for opportunities to help a company grow. (Estefany Mayorga)

Being an entrepreneur means taking the chance to create a new idea and turn it into a product or service that can then be a source of income. (Arnoldo Garcia)

From the above, it can be concluded that entrepreneurs are people capable of having initiative and trust that the product or service they start will be successful even if there is no guarantee of it, being optimistic to face the problems that may arise and thus build a stable business that they feel passionate about.

3.1.2. Types of entrepreneurs

Personality, passion, environment and interests are elements that determine the type of entrepreneur that a person who is starting his business or someone who has already established his company. Taking into account the above elements, Suchitoto Lovers Tours considers that company falls into the following typology:

- Creative entrepreneur
- Social entrepreneur

3.1.2.1. Creative entrepreneur

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (2015) defines this type of entrepreneur as those who decide to found a company based on their own product, service or technology that have been developed by themselves. Creative entrepreneurs have a much-appreciated competitive differential, their creative capacity; while some copy, they are creating new products or looking for new processes.⁷

⁷ Adapted from *Manual del Emprendedorismo* (p. 39), by Japan International Cooperation Agency. 2015.

The tour operator identifies itself as creative entrepreneurs since the company that is starting will focus on exploring the cultural wealth that the municipality of Suchitoto possesses and is not well known by people. Although there are some operators in the area, they are concentrated on other types of tourism such as rural tourism, leaving aside the cultural aspect.

3.1.2.2. Social entrepreneur

Universia (2020) defines social entrepreneurs as people who develop a company or a business whose goal is to introduce some positive change in the environment in which it develops its activity, and as long as that business is sustainable, such a goal will be above profitability objectives.

For its part, the tour operator wants to produce a positive change in the municipality of Suchitoto because it seeks to promote the culture of Suchitoto respecting the cultural identity of its inhabitants and create awareness about the importance of protecting natural resources that the city has at the same time that supports local businesses (See Figure 11).

Figure 11

City of Suchitoto and its inhabitants



Note. Suchitoto, El Salvador 061 [Photograph], by Michael Swigart, 2007, Flickr (<https://flic.kr/p/29VRbZ>). CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

3.1.3. Entrepreneurial ecosystem

The National University of the Littoral (n.d.) describes the entrepreneurial ecosystem as a set of actors, factors, relationships and processes that act and interact shaping the conditions for the creation, development and expansion of companies in a geographical space.

Based on the previous concept, it is understood as an ecosystem of the entrepreneur to everything that surrounds it and produces some type of influence at the moment that a person decides to set up a company. In the specific case of the tour operator, Suchitoto Lovers Tours has taken into account the six key areas suggested by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (2015) in which Isenberg (2011) was cited, adapting them to the Salvadoran context:⁸

Market: It consists of customers, channels to reach them and partners with whom pretends to work Suchitoto Lovers Tours, these are broken down below:

- **Customers.** This category includes tourists who are attracted by the culture that is transmitted through the gastronomy, art, tradition and natural resources of Suchitoto.
- **Communication channels.** To get customers to know Suchitoto Lovers Tours, the company will make use of social networks such as Facebook, Instagram and TripAdvisor, so that a target public and a general audience can be reached.
- **Business partners.** Establishing agreements with local businesses will bring economic growth that will benefit both parties, including places such as museums, art galleries, restaurants, among others.

Policies: Currently, in El Salvador there are different laws that aim to help micro and small businesses; among them, it can be mention the following:

- **Law for the Promotion, Protection and Development of Micro and Small Enterprises:** this law promotes entrepreneurship and provides support to improve aspects related to organization, administration, production and financing. To benefit from the support provided by the government through this

⁸ Adapted from *Manual del Emprendedorismo* (p. 14-15), by Japan International Cooperation Agency. 2015.

law; Suchitoto Lovers Tours will take into account the following articles stipulated in the Legislative Decree No. 667 (2014):

TITLE I⁹

GENERAL PROVISIONS

SOLE CHAPTER

OBJECT, NATURE, PURPOSE, APPLICATION AND CLASSIFICATION

Object and Nature

Art.1.- This Law aims to promote the creation, protection, development and strengthening of Micro and Small Enterprises, hereinafter referred to as MSEs, and to contribute to strengthening the competitiveness of existing ones, in order to improve their capacity to generate jobs and added value to production; to promote greater access of women to entrepreneurial development under conditions of equity, and it constitutes the general framework for their integration into the formal economy of the country, by creating an enabling, equitable, inclusive, sustainable and competitive environment for the good functioning and growth of this business sector.

Purpose

Art. 2.- This Law aims to stimulate Micro and Small Enterprises in the development of their competitive capacities for their participation in national and international markets, their partnership and productive chains; facilitating their opening, development, sustainability, closure and settlement through:

- a) To lay the foundations for the planning and implementation of activities aimed at the coordination of Micro and Small Enterprises with territorial development;
- b) Establish an inter-agency coordination system as a tool to support policies for the promotion and development of Micro and Small Enterprises, which harmonizes the management of the various public and private entities;

⁹ Adapted from Ley de Fomento, Protección y Desarrollo de la Micro y Pequeña Empresa (p. 6-7), by Legislative Assembly of the Republic of El Salvador. 2014.

- c) Promote the creation of an entrepreneurial culture of innovation, quality and productivity that contributes to the advancement of production, marketing, distribution and customer service processes of the Micro and Small Enterprises;
- d) Promote the facilitation and simplification of administrative procedures with State entities;
- e) Promote the existence and institutionalization of business programs, instruments and services for the strengthening and development of Micro and Small Enterprises, with emphasis on those aimed at improving the situation and needs of women entrepreneurs;
- f) Effectively expand policies for the promotion and development of Micro and Small Enterprises, promoting greater coordination between the public and private sectors;
- g) Promote access to financial services and resources for Micro and Small Enterprises, increase production, start-ups and consolidate the existing ones.

TITLE II¹⁰

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER I

OF POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

Support for New Ventures

Art. 5.- The Central Government and the Municipalities shall encourage support for new enterprises and existing MSEs, encouraging private investment, promoting the provision of business services and financial services under conditions of gender equity, aimed at improving the levels of organization, administration, production, productive and commercial articulation.

Guidelines

Art. 6.- The action of the State and the Municipalities in the promotion of the MSEs shall be guided by the following strategic guidelines:

¹⁰ Adapted from Ley de Fomento, Protección y Desarrollo de la Micro y Pequeña Empresa (p. 9-10), by Legislative Assembly of the Republic of El Salvador. 2014.

- a) To promote and develop programs and instruments that will stimulate the creation, development and competitiveness of the MSEs in the short, medium and long term, and that will promote the economic, financial, social and environmental sustainability of the actors involved;
 - b) To promote and facilitate the consolidation of business and production networks through the coordination between sectors, at the municipal, departmental, national and international levels, and between productive units of different sizes, promoting the partnership of MSEs and integration into production chains, distributions and lines of activity, with different advantages for employment generation and socioeconomic development;
 - c) Encouraging the entrepreneurial and creative spirit of the population by supporting the creation of new enterprises; promoting private initiative and investment and free competition, and intervening in those activities in which it is necessary to complement the actions carried out by the private sector in support of MSEs;
 - d) Facilitate the effective participation of MSEs in public administration purchases;
 - e) Achieve efficiency in action and inter-agency coordination through specialization by economic activity;
 - f) Actively promote, under conditions of equity, the access of women entrepreneurs to the opportunities offered by programs of promotion, formalization and business development, promoting their access to productive resources, training, technical assistance and financing needed to start or strengthen their businesses;
 - g) Ensure that the design of promotion and development instruments contemplates compliance with the norms and international commitments signed by the State and ratified by the Legislative Assembly.
- **Tourist Law**: This law seeks to promote and regulate the tourism industries in the country. Therefore, to provide a quality service with transparency, ensuring the well-being of customers and cultural heritage, Suchitoto Lovers Tours will comply with the obligations stipulated in the Legislative Decree No. 899 (2010), specifically the articles mentioned below:

CHAPTER IV¹¹

OBLIGATIONS OF PERSONS ENTERED IN THE REGISTER

Art. 12.- Tourist companies have the obligation to provide tourists with objective and truthful information about the places of destination and the conditions of travel, reception and stay.

It will also ensure the absolute transparency of the clauses that they propose to their customers, both in terms of nature, price, reservations and the quality of the facilities they undertake to provide.

Art. 13.- Tourist enterprises, in cooperation with public authorities, shall ensure the safety, prevention of accidents, health protection and food hygiene of those who use their services.

Art. 14.- All infrastructure and tourist activities shall be programmed in such a way as to protect the natural heritage constituting ecosystems and biological diversity, and to preserve endangered species, wild fauna and flora.

Enterprises engaged in tourism activities shall be subject to the limitations imposed by the authorities, when they are exercised in particularly vulnerable areas, such as coastal regions, tropical forests or wetlands, suitable for the creation of natural parks or protected reserves.

Art. 15.- Tourism policies and activities shall be carried out with respect to the artistic, archaeological and cultural heritage; and shall be organized in such a way as to allow the survival, enrichment and flourishing of cultural, artisanal and folkloric production.

This law also has its own General Regulations that support the implementation of the Tourism Law in the Salvadoran territory. Through the Executive Decree No. 108 (2012), Suchitoto Lovers Tours will be able to achieve greater customer satisfaction by ensuring that its tour guides adhere to the following articles:

¹¹ Adapted from Ley de Turismo (p. 4-5), by Legislative Assembly of the Republic of El Salvador. 2010.

CHAPTER III¹²
OF TOURISM COMPANIES

General obligations

Art. 11.- Tourist companies, as established in articles 12, 13 and 14 of the Law, shall be subject to the following obligations:

- a) Display to their customers and visitors, the price of their products or services, as well as the taxes and special contributions that affect them and the currency in which they must pay;
- b) Comply with hygiene, safety, health and environmental and other legally established standards;
- c) Display in a visible place the regulations, general conditions of service and use of the facilities of the establishment;
- d) Respect the rights of visitors as consumers according to current regulations;
- e) Comply with other legal obligations according to the nature of the establishment.

GENERAL REGULATION OF THE TOURISM LAW

CHAPTER VII¹³

TOURIST INFORMATION COMPANIES

Facilities

Art. 31.- Tourist guides, to provide their services, will have access to areas open to the public in museums, monuments, archaeological zones and in general, to any site of tourist interest, as well as to public areas of reception of lodging establishments, during the performance of their activities, subject in any case to the rules of access and establishment.

Information

¹² Adapted from Reglamento General de la Ley de Turismo (p. 4), by Presidency of the Republic of El Salvador. 2012.

¹³ Adapted from Reglamento General de la Ley de Turismo (p. 10), by Presidency of the Republic of El Salvador. 2012.

Art. 32.- The tourist guide, in the provision of his services, must inform the tourist at least the following:

- a) Maximum number of people in the group;
- b) Rate that applies if the service is contracted directly with him;
- c) The language(s) in which explanations will be given;
- d) The duration of their services; and
- e) The other elements that allow the tourist to know with certainty the scope of such services.

Obligations

Art. 33.- Natural or legal persons engaged in the service of tourist guides shall have the following obligations:

- a) Comply with service arrangements agreed to with their customers;
- b) Ensure that guides perform proper conduct at their workplaces and do not perform their duties while intoxicated or under the influence of narcotics;
- c) Do not hinder the development of the activity of other tourism service companies; and
- d) Comply with the provisions of the Law and its Regulations.

To strengthen the national and local economy, new policies were also implemented by the government, such as:

- ***Policy for Promotion and Development of Micro and Small Enterprises.*** It focuses on increasing the competitiveness, productivity, sustainability and partnership of MSEs with the aim of improving the capacity to generate jobs and added value (CONAMYPE, n. d.).
- ***The National Entrepreneurship Policy.*** It looks to facilitate access to tools for the development of entrepreneurship through various training programs (National Commission for Micro and Small Enterprises, 2019).

Although there are laws and policies in favor of entrepreneurship, there are also organizations that play an important role in this area such as CONAMYPE¹⁴, whose

¹⁴ Acronym in Spanish, meaning: Comisión Nacional de la Micro y Pequeña Empresa.

function is to promote entrepreneurship through different programs, some of them are focused on training people. For example, “Un Pueblo, Un Producto” program that spotlights the use of local resources to create products and services that encourage the pride of the Salvadorans identity (National Commission for Micro and Small Enterprises, 2019).

In addition, ISO (International Organization for Standardization) are internationally available norms. Global Suite Solutions (2023) describes them as a set of internationally recognized standards that were created with the aim of helping companies establish levels of homogeneity in relation to management, service delivery and product development in the industry. ISO are grouped into series or families:

- **Quality management:** It ensures that no matter the size or activity of a company, the quality standards of the services and products of public and private organizations are equal.
- **Environmental management:** It refers to standards that set parameters for companies to understand problems or challenges related to the environment, so that companies organize all their activities fulfilling the current legislation and creating awareness of a situation that affects the society.
- **Risk and safety management:** As the name suggests, are rules or systems whose objective is to avoid or minimize the different risks that are generated from the business activity.
- **Management of social responsibility:** It is dedicated to helping the company or organization to maintain an ethical, transparent and honest behavior as part of its overall management model.

Suchitoto Lovers Tours will make sure to adhere to certain standards that aim to provide quality service while avoiding environmental harm and ensuring that its employees are safeguarded. To perform these tasks, the tour operator must abide the regulations listed below:

- **ISO 9001: Quality Management System**

This international standard sets forth the procedures and minimum requirements for implementing this system, which controls the quality of all processes of products and services offered by a company. By adopting this standard, the tour

operator can optimize the operations of the company, become more proficient in the market, and continuously improve (BSI Group, n.d.).

➤ **ISO 14001: Environmental Management System**

The purpose of this international standard is to encourage companies to develop their activities without causing harm to the environment, while also promoting the preservation of nature and its resources. By setting up this environmental management system, the corporate image can be improved in front of regulatory authorities and the government; in addition, Suchitoto Lovers Tours will make sure that the area is not polluted by tourists who participate in the tours, to prevent the natural resources from degrading or suffering irreparable damage (Escuela Europea de Excelencia, 2016).

➤ **ISO 45001: Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems - Requirements with guidance for use**

These international standards are meant to guarantee the occupational health and safety of both organization employees and tourists using its services. Moreover, the purpose of this policy is to prevent situations that could cause injury or threaten the lives of either employees or customers of a company (NQA Organismo de Certificación Global, n.d.).

Financing: There are different ways to obtain an initial capital, the Inter-American Development Bank of El Salvador¹⁵ offers different lines of credit for entrepreneurs such as Green Climate Fund, which is responsible for financing projects of MSEs that are friendly to the environment and that help reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Negocios Rentables, 2022).

On the other hand, there are also angel investors who provide financial support to new and small businesses. In El Salvador there are angel investors that are known to the general public, some of them include First Tuesday, Pacific Angel Investor Network and the Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development¹⁶ Investor Network (Negocios Rentables, 2022).

¹⁵ BANDESAL according to its acronym in Spanish.

¹⁶ According to its Spanish acronym, FUSADES.

In view of the above, Suchitoto Lovers Tours has considered two possible options to acquire capital that allows it to start operations. The first option is through angel investors, to make this possible, an investigation will be run to find the most suitable investor that wants to invest in the tourism area; however, if it is not possible to acquire seed capital by an angel investor, a bank credit will be requested, selecting the one that provides the best conditions for the tour operator and whose requirements can be met.

Culture: It is the set of values and skills that allow a company to face the obstacles that may arise in the process to reach the objectives that have been established. To have a good culture, Suchitoto Lovers tours gives importance to the following aspects:

- **Tolerance to the risk of failure.** It will help the company grow, facing the fear that some decisions cannot always generate the expected result and learning how to transform failures into strengths that can be applied in future projects.
- **Motivation and perseverance.** These two elements are key when developing projects, because if there is no motivation for the business that is being created, it is easy for an entrepreneur to surrender to the difficulty.
- **Creativity.** This is what will help the tour operator to find new ways to innovate and differentiate Suchitoto Lovers Tours from the competition.
- **Adaptation.** It refers to the ability to observe, analyze and identify what works in the market and what the public wants in order to detect areas that can be used to provide added value to the tour operator. A clear example of this is Emily Weiss, the founder of the cosmetics company Glossier and the blog Into the Gloss, who started by providing advice on beauty routines, but, through her work at Vogue, managed to identify what was being offered in the beauty sector and what were the demands of her followers, thus adapting to the market, she managed to establish her company (Ordoñez, 2020).
- **Responsibility.** It is about taking charge of the consequences that may entail the decisions and actions taken by the tour operator; it also refers to the commitment to be responsible with the projects, employees, business partners and those who are influenced by the company, to achieve success.

Support: In this aspect there are some private companies that have incubators such as the GERMINA company that provide support to enterprises focused on the use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and the Gloria de Kriete foundation that seeks to create an economic, social and environmental impact by supporting entrepreneurship (Programa De Incubación Fundación Gloria Kriete, 2023; Universidad Francisco Gavidia, n.d.). Likewise, the government is not far behind, as the National Entrepreneurship Policy of El Salvador has allowed the installation of incubators and coworking spaces for universities and private actors to respond to the needs of entrepreneurs (National Commission for Micro and Small Enterprises, (2019).

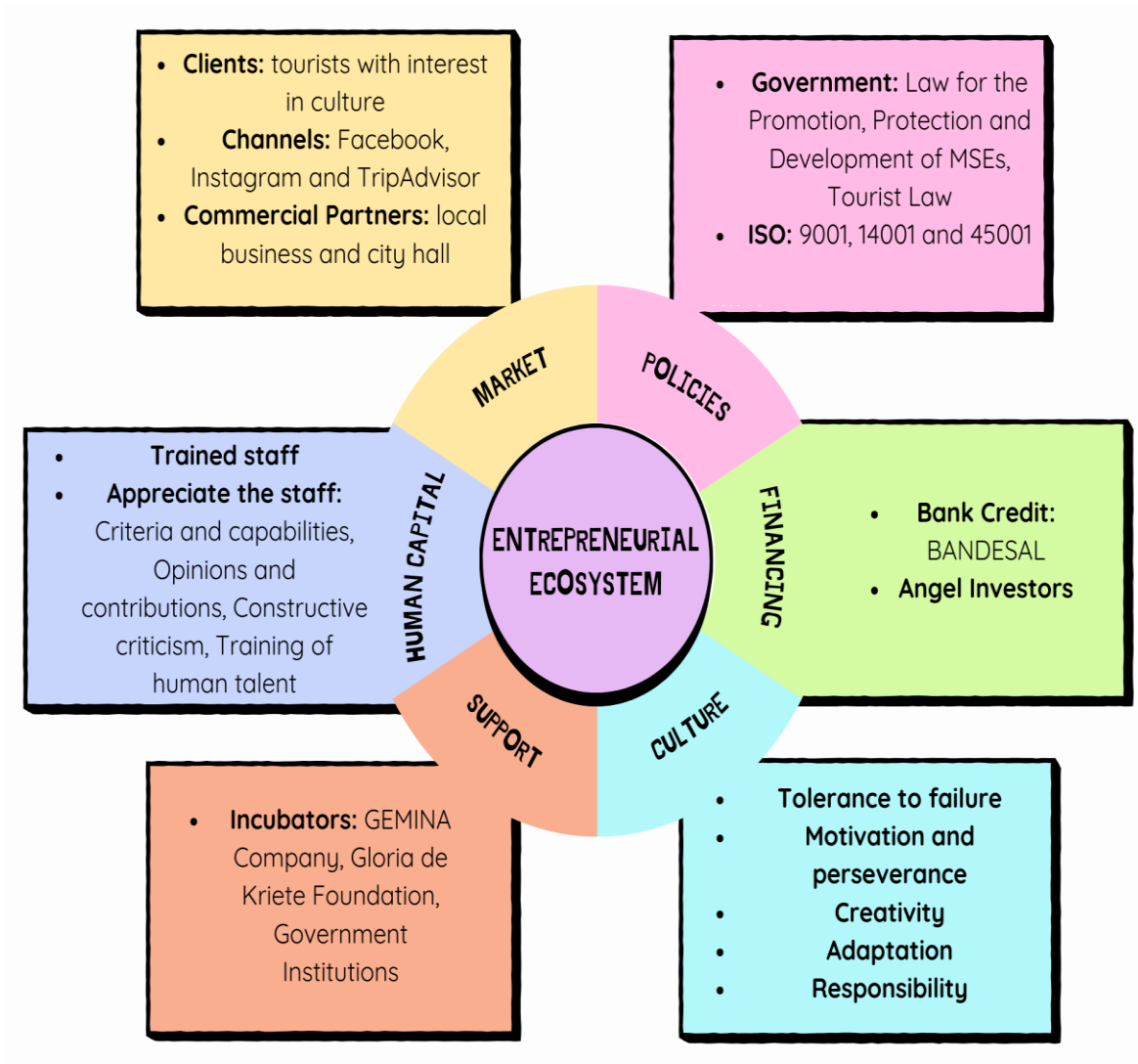
Human Capital: Another essential aspect in an organization are the skills, aptitudes, experiences and knowledge that employees have, as they are the ones who will help Suchitoto Lovers Tours to face the difficulties that may arise. Therefore, it will be important to incorporate trained personnel for a successful performance; in addition, it is also essential that employees feel that the tour operator values them, this can be demonstrated with the following actions towards the employees:

- Relying on their criteria and capabilities
- Listening to their opinions and contributions
- Encouraging them to improve by providing constructive criticism
- Promoting the training of human talent

Below, in Figure 12 is a diagram that summarizes the important elements for the ecosystem of the entrepreneur Suchitoto Lovers Tours.

Figure 12

Entrepreneurial ecosystem



3.1.4. Competences and characteristics of the entrepreneur

To perform a job in the right way an entrepreneur must have certain skills because these are the ones that will help him to provide a quality service or product.

The competences also include certain characteristics that describe what an entrepreneur needs to possess, as they will follow him step by step along the way to get his company established. The tour operator considers that it has the following competencies linked to the achieved, commitment and leadership:

Table 6*Important aspects of being an entrepreneur*

Competences	Characteristics	
Linked to the achievement	Perseverance	Since Suchitoto Lovers Tours has no experience in entrepreneurship, some situations may arise where there may be difficulties in how to address and overcome them. Therefore, it is likely that sometimes our decisions may not be the most accurate and Suchitoto Lovers Tours can end up failing, but the important thing is that the tour operator will continue to try and analyze the errors to learn from them.
	Demand for quality	The services offered by Suchitoto Lovers Tours will consist of a travel of high-quality service and a professional attitude by workers.
	Calculated risk	Before making decisions, Suchitoto Lovers Tours will analyze the possible consequences that these can generate, so that the tour operator can effectively identify which decisions bring greater benefit to the company.
	Tolerance	Nobody can be 100% sure of the results of the decisions made, because certain factors may appear that were not foreseen and that may influence the final result, tolerance is necessary in order not to be adversely affected by uncertain situations.

Linked to the commitments	Clear objectives	It is important not to forget the objectives and to be flexible when creating plans and establishing the actions necessary to achieve them.
	Compliance with commitments	It is essential to fulfill commitments with customers, partner companies and with the company itself, because this will help the tour operator to analyze if the obligations are being properly developed and identify the areas of opportunities that can be improved.
	Search for information	As inexperienced people in the area of entrepreneurship, the company will aim to be updated to trends in the market to determine what customers are looking for and to know what Suchitoto Lovers Tours can offer them. The tour operator will also seek to keep abreast of the appropriate tools so that the internal processes of the company can be carried out more effectively.
	Planning and follow-up	The tour operator will seek to make good use of the time and resources available, determining which responsibilities should be carried out in a certain period of time; moreover, it will be analyzed if changes are necessary to optimize processes within the tour operator.
Linked to leadership	Construction of contact networks	To have a more profitable business, The tour operator will try to establish alliances with local businesses in the municipality of

		Suchitoto, so that establishments and Suchitoto Lovers Tours can benefit each other.
	Communication skills	It is necessary to be able to express clearly the ideas that can bring the company closer to its objectives, avoiding misunderstandings that may cause delays in the progress of the company.
	Teamwork skills	Through teamwork, it will be possible for coworkers to improve their abilities to socialize; this can lead employees to support each other to complement their skills when working together, increasing their creativity and achieving easier set objectives.
	Ability to improve areas of opportunity	Transforming difficulties into situations that may favor the company or that may prevent it from being affected is important to grow, since no one else will solve the problems of the tour operator and if this continues Suchitoto Lovers Tours will fail because it will not be able to perform properly.
	Skills to negotiate	<p>Creating good interpersonal relationships with all the people involved in the project will help the tour operator to create a healthy working environment and to make the ties with other companies more durable.</p> <p>Also, this ability will be helpful when</p>

		dealing with complaints that some customers may submit.
	Self-confidence	Self-confidence is an important factor because there may be people who do not believe in the idea of promoting culture through tourism in Suchitoto and their opinions may be negative, so if we as a company do not have self-confidence, the outside opinions can affect the tour operator, resulting in giving up on pursuing the goals of Suchitoto Lovers Tour.
	Initiative	This is important because it refers to the ability to move from an idea to materialize it.

Note. Own elaboration. This table contains the competences and features that will be useful for the tour operator to succeed.

3.1.5. Barriers when undertaking

Obstacles to entrepreneurship are something that every person starting a business should expect, as it is normal for each entrepreneur to face them, especially if they have little experience; however, to identify these barriers, solutions can be found to overcome the situation in a short or long period of time. Suchitoto Lovers Tours is not the exception, below are the barriers that have been speculated that the tour operator will have to face in the future:

Table 7*Common difficulties faced by an entrepreneur*

Barriers	Description
Lack of experience in the sector	This aspect can affect the tour operator because if the company does not properly inform or consult information on the areas in which there is a knowledge deficiency, Suchitoto Lovers Tours will make decisions that may not be the most appropriate for the development of the organization.
Financing	This is one of the barriers of Suchitoto Lovers tours, since the company do not have our own assets to help with the establishment of the tour operator; in addition, while there are organizations that allow credit to be obtained, it is difficult to determine the best option and to verify that the requirements for initial funding are met.
Lack of knowledge of the market	This barrier is important because as a tour operator that is starting operations, it may not have many customers, so it will be necessary to be persistent and look for ways to enter the market, so that people can recognize the service, the attention and quality that will be given to them. In this regard, the recommendations of customers who have already made use of the service and are satisfied with the tours can help the company to achieve its goals.
Underestimate the competition	Although there are no prominent tour operators in Suchitoto, there are small businesses that are focused on tourism and their years of experience working in the municipality qualify them as a competition. To remain unaffected, the tour operator will concentrate on its distinctive features and services by providing personalized attention that allows customers to feel important when

	traveling with Suchitoto Lovers Tours.
Logistical difficulty	The greatest challenge that could arise is the journey from the port of Suchitlán to Ermitaño island, as during the rainy season, the water level rises, increasing the risk of boats overturning and causing accidents for customers.
Insufficient procurement of services	As previously mentioned, being unknown in the market can lead to certain complications, such as only a small percentage of clients opting for the services of Suchitoto Lovers Tours when starting operations. Nevertheless, the tour operator will make an effort to take some measures to overcome this obstacle.

Note. Own elaboration. This table details the difficulties that have been speculated that Suchitoto Lover Tours will have to overcome to stay in the market.

3.1.6. Success factors

Achieving set goals and being an entrepreneur is not an easy task; however, there are some important factors that contribute to the success of a business. Suchitoto Lovers Tours has listed the factors that will play a significant role in strengthening the stability of the company in the table below:

Table 8

Aspects to effectively position a company in the market

Factors	Description
Strategy	A strategy will be established detailing how to proceed through the different processes within the company, specifying deadlines and actions to be performed to enable the tour operator to operate effectively from the inside. Additionally, it will be determined how to maintain a lasting relationship with customers in the most appropriate way.

Structure	The profile required for each job position will be analyzed so that people with the right skills can be selected to effectively carry out the responsibilities required for the job. Likewise, it will be necessary for them to have the required social skills to respect their colleagues and work as a team.
System	To reach potential customers, fulfill their needs, and manage financial profits properly, the tour operator will set up systems for production, financial, and commercial activities. Moreover, the tour operator will seek to have a better internal organization through a direction and management system, which will provide better control of operations. Lastly, having an information system will enable the company to have a better understanding of the functioning of the company, which will aid in decision-making.
Staff	The company will hire sufficient staff to carry out its activities, delegating duties based on their abilities.
Competences	To achieve the expected results, it is important to ensure that the hired staff has complementary skills, aptitudes, and attitudes to support each other.
Shared values	The importance of shared values, represented through the ethics and philosophy of a company, lies in its influence to guide the decisions of a company, creating a sense of community among its employees.

Note. Own elaboration. In this table, each factor has been addressed describing the utility that will have within the company.

3.2. Responsibility

3.2.1. Entrepreneurship responsibility

Disha Katuria (2017) provides her own definition of the term responsibility as the following:

Responsibility is one's ability to respond in a given situation or with another person. And our responses are based on the quality of information we possess with respect to products and people, and are thus determined by what we know... A truly responsible entrepreneur is an individual who has assessed their ability to recognise an existing problem and found a viable solution to make the quality of life in general a little better for humanity.

So, to be a good entrepreneur there are certain responsibilities that must be fulfilled, Belén Gómez (2021) mentions that these must be aimed at five audiences:

- Your customers
- Your employees
- Your society
- The environment
- With yourself

3.2.1.1. Responsibility to customers

It is very important to be attentive in the way in which it is addressed to customers, for that it is necessary to take into account the following points:

- Provide high-quality service that meets customer expectations.
- Provide honest information to customers about products and services, while avoiding misleading advertising to gain profit.
- Effectively address questions, complaints, and suggestions from individuals requesting the service.
- Provide personalized communication that gives them a sense of convenience to know that their needs are being heard, in order to ensure that they will re-request the services of the company.

3.2.1.2. Responsibility to employees

The role of employees in the company is significant because they are like gear wheels that work together to achieve a goal. To ensure the proper functioning of the organization, the entrepreneur must ensure that his employees are satisfied with their work. This can be achieved by meeting the following aspects:

- To ensure a positive work environment, it is important to promote it, as many employees leave companies due to a negative atmosphere. On the contrary, workers will feel comfortable and value staying in the company if they are in a place with companionship and respect.
- Use language that avoids denigrating comments to give feedback.
- Acknowledge accomplishments of employees either by offering an incentive or congratulating them on their performance.
- A fair salary will make members of the organization feel valued, which will have a significant impact on the productivity of the organization.
- Provide workers with the benefits stipulated by law.

3.2.1.3. Responsibility to your society

Suchitoto Lovers Tours needs to fulfill certain legal responsibilities to establish itself as a company, as it will create jobs and economic gains. The following are some of them which each company has to fulfill to society according to TecnoSoluciones (n.d.):

- Register the company. First, the tour operator must identify the type of company that needs to be registered, and then it must be registered at the National Records Center¹⁷. Also, Suchitoto Lovers Tours must obtain the Tax Identification Number (NIF, its Spanish acronym) and since employees will be hired, the Taxpayer Registration Number¹⁸ will be required.
- Create a bank account for business purposes to separate personal and company funds.

¹⁷ CNR, acronym in Spanish, meaning: Centro Nacional de Registro.

¹⁸ In Spanish, NRC is the acronym for it.

- Ensure that the company and employees are registered on the Salvadoran Institute of Social Security¹⁹.
- Register the company with the Ministry of Labour and present employment contracts if there are any employees.
- By joining the Chamber of Commerce, the company will have the opportunity to participate in free workshops, seminars, and great events (Cámara de Comercio e Industria de El Salvador, n.d.).

The tax return is another of the legal responsibilities of each company, and it can be seen in the current corporate tax rate of 30%; TecnoSoluciones (n.d.) mentions that each company must pay the following taxes:

- Value Added Tax (IVA by its acronym in Spanish): which is currently established at 13% on the sale of goods and services.
- Income Tax Withholdings: Companies are responsible for withholding income tax on wages, professional fees and payments to foreign entities, which will then be remitted to the appropriate tax authority.
- Payment to Account: This is a monthly payment that is contingent on the percentage of the gross income of the companies.

3.2.1.4. Responsibility to the environment

Natural resources are crucial for both the inhabitants of Suchitoto and Suchitoto Lovers Tours; so, the tour operator will make sure that the locations included in the tours are not affected or altered due to the organized visits. In order for this to be achievable, tourists will be informed about certain rules that must be adhered to:

- It is necessary to deposit the garbage in the designated dump, if they do not find one, the tourists will have to contact the group guide to drop off organic or inorganic waste in a garbage bag that he will be carrying with him.
- If customers want to listen to music, they are advised to use a low volume that will not affect people or animals around them, thus preventing noise pollution.
- Smoking during the tour is not permitted as it can pollute the air both indoors and outdoors. Furthermore, tobacco smoke contains three types of greenhouse

¹⁹ ISSS by its acronym in Spanish.

gases that include carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide (Estado Peruano, 2023).

In addition to the rules mentioned above, information will be provided about the green areas included in the tours to ensure that when visiting these places, they are aware of the significance of maintaining these ecosystems in good condition.

3.1.1.5. Responsibilities to yourself

When a company is established, it is expected that the entrepreneur will guide it. Therefore, it is crucial that the tour operator is committed to meeting its obligations; for this, it is of great importance to have passion for the business that will develop and enjoy the theme on which the venture will focus. Additionally, there are other measures that need to be taken:

- Determine the areas where training is required when the knowledge of the entrepreneur is not enough.
- The importance of balancing work and personal life should not be overlooked (See Figure 13).
- Maintaining a reasonable work schedule without frequently working overtime. To generate results quickly, it is not advisable to sacrifice the health of the body and shorten sleep periods.
- To prevent health from deteriorating, try to maintain a healthy routine that incorporates proper eating and exercise.

Figure 13

Responsibility of an entrepreneur



Note. Businessman Juggling the Pressures of Work and Family [Illustration], Wannapik, 2015, Wannapik (<https://www.wannapik.com/vectors/5527>). CC BY 3.0

Professional training, stress management, and physical and mental health are all factors that can affect an entrepreneur; considering that, it is advisable to allocate the appropriate time to each of them so that the tour operator can obtain benefits.

3.2.2. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

To the Editorial RS y S (2022), the commitment of a company and trust towards its employees and families is a key factor in corporate social responsibility. Therefore, it aims to contribute to sustainable human development for both society and the local community, with the aim of improving the quality of life for everyone in the community. This responsibility is not restricted to large companies alone. As an organization that intends to start operations, there are some measures that can be taken without destabilizing the tour operator economically:

- Boosting economic growth
- Promote local culture
- Raising awareness of the significance of the environment
- Volunteering
- Donations

3.2.2.1. Boosting economic growth

When conducting tours focusing on Suchitoto, the tour operator will be a means of attracting tourists to the community, this will result in the establishment of a constant flow of people who consume local products and use the services available on Suchitoto. Therefore, the economic sector will grow and improve the quality of life of local people due to better incomes.

3.2.2.2. Promote local culture

The tour operator will aim to highlight the culture of the municipality through the tours in the different places, thus visitors will know the customs and traditions that take place there. For example, through the designs on the products made by artisans (bracelets, necklaces, and earrings), tourists can get a sense of the roots of this place. Additionally, houses and the church of Santa Lucía will also exhibit their colonial architecture, and since its pre-hispanic features are part of the history of the municipality, many tourists will have the opportunity to learn from it.

3.2.2.3. Raising awareness of the significance of the environment

Promoting the culture of environmental care through tours and publicizing the wonders of the municipality is one of the goals to be accomplished. It will also aim to raise awareness of the consequences that could occur if these resources are not taken into consideration, since some places could disappear due to pollution or would become harmful to human health, in the same way that it would alter the flora and fauna. For example, Lake Suchitlán is impacted by pollution, which affects the various types of fish that live there. In addition, if there is no action taken, the animal and plant species in the area will cease to exist.

3.2.2.4. Volunteering

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2016) considers that volunteering is a form of social assistance that involves providing human and material resources; performing altruistic work necessary for a specific purpose or cause.

The Art Center for Peace (n.d.-a) in Suchitoto offers volunteering opportunities, it appreciates the efforts of those who want to aid them in the struggle for social welfare through art, being the main beneficiaries of children, girls and youth of the municipality. Volunteering can be done by working in areas such as the Media Library, the Café, the Community Museum, the Casa del Sol Hostal, helping in the workshops or with accounting administrative operations (Art Center for Peace, n.d.-b). To support this altruistic cause, the tour operator will promote volunteering among both employees and customers of Suchitoto Lovers Tours and information on telephone numbers and email addresses to contact the Art of Peace Center will be given.

3.2.2.5. Donations

Donations are actions that are not done for the purpose of receiving a reward, just like volunteering. In the case of Suchitoto Lovers Tours, this social work cannot be done when the company is starting; however, it is expected that if the tour operator has a stable economy, it will be able to donate to the Art of Peace Center, which also accepts this type of support.

3.3. Niche market

3.3.1. Definition

Study Smarter (n.d.) explains that a niche market “involves outlining and understanding the needs and wants of customers in a small (niche) market segment. Niche segments are usually created by identifying needs and wants that are not addressed by the Mass market or by other businesses.”

3.3.2. Blue Ocean Strategy

The Blue Ocean strategy is a concept developed by Kim and Mauborgne, who propose to imagine the competitive universe in two oceans: the red oceans and the blue oceans (SEFOET Fortalecimiento Empresarial, 2021). The red oceans represent all the existing industries in the market that seek to prevail over their rivals. On the other hand, the blue oceans refer to areas in the market that have not yet been explored or defined and that present a greater opportunity for growth (SEFOET Fortalecimiento Empresarial, 2021).

Another important element of this strategy is value innovation, as this is considered its cornerstone. One of the dogmas of the competition-based strategy is that one must choose between value and costs, a situation that sometimes leads to the demand for a service or product falling rather than increasing. In contrast to this strategy, the blue oceans look to provide a different product or service than what is available in the market at a cost that does not imply a loss for customers (SEFOET Fortalecimiento Empresarial, 2021).

To implement this strategy, Suchitoto Lovers Tours chose to identify a market that has not yet been fully explored and that allows it to take advantage of growth opportunities without having to compete with the other tour operators that already exist in the area, as these specialize in other areas.

Suchitoto is a beautiful place to do tourism standing out for its colonial architecture, with its cobbled streets, culture and natural wealth that attract national and international tourists; however, a study conducted by CORSATUR & MITUR²⁰ (2015) shown that people traveled to the place on their own without requesting the

²⁰ Acronym in Spanish, meaning: Corporación Salvadoreña de Turismo.

services of any tour operator. So, it can be understood that this is an area of the market with the potential to start a business where competition is not important.

Another important aspect is that given the great offer that exists in Suchitoto, by forming alliances with local businesses, the tour operator can reach agreements that provide mutual benefit, resulting in a costs reduction and tour packages at a low price to provide a quality service focused on the satisfaction of customers who want to know about the cultural vestiges of Suchitoto without having to set exorbitant prices; which means, the market to be addressed has the characteristics of the strategy of the blue ocean differing from the red ocean that Chepkonga (2023) exposes:

- A market space that is free of competition
- Turn the competition into a thing of the past
- Create and take advantage of new demand
- Break the value-cost equation

3.3.3. Elements to choose a niche market

It is advisable for every company to be clear about its niche market, because trying to reach all audiences can be counterproductive since not all people seek to meet the same needs. The niche market of Suchitoto Lovers Tours was identified through the use of the elements proposed by Real Fun Marketing (2022).

3.3.3.1. Target audience

To determine the target audience, the study carried out by CORSATUR & MITUR (2015) was taken into account, which specifies the characteristics of tourists visiting Suchitoto, as well as their preferences and reasons for traveling to this municipality.²¹

The study mentions that most national and international visitors arriving in Suchitoto are between the ages of 24 to 49. These people mainly seek to relax among family and friends, while enjoying the cultural heritage of the municipality through walks and visits to museums, restaurants, galleries and shops. In addition, visitors

²¹ Adapted from *SUCHITOTO: PLAN MAESTRO PARA EL DESARROLLO TURÍSTICO MUNICIPAL* (1st ed., p. 47-49), by CORSATUR & MITUR. 2015.

tend to travel to Suchitoto in their own vehicle and most respondents of the study spend between \$26 and \$75 USD (CORSATUR & MITUR, 2015).

According to this information, Suchitoto Lovers Tours believes it is advantageous to concentrate on national and foreign tourists who are between the ages of 15 and 50 that are looking for tourist packages with affordable prices that focus on cultural tourism and its branches (gastronomic tourism, natural tourism, architectural tourism, religious tourism and artistic tourism), with a one-day duration to explore museums, art galleries, restaurants, handicraft shops, and the main tourist attractions in Suchitoto: Santa Lucía Church, Los Tercios waterfall and Suchitlán Lake.

3.3.3.2. Problem

Traveling can be a challenge for some tourists when it comes to finding information. They present the following questions:

- What is the best way to get to the municipality?
- What are the places they should visit?
- What are the opening hours of local businesses?
- What are the festivities that take place in Suchitoto and when is it possible to attend them?

When all these questions are asked, the tourist is more likely to feel stressed rather than enjoy the process of traveling.

3.3.3.3. Desired outcome

Provide tours that allow tourists to have a good time while immersing themselves in the culture of Suchitoto by visiting places that catch their attention without worrying about the costs, the transportations options they should use or any other doubt relating to the organization of the tours.

3.3.3.4. Secret sauce

Rural tourism, adventure tourism, and ecotourism are the main focus of most tour operators located in the municipality; so, activities and visits to tourist destinations will be conducted by Suchitoto Lovers Tours to connect tourists with the cultural heritage of Suchitoto. In addition, as a distinctive feature, tours will cover transportation

expenses and entry to tourist destinations, since the tour packages of some companies in Suchitoto do not include these services.

3.3.4. Suchitoto Lovers Tours niche market

Suchitoto Lovers Tours is dedicated to offering trips that bring calm and knowledge about the culture of Suchitoto to teens and adults who are looking for a quality experience at an affordable price while all aspects related to the travel organization are taken care of by the tour operator.

3.3.5. Characteristics of the tourist service niche market

In order to define a niche that currently did not have much competition and in which there was potential to grow, Suchitoto Lovers Tours took into consideration the following characteristics:

- **They are potential customers who have unmet needs:** There are 7 tour operators in Suchitoto, but only 2 of them enhance the cultural aspect; however, one of them does not have prices that are affordable for many people, and the other does not provide transportation to reach the municipality.
- **The niche encompasses individuals who have a variety of preferences and characteristics that are similar to each other:** The study conducted in 2015 by CORSATUR & MITUR was used to determine the customers to whom the tour operator is directing; through this, it was discovered that tourists who visit Suchitoto do so because they are interested in its cultural wealth.²² Moreover, they share an attraction for sightseeing to have fun with their family or friends.
- **Despite being a small group, they are not overly limited:** Peña (2021) has confirmed that the offer available in Suchitoto, as well as the influx of tourists has increased over time. He referred to this municipality as the capital of Salvadoran tourism due to its attractions.
- **Their purchasing power allows them to pay for the service and make the business profitable.** In accordance with the blue ocean strategy, Suchitoto

²² Adapted from *SUCHITOTO: PLAN MAESTRO PARA EL DESARROLLO TURÍSTICO MUNICIPAL* (1st ed., p. 47-49), by CORSATUR & MITUR. 2015.

Lovers Tours will strive to ensure that the expenses of tourists are within a reasonable range, in order to prevent traveling from becoming a luxury.

- **The features of niche services are very specific.** Their age range, preferences, and needs are incorporated into the niche market.

3.5. Customer management

3.5.1. Definition

Customer management involves knowing how to understand and manage the needs of customers to improve the relationship with them, create loyalty, attract new customers and improve the reputation of the company (CoSchedule, n.d.).

3.5.2. Strategies for the effective management of tourist service customers

To maintain a lasting relationship with customers, Suchitoto Lovers Tours will implement the following strategies that will provide customers with better service:

- **Have good control of the customer database.** Updating customer data is essential to be able to identify who is the target of the service and what they are looking for, in order to provide adequate attention based on their profile.
- **Accessible means of communication.** To address any doubts customers may have about the services of the tour operator, WhatsApp and Email platforms will be used. In addition, for more effective communication, schedules will be set so that potential customers can have an immediate response.
- **Conflict resolution.** In certain situations, it may be challenging to meet customer demands immediately, which can result in a negative situation. To face this kind of cases, Suchitoto Lovers Tours will try to solve this problem in order to provide a quality service that helps to obtain the loyalty of the people who make use of the tour operator.
- **Keep track of customer needs.** This aspect is of great significance to the tour operator, because if customers have any inconvenience that prevents them from using the previously contracted service and wish to request a change of dates or a refund, it is necessary for Suchitoto Lovers Tours to offer a successful solution with personalized attention that can support customer loyalty.
- **Provide a comprehensive experience before, during, and after a service is requested.** Customers are influenced by how well a customer is treated throughout the process, from the time they acquire the service until they receive it, to decide whether or not to re-hire the services of the tour operator. Therefore, Suchitoto Lovers Tours will strive to provide a positive experience

for those who consult information about the tours until they have visited the location and give their opinions about their experience.

- **Pay attention to the feedback.** Receiving feedback from customers is essential but it is even more important that the tour operator understands it and makes good use of it (See Figure14). Positive or negative feedback from the tours will help identify if there are any problems with the service, as well as the actions that are working and should be continued to be implemented, so that customers perceive their opinions as valuable.

Figure 14

Opinions of the Customers Regarding the Tourist Service



Note. Feedback-G95f96811e [Image], by Athree23, 2018, Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Feedback-g95f96811e_1920.jpg). CC0 1.0

3.6. Strategic alliances

3.6.1. Definition

Irene López (2013) describes a strategic alliance as:

An arrangement between two separate businesses to partner on a mutually beneficial project, while each business still retains independence. These partnerships are usually long-term in nature, with each business bringing its expertise and resources to the table to achieve mutual goals and growth.

Strategic alliances play an important role in acquiring benefits that a company cannot easily obtain on its own, due to factors such as shortage of staff or inability to access certain resources (See Figure 15). These partnerships aid in expanding market opportunities by providing knowledge, resources, and positively impacting the reputation of the company (Kenton, 2022).

3.6.2. Types of alliances

In the world of entrepreneurship, each company seeks to achieve objectives through its own efforts. One of the ways to achieve the desired goal is through alliances with other companies; however, it is important that these are done in an appropriate way that equally benefits all parties involved.

First of all, it is necessary to identify what type of alliance is capable of providing greater benefits. Vendimia divides strategic alliances into two types: horizontal alliances and vertical alliances. Horizontal alliances are collaborations that arise when companies are associated with others that are part of the same value chain, that is, competitors (Vendimia, n.d.). On the other hand, vertical alliances refer to the collaborations between companies that operate in different phases of the value chain such as customers and suppliers (Vendimia, n.d.).

Based on the previous mentioned, Suchitoto Lovers Tours has decided that it will focus on creating **vertical alliances** since it will try to collaborate with the city hall, restaurants, museums and art galleries in the municipality, in order to obtain better prices to reduce costs that will be beneficial for the tour operator; likewise, the businesses involved will obtain a favorable profit since Suchitoto Lovers Tours will provide clients to these local companies.

Figure 15

Alliances with Local Businesses to Provide a Better Service



Note. Photo of Casa de la abuela, a business established at Suchitoto provided by Laura Monge.

3.6.3. Selection criteria for alliance partners

Although alliances can be advantageous, they need to be formed according to specific criteria to be successful. The factors that Suchitoto Lovers Tours will be mindful of are listed below:

- **Strategic compatibility.** It is necessary to have a clear understanding of the objectives, values, and vision of the companies that Suchitoto Lovers Tours wants to partner with to prevent both parties from being disappointed. This will be reflected mainly when making decisions because if the aspects previously mentioned are aligned, the decisions taken will respect them and the possibility of discrepancies will be reduced.
- **Complementarity of capacities and resources.** The alliance partners can benefit more if there is a synergy between capacities and resources. The strengths of two individuals can work together to take full advantage of the skills, knowledge, technology, networks, customer base, reputation, or distribution channels they possess.

- **Adaptability to change.** To maintain a stable position in the market it is important that the tour operator and its partners are attentive to the changes that must be implemented to meet the needs of customers, as they are prone to change over time. A resilient and agile partnership can be achieved by adopting a flexible approach, which allows both parties to be open to feedback and embrace change.
- **Confidence and reputation.** Collaboration is facilitated by a climate of trust, which is why these two factors are important. Moreover, the growth of the tour operator can be achieved if the company is acknowledged for its positive reputation and earned respect in its professional circle.
- **Commitment.** The fifth criterion encompasses more than just the tour operator and its partners agreeing on decisions together, but also the commitment that involves being willing to invest time, energy and resources to make the alliance work. Therefore, it is necessary to define the roles and responsibilities of each company to achieve a long-term sustainable alliance.
- **Shared responsibility.** This criterion requires that both parties fulfill their responsibilities for collective success.

3.6.4. Benefits

Nowadays, every company is seeking to find new ways to enhance their position in the market, and one of them is the development of strategic alliances. Suchitoto Lovers Tours expects the following benefits to be achieved through these alliances:

- **Greater accessibility to resources and capacities.** Through the alliance, the tour operator will be able to access technological resources and market experience that Suchitoto Lovers Tours will not initially have.
- **Expanding the scope of the market and customer base.** By making alliances with other companies, the tour operator can more easily reach customers who own the allied enterprises.
- **Cost reduction.** The third benefit is the ability to distribute expenses related to market research and marketing by joining forces with other companies.

- **Learning and mutual growth.** Working together with other companies will allow them to share knowledge and experiences that can help implement best practices to promote the development of their companies.

CHAPTER IV
COST PLAN FOR SUCHITOTO
LOVERS TOURS

4.1. Logo

TechTarget Contributor (2017) states that “logos serve to represent a given organization or company through a visual image that can be easily understood and recognized”.

The logo of the tour operator (See Figure 16) is made up of three elements, each of which was chosen with care based on its specific meaning:

Figure 16

Logo of Suchitoto Lovers Tours



- *The bird and the flowers:* The two elements are based on the name of the municipality where the tours will be focused, Suchitoto. In Nahuatl, its name means “place of birds and flowers”, so it was used to represent this town (CORSATUR, 2022).
- *Rhombus:* It represents the distinction, since in this community there is no tour operator that focuses purely on cultural tourism (Backdoor, 2022).

On the other hand, the color range was selected using four colors:

- *Blue:* It symbolizes serenity, reflection, stillness, study; how much one thinks and feels (Gaceta Suchitoto, 2017c).

- *Red*: It refers to the crucial moments that can be war, tragedy, glory, power and authority (Gaceta Suchitoto, 2017c).
- *Black*: It is considered an elegant and serious color that shows power, intelligence and luxury (INSIDE Marketing Digital, 2021).
- *White*: It represents purity, cleanliness, simplicity, freshness, and safety (INSIDE Marketing Digital, 2021).

The blue and red colors were chosen for two reasons: the first reason is that they are displayed with the heraldic shield of Suchitoto. The second reason is because the tour operator identifies with the meanings that each color has and entrepreneurs must be calm when facing any difficulties. Moreover, the use of black color was intended to create a greater contrast with the other colors and to evoke a sense of professionalism. Lastly, the white color was chosen to create a simple image that did not interfere with the color palette of the logo, while also conveying a sense of security and tranquility.

4.2. Slogan

According to Puchalt (2020), a slogan is meant to identify a product or service and make it memorable for potential customers; if they accomplish this, they will remember the company and be more inclined to use their services or products in the future. On the other hand, according to the Royal Spanish Academy, when it initially appeared, the term was defined as a meaningful short phrase that alludes to something designed to be etched in the memory of others (Puchalt, 2020).

In order to achieve the purpose of a slogan, Suchitoto Lovers Tours decided to identify itself under the following phrase:

“Traveling is more than an experience”

By using this slogan, the tour operator wants to be identified as a company whose purpose is to convey that traveling is not just about getting to know a place but also about discovering new environments, people, traditions, and customs that can change our perspective on the world and life.

4.3. Mission

Santander Universidades (2022) defines the term mission as the explanation of the reason for the existence of a company. Likewise, it defines the role of the company in society and its distinguishing traits compared to the competition.

Having a thorough knowledge of the concept, the tour operator established its mission by taking into account the objectives and goals of Suchitoto Lovers Tours:

Suchitoto Lovers Tours is a tour operator that provides exceptional experiences to different tourist destinations in Suchitoto, aiming to enhance the natural and cultural splendor of the municipality, contributing to the tourist and social development of the country through personalized service that focuses on continuous quality improvement.

4.4. Vision

In contrast to the mission, the vision sets the direction a company will pursue in the short and long term in the future (Santander Universidades, 2023). The tour operator took into account the following questions to establish the vision that it intends to adhere to:

- What does Suchitoto Lovers Tours want to achieve in the future?
- Why does the tour operator want to reach a certain goal?
- What should the company do to meet the goals that have been projected?

After providing answers to the questions, the vision of the company was identified as:

To provide a service that is recognized nationally and internationally for minimizing the environmental and socio-cultural impact of our tourism activities in Suchitoto, fostering strong relationships that are based on respect for customers, partners, and employees.

4.5. Values

The objectives and culture of Suchitoto Lovers Tours will be represented by the values presented below, which will serve as guides for the company:

- *Excellence*: Make every effort to exceed the expectations of the customer, generating a sense of assurance about the experience they will receive while using the services of the tour operator.
- *Responsibility*: Engage with the service to deliver to customers as well as employees and business partners to establish a more lasting relationship between the parties involved.
- *Transparency*: To achieve economic benefits, it is necessary to be honest with the services of the tour operator without going beyond the interests of the customers and collaborators, avoiding a lack of trust from them towards the tour operator.
- *Teamwork*: Performing activities with other employees to foster a positive relationship will be beneficial for supporting each other and producing better results.
- *Respect*: For Suchitoto Lovers Tours, it is important to create an environment where this value is a priority among workers, customers, and associates, as this will lead the operator have strong personal relationships, which will help the company overcome any obstacle that may arise in the future, since everyone will cooperate in overcoming them; also, this will contribute to a better working environment.

4.6. Cost plan of a tour operator

Suchitoto Lovers Tours

Service company

Table 9

Information about the expenses and costs related to the tours mentioned in Chapter I

Direct costs	Indirect costs	Other operating costs	Expenses linked to the service
Payment for transportation \$150.00	<p>The depreciation rate for a computer with a lifespan of 5 years is \$650.00. Accumulated depreciation is \$130.00 and depreciation per year is \$104.00.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value after one year \$520.00 • Value after 2 years \$416.00 • Value after 3 years \$312.00 • Value after 4 years \$208.00 • Value after 5 years \$104.00 	Internet (50 mbps) \$30.00	Travel expenses of the entrepreneur (Lunch) \$8.00
Tour guide payment (Spanish, English and French) \$30.00	<p>Mobile device depreciation of \$280.00 with a useful life of 2 years. Accumulated depreciation is \$140.00 and depreciation per year is \$70.00.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value after one year \$140.00 • Value after 2 years \$70.00 	Mobile Internet Package Payment \$20.00	First aid kit \$50.00
<p>Tour Package #1: It includes entrance to tourist destinations and boat rides \$5.13 per person and \$41.04 per group 8 people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boat ride \$3.13 per person 			Garbage Bags \$1.50

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entrance to the museum of 1000 dishes \$2.00 per person 			
<p>Tour package #2: It includes entrance to tourist destinations and rides for \$5.50 per person and \$44.00 per group of 8 people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Happy Turtle Train Ride \$3.00 per person Currency Museum Ticket \$2.00 per person Entrance to Casa del Adulto Mayor \$0.50 per person 			Electricity \$20.00
<p>Tour package #3: It includes entrance to tourist destinations \$1.50 per person and \$12.00 per group of 8 people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Los Tercios Waterfall Ticket \$0.50 per person Parking \$ 1.00 			
<p>Tour package #4: It includes entrance to tourist destinations \$0.50 per person and \$4.00 per group of 8 people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entrance to Casa del Adulto Mayor \$0.50 per person 			
Monthly salary of the entrepreneur \$300			

Note. Own elaboration. Table describing the future costs and expenses of the tour operator.

CHAPTER V

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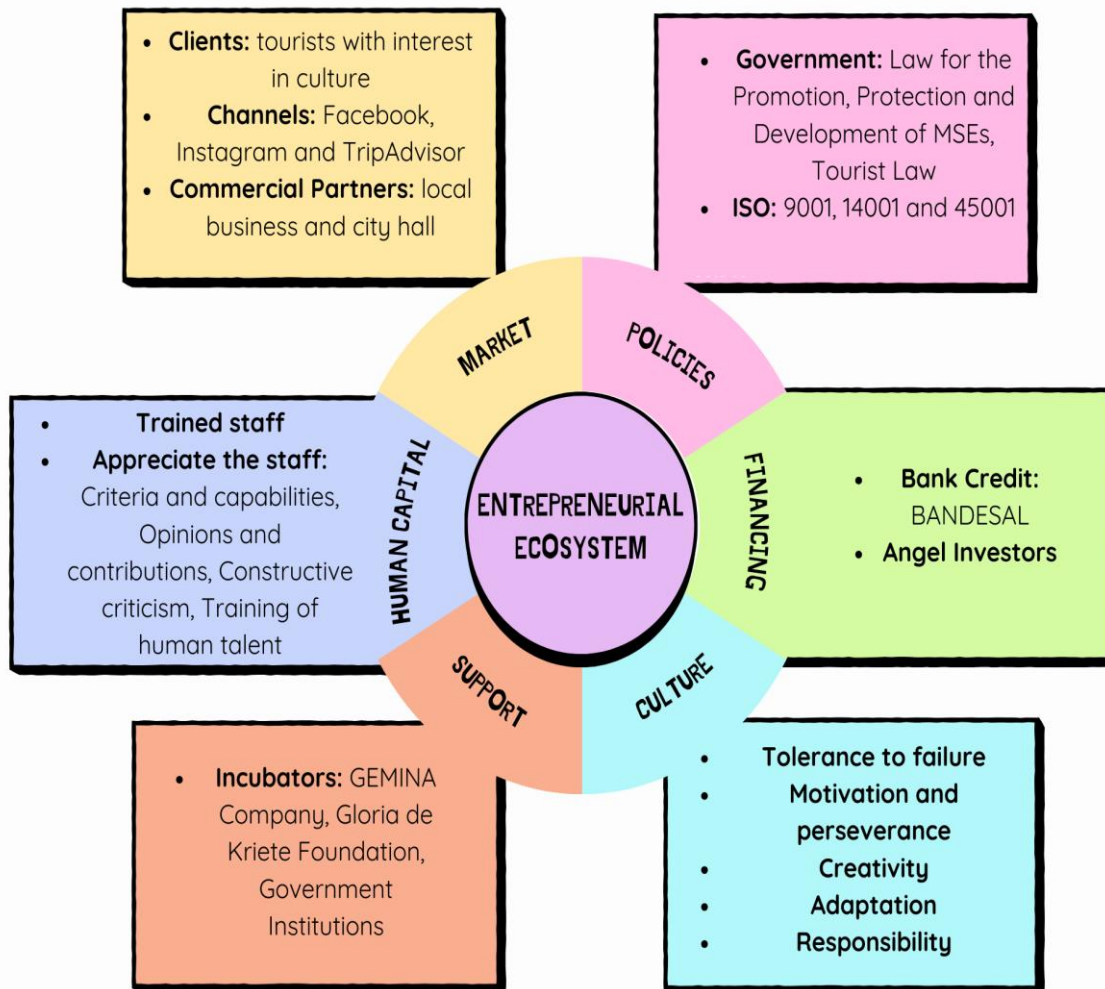
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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Strategic Plan of Suchitoto Lovers Tours



Annex 2. Entrepreneurial ecosystem



Annex 3. Logo of Suchitoto Lovers Tours



Suchitoto Lovers Tours



TRAVELING IS MORE THAN AN
EXPERIENCE