

Coastal and Marine Tourism in the Blue Economy: An Assessment of Strategies in  
Latin America and the Caribbean

By

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## ABSTRACT

The blue economy (BE) aims to support tourism opportunities that provide economic development and marine conservation objectives, as well as social equity. For the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region, coastal and marine tourism is a crucial sector of the economy. This paper presents the degree to which countries in LAC have strategies and plans to develop the BE and the degree to which the strategies and plans address the role of coastal and marine tourism in the development of the BE. A systematic review was used to extract the official strategies, reports, and plans used for this research. Then, each country was categorized based on the level of development of a BE plan or strategy. Lastly, a sustainability analysis of each National BE strategy is used based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their relevance to tourism. Key findings show that LAC countries see potential for the development of tourism as part of their BE. Also, the involvement of local communities and the development of the cruise and yachting industry are evident throughout. From these findings, key opportunities for improvement and future research related to tourism in the development of a sustainable blue economy are presented.

*Keywords: blue economy; coastal and marine tourism; sustainable development goals; latin america and the caribbean; sustainable tourism*

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
A&B	Antigua and Barbuda
BE	Blue Economy
BG	Blue Growth
BVI	British Virgin Islands
CBT	Community-based tourism
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CMEP	Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme
CMT	Coastal and Marine Tourism
CROP	Caribbean Regional Oceanscape Project
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
HDI	Human Development Index
ICZM	Integrated Coastal Zone Management
IOC	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MSP	Marine Spatial Planning
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
OCTA	Overseas Countries and Territories Association
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
OETS	Oceans Economy and Trade Strategy
OSPESCA	Organización del Sector Pesquero y Acuícola del Istmo Centroamericano
RT	Responsible tourism
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SICA	Central American Integration System
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
ST	Sustainable tourism
T&T	Trinidad and Tobago
TIES	The International Ecotourism Society
UN	United Nations
UNCSD	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP-WCMC	United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
USVI	United States Virgin Islands

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## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

The Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region is considered one of the most ecologically generative areas of the world, with extraordinary marine biodiversity (ECLAC, 2020). The recognition of the importance of protecting the ocean and better managing its resources while advocating for social and economic development has been growing for more than a decade (UNEP, 2016). The United Nations declared 2021 to 2030 as the *Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development* to stop the deterioration of the ocean and support ocean stakeholders with a common framework for ocean action (Lee et al., 2020). Furthermore, 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were built to guide the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of progress regarding sustainable development (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2020). Throughout the past decade, different institutional frameworks, such as the green and blue economy have been put forward to advance toward sustainable development. Such frameworks have been advocated to support Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in better managing their marine resources and benefit their coastal communities (World Bank, 2017).

The blue economy (BE) is an increasingly used framework that aims to promote the economic development of ocean sectors while ensuring social equity and environmental sustainability (Cisneros-Montemayor et al., 2019). While there is no agreed upon definition of the BE, M. Voyer et al. (2018) identified four lenses through which the term is being used in terms of global governance tools: (1) Oceans as natural capital, (2) Oceans as a driver of innovation, (3) Oceans and livelihoods, and (4) Oceans as good business. The BE can play a larger role in the LAC region, which could initiate coordinated action toward protecting its marine and coastal environment and its reliant communities (UNEP, 2016). The ocean sectors can be classified into established and emerging sectors (CDB, 2018). The key established sectors of the BE are fisheries, tourism, and maritime transport. The key emerging sectors are offshore renewable marine energy, aquaculture, seabed extractive activities, and marine biotechnology. All sectors have great potential to further advance the sustainable development of our oceans (CDB, 2018; UNEP, 2016; World Bank, 2017). Amongst the BE sectors in the LAC region with more potential are fisheries, aquaculture, coastal and marine tourism, renewable marine energy, and marine transport (CDB, 2018).

Coastal and Marine Tourism (CMT) is one of the key established sectors of the Ocean Economy, it is the main source of employment for many countries, contributing trillions of

dollars to the global economy and supporting the livelihoods of an estimated one in ten people worldwide (Moreno & Amelung, 2009; OECD, 2016; Phelan et al., 2020). CMT is considered one of the sectors with the most potential to fulfill the purpose of the BE, being the largest value-added segment of the ocean economy with a projection of 26% by 2030 (Brumbaugh & Patil, 2017). A poorly managed CMT sector can produce economic and social inequality, creating damaging social and cultural impacts (Bennett et al., 2019). Different types of tourism have been put forward to address these environmental and social issues (ecotourism, community-based tourism, responsible tourism, sustainable tourism). The discussion on which of these alternatives is more appropriate under the BE is evolving and each in their way, recognize that for CMT to thrive and continue to be prosperous, the coastal and marine environment needs to be protected and its local communities are to be part of this process. Overall, the development of the CMT sector as part of a BE strategy is crucial for regions where tourism plays an essential role in supporting the livelihoods of local communities.

### **Rationale and Research Objectives**

Although BE frameworks encompass all ocean sectors with the potential to drive sustainable development, scarce attention is allocated to assessing how countries and territories are employing them, particularly in the LAC region. CMT has the potential to be one of the drivers for sustainable development under the BE. Therefore, more focus should be allocated to evaluating how CMT is presented and implemented under the BE discourse for LAC. This research presents the degree to which countries in the study area have strategies and plans to develop the BE, and secondly the degree to which the strategies and plans explicitly address the role of tourism in the development of the BE. Therefore, the aims of this study are threefold:

1. to provide a country-level overview of the status of strategies and plans to develop the Blue Economy in the LAC region;
2. to assess the degree to which tourism is part of the country-level strategies and plans to develop the BE; and
3. to assess the degree to which national strategies and plans for the BE address the sustainability of tourism using the SDGs.

This research serves as an important first step in understanding the state of these BE strategies and plans and the degree to which they address the opportunities and challenges of using tourism as a means of achieving true sustainability and therefore, positive change for the countries and region of LAC. In this spirit, concluding thoughts identify opportunities for

improvement and future research related to tourism in the development of sustainable Blue Economy strategies and plans.

### **Structure**

Following the introduction, a review of the main literature surrounding the BE and CMT is presented. The study site, data collection and analysis methods are then presented. Followed by the results of the LAC countries to the development of a BE strategy/plan as well as the results for the sustainability assessment of the tourism sector in the national BE strategies. Then, a discussion, revisiting the research objectives, key literature, and the significance of results for ocean governance is provided. Lastly, management recommendations for future BE strategies, main conclusions, and suggestions for future work and areas of research are presented.

## CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores the main literature surrounding the blue economy (BE), its origins, various definitions and interpretations, its relationship with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and its main sectors. It also studies the Coastal and Marine Tourism (CMT) sector, its environmental and social impacts, different types of tourism, and how it is defined and presented under the BE literature.

### **Blue Economy**

#### ***What is the origin of the Blue Economy?***

We can trace the origins of the BE to the preparation for “Rio +20” the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), held in Rio de Janeiro on 20-22 June 2012. This conference focused on the improvement of the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development and the development of the “Green Economy” concept (UNEP, 2016). The green economy is “one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities” (UNEP, 2011, p. 1). During the preparatory process for “Rio +20”, coastal countries questioned the applicability of the green economy to their unique situation (UNEP, 2016). Consequently, a blue approach to the green economy emerged (Louey, 2022). This blue approach has helped coastal countries adapt the later established UN SDGs to their specific and unique challenges (UNEP, 2016). Since then, the need to allocate more attention and coordinated action to the role of the ocean has developed significantly (UNEP, 2016). So much so that the UN has declared 2021 to 2030 as the ‘Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development’ to assist in the efforts to stop the “decline in ocean health and gather ocean stakeholders worldwide behind a common framework” (Lee et al., 2020, p. 2). However, these efforts resulted in fundamentally different approaches to the BE, since the ambiguity of the concept poses significant conflicts of interest (Martínez-Vázquez et al., 2021).

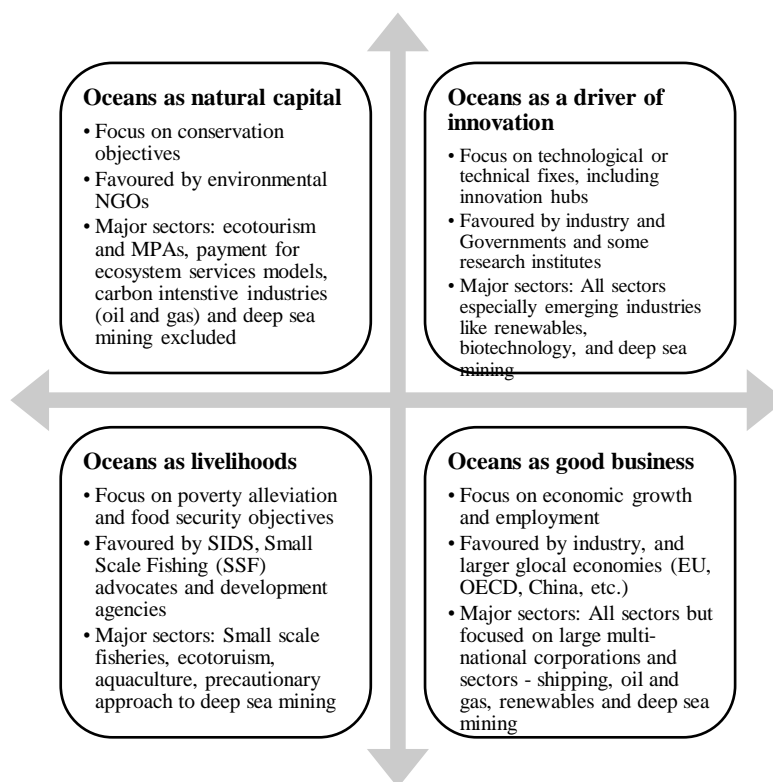
#### ***What is the definition of the Blue Economy?***

Different definitions of the BE have been put forward by key global institutions and organizations. According to the World Bank, the BE “seeks to promote economic growth, social inclusion, and preservation or improvement of livelihoods while at the same time ensuring environmental sustainability” (World Bank, 2017, p. 1). The Commonwealth explains the BE as

“an evolving concept that recognises the need to maximise the enormous economic potential presented by the ocean, while preserving it” (Roberts & A, 2016, p. 11). Other attempts to understand the BE concept are still emerging (Silver et al., 2015; Smith-Godfrey, 2016; M. Voyer et al., 2018b). However, as Winder & Le Heron (2017) pointed out, due to the diversity in discourses and context in which it has been used, providing an accurate definition is not an easy task. Consequently, the ongoing discourse over its different definitions is tied with its meaning for ocean-related industries; growth and development, or conservation of the natural environment (M. Voyer et al., 2018b). More importantly, the consequences of this diversity go way beyond the literature, since it can have a direct effect on the way the concept is carried out operationally, resulting in misguided governance outcomes (Eikeset et al., 2018). Overall, the BE must be environmentally sustainable, socially equitable, and economically viable for it to become a truly innovative development framework (Cisneros-Montemayor et al., 2019).

M. Voyer et al. (2018) identified four dominant dialogues built upon Silver et al.’s (2015) analysis of how the term is being used and articulated in global governance tools: (1) Oceans as natural capital, (2) Oceans as a driver of innovation, (3) Oceans and livelihoods, and (4) Oceans as good business (Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1.** Blue Economy Lenses



*Note.* Retrieved from D. M. Voyer & van Leeuwen (2019)

### ***Blue Economy or Blue Growth?***

The BE is also referred to as Blue Growth (BG), however, is there a differentiation between these concepts? If so, what does it mean for the strategies, plans, and reports published to address the sustainability of their ocean-related industries? BG is defined by the European Commission as a “long term strategy to support sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors as a whole” (European Commission, 2020a). The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) launched its BG initiative to “maximize economic and social benefits while minimizing environmental degradation from the fisheries and aquaculture sectors” (FAO, 2017, p. 3). On the other hand, The World Bank explains that “blue growth, or environmentally sustainable economic growth based on the oceans, is a strategy of sustaining economic growth and job creation necessary to reduce poverty in the face of worsening resource constraints and the climate crisis” (World Bank, 2017, p. 5). We can recognize the similarity between the definitions of BG and the previously mentioned definitions of the BE. Both concepts refer to the environmental sustainability of ocean-related industries and the importance of maximizing social and economic benefits from them. However, some authors (Hadjimichael, 2018; Hassanali, 2020a) have criticized BG, claiming the concept is inherently capitalist and focused on growth.

The discussion over the meaning of the BE and BG further evidences the ambiguity of their definitions. Despite the concepts being around for 10 years, there is still no exact definition of BE or BG, not in academic literature or key institutions’ concept papers (Ertör & Hadjimichael, 2020). For some, BG is about maximizing economic growth, while for others the focus is on sustainability (Hadjimichael, 2018). The differentiation between these two concepts is crucial to avoid miscommunications amongst those who may be employing these terms (Eikeset et al., 2018).

### ***Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and The Blue Economy***

The SDGs were envisioned as part of *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* to “stimulate action over the next 15 years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet” (United Nations, 2015b, p. 3). There are 17 SDGs, which according to the UN, “are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership” (United Nations, 2015a). The SDGs were also designed to better aid in the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of progress regarding sustainable development (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2020).

The BE plays a central role in negotiations over the sustainable use of ocean resources as well as the progress made toward the SDGs (M. Voyer et al., 2018b). However, linking the BE to SDGs is not an easy task, particularly when conflicts exist between individual or industrial goals (i.e., fossil fuel-based carbon emission reductions and energy provision) (Lee et al., 2020). While an analysis by Niner et al. (2022) reveals that there are some instances of conflicting and neutral relationships between the BE policy aims and the SDGs, their overall conclusion is that the two are largely complementary. Nonetheless, this highlights the need to evaluate the sustainability of the BE thoroughly with evidence-based measures of progress (Niner et al., 2022). Ultimately, SDGs can be used as a tool to measure the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the BE (Martínez-Vázquez et al., 2021)

### *Sectors of the Blue Economy*

The BE is composed of a wide variety of ocean-based sectors and components. These cover “economic activities that directly take place in the ocean and seas or use outputs from the sea for consumption or as a source of income” (CDB, 2018, p. 17). There are different ways in which key organizations (UNEP, World Bank) classify these sectors. The World Bank also classifies the sectors as (1) Harvesting and trade of marine living resources, (2) Extraction and use of marine nonliving resources (non-renewable), (3) Use of renewable non-exhaustible natural forces (wind, wave, and tidal energy), (4) Commerce and trade in and around the oceans, and (5) Indirect contribution to economic activities and environments (World Bank, 2017). Moreover, the Caribbean Development Bank divides the sectors into two main categories: (1) Established sectors; and (2) Emerging sectors (CDB, 2018). The main sectors within the BE are depicted and classified in **Table 2.1**.

**Table 2.1.** Blue Economy Sectors

<b>Blue Economy Component</b>	<b>Type of Activity</b>	<b>Sector</b>
Harvesting and trade in living marine resources	Established	Fisheries
	Established and Emerging	Aquaculture
	Emerging	Marine Genetic Resources
Extraction and use of non-living marine resources	Established	Seabed mining
	Established	Deep-sea mining
	Established and Emerging	Oil and Gas
	Emerging	Deep-sea mining
Use of renewable non-exhaustible natural forces	Emerging	Renewable energy
Commerce and trade in and around the oceans	Established	Shipping
	Established	Maritime Transport
	Established and Emerging	Ports and Related Services
	Established	Coastal Development
	Established	Coastal and Marine Tourism
Indirect contribution to economic activities and environments	Established and Emerging	Technology and “Research and Development (R&D)”
	Established and Emerging	Communications and power cables
	Established and Emerging	Ecosystem-based management

*Note.* Built from Bramley et al. (2021); Caribbean Development Bank (2018); The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) (2015); UNEP (2012); World Bank (2017).

Although these industries are included in most of the conceptual papers and reports published by key institutions (Bramley et al., 2021; European Commission, 2021; FAO, 2017; Hassanali, 2020b; OECD, 2016; OECS, 2020a; UNEP, 2012), some authors disagree on certain sectors being considered as part of the BE. For example, Cisneros-Montemayor et al. (2019) argue that not all ocean-related industries fit well within the definition of the BE since some industries are unsustainable by definition (i.e., non-renewable resource extraction). Not only is this reluctance existing in academic literature, but also governmental institutions, NGOs, and communities question the legitimacy of these sectors (e.g., oil and gas, deep seabed mining, and forms of commercial fishing) with growth-based values being included in BE discourse (Midlen, 2021; D. M. Voyer & van Leeuwen, 2019). For example, the government of Belize does not recognize offshore oil and gas as part of its BE (Hassanali, 2020a). Likewise, an initial scoping study performed in Uruguay limits its BE sector scope to tourism, fishing, aquaculture, and



marine renewable energy (UNEP-WCMC & GRID-Arendal, 2021). On the other hand, Grenada's Blue Growth Master Plan includes marine exploration (exploration of the seabed for hydrocarbons and minerals, marine extraction, and marine-related environmental services) as part of its strategy (Government of Grenada & The World Bank, 2016). Overall, it is important to beware of industries that are socially and environmentally problematic being given legitimacy under the BE construct (Hassanali, 2020a).

### **Coastal and Marine Tourism**

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) tourism is defined as “a social, cultural and economic phenomenon related to the movement of people to places outside their usual place of residence, pleasure being the usual motivation” (UNWTO, 2010, p. 1). The natural resources and beauty of marine and coastal zones have made them extremely popular destinations that offer unique and customized experiences to visitors. So much so that CMT comprises one of the largest and fastest-growing segments in the tourism industry (Leposa, 2020). CMT seems to be very closely related because of the water/sea element (Papageorgiou, 2016). Hall (2001) provides a well-rounded definition of coastal tourism: “Coastal tourism embraces the full range of tourism, leisure, and recreationally oriented activities that take place in the coastal zone and the off shore coastal waters. These include coastal tourism development (accommodation, restaurants, food industry, and second homes), and the infrastructure supporting coastal development (e.g., retail businesses, marinas, and activity suppliers). Also included are tourism activities such as recreational boating, coast, and marine-based ecotourism, swimming, recreational fishing, snorkeling, and diving” (p. 2). On the other hand, marine tourism encompasses activities that take place in the deep ocean and, according to Orams (1998), marine tourism requires that consumers travel away from their place of residence to be actively involved with the sea (Papageorgiou, 2016). The most predominant activities of marine tourism are yachting, sailing, scuba diving, underwater fishing, water skiing, windsurfing, tours to maritime parks, and wildlife mammal watching (European Commission, 2014; Hall, 2001; Papageorgiou, 2016).

Together CMT represent one of the established sectors of the ocean economy, it is the main economic sector and source of employment for many countries, contributing trillions of dollars to the global economy and supporting the livelihoods of an estimated one in ten people worldwide (Moreno & Amelung, 2009; OECD, 2016; Phelan et al., 2020). “CMT is projected as

the largest value-added segment of the ocean economy by 2030 at 26%” (Brumbaugh & Patil, 2017). This is especially true for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), whose economies are heavily reliant on this sector, leaving them extremely vulnerable to unexpected crises (i.e., COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, fluctuation in global economies, etc.) (UNEP, 2016). Furthermore, it is almost completely dependent on nature as it relies on enjoyable weather conditions and aesthetically pleasing environments, which makes it one of the most vulnerable economic sectors to climate variability (Karani & Failler, 2020a; Moreno & Amelung, 2009). This can negatively affect the success of tourism businesses because of its potential to change the decision-making process of tourists (Karani & Failler, 2020a).

### ***The Impacts of Coastal and Marine Tourism***

CMT covers a wide range of activities that go from large-scale mass touristic activities to more “eco-friendly” and socially conscious activities (Papageorgiou, 2016). This range goes from cruise tourism and all-inclusive resorts to nature-based activities such as responsible observation of flora and fauna. Many of these have negative environmental effects as well as social externalities derived from mass pollution, unsustainable production, and consumption patterns (Fosse et al., 2021). The environmental impacts of CMT have been widely studied for decades. According to Duan et al. (2022), CMT research is highly concentrated in the field of environmental science. CMT studies are primarily focused on: (1) sustainable development, (2) the impact of CMT on destinations, (3) CMT management and conservation, and (4) the impact of climate change on CMT. That being said, the main environmental impacts are depicted in **Table 2.2**.

**Table 2.2.** Environmental Impacts of Coastal and Marine Tourism

<b>Impacts</b>	
Environmental degradation and pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degradation and pollution from golf courses</li> <li>• Pollution by littering</li> <li>• Greenhouse gas emissions</li> </ul>
Destruction of habitats and damage to ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destruction of high-quality natural environments</li> <li>• Unmanaged human interference of species of fauna and flora</li> <li>• Dynamite blasting and over-fishing</li> </ul>
Loss of coastal and marine resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interference with inland and coastal natural processes (excessive groundwater extraction by large resorts)</li> <li>• Coastal ecosystem damage and destruction through tourism development</li> <li>• Terrestrial runoff and dredging on coastal areas (damage to coral reefs and marine resources caused by the construction of tourist infrastructure )</li> <li>• Destruction by tourist activities (destruction of coral reefs, lagoons, mangroves, saltwater marshes, and wetlands due to excessive visitation and/or unmanaged exploitation of those resources disturbance)</li> <li>• Introduced exotic species which can be destructive to indigenous flora and fauna tourism</li> <li>• Damage to sand-cay, mangrove, and coastal rainforest ecosystems</li> <li>• Loss of sandy beaches and shoreline erosion</li> </ul>
Coastal pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wastewater discharge and sewage pollution</li> <li>• Coastal water pollution and siltation due to nearshore resort construction and runoff from resort areas</li> <li>• Marine and harbor pollution</li> <li>• Coastal oil pollution due to motorized vehicles and ships</li> </ul>
Surface water and groundwater diversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversion of streams and water sources from local use to resort use, resulting in a decline in water availability for domestic and other productive uses and farming</li> </ul>

*Note.* Retrieved from Gössling & Hall (2017); Hall (2001); UNEP (2016)

The social impacts of CMT are far less studied than its environmental impacts. Leposa (2020) noted that the social impacts of CMT are more difficult to study in comparison to its environmental impacts. Nevertheless, CMT has created issues of inequality, vulnerability, dependency, and power imbalances generated by foreign ownership (Khan, 1997; Leposa, 2020). More specifically, foreign owners and high-paid tourism enterprises have obtained exclusivity and property rights over coastal areas, resulting in reduced access to local natural resources, which has been a significant source of tension for the local communities in the Caribbean (Goodwin, 2008). Moreover, Jordan et al. (2019) studied how host communities are susceptible to experiencing negative psychological impacts derived from negative emotions and stress from perceived negative changes in their community. Not only do tensions exist between the local community and tourists, but gaps have developed between those that benefit from the tourism industry and those who are victimized and marginalized by it (i.e., forced relocation due to increasing rental rates on touristic locations) (Duval & Wilkinson, 2004; Goodwin, 2008).

Despite the previously mentioned impacts, CMT is still assumed to stimulate income generation and fair benefit distribution to local communities in comparison to other ocean-related industries (Liu, 2003). Contrarily, Khan (1997) argued that if tourism promotes economic growth and development, how come LDCs that are main hubs of CMT (i.e., countries in Latin America and the Caribbean) still suffer from foreign dependence, persistent poverty, economic inequality, and destruction of cultures and communities at the hands of tourism development. Nevertheless, it is still crucial to attempt to manage these activities in a way that does not pose a threat to the natural environment while allowing the local community to benefit socially and economically from the industry (Papageorgiou, 2016). Additionally, increased decision-making power for the local community has the potential to re-assert control over their resources and increase their responsiveness to protect natural and cultural heritage (Liu, 2003).

### ***Coastal and Marine Tourism and the Blue Economy***

The CMT sector is considered a crucial segment of the BE (Silver et al., 2015). As previously stated, the BE aims to support tourism opportunities that provide economic development and marine conservation objectives, as well as social equity. Developing a tourism sector that promotes lower impact activities (ecotourism, sustainable tourism, nature-based tourism, etc.) that consider the maintenance of the natural capital is a crucial part of the process (UNEP, 2016). Although being considered one of the sectors with a high potential for growth and jobs (European Commission, Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, 2020; Fosse et al., 2019; Mayén Cañavate et al., 2019; Tegar & Gurning, 2018a), there is a major literature data gap that covers the CMT sector and the BE, despite it being included in almost every BE strategy and/or plan (Kabil et al., 2021). Additionally, there are many forms of tourism that circle around the sustainability, environment, and social equity of the sector (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2019). According to Duan et al. (2022), there is a need to develop and polish the theoretical framework of CMT research that includes and analyzes the full spectrum of concepts. Distinguishment over different types of tourism is very important for determining their applicability to the BE. It can also assist in understanding the various types of tourism, their relationship with one another, and their respective boundaries (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2019). **Table 2.3** provides several definitions of tourism that follow similar guiding principles as the BE.

**Table 2.3.** Different tourism types that fit well with the Blue Economy and their definition

Tourism Type	Definition	Source
Community-based Tourism	“Tourism characterized by local involvement and retention of benefits in the locale of activity; the pursuit of social equity and redistributive justice as an objective of the venture/project and local control of tourism projects and the sector in the interests of social justice, empowerment, improved livelihoods, self-determination, and self-sovereignty.”	Mtapuri & Giampiccoli (2019, p. 30) Murphy (1985)
Ecotourism	“Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education”	(TIES, 2015)
Sustainable Tourism	"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"	UNEP & UNWTO (2005, pp. 11–12)
Responsible Tourism	“Responsible Tourism is about providing better holiday experiences for guests and good business opportunities to enjoy a better quality of life through increased socio-economic benefits and improved natural resource management”	Spenceley et al. (2002, p. 8)

The discourse on which type of tourism is more appropriate under the concept of the BE is still developing. Several authors have argued in favor of ecotourism because its main values seem more appropriate under the definition of the BE (Cisneros-Montemayor et al., 2019; Phelan et al., 2020; Tegar & Gurning, 2018a). However, this doesn't mean ecotourism cannot have any negative impacts on the environment and local communities or that other forms of tourism should not be part of the BE. Although the concept is in line with environmental and social values, implementation is often flawed. For example, Leposa (2020) explains that although ecotourism in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) is portrayed as a win-win situation, jobs and profits are not necessarily provided for the local community. This means that, if not managed correctly, ecotourism can create environmental injustices that disproportionately marginalize and impact communities just as other forms of tourism (Leposa, 2020). Nevertheless, some authors (Bethel et al., 2021; Sakellariadou & Kostopoulou, 2015; Tegar & Gurning, 2018a) agree that integrating ecotourism into BE strategies has been demonstrated to be an effective route to enhance environmental conservation while minimizing environmental impacts.

Community-based tourism (CBT) aims to empower and preserve the social, cultural, and natural resources of the community, ultimately improving their livelihoods (Phelan et al., 2020). Also, diversifying local economies beyond primary livelihoods is critical to achieving sustainable and inclusive development (Phelan et al., 2020). While CBT ensures community involvement, given its main focus is on the social aspects of sustainability, Leposa (2020) debates that this may cause ecological sustainability to be overlooked. Notwithstanding its shared values with the BE, CBT has not been adopted by BE frameworks or strategies.

Responsible tourism (RT) aims to “ensure that the destination is contributing to itself being a better place to live and visit” (Tewari, 2011, p. 434). RT requires that operators, hoteliers, governments, local communities, and tourists take responsibility and action to make tourism more sustainable. One differentiating aspect of RT is the recognition that different destinations and stakeholders will have different priorities, and that local policies and guidelines will need to be developed through multi-stakeholder processes to develop responsible tourism in destinations (The Cape Town Declaration, 2002). Moreover, RT builds on appropriate sustainability-based strategies and policies and adds appropriate behavior, which makes it a truly unique approach to sustainable tourism (Mihalic, 2016). However, despite its applicability to BE values and objectives, this type of tourism has not been adopted by BE frameworks or strategies.

Sustainable Tourism (ST) aims to make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, conserving natural heritage and biodiversity, and respecting the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005). Like ecotourism, ST is far more discussed in the context of the BE than CBT and RT. For example, the Maritime Economy plan for Antigua and Barbuda aims to develop the ST sector to promote and support opportunities for increasing the health and wellbeing benefits of the coast to citizens and preserving the natural environment (CMEP, 2021). Perhaps ST is more popular because of its applicability to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations. Moreover, the World Bank claims that ST has the potential to drive the BE in both developing and well-developed economies (World Bank, 2017).

### ***Should cruise tourism be part of the Blue Economy?***

Cruise tourism is considered one of the most important CMT activities in the Caribbean, and before the COVID-19 pandemic, it accounted for 50% of the global cruise market share of vessel calls and passengers (CDB, 2018, p. 45). Goodwin (2008) argues that cruise tourism causes significant damage to the environment while returning very little benefit to the local

economy. Moreover, cruise tourism is known to exert significant pressures on marine ecosystems by (1) dumping waste, sewage, and petrol, (2) anchoring, (3) emission of fuel and chemical products, and (4) port construction and maintenance (Fosse et al., 2019). This ultimately produces (1) endangerment to animals and plankton in open seas, (2) damage to coral reefs and eelgrass meadows, and (3) coastal erosion and alteration of benthic ecosystems (Fosse et al., 2019). Moreover, port residents experience stress and disruption to their daily life derived from experiencing a high level of tourists for a short period (Leposa, 2020). On the other hand, some authors argue that, when managed correctly, cruise tourism can “boost accessible heritage, support indigenous societies, and help differentiate a nation's vacation industry” (Dimitrovski et al., 2021, p. 3).

Whether the cruise industry is part of a BE strategy depends solely on each country's objectives and chosen approach. Nonetheless, a Blue Tourism study by Fosse et al. (2019), provides four recommendations for the cruise industry to be aligned with the BE: (1) providing sound regulation, technical support, and financial incentives to green ports and cruises practices, (2) leverage zoning, integrated planning and risk mitigation in sensitive marine areas, (3) monitor, manage and regulate passengers and cruise flows, and (4) promotion of environmental conception, construction, operation and dismantling of cruise vessels.

To summarize, the BE aims to develop ocean sectors that are environmentally sustainable, economically viable, and socially equitable (Cisneros-Montemayor et al., 2022). Although there is no agreed upon definition of the BE, four dominant dialogues shape the various interpretations and what they mean for ocean governance; (1) Oceans as natural capital, (2) Oceans as a driver of innovation, (3) Oceans and livelihoods, and (4) Oceans as good business (M. Voyer et al., 2018). Its “interchangeability” with Blue Growth (BG) represents a challenge for its development and integrity as a sustainable development framework. Further research into how this translates into governance systems and evidence-based measures of progress is needed (Niner et al., 2022). The SDGs can be used as a measurement framework to evaluate the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the BE and its contribution to sustainable development (Martínez-Vázquez et al., 2021; Voyer et al., 2018).

CMT represent one of the established sectors of the ocean economy. It supports the livelihoods of an estimated one in ten people worldwide and it is estimated as the major value-added segment of the ocean economy at 26% (Brumbaugh & Patil, 2017; Moreno & Amelung, 2009; OECD, 2016; Phelan et al., 2020). The CMT sector is a crucial part of the BE, as it can

promote lower impact alternatives that consider people's well-being and the environment (UNEP, 2016). Some of these alternatives fit well within the BE framework due to their consideration of social and environmental aspects of their practices (ecotourism, community-based tourism, responsible tourism, sustainable tourism). The discourse on which of these alternatives is more appropriate under the concept of the BE is evolving, with ecotourism being promoted as more suitable for the BE (Cisneros-Montemayor et al., 2019; Phelan et al., 2020; Tegar & Gurning, 2018). The inclusion of cruise tourism in the BE is highly debatable as it is one of the most significant CMT sub-sectors in regions like the Caribbean. Overall, the types of tourism included as part of BE strategy vary depending on each country's objectives and chosen approach.



## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following chapter consists of a description of the methods used to achieve the objectives of this research. A brief description of the study site is presented. Then, the data collection methodology consisted of gathering all the available information on the blue economy (BE) in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region. The criteria for the categorization of each country regarding the development of a BE plan or strategy are presented. Lastly, the approach to conducting a sustainability analysis on each of the National BE strategies is presented. Overall, the purpose of this methodology is to provide a guided overview of the nature and future development of the tourism sector under BE strategies of the countries in the LAC region.

### Study Site

LAC is a vast and diverse region with wide access to the ocean (**Figure 3.1**); for most countries their ocean share represents a larger territory than their land share (ECLAC, 2020). Twenty-seven percent (27%) of the population lives in coastal areas and depends on tourism, and commercial and artisanal fishing for their livelihoods (ECLAC, 2020, p. 9).

**Figure 3.1.** Map of Latin America and the Caribbean Region



The LAC region incorporates 49 countries and territories in total. Which are constituted by 33 countries (**Table 3.1**) and 18 territories that are protectorates of France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the United States (**Table 3.2**). This results in a wide variety of governance systems, with some territories having access to financial and development support from their respective protectorates. Thirty-one (31) out of thirty-three (33) countries have access to the sea (except for Bolivia and Paraguay which are land locked countries). Twenty-seven (27) are recognized as Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

**Table 3.1.** List of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean

Country	HDI <sup>a</sup>	SIDS <sup>b</sup>	Region
Antigua and Barbuda	0.778	Yes	Caribbean
Argentina	0.845	---	South America
Bahamas	0.814	Yes	Caribbean
Barbados	0.814	Yes	Caribbean
Belize	0.716	Yes	Central America
Brazil	0.765	---	South America
Chile	0.851	---	South America
Colombia	0.767	---	South America
Costa Rica	0.81	---	Central America
Cuba	0.783	Yes	Caribbean
Dominica	0.742	Yes	Caribbean
Dominican Republic	0.756	Yes	Caribbean
Ecuador	0.759	---	South America
El Salvador	0.673	---	Central America
Grenada	0.779	Yes	Caribbean
Guatemala	0.663	---	Central America
Guyana	0.682	Yes	South America
Haiti	0.51	Yes	Caribbean
Honduras	0.634	---	Central America
Jamaica	0.734	Yes	Caribbean
Mexico	0.779	---	Central America
Nicaragua	0.66	---	Central America
Panama	0.815	---	Central America
Peru	0.777	---	South America
Saint Kitts & Nevis	0.779	Yes	Caribbean
Saint Lucia	0.759	Yes	Caribbean
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	0.738	Yes	Caribbean
Suriname	0.738	Yes	South America
Trinidad and Tobago	0.796	Yes	Caribbean
Uruguay	0.817	---	South America
Venezuela	0.711	---	South America

*Note.* Bolivia and Paraguay are excluded from this list because they are land locked countries

<sup>a</sup> Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP, 2020b)

<sup>b</sup> Small Island Developing States (SIDS) (UN, n.d.)

**Table 3.2.** List of overseas territories and protectorates in Latin America and the Caribbean.

<b>Territory</b>	<b>SIDS<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Protectorate</b>
Aruba	Yes	Caribbean	Netherlands
Anguilla	Yes	Caribbean	UK
Bonaire	---	Caribbean	Netherlands
British Virgin Islands	---	Caribbean	UK
Cayman Islands	Yes	Caribbean	UK
Curacao	Yes	Caribbean	Netherlands
French Guiana	---	South America	France
Guadeloupe	Yes	Caribbean	France
Martinique	Yes	Caribbean	France
Montserrat	Yes	Caribbean	UK
Puerto Rico	Yes	Caribbean	United States
Saba	---	Caribbean	Netherlands
Saint Barthelemy	---	Caribbean	France
Saint-Martin	---	Caribbean	France
Sint Eustatius	---	Caribbean	Netherlands
Sint-Maarten	Yes	Caribbean	Netherlands
Turks and Caicos Islands	Yes	Caribbean	UK
US Virgin Islands	Yes	Caribbean	United States

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Small Island Developing States (SIDS) (UN, n.d.)

### **Data Collection**

The strategies, reports, and plans used for this research were extracted utilizing Google search engines and Boolean equations. Google and Google Scholar were chosen as search engines because they provided a simple way to broadly search for countries' official strategies, reports, and plans, as well as the grey and peer-reviewed literature relevant to this study. The keywords for this search were selected based on a variety of Blue Economy concept papers, frameworks, and global strategies to target the desired data outcomes (**Table 3.3**). The Boolean search equations used the operator "OR" to capture all the keywords in the equation, and the operator "AND" to indicate which country was being searched (i.e., Colombia, Mexico, Argentina, etc.).

For English-speaking countries, the search was conducted using the selected English keywords. As for official Spanish-speaking countries, the search was performed using Spanish (which is the first language of the principal investigator) keywords first, followed by a second search using the selected English keywords. This is important given the collaboration and partnership between LAC countries and international organizations (i.e., World Bank, UNDP, etc.) leading to the production of strategies, studies, plans, and reports in both languages.

**Table 3.3.** Boolean equations and terms used for Google and Google Scholar searches.

Language	Key Words	Boolean Equation
English	Blue Economy	["Blue Economy" OR "Ocean Economy" OR "Sustainable Blue Economy" OR "Blue Growth" OR "Sustainable Ocean-based Economy" OR "Ocean-based Economy" OR "Sustainable Ocean Economy"] AND ["Country"]
	Ocean Economy	
	Sustainable Blue Economy	
	Blue Growth	
	Sustainable Ocean-based Economy	
	Ocean-based economy	
Spanish	Sustainable Ocean Economy	["Economía Azul" OR "Economía Oceánica" OR "Economía Azul Sostenible" OR "Crecimiento Azul" OR "Economía Oceánica Sostenible"] AND ["País"]
	Economía Azul	
	Economía Oceanica	
	Economía Azul Sostenible	
	Crecimiento Azul	
Economía oceánica sostenible		

Pages 1 – 10 of the search results were scanned for documents, plans, reports, and literature that involved the development of a Blue Economy strategy in the LAC region. The data was accessed between October 1<sup>st</sup> and November 22<sup>nd</sup> of 2021. A total of 31 documents were identified as relevant to the development of a Blue Economy in Latin America and the Caribbean. This consisted of 15 reports, 11 plans and strategies, 4 studies, and 1 policy document. Twelve of these documents were classified as regional in scope (pertaining to two or more countries) and 19 were classified as national.

The approach used identifies all recent documents regarding the development of a BE for LAC countries. Nonetheless, this omits any documents whose main objectives were not explicitly focused on the development of the BE in the LAC region, even if they referenced the tourism industry. Where a document included several countries (i.e. a regional strategy for Central American countries), this was noted and the document was categorized according to all the countries listed. (M. Voyer et al., 2020).

### Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using a two-step process. The first step was to categorize all the countries/territories based on their position regarding the development of a Blue Economy Strategy/Plan. The second step was a more detailed sustainability assessment of the tourism sector of countries with a national Blue Economy Strategy/Plan utilizing the 17 SDGs as an organizing framework.

### ***Overall Country/Territory Review***

Five categories were crafted to best reflect the position of each country in terms of the development of a Blue Economy Strategy and the tourism sector (**Table 3.4**). All categories feature the studies, strategies, plans, reports, and/or documents found for each country/territory and the identification of tourism objectives and relevant information. It is important to note that creating the optimal criteria for each category was challenging since the situation and context of each country/territory is unique including partnerships with key international institutions not necessarily accessible by other countries.

**Table 3.4.** Categorization of Blue Economy Strategies in Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Countries

Category	Description
Category 1	LAC countries without a Blue Economy Strategy/Plan and that are not part of discussions in any Blue Economy Diagnostic Studies/Reports
Category 2	LAC countries without a Blue Economy Strategy/Plan but that are part of discussions in Regional Blue Economy Diagnostic Studies/Reports
Category 3	LAC countries without a Blue Economy Strategy/Plan but with National Diagnostic Studies/Reports
Category 4	LAC countries without a National Blue Economy Strategy/Plan but part of a Regional Blue Economy Strategy/Plan
Category 5	LAC countries with a National Blue Economy Strategy/Plan

### ***Analytical Framework to Evaluate National Blue Economy Strategies***

The 17 SDGs are used as an analysis framework to evaluate the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the tourism sector outlined in the National Blue Economy Strategy/Plans of countries in Category 5. The relationship between each SDG and the tourism sector (**Table 3.5**) was retrieved from a report published by the UNWTO demonstrating how tourism can contribute to these key areas of development (UNWTO, 2018).

**Table 3.5.** Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their relationship with tourism

SDGs	Relationship with Tourism
1	<p><b>End poverty in all its forms everywhere</b>                      Tourism provides income through job creation at local and community levels. It can be linked with national poverty reduction strategies and entrepreneurship. Low skills requirement and local recruitment can empower less favored groups, particularly youth and women.</p>
2	<p><b>End hunger, achieve food security and nutrition, promote sustainable agriculture</b>                      Tourism can spur sustainable agriculture by promoting the production and supplies to hotels, and sales of local products to tourists. Agro-tourism can generate additional income while enhancing the value of the tourism experience.</p>
3	<p><b>Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</b>                      Tax income generated from tourism can be reinvested in health care and services, improving maternal health, reduce child mortality, and preventing diseases. Visitors fees collected in protected areas can as well contribute to health services.</p>
4	<p><b>Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all</b>                      Tourism has the potential to promote inclusiveness. A skilled workforce is crucial for tourism to prosper. The tourism sector provides opportunities for direct and indirect jobs for youth, women, and those with special needs, who should benefit through educational means.</p>
5	<p><b>Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</b>                      Tourism can empower women, particularly through the provision of direct jobs and income generation from MMEs in tourism and hospitality-related enterprises. Tourism can be a tool for women to become fully engaged and lead in every aspect of society.</p>
6	<p><b>Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</b>                      Tourism investment requirement for providing utilities can play a critical role in achieving water access and security, as well as hygiene and sanitation for all. The efficient use of water in tourism, pollution control, and technology efficiency can be key to safeguarding our most precious resource.</p>
7	<p><b>Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all</b>                      As a sector, which is energy-intensive, tourism can accelerate the shift towards increased renewable energy shares in the global energy mix. By promoting investments in clean energy sources, tourism can help to reduce greenhouse gases, mitigate climate change and contribute to access to energy for all.</p>
8	<p><b>Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all</b>                      Tourism, as services trade, is one of the top four export earners globally, currently providing one in ten jobs worldwide. Decent work opportunities in tourism, particularly for youth and women, and policies that favour better diversification through tourism value chains can enhance tourism's positive socio-economic impacts.</p>
9	<p><b>Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation</b>                      Tourism development relies on good public and private infrastructure. The sector can influence public policy for infrastructure upgrade and retrofit, making them more sustainable, innovative, and resource-efficient and moving towards low carbon growth, thus attracting tourists and other sources of foreign investment.</p>
10	<p><b>Reduce inequality within and among countries</b>                      Tourism can be a powerful tool for reducing inequalities if it engages local populations and all key stakeholders in its development. Tourism can contribute to urban renewal and rural development by giving people the opportunity to prosper in their place of origin. Tourism is an effective means for economic integration and diversification.</p>
11	<p><b>Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable</b>                      Tourism can advance urban infrastructure and accessibility, promote regeneration and preserve cultural and natural heritage, assets on which tourism depends. Investment in green infrastructure (more efficient transport, reduced air pollution) should result in smarter and greener cities for, not only residents but also tourists.</p>
12	<p><b>Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</b>                      The tourism sector needs to adopt sustainable consumption and production (SCP) modes, accelerating the shift towards sustainability. Tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for tourism including</p>

	energy, water, waste, biodiversity, and job creation will result in enhanced economic, social, and environmental outcomes.
13	<b>Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</b> Tourism contributes to and is affected by climate change. Tourism stakeholders should play a leading role in the global response to climate change. By reducing its carbon footprint, in the transport and accommodation sector, tourism can benefit from low carbon growth and help tackle one of the most pressing challenges of our time.
14	<b>Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development</b> Coastal and maritime tourism rely on healthy marine ecosystems. Tourism development must be a part of Integrated Coastal Zone Management to help conserve and preserve fragile marine ecosystems and serve as a vehicle to promote a blue economy, contributing to the sustainable use of marine resources.
15	<b>Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and halt biodiversity loss</b> Rich biodiversity and natural heritage are often the main reasons why tourists visit a destination. Tourism can play a major role if sustainably managed in fragile zones, not only in conserving and preserving biodiversity but also in generating revenue as an alternative livelihood to local communities.
16	<b>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all, and build inclusive institutions</b> As tourism revolves around billions of encounters between people of diverse cultural backgrounds, the sector can foster multicultural and inter-faith tolerance and understanding, laying the foundation for more peaceful societies. Tourism, which benefits and engages local communities, can also consolidate peace in post-conflict societies.
17	<b>Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development</b> Due to its cross-sectoral nature, tourism can strengthen private/public partnerships and engage multiple stakeholders – international, national, regional, and local – to work together to achieve the SDGs and other common goals. Public policy and innovative financing are at the core for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

*Note.* Retrieved from UNWTO (2018)

**Limitations**

Certain limitations have the potential to affect the information and results of this research. First, the tourism sector was evaluated exclusively through a Blue Economy lens. Therefore, a country/territory with a national tourism strategy that addresses the sustainability of the tourism sector without reference to the BE would not be included in this research. Second, the data collection methodology only captures publicly available information. Therefore, a country/territory could be in the preparatory process of publishing a BE strategy or have a draft that would not be captured with this methodology. Third, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry are still developing. Although some of these countries/territories have addressed or published recovery plans and strategies, the long-term effects on the industry are still unknown. Lastly, countries are not obligated to produce a national Blue Economy strategy. Each country’s/territory’s journey toward the sustainable development of the tourism sector is unique, as Bramley et al. (2021) pointed out, “there is no one size fits all approach” (p. 13). This is likely to be especially in regions as culturally and environmentally diverse as Latin America and the Caribbean.

## CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the LAC countries concerning the development of a Blue Economy (BE) Strategy/Plan. It also provides the results of a sustainability assessment of the tourism sector in the National BE Strategies for those countries that have a National BE Strategy or Plan (Category 5 countries as per Table 3.4).

### Overall Country/Territory Review

The results of each category and the countries classified in them are presented in Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5. Each table features the studies, strategies, plans, reports, and/or documents found for each country/territory and the identification of tourism objectives and relevant information.

#### ***Category 1 – LAC Countries/Territories without a Blue Economy Strategy/Plan and that are not part of discussions in any Blue Economy Diagnostic Studies/Reports***

Countries/territories in Category 1 do not have readily available public information that indicates the presence of a national BE strategy/plan or participation in any scoping studies related to the Blue Economy. A total of 10 countries/territories (20%), corresponding to both Latin America (4) and the Caribbean (6), were assigned to this category.

**Table 4.1.** LAC Countries/Territories without a Blue Economy Strategy/Plan and that are not part of discussions in any Blue Economy Diagnostic Studies/Reports

Country	BE Strategy / Plan / Report	Relevance to Tourism	References
Anguilla (United Kingdom)	---	---	---
Argentina	---	---	---
The Bahamas	---	---	---
Brazil	---	---	---
Cayman Islands (United Kingdom)	---	---	---
Cuba	---	---	---
Haiti	---	---	---
Suriname	---	---	---
Turks and Caicos Islands (United Kingdom)	---	---	---
Venezuela	---	---	---

*Note:* “---” meaning that the respective country/territory does not have available information that reference the blue economy and coastal and marine tourism

#### ***Category 2 – LAC countries without a Blue Economy Strategy/Plan but that are part of discussions in Regional Blue Economy Diagnostic Studies/Reports***

Countries/territories in Category 2 do not have a National BE strategy but are part of discussions in Regional BE diagnostic studies and/or reports which indicate inclusion in the BE



discourse. A total of 13 countries/territories (27%) are in this category, corresponding to both Latin America (1) and the Caribbean (12).

Three common themes are identified in these regional studies/reports. First, *coastal tourism is recognized as an opportunity for economic growth* in four countries/territories (31%) in this category: French Guiana, Martinique, Saint Martin (France), and Guadeloupe. According to the regional report by the European Commission (2017), coastal tourism is the major employer throughout the region. However, the need to elaborate a common strategy for development and sustainability is also recognized, along with capacity building at different levels (policymakers, managers, and employees). Second, *cruise tourism is put forward as a dominant sector with high potential for growth* in five countries/territories (38%): Aruba, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Saint Martin (France). The environmental impact of the industry is mentioned by the European Commission (2017): “Cruise tourism impacts also negatively coastal and marine resources. More restrictive practices and better management could reduce coastal and marine pollution from cruise tourism activities.” (p. 94). Nevertheless, the industry is addressed from an economic development standpoint: “There are abundant opportunities for further expansion of this well-established cruise industry, offering a significant opportunity to strengthen this component of economic development” (p. 84). Yachting was also pointed out as a high-value sector in Guadeloupe and Martinique with a strong potential to “further grow the tourism industry into upmarket” (European Commission, 2020b, p. 70). And third, *ecotourism was identified as an opportunity for further development* in four countries/territories (31%): French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Saint Barthelemy, and Saint Eustatius. However, further detail on what type of ecotourism activities was being proposed was not presented. Dependency on mass tourism and the risk it imposes was indicated for Aruba, Curacao, Guadeloupe, Saint Barthelemy, and Saint Martin (Netherlands). For example, Guadalupe states that “reliance on tourism for the island’s economy puts the island’s economy at risk in the event of shocks to global tourism” (European Commission, 2020b, p. 70).

Sustainable tourism was the focus of three main regional projects in this category. First, the *MAR2R regional project* (Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras), aims to “establish the roadmap to achieve blue growth, based on the sustainable use of coastal marine resources” (Escobedo et al., 2021, p. 14). This project aims to develop a regional vision of social and sustainable tourism that will include best practices on how to develop the tourism industry while following the principles of a BE. Similarly, the *Caribbean Regional Oceanscape Project* (CROP) and the *Ocean Panel* aim to adapt Blue Economy strategies to a post-pandemic world and

recognize the importance of sustainable tourism. Involvement of local communities was specifically addressed in the objectives of the *Ocean Panel*: “implement mechanisms to increase the reinvestment of tourism revenue into local and indigenous communities to build capacity and skills for increasing local employment in tourism, diversify economic opportunities and increase resources for coastal and marine restoration and protection” (Ocean Panel, 2020b, p. 8). Overall, the countries/territories in this category demonstrate inclusion in the BE discourse by being part of regional studies and projects funded by external agencies.

**Table 4.2.** LAC countries without a Blue Economy Strategy/Plan but that are part of discussions in Regional Blue Economy Diagnostic Studies/Reports

Country	BE Strategy / Plan / Report	Relevance to Tourism	References
Aruba (Netherlands)	“Blue Economy Roadmap”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong cruise destination</li> <li>• Mass tourism approach</li> <li>• Lack of training for hospitality providers</li> <li>• Lack of government strategic guidance</li> <li>• Opportunity to adopt a Blue Tourism approach</li> </ul>	OCTA (2021)
Curacao (Netherlands)	“Blue Economy Roadmap”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism Master Plan but focused on economic growth (BE not mentioned)</li> </ul>	OCTA (2021)
French Guiana (France)	“Realizing the potential of the Outermost Regions for sustainable blue growth”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coastal tourism and cruise tourism are recognized as the sector with the most potential for economic growth in the region</li> <li>• Promotes ecotourism</li> <li>• Promotes development of a regional cruise industry</li> </ul>	European Commission (2017)
	“Methodological assistance for the outermost regions to support their efforts to develop blue economy strategies”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coastal tourism potential for economic growth</li> </ul>	European Commission (2020)
Guadeloupe (France)	“Realizing the potential of the Outermost Regions for sustainable blue growth”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coastal tourism and cruise tourism are recognized as the sector with the most potential for economic growth in the region</li> </ul>	European Commission (2017)
	“Methodological assistance for the outermost regions to support their efforts to develop blue economy strategies”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yachting identified as strong potential for development</li> <li>• Ecotourism is identified as an opportunity to promote sustainable tourism</li> </ul>	European Commission (2020)
Jamaica	Ocean Panel (Transformations for a Sustainable Ocean Economy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes the importance of sustainable tourism for the blue economy after the COVID 19 pandemic.</li> </ul>	Ocean Panel (2020)
Martinique (France)	“Realizing the potential of the Outermost Regions for sustainable blue growth”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coastal tourism and cruise tourism are recognized as the sector with the most potential for economic growth in the region</li> </ul>	European Commission (2017)
	“Methodological assistance for the outermost regions to support their efforts to develop blue economy strategies”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly developed tourist infrastructures</li> <li>• Yachting and leisure boating activities are considered a high value-added sector</li> </ul>	European Commission (2020)
Mexico	“Integrated Ridge to Reef Management of the Mesoamerican Reef Ecoregion Project (MAR2R)”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism is one of the most important socio-economic activities in the region</li> <li>• Construction of a regional vision of social and sustainable tourism as an objective</li> </ul>	Escobedo et al. (2020) Escobedo et al. (2021)
	Ocean Panel (Transformations for a Sustainable Ocean Economy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes the importance of sustainable tourism for the blue economy after the COVID 19 pandemic</li> </ul>	Ocean Panel (2020)
Saba (Netherlands)	“Blue Economy Roadmap”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The tourism industry mainly focused on nature-based activities</li> <li>• Dependent on other islands’ transport system</li> </ul>	OCTA (2021)
Saint Barthelemy (France)	“Blue Economy Roadmap”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on high-end residential tourism</li> <li>• Dependency on mass tourism</li> <li>• No conservation measure to protect the ecosystem</li> <li>• Opportunity to develop ecotourism</li> </ul>	OCTA (2021)
Saint Martin (France)	“Realizing the potential of the Outermost Regions for sustainable blue growth”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coastal tourism and cruise tourism are recognized as the sector with the most potential for economic growth in the region</li> </ul>	European Commission (2017)
	“Methodological assistance for the outermost regions to support their efforts to develop blue economy strategies”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliance on coastal tourism in sustaining local economic activity</li> <li>• Lack of capacity at the local level as a priority has been given to recovery after Hurricane Irma in 2017</li> </ul>	European Commission (2020)
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Caribbean Regional Ocean Scape Project (CROP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocation of recovery funds to support restoration work of coastal ecosystems</li> <li>• Opportunities for nature-dependent recreation are the primary motivators for tourism</li> </ul>	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (2020b)
Saint Eustatius (Netherlands)	“Blue Economy Roadmap”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes an ecotourism approach.</li> </ul>	OCTA (2021)
Saint Martin (Netherlands)	“Blue Economy Roadmap”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependency on mass tourism</li> <li>• Opportunity to develop a blue tourism strategy</li> </ul>	OCTA (2021)

### ***Category 3 – LAC countries without a Blue Economy Strategy/Plan but with National Diagnostic Studies/Reports***

Countries/territories in Category 3 do not have a BE Strategy but have published a National Diagnostic Study/Report which indicates a first step in the process of developing a BE strategy/plan. Sector-specific opportunities that support the development of a BE are seen in most of the initial scoping studies presented. A total of 7 countries/territories (14%) are in this category, corresponding to both Latin America (1) and the Caribbean (6).

*Tourism is identified as the sector with the largest potential for sustainable development of a Blue Economy* for Dominica and Uruguay. Similarly, Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands (USVI) are part of a report by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that states that the tourism and recreation sector represent most of the economic activity in both territories (Feliciano et al., 2016). *The need for cross-sectoral integration* is addressed by Dominica and Uruguay. For example, creating links between tourism and conservation is a priority for Dominica on grounds that “the success of the sector is based on a healthy natural environment” (UNDP, 2019, p. 19). Also, links between fishing and tourism are addressed for Uruguay which proposes that "artisanal fishermen and small producers, provide employment alternatives for fishermen to offer excursions to tourists" (UNEP-WCMC & GRID-Arendal, 2021, p. 7).

The cruise industry is deemed to be the largest contributor to visitor numbers in Dominica. However, improving the level of income that remains in the economy from the cruise industry is stated as a difficult outcome to achieve in the country's BE assessment. Yachting is considered a small but not insignificant sector in Dominica. While lower in visitor numbers, the yachting tourist tends to stay longer (more than 5 days), so the consumption of secondary services (fuel, food, landing, and docking fees) is considerable (UNDP, 2019). As for SCUBA diving and whale watching, they are considered to have a strong potential for growth in Dominica and Uruguay. Even though the BE is addressed as key for Dominica's *National Resilience Development Strategy 2030*, the tourism sector isn't part of its approach since “Dominica's ocean already drives the country's tourism sector” (Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica, 2018, p. 66). The tourism sector is addressed separately from a climate resilience standpoint.

Two main projects and programs are found in this category. First, the *Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme* has produced national scoping studies for three countries: Guyana, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The three reviews *contain strategies*

*related to the marine economy, challenges faced by each country, and activities in topics of research, development, and monitoring.* However, they share the same structure and strategic outcomes and *they do not address the tourism industry.* Second, countries included in the CROP project are Dominica, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. This project is developing coastal master plans for the countries that presently do not have one, using Grenada's *Blue Growth Master Plan* as a reference.

Overall, the countries in this category indicate a potential for the development of tourism in their BEs by outlining the gaps, challenges, and opportunities that each country/territory faces. Of the 7 countries/territories in this category, Uruguay and Dominica contain the most comprehensive diagnostic of their BE potential. Uruguay's study concludes by stating that "sound policies and regulations to protect the nature and promote the sustainable development of blue economy sectors" (UNEP-WCMC & GRID-Arendal, 2021, p. iv). However, "effective implementation of the existing framework is limited by a lack of cross-sectoral integration, limited access to long-term financing, inconsistent monitoring, and non-compliance with existing regulations" (UNEP-WCMC & GRID-Arendal, 2021, p. iv).

**Table 4.3. LAC countries without a Blue Economy Strategy/Plan but with National Diagnostic Studies/Reports**

Country	BE Strategy / Plan / Report	Relevance to Tourism	References
Guyana	“Enabling safe and sustainable marine economies across Commonwealth Small Island Developing States Guyana Country review”	---	Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme (2018)
Dominica	Blue economy scoping study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The link between the tourism sector and marine conservation</li> <li>• Expand SCUBA and whale watching sub-sectors</li> <li>• The link between the fishery sector and the tourism sector</li> <li>• Develop infrastructure to support the yachting community</li> </ul>	UNDP (2019)
	National Resilience Development Strategy 2030 of Dominica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blue Economy is mentioned in the plan but is focused on the fisheries sector. Tourism is mentioned but not from a Blue Economy standpoint</li> </ul>	Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica (2018)
	Caribbean Regional Oceanscape Project (CROP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocation of recovery funds to support restoration work of coastal ecosystems</li> <li>• Opportunities for nature-dependent recreation are the primary motivators for tourism</li> </ul>	OECS (2020) OECS (2020b)
Puerto Rico (United States)	“Describing the Ocean Economies of the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The tourism and recreation sector represent most of the economic activity</li> </ul>	Feliciano et al. (2016)
Saint Lucia	“Enabling safe and sustainable marine economies across Commonwealth Small Island Developing States St. Lucia Country Review”	---	Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme (2018)
	Caribbean Regional Oceanscape Project (CROP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocation of recovery funds to support restoration work of coastal ecosystems</li> <li>• Opportunities for nature-dependent recreation are the primary motivators for tourism</li> </ul>	OECS (2020) OECS (2020b)
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	“Enabling safe and sustainable marine economies across Commonwealth Small Island Developing States Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Country Review”	---	Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme (2018a)
	Caribbean Regional Oceanscape Project (CROP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocation of recovery funds to support restoration work of coastal ecosystems</li> <li>• Opportunities for nature-dependent recreation are the primary motivators for tourism</li> </ul>	OECS (2020) OECS (2020b)
Uruguay	“Challenges and opportunities for the Blue Economy in Uruguay. Policy Summary”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism identified as the sector with bigger potential for sustainable development of a Blue Economy</li> <li>• The link between the fishery sector and the tourism sector</li> <li>• Whale watching and yachting stated as an opportunity</li> </ul>	UNEP-WCMC & GRID-Arendal (2021)
United States Virgin Islands (United States)	“Describing the Ocean Economies of the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reports tourism and recreation sector represents most of the economic activity</li> </ul>	Feliciano et al. (2016)

Note: “---” meaning that the respective document does not mention or reference tourism

***Category 4 – LAC countries without a National Blue Economy Strategy/Plan but part of a Regional Blue Economy Strategy/Plan***

Countries/territories in Category 4 do not have a national BE Strategy but are part of a Regional BE Strategy, which indicates involvement in the development of a BE on a regional

scale. A total of 11 countries/territories (23%) are in this category, all corresponding to Latin America and the Caribbean (11).

Most of the countries in this category are part of one of two regional strategies. First, the "*Regional Strategy for Blue Growth in SICA Countries*" covers eight Central American countries: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and the Dominican Republic. Its overarching objective is to “establish the bases for growth based on the sustainable use of marine-coastal resources, thus contributing to the improvement of the quality of life of Central American people” (OSPESCA, 2020). An inclusive, respectful, and sustainable approach to planning and management is considered crucial for the tourism sector to be an ally for the development of the BE in the region. There are *four strategic objectives* aligned with this vision. First, *gender equity is addressed* by assuring the participation of women in decision-making spaces as well as promoting the incorporation of women at different levels and positions of relevance. Second, *capacity building is needed to meet the demands and needs of the tourism sector*. Third, *management tools to coordinate activities* must be implemented to take advantage of the synergies and complementarities between them. Lastly, the *development of cultural tourism that is focused on the protection and conservation of heritage linked to the sea* is proposed as a tool for local promotion and development.

The second regional strategy is the “*Blue Economy Regulatory Framework*” which covers five member countries of the Andean Parliament: Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Nicaragua, and Chile. Its objective is to promote the consolidation of coastal and marine economic activities with a blue economy approach in the member states. This strategy generally endorses sustainable tourism, responsible tourism, cruise tourism, and cultural tourism. Two main objectives are at the core of the strategy. First, *development aid for local tour operators that promote the concepts of sustainability, responsibility, and respect for the environment* in such a way that biodiversity, marine ecosystems, mangroves, wetlands, and swamps are preserved. Second, *incorporation of management tools, such as Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)* to control coastal development and achieve the appropriate *balance between tourism and other sectors*. Similarly, the implementation of conservation tools that include an element of zoning to protect vulnerable coastal marine ecosystems such as coral reefs and mangroves is also addressed as a need.

The projects found in this category are the *Oceans Economy and Trade Strategy (OETS)* project for Belize, which is focused on the fisheries and seafood processing sector but proposes tourism as an alternative livelihood opportunity to diversify the income of reef-dependent coastal communities. The project involves “traditional fishermen taking visitors on guided tours to

experience a day-in-the-life of a traditional beach trap fisherman” (UNCTAD, 2020, p. 38). Similarly, Costa Rica is the beneficiary of the project "Navigating towards the blue economy: Initiatives in the fishing sector of Costa Rica". Although this project is focused on the fisheries sector under the BE, tourism is part of its action plan as an “alternative activity to fishing” to provide complementary income to fishery-dependent communities. Chile, Ecuador, Panama, and Peru are part of the report “Contribution of the maritime sectors to a sustainable blue economy for the Southeast Pacific” which describes the main opportunities for development in each country's tourism sector under the BE. Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras are part of the CROP project (referenced in category 2). Lastly, Chile is part of the *Ocean Panel (Transformations for a Sustainable Ocean Economy)*.

Overall, the regional strategies and projects in this category demonstrate compromise to work together toward the development of a regional framework of the BE. This is more evident in the “*Regional Strategy for Blue Growth in SICA countries*” since it includes an action plan with an element of monitoring and review to achieve its objectives.

**Table 4.4.** LAC countries without a National Blue Economy Strategy/Plan but part of a Regional Blue Economy Strategy/Plan

Country	BE Strategy / Plan / Report	Relevance to Tourism	References
Belize	“Oceans Economy and Trade Strategy: Belize Marine Fisheries and Seafood Processing”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism as an alternative livelihood opportunity</li> </ul>	UNCTAD (2020)
	“Regional Strategy for Blue Growth in SICA countries”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism as an essential activity with strategic challenges on a regional scale</li> <li>• Support of gender equity in the sector</li> <li>• Focus on capacity training</li> </ul>	OSPESCA (2020)
	“Integrated Ridge to Reef Management of the Mesoamerican Reef Ecoregion Project (MAR2R)”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism is one of the most important socio-economic activities in the region</li> <li>• Construction of a regional vision of social and sustainable tourism as an objective</li> </ul>	Escobedo et al. (2020) Escobedo et al. (2021)
Chile	“Blue Economy Regulatory Framework”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes sustainable tourism, responsible tourism, coastal and marine tourism, cruise tourism, and cultural tourism</li> <li>• Identifies main sustainable tourism objectives</li> </ul>	Parlamento Andino (2019)
	“Ocean Panel (Transformations for a Sustainable Ocean Economy)”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes the importance of sustainable tourism for the blue economy after the COVID 19 pandemic</li> </ul>	Ocean Panel (2020)
	“Contribution of the maritime sectors to a sustainable blue economy for the Southeast Pacific”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slightly mentions the state of the tourism industry in the country. Mainly focused on cruise tourism</li> <li>• Observation of marine mammals and seabirds has become a significant tourism activity</li> </ul>	COI-UNESCO (2020)
Costa Rica	“Navigating towards the blue economy: Initiatives in the fishing sector of Costa Rica”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report mentions tourism as a possible alternative to fishing in populations that show a willingness to change or complement their fishing activities with viable productive alternatives</li> </ul>	UNCTAD (2019)
	“Regional Strategy for Blue Growth in SICA countries”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism as an essential activity with strategic challenges on a regional scale</li> <li>• Support of gender equity in the sector</li> <li>• Focus on capacity training</li> </ul>	OSPESCA (2020)



Dominican Republic	“Regional Strategy for Blue Growth in SICA countries”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism as an essential activity with strategic challenges on a regional scale</li> <li>• Support of gender equity in the sector</li> <li>• Focus on capacity training</li> </ul>	OSPESCA (2020)
Ecuador	“Blue Economy Regulatory Framework”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable tourism as part of the strategical alignment of the framework</li> <li>• Identifies main sustainable tourism objectives</li> </ul>	Parlamento Andino (2019)
	“Contribution of the maritime sectors to a sustainable blue economy for the Southeast Pacific”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• States the importance of tourism in the country</li> <li>• Identifies cruise tourism, sports tourism, diving, and marine mammal and bird sighting tourism as one of the main opportunities for the industry</li> </ul>	COI-UNESCO (2020)
El Salvador	“Regional Strategy for Blue Growth in SICA countries”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism as an essential activity with strategic challenges on a regional scale</li> <li>• Support of gender equity in the sector</li> <li>• Focus on capacity training</li> </ul>	OSPESCA (2020)
Guatemala	“Regional Strategy for Blue Growth in SICA countries”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism as an essential activity with strategic challenges on a regional scale</li> <li>• Support of gender equity in the sector</li> <li>• Focus on capacity training</li> </ul>	OSPESCA (2020)
	“Integrated Ridge to Reef Management of the Mesoamerican Reef Ecoregion Project (MAR2R)”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism is one of the most important socio-economic activities in the region</li> <li>• Construction of a regional vision of social and sustainable tourism as an objective</li> </ul>	Escobedo et al. (2020) Escobedo et al. (2021)
Honduras	“Regional Strategy for Blue Growth in SICA countries”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism as an essential activity with strategic challenges on a regional scale</li> <li>• Support of gender equity in the sector</li> <li>• Focus on capacity training</li> </ul>	OSPESCA (2020)
	“Resilience of the Blue Economy of the Coastal Ecosystem of Northern Honduras”	---	GOAL (2016)
	“Integrated Ridge to Reef Management of the Mesoamerican Reef Ecoregion Project (MAR2R)”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism is one of the most important socio-economic activities in the region</li> <li>• Construction of a regional vision of social and sustainable tourism as an objective</li> </ul>	Escobedo et al. (2020) Escobedo et al. (2021)
Nicaragua	“Regional Strategy for Blue Growth in SICA countries”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism as an essential activity with strategic challenges on a regional scale</li> <li>• Support of gender equity in the sector</li> <li>• Focus on capacity training</li> </ul>	OSPESCA (2020)
Panama	“Regional Strategy for Blue Growth in SICA countries”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism as an essential activity with strategic challenges on a regional scale</li> <li>• Support of gender equity in the sector</li> <li>• Focus on capacity training</li> </ul>	OSPESCA (2020)
	“Contribution of the maritime sectors to a sustainable blue economy for the Southeast Pacific”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specifies tourism as one of the most important economic sectors in the country.</li> <li>• Main tourism activities are coastal tourism, nature tourism, and the channel.</li> </ul>	COI-UNESCO (2020)
Peru	“Blue Economy Regulatory Framework”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable tourism as part of the strategical alignment of the framework</li> <li>• Identifies main sustainable tourism objectives</li> </ul>	Parlamento Andino (2019)
	“Contribution of the maritime sectors to a sustainable blue economy for the Southeast Pacific”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism is identified as the third largest and fastest-growing industry due to its archaeological monuments, nature, beaches, colonial cities, gastronomy, and nature and adventure tourism.</li> <li>• Coastal tourism is also identified as important with a focus on rest, surfing, gastronomy, and ecotourism.</li> </ul>	COI-UNESCO (2020)

Note: “---” meaning that the respective document does not mention or reference tourism

### ***Category 5 – LAC countries with a National Blue Economy Strategy/Plan***

Countries/territories in Category 5 have a National BE Strategy or plan. This indicates active involvement in the development of a BE. A total of 8 countries/territories (16%) are in this category, corresponding to both Latin America (1) and the Caribbean (7).

*Tourism is identified as the most important sector and is part of key thematic areas and objectives in all eight countries (100%).* The main themes in these plans are linking tourism and conservation, developing ecotourism, cruise tourism and yachting, and finally, involvement of local communities in the implementation and development of the strategies.

Creating links between conservation and tourism is specifically an objective for Montserrat and Barbados. The activities outlined to achieve this are paid turtle research internships, adopt-a-coral initiatives, and lionfish derbies. Ecotourism is identified as an opportunity in Colombia, Grenada, and Trinidad and Tobago. However, noticeably different approaches are evident in these plans. Grenada's plan proposes an "Eco-Tourism Center" in one of its development zones. Activities such as hiking and visits to one of the largest waterfalls on the islands are included, along with commercial development that tourists could use as a "base for their excursions". Trinidad and Tobago's plan points out that ecotourism is likely to attract tourists that spend more time on-site and therefore spend more money than mass tourism from cruise tourism (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2021). Activities include nature photography, snorkeling, scuba diving, kayaking, and turtle and bird watching. Most of these activities are expected to support local livelihoods. On the other hand, Colombia focuses on a unique constraint, since access to natural areas with the potential to develop the sub-sector is affected by security issues related to crime in the country. Consequently, infrastructure development to allow for secure access to natural areas is depicted as a necessity.

Cruise tourism is approached from a growth and development perspective in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Bonaire, BVI, Colombia, and Trinidad and Tobago. Developing a policy aimed at better managing the impacts of cruise tourism is a focus for BVI and Montserrat. A different approach to the cruise industry is presented by Bonaire. The strategy aims to "lower the number of cruise passengers arriving on, shifting from quantity to quality. It has been decided to apply price strategies to decrease the number of cruise ships. Additionally, cruise ships will be required to have taken initiative to meet sustainability goals" (Government of Bonaire & Tourism Bonaire Corporation, 2021, p. 24). Developing yachting tourism is one part of the objectives for Barbados, Bonaire, BVI, and Trinidad and Tobago. This sub-sector is deemed as being more valuable since they bring "high-income" tourists. However, the need for training and capacity building is identified to "improve the quality of service provided by the yachting services sector in order to make T&T a competitive destination for yachties" (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2021, p. 76).

The *involvement of local communities in the definition and implementation of these strategies and plans* is addressed in seven countries (88%): Antigua and Barbuda, Bonaire, BVI, Colombia, Grenada, Montserrat, and Trinidad and Tobago. Bonaire’s Tourism Recovery plan outlines a strategy to increase the local community involvement in the current tourism industry and states that “community participation in tourism development and conservation of the local identity and culture, is essential for the creation of a sustainable tourism destination” (Government of Bonaire & Tourism Bonaire Corporation, 2021, p. 26). Similarly, Grenada’s Blue Growth Master plan addresses this by implementing “blue community approaches into its implementation strategies, involving communities and grassroots groups on the ground, through the establishment of community co-management agreements and community-managed blue projects” (Government of Grenada & The World Bank, 2016, p. 1).

**Table 4.5. LAC countries with a National Blue Economy Strategy/Plan**

Country	BE Strategy / Plan / Report	Relevance to Tourism	References
Antigua and Barbuda	“Antigua and Barbuda Maritime Economy Plan”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies tourism as the most important economic sector with potential for further growth and diversification</li> <li>Needs skilled workforce to plan and manage sustainable tourism development</li> </ul>	Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme (2021)
	“Caribbean Regional Oceanscape Project (CROP)”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentions tourism as a BE sector but does not specify further</li> </ul>	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (2020)
Barbados	“Barbados Blue Economy Scoping Study - Initial Action Plan”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Tourism and Leisure” is one of the key thematic areas for its Initial Action Plan</li> <li>Linkages between the tourism sector and marine conservation</li> <li>Develop cruise sector to account for its impacts on the marine environment</li> <li>Expand yacht facilities to cater to recreational activities</li> </ul>	UNDP (2020)
Bonaire (Netherlands)	“Strategic Tourism Master Plan”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alignment between environment, society, and development</li> <li>Promotes Blue Growth</li> <li>Expand benefits of tourism to a broader population, convert to high-end destination, cohesive branding strategy, and elevate tourist experience</li> </ul>	Tourism Bonaire Corporation (2017)
	“Tourism Recovery Plan”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimation of the economic losses due to the pandemic</li> <li>Review of the 2017 STMP objectives</li> <li>Upgrading and diversification of the tourism sector</li> <li>Ideas for increased involvement from the community</li> </ul>	Government of Bonaire & Tourism Bonaire Corporation (2021)
	“Blue Economy Roadmap”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on keeping the tourist density low</li> <li>Lack of Diversification of tourism experiences</li> <li>The tourism sector is described as "underperforming"</li> </ul>	OCTA (2021)
British Virgin Islands (United Kingdom)	“British Virgin Islands (BVI) Strategic Blue Economy”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maritime Tourism as one of the key elements of the strategy</li> <li>Manage the impacts of the yacht and cruise tourism</li> <li>Increase the number of people pursuing careers in maritime sectors</li> </ul>	UNDP & Government of the Virgin Islands (2020)
Colombia	“National Policy for the Ocean and Coastal Spaces”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tourism is a main thematic area of economic development</li> <li>Promote the principles of sustainable tourism in all destinations linked to the marine-coastal zone</li> <li>Regulate the development of recreational diving, sport fishing, recreational activities, and marine water sports</li> </ul>	Comisión Colombiana del Océano (2018)
	“Blue Economy Regulatory Framework”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainable tourism as part of the strategic alignment of the framework</li> <li>Identifies main sustainable tourism objectives</li> </ul>	Parlamento Andino (2019)
	“Contribution of the maritime sectors to a sustainable blue economy for the Southeast Pacific”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential for ecotourism development and its necessary infrastructure</li> <li>Reduce security and public order problems that prevent tourism in areas with ecological and cultural attractions</li> </ul>	COI-UNESCO (2020)
Grenada	“Blue Growth Coastal Management Plan”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tourism to play a dominant role in providing new jobs and alternative livelihoods</li> <li>Identifies ecotourism, global, and boutique tourism incentive zones with strategic projects for each area.</li> </ul>	Government of Grenada & The World Bank (2016)
	“Caribbean Regional Oceanscape Project (CROP)”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocation of recovery funds to support restoration work of coastal ecosystems</li> <li>Opportunities for nature-dependent recreation are the primary motivators for tourism</li> </ul>	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (2020) Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (2020b)
Montserrat (United Kingdom)	“Blue Economy Scoping Study – Montserrat”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COVID pandemic impact on the industry</li> <li>Tourism highlighted as a major area for growth</li> <li>Advantage for ecotourism given its pristine and unspoiled beaches</li> </ul>	UNDP & Government of Montserrat (2021)
	“Blue Economy Scoping Study, Montserrat – Initial Action Plan”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linkages between tourism and conservation</li> <li>Diversify the existing tourism product</li> <li>Sustainable tourism training for businesses and policymakers</li> <li>Explore sustainability branding for the sector</li> </ul>	UNDP & Government of Montserrat (2021b)
Trinidad and Tobago	“Development of a National Maritime Policy and Strategy”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity for ecotourism development</li> <li>Promote historical heritage through yachting, cruises, and underwater cultural heritage sites (wrecks)</li> </ul>	Government of Trinidad and Tobago (2021)

## Analysis of National Blue Economy Strategies

The results of the SDGs addressed through the tourism sector in the national BE strategies/plans are presented in Table 4.6. It highlights the social, economic, and environmental sustainability results of the tourism sector tackled in each of the eight strategies.

**Table 4.6.** Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) analysis of national Blue Economy strategies/plans.

SDGs	A&B	Barbados	Bonaire	BVI	Colombia	Grenada	Montserrat	T&T	Total
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	
1									1/8
2									1/8
3									2/8
4									8/8
5									4/8
6									2/8
7									2/8
8									8/8
9									6/8
10									6/8
11									3/8
12									1/8
13									7/8
14									8/8
15									0/8
16									7/8
17									8/8
<b>Total</b>	<b>13/17</b>	<b>8/17</b>	<b>8/17</b>	<b>10/17</b>	<b>6/17</b>	<b>9/17</b>	<b>12/17</b>	<b>8/17</b>	

*Note.*

Green box indicates that BE strategy/plan includes the respective SDG.

Red box indicates that BE strategy/plan does not consider the respective SDG

(A) Antigua and Barbuda Maritime Economy Plan

(B) Barbados Blue Economy Scoping Study - Initial Action Plan

(C) Strategic Tourism Master Plan & Tourism Recovery Plan

(D) British Virgin Islands (BVI) Strategic Blue Economy

(E) National Policy for the Ocean and Coastal Spaces

(F) Blue Growth Coastal Management Plan

(G) Blue Economy Scoping Study, Montserrat – Initial Action Plan

(H) Development of a National Maritime Policy and Strategy

A&B and Montserrat tackled the most SDGs through the tourism industry. A&B addressed thirteen SDGs, followed by Montserrat, which addressed twelve SDGs in their strategy. BVI's strategy tackled ten SDGs. Grenada's Blue Growth Coastal Management Plan

addressed nine SDGs. Barbados, Colombia, and T&T tackled eight SDGs. Lastly, Colombia addressed six SDGs in its National Policy for the Ocean and Coastal Spaces.

SDGs 4, 8, 14, and 17 were addressed by all eight strategies/plans (100%). *SDG 4* “*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all*” was mostly addressed through objectives that promoted capacity building, training, and educational programs to build a skilled workforce. *SDG 8* “*Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all*” was tackled by promoting inclusive economic growth in all eight plans. Bonaire focused on endorsing “employment awareness and provide access to employment opportunities that can expand the benefits stemming from tourism development to a broader segment of the Bonaire population” (Government of Bonaire & Tourism Bonaire Corporation, 2021, p. 12). *SDG 14* “*Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*” was part of all the strategies/plans through different objectives. Barbados tackled this by “developing conservation partnerships with operators of high-end hotels/resorts aimed at protecting marine ecosystems” (UNDP, 2020, p. 21) while the BVI focused on managing “the cumulative impacts of the charter yacht sector on the marine environment” (UNDP & Government of the Virgin Islands, 2020, p. 51). *SDG 17* “*Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development*” was addressed through the participation and collaboration of key international institutions (World Bank, UNDP, Commonwealth, European Commission) and national governments in the development of a BE strategy for countries/territories in the LAC region.

SDGs 13, and 16 were addressed by seven strategies/plans (88%). A&B addressed *SDG 13* “*Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*” by “promoting marine spatial planning to support sustainable tourism development at the coast/marine area in managing the risk of coastal hazards and climate change” (CMEP, 2021, p. 73). *SDG 16* “*Promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all and build inclusive institutions*” was tackled by Barbados through the involvement of local communities in stewardship initiatives and cooperation to find environmental and sustainable development solutions. On the other hand, Colombia addressed this by endorsing the development of tourism strategies that promote traditional and cultural knowledge of the populations settled in the coastal marine areas.

SDGs 9, and 10 were addressed by six strategies/plans (75%). Montserrat tackled *SDG 9* “*Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation*” by promoting “improved building standards of tourism accommodations and infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events and climate hazards” (UNDP & Government

of Montserrat, 2021b, p. 48). *SDG 10 “Reduce inequality within and among countries”* was addressed by T&T through “ecotourism development that can change wealth distribution in favour of rural communities” (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2021, p. 50).

*SDG 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”* was addressed by four strategies/plans (50%). A&B supports this by stating that “tourism is one maritime economy sector that offers a wider range of opportunities for women to take an active part of the economy. The opportunity to diversify and expand the tourism offering creates the opportunity for women and rural/remote communities to engage in the economy” (CMEP, 2021, p. 49).

SDG 11 was addressed by three strategies/plans (38%). *SDG 11 “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”*. Grenada tackles this by aiming to “plan and manage development in the coastal zone in a way that reduces vulnerability and risk associated with coastal hazard” (Government of Grenada & The World Bank, 2016, p. 5). On the other hand, Barbados proposes an “island-wide assessment of potentially suitable sites for marine development such as a small recreational vessels marine facility” (UNDP, 2020a, p. 24).

SDGs 3, 6, and 7 were addressed by two strategies/plans (25%). *SDG 3 “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”* was addressed by Bonaire by stating that “tourism must serve as the stepping-stone for development and well-being for all Bonairians. Tourism must enable all Bonairians to unleash their transformative and creative power to create a blue economy and live in harmony with nature” (Government of Bonaire & Tourism Bonaire Corporation, 2021, p. 4). *SDG 6 “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”* and *SDG 7 “Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all”* was tackled by addressing the utilization of energy and water by hotels and resorts, which are identified as main consumers of electricity and water. A&B states that “water quality monitoring and improvements are required to meet regional/international standards” (CMEP, 2021, p. 72). Grenada proposes the use of renewable energy production on-site, such as solar power, solar thermal hot water, geothermal, geo-exchange, wind, biofuel, and waste to energy strategies.

SDGs 1, 2, and 12 were addressed by one strategy/plan (13%). *SDG 1 “End poverty in all its forms everywhere”*, *SDG 2 “End hunger, achieve food security and nutrition, promote sustainable agriculture*, and *SDG 12 “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”* were significantly harder to connect to the tourism industry. Nevertheless, the BVI includes ensure food security as one of its main objectives. As well as Montserrat by proposing to “create state-of-the-art zero-energy facilities using sustainable building materials” (UNDP &

Government of Montserrat, 2021b, p. 48). Lastly, *SDG 15 “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and halt biodiversity loss”* was not addressed by any of the strategies/plans (0%).

To summarize, the results of categorizing each country’s/territory’s and identifying tourism objectives and relevant information reveal that LAC Countries/Territories without a Blue Economy Strategy/Plan and that are not part of discussions in any Blue Economy Diagnostic Studies/Reports represent 20% of the territory. LAC countries without a Blue Economy Strategy/Plan but that are part of discussions in Regional Blue Economy Diagnostic Studies/Reports represented 27% of the territory. The main themes are tourism as an opportunity for economic growth, cruise tourism as a dominant sector, and ecotourism as an opportunity for further development. LAC countries without a Blue Economy Strategy/Plan but with National Diagnostic Studies/Reports represent 14% of the territory. Tourism is identified as the sector with the largest potential for sustainable development and the need for cross-sectoral integration is addressed. LAC countries without a National Blue Economy Strategy/Plan but part of a Regional Blue Economy Strategy/Plan represent 23% of the territory. Gender equity, capacity building, management tools (ICZM), development aids for local tour operators, and cultural tourism development are addressed. LAC countries with a National Blue Economy Strategy/Plan represent 16% of the territory. Tourism is identified as the most important sector in all eight countries and the involvement of local communities in strategy/plan implementation is addressed in seven out of eight strategies/plans.

The results of the sustainability assessment highlighted the most discussed SDGs in the National Blue Economy Strategies/Plans. SDGs 4, 8, 14, and 17 were addressed by all eight strategies/plans (100%). Education and learning, economic growth, ocean conservation, and global partnership for development are in the substance of these countries’ BE’s visions. SDGs 13, and 16 were addressed by seven strategies/plans (88%). They cover climate change action and peaceful and inclusive societies. SDGs 9, and 10 were addressed by six strategies/plans (75%), which involve building resilient infrastructure and reducing inequality. *SDG 5* was addressed by four strategies/plans (50%), which stated achieving gender equality. *SDG 11* was addressed by three strategies/plans (38%). This included making cities more inclusive, safe, and resilient. SDGs 3, 6, and 7 were addressed by two strategies/plans (25%), which consider peoples’ well-being, access to water and sanitation, and access to affordable, sustainable, and



reliable energy. SDGs 1, 2, and 12 were addressed by one strategy/plan (13%). These cover ending poverty, hunger, and sustainable consumption. They were harder to connect to the tourism industry. Lastly, SDG 15 was not addressed by any strategies/plans (0%).

## CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

The blue economy (BE) is becoming an accepted approach for sustainable development of ocean sectors, and coastal and marine tourism (CMT) is no exception (Phelan et al., 2020). To restate, there are three main objectives for this paper. First, to provide a country-level overview of the status of development of the BE in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region. Second, to assess the sustainability of the tourism industry under BE strategies. And lastly, to identify the opportunities for future BE strategies and plans. This work aligns with previous research on the BE and CMT (Cisneros-Montemayor et al., 2019; Karani & Failler, 2020b; Phelan et al., 2020; Sotiriadis & Shen, 2020; Tegar & Gurning, 2018b; Thorburn et al., 2021) and builds on Thorburn et al. (2021) findings on the need to evaluate national scale strategies to provide information on how the sector contributes to the sustainable development of a BE and community. Furthermore, connections are made among the findings of Phelan et al. (2020) regarding the role of the BE in providing opportunities for local communities through the tourism sector (hospitality training, additional revenue for households, and market access). Additionally, the effective implementation of CMT objectives is a vital part of the BE strategies (Sotiriadis & Shen, 2020). Recommendations made here are based on important elements of an effective governance strategy.

This research is important for ocean governance because it is necessary to provide clear evidence of progress made to date on the sustainability of BE management frameworks and tools being used. Cisneros-Montemayor et al. (2019) conclude that established ocean sectors (such as tourism) are a bigger challenge than new and emerging sectors (i.e., blue carbon and ocean energy) in moving toward a real BE because they already represent an important contribution to peoples' livelihoods and are part of the present economy. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought incredible losses for the industry, however, there is now both a challenge and an opportunity to rebuild as the crisis wanes. Because the CMT sector has vastly different sub-sectors (ecotourism, cruise tourism, yachting tourism, etc.), a sub-sectoral approach to evaluate their fit or unsuitability to the BE may provide clearer guidance than the usual overall BE approach. Several national BE strategies have already been created. However, re-branding countries with the same business as usual approach may limit the potential development of tourism compared to a more novel approach (Cisneros-Montemayor et al., 2019). Thus, a thorough evaluation of these

approaches is needed to identify where the industry stands, what is working and what is not, to re-evaluate the appropriateness of objectives, and promote the necessary adjustments to better manage CMT under a true BE.

### **Level of development of Blue Economy in LAC**

The classification scheme of countries in the LAC region used here (**Table 3.4**) illustrates the level of progress of countries in the creation of strategies and plans to guide the development of the BE. Overall, the BE is part of the national and regional discourse in 80% of countries in the LAC region. This further evidences the significance of the BE and the increasing recognition of its importance for sustainable management of ocean resources (Lee et al., 2020; UNEP, 2016). However, it is informative to differentiate the levels and approaches countries are taking in developing the BE.

Countries with neither a BE Strategy nor available discussion in BE diagnostic studies/reports represent 20% of the LAC territory. The various reasons (political, social, economic, etc.) behind the absence of any discussion of the BE in these countries is not part of the objectives or scope of this study. Countries without a BE strategy but that are part of regional BE diagnostic studies/reports represent 27% of the territory. Studies and reports from this category provided overall regional reviews of the BE as well as opportunities for the sustainable development of a BE. They represent an important first step toward evaluating the enabling conditions of the region and introducing the status of their ocean sectors. Third, countries without a BE Strategy but with national diagnostic studies/reports represent 14% of the territory. Their purpose and significance are similar to countries in the previous category, but with a national focus, which provides a more thorough analysis of their country-specific BE potential and ocean sectors. The BE scoping study for Uruguay, in collaboration with the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), can be used as a reference point for what an effective and thorough BE report must contain. These basic elements are a general description of the context of the region, a definition of key BE sectors, challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for the development of a BE in the region (UNEP-WCMC & GRID-Arendal, 2021).

Countries that are part of a regional BE strategy represent 23% of the territory. Caribbean countries constituted the majority in all other categories except this one. This means that countries in Latin America are more inclined toward a regional approach to the BE, while

Caribbean countries tend to opt for a more national-focused approach. Shared strategies and plans represent a good opportunity for countries that may lack national resources and funding to develop a national BE strategy. This may be the case for Central and South American countries, as it hosts the only two regional strategies. Accordingly, collaboration with key global organizations (UNDP, Commonwealth, World Bank) is far more common for countries and territories in the Caribbean. It is important to mention that collaboration with these organizations without contribution from the government may hinder commitment to act on (implement) these strategies and plans. Furthermore, when projects are completely supported by these external agencies without governmental input, steps taken to further develop a national BE strategy seem less likely.

Countries with a national BE strategy/plan represent 16% of the territory. While the BE strategies/plans of these countries do not necessarily share a common structure or purpose, they do share a framework of reference (ocean sectors, objectives, key actors, etc.), whereby each one reflects the reality of their own national situation (OSPESCA, 2020). There is a peculiar difference between the national BE strategies/plans that were developed with other institutions and those without international input. Bonaire, Colombia, and Trinidad and Tobago worked with their governmental resources and while they utilized the BE as a framework, their strategies do not include “Blue Economy” in their name. This suggests that they are taking a more nationalized approach to their ocean economy while utilizing the BE as a reference. Montserrat, Barbados, and the British Virgin Islands worked in collaboration with the UNDP and their strategies follow the same structure and name, although vary depending on their priorities and strongest CMT sub-sectors. Antigua and Barbuda worked with the Commonwealth as part of their Marine Economies Program, therefore similar strategies resulting from these programs are expected for other Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean (i.e. Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Dominica). Lastly, Grenada worked with The World Bank and while their strategy references Blue Growth, it has been globally recognized as a pioneer of the BE development (The World Bank, 2018). This illustrates the diversity chosen by each country in terms of approach and the importance of analyzing the focus and objectives of their strategies in detail.

CMT was included in all regional and national documents as a key sector to be developed with specific actions and objectives. This clearly asserts the belief that these regions have

regarding the importance of CMT in the ocean economy of the region, although the purposes and focus were different depending on the country's objectives. Further analysis of the similarities and differences in their approach can provide valuable insights into each country's priorities and their own definition of what a sustainable CMT sector means. Also, because of the evident ambiguity of BE definitions (Silver et al., 2015; M. Voyer et al., 2018a; Winder & Le Heron, 2017), it is important to utilize a defined framework and indicators to evaluate the CMT sector's stance on its sustainability.

### **Do BE Strategies/Plans encourage the development of sustainable CMT?**

One of the objectives of this research is to assess the sustainability of the CMT sector within the context of BE strategies and plans. Furthermore, the resulting analysis contributes to the conversation on how the BE plays a central role in negotiations over the sustainable use of ocean resources as well as the progress made toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (M. Voyer et al., 2018a). SDGs can be used as a tool to measure the economic, social, and environmental factors of the Blue Economy (Martínez-Vázquez et al., 2021). A UNWTO publication published a series of documents aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of tourism's current and potential contribution to sustainable development. It provides clear connections between SDGs and tourism development through five pillars that represent the "key elements of sustainable development to which tourism stands to make a significant, lasting contribution" (UNWTO, 2018, p. 12). In the present study, these pillars are used to organize the insights resulting from the evaluation of the sustainability of proposed coastal and marine tourism (CMT) development outlined in the national BE strategies using the 17 SDGs.

#### ***Pillar 1 – Sustainable economic growth***

The relationship between CMT and sustainable economic growth has received increasing attention amid the growth of the industry and the new imperative of sustainability. According to the UNWTO (2018), SDGs 8, 9, 10, and 17 can be used as a tool to measure the progress made specifically to address sustainable economic growth. The results of an assessment of the SDGs reveal that these four goals are amongst the most commonly and substantively addressed in the national BE plans (75% ≤). Accelerating economic growth, creating employment opportunities,

and economic diversification are critical expected outcomes of the BE. Accordingly, these were explicitly and substantially part of all eight plans.

The potential of the CMT sector for economic growth is evident. For example, ecotourism and responsible tourism have great potential to support local communities to develop culture, heritage, and environment while promoting equitable and sustainable economic growth (Phelan et al., 2020). However, it is important to emphasize that not all economic growth in the industry is a good indicator of progress. If the industry is expected to grow sustainably and equitably, an emphasis on consistent monitoring and review in aspects of environment, equity, and inclusiveness should be clear in these strategies. For example, if the objective is to increase employment opportunities, an indicator of gender equity or diversity more broadly should be introduced.

Along with economic growth, investment in infrastructure and coastal zone development to promote safe and profitable businesses is critical for sustainability. A portion of the revenues of CMT growth is needed for investments in local infrastructure. Such investments benefit not only tourism enterprises, but also local communities and people who deserve to live and work in a safe and climate-resilient context. Lastly, the popularity and impact of the BE conceptual framework and values encourage countries to revitalize and support global partnerships for sustainable development. For example, Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) aims to boost regional tourism partnerships with its Caribbean Island neighbors.

### ***Pillar 2 – Social inclusiveness, employment, and poverty reduction***

Cisneros-Montemayor et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of BE frameworks in addressing social inclusion and equitable outcomes. SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 10 can be used to measure CMT progress toward social inclusiveness, employment, and poverty reduction. The analysis revealed an overriding concern that these strategies contemplate the need to make CMT growth inclusive to all. Improving the quality of life and overall well-being of its citizens was a focus for T&T and Bonaire. More specifically, ecotourism development is seen as an opportunity to stimulate wealth distribution in favour of rural communities. Making connections between the CMT sector and the wellbeing of its local citizens demonstrates how these strategies touch upon different BE lenses, and as identified by D. M. Voyer & van Leeuwen (2019), illustrates that the ocean is not only good business but also a means to alleviate poverty and promote economic

diversity for the well-being of the community. The active involvement of communities in tourism development and conservation of local identity and culture creates the potential for them to re-assert control over their resources (Liu, 2003). Although these strategies contain objectives directed toward community involvement in the CMT sector, participation in leadership roles should also be introduced as a key outcome (Cisneros-Montemayor et al., 2022).

The need for capacity building to develop a much-needed skilled workforce could have been more emphasized in the CMT portion of the LAC BE strategies and plans. The opportunity to connect the lack of skilled human resources to gender equality and access to leadership roles is noticeably missing. Increasing decent employment and enterprise opportunities for women and other disadvantaged groups in traditional sectors of the BE requires more detailed planning than what was presented in these strategies. For example, providing more detail on what types of jobs and skills are needed (i.e., jobs involved in the direct administration of hotels, restaurants, stores, transportation, etc.) may provide valuable insights into what type of education and skills are necessary for the youth and women in local communities (Karani & Failler, 2020b).

### ***Pilar 3 – Resource efficiency, environmental protection, and climate change***

Tourism has the potential to ensure that local natural resources are not exploited while offering opportunities to support conservation and climate resilience for coastal zones (UNWTO, 2018). SDGs 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 can be used to measure progress toward resource efficiency, environmental protection, and climate change through CMT. The analysis revealed that this pillar plays a significant role in the BE strategies analyzed. Environmental protection was adopted mostly through SDG 14 in all eight plans. Links between conservation and tourism, ecotourism development, conservation partnerships with local tourism operators, and cruise tourism impact management were amongst the common objectives. Ecotourism represents an excellent opportunity to enhance this connection through environmental education, awareness, and responsible interactions with nature and marine wildlife. For example, shark-watching activities in Mexico have been considered an example of how ecotourism can contribute to conservation while economically benefiting the local community, which aligns with the values of the BE (Cisneros-Montemayor et al., 2020).

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) is “a dynamic, multidisciplinary and iterative process to promote sustainable management of coastal zones” (European Commission,

2000). Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) is a “public process of analyzing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic, and social objectives” (Ehler & Douvère, 2009, p. 1). Both can be used as tools to maximize the use of the coastal zone in a sustainable manner, while also allowing for collaboration between ocean sectors (i.e., fisheries and tourism). However, very little mention of it is evidenced in these plans, especially concerning the tourism sector. Development of the cruise and yachting industry is an integral part of all eight strategies, therefore, an element of zoning would be extremely beneficial to the controlled and sustainable development of these CMT sub-sectors and the necessary infrastructure they require.

Climate change is an imminent threat to the marine environment as well as the coastal zone and the communities dependent on it. Although climate change resilience was addressed through the implementation of resilient tourism infrastructure, the associated objectives are rarely SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) and therefore less useful in guiding actions and the deployment of resources, and in the measuring of progress toward achievement of objectives and an overall vision. Also, risk assessment tools appear lacking and should be included to develop response plans for climate hazards (i.e. tsunamis, storm surges, etc.). Overall, ensuring that CMT infrastructure development is planned, managed, and monitored must be a priority to implement these objectives successfully. It is important to note that addressing the apparent lack of resources for implementation is needed in these strategies to facilitate effective action.

#### ***Pilar 4 – Cultural values, diversity, and heritage***

CMT can support efforts to protect and safeguard natural and cultural heritage through sustainable initiatives and projects that provide the local community with socio-economic benefits (UNWTO, 2018). SDGs 8, 11, and 12 can be used to measure progress toward enhancing cultural values, diversity, and heritage through CMT. The results of this analysis show that BE strategies are addressing this through objectives that incorporate the promotion of local culture, local employment, and CMT diversification. These have the potential to enhance the immense culture and heritage diversity that the LAC region offers. The Government of Grenada stated that indigenous approaches to the BE circumstances will be included in future developments. This is a first step toward further acknowledging the opportunities that tourism



brings to creating an equitable BE. CMT as part of the BE can help to enhance peoples' pride toward their own culture (if carried out respectfully in collaboration with the local population). For example, The Government of Bonaire recognized that the cultural empowerment resulting from the country's global recognition of their authenticity and hospitality toward visitors has generated a sense of achievement for tourism service providers. A culturally rich CMT sector can be refined by incorporating different tourism products that disclose local history. Trinidad and Tobago's underwater heritage sites are identified as an opportunity to diversify their tourism industry while promoting social development. However, if implemented, these sites would need monitoring and enforcement resources to safeguard their integrity. The need to preserve these cultural heritage sites should not be overlooked by the corresponding authorities and BE strategies/plans.

#### ***Pilar 5 – Mutual understanding, peace, and security***

Blanchard & Higgins-Desbiolles (2013) suggested that tourism contributes to cross-cultural understanding, tolerance, and peace between fundamentally different communities and nations. SDG 16 can be used to measure the progress of the CMT sector on mutual understanding, peace, and security. Developing tourism strategies that promote cultural and traditional knowledge has the potential to contribute to the well-being of local communities, which is connected to the four pillars discussed previously. T&T's BE strategy aims to develop its UNESCO *Underwater Cultural Heritage Sites* to be accessible for dive tourism purposes. Similarly, Bonaire's tourism strategy aims to promote the authenticity of its culture through the accurate representation of their traditional lifestyles and values. Moreover, the involvement of its local community to plan and manage this process is recognized as imperative to its success. Objectives such as these have the potential to educate and indeed promote cultural understanding among different communities.

To summarize, this research provided evidence of progress made to date on the sustainability of Blue Economy management frameworks and tools being used to develop the Coastal and Marine Tourism sector in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Consideration of the SDGs, pillars, and the results hoped to be achieved with the development of CMT are evident. The strategies and plans analyzed are clearly indicative that countries in the LAC region

see significant potential (and have high expectations) for the development of CMT as part of the development of their BE. In this context, it is clear that LAC countries expect significant social and economic benefits to be derived from the CMT portion of their BE strategies and plans. However, the sustainable realization of the potential of the CMT sector will very much depend on the elaboration and execution of these strategies and plans as outlined here.

## **CHAPTER 6 – MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION**

This chapter consists of management recommendations for future blue economy (BE) strategies, a summary of the main points, and elements for future work and areas for research.

### **Recommendations for future Blue Economy Strategies**

#### ***Unambiguous language***

BE strategies/plans will shape specific implementation, with impacts on the well-being of coastal communities (Campbell et al., 2021; Silver et al., 2015). Therefore, the language used in BE strategies and plans must be clear and unambiguous. Based on the literature presented in chapter two (Eikeset et al., 2018; Hadjimichael, 2018; Hassanali, 2020a), “Blue Economy” and “Blue Growth” are not synonymous, and accordingly, their governance outputs should not be considered equivalent. Thus, differentiation between “Blue Economy” strategies and “Blue Growth” strategies must be clarified depending on the focus of said plan. The focus of the strategy (economic growth and development, social equity, and/or environmental sustainability) should be explicitly referenced.

#### ***Establish SMART objectives along with a monitoring and review plan***

Like every strategy and plan, having objectives that follow a SMART methodology (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timebound) is essential to evaluate success. Many of the plans presented here lack SMART objectives with indicators necessary to measure their progress toward truly sustainable development. For example, creating links between conservation and tourism was an objective for Montserrat and Barbados. Although this action comprised key implementation steps, time frame, potential partners, and funding opportunities, indicators to measure progress were not identified. Establishing measurable objectives will also allow for a monitoring and review process. Monitoring and evaluating progress against objectives is essential to allow for adaptive management (Bramley et al., 2021). Establishing a monitoring and review strategy will allow the industry to measure the impact of the plan and adjust necessary changes that will result in a more effective and efficient framework that is adaptable to the changing nature of ocean sectors.

### ***Prioritize funding for implementation***

The implementation of any strategy is almost as important as the plan and objectives themselves. National resources and traditional sources of funds are not enough to pay for the necessary investments in the blue economy within the LAC region (CDB, 2018). It is imperative to secure adequate funding for the implementation and monitoring stages of these strategies. New forms of financing will be necessary to facilitate the operationalization of a blue economy strategy. Also, funding for education and capacity building should be prioritized as it could generate high-quality proposals that could attract more investment necessary for the BE strategy implementation.

### ***Cruise and yachting industry***

Throughout the results of this research, cruise and yachting tourism are put forward as a sub-sector with high potential for economic growth. Therefore, it is important to implement programs directed at the social and environmental opportunities of cruise tourism. Not only do future BE strategies and plans explicitly recognize the social and environmental impacts of the industry, but opportunities to include an element of social equity and growth within the local community are clearly missing. For example, the re-introduction of wealth into the coastal zone, where a portion of the revenues of cruise and yachting development are re-invested for local infrastructure and capacity-building programs for the local community. Recommendations made by Fosse et al. (2019) are equally important: (1) providing sound regulation, technical support and financial incentives to green ports and cruises practices, (2) leverage zoning, integrated planning and risk mitigation in sensitive marine areas, (3) monitor, manage and regulate passengers and cruise flows, and (4) promotion of environmental conception, construction, operation and dismantling of cruise vessels. The planning, implementation, and monitoring of these can reduce the gap between economic growth and social and environmental well-being within the cruise and yachting industry

### ***Establish partnerships between local community and industry***

The tourism industry is very well established in the LAC region, where models of mass tourism such as all-inclusive resorts and big cruising enterprises are conventional within the region. The BE has contributed toward bridging the gap between livelihoods and ocean health

while advocating for sustainable development (Phelan et al., 2020). However, expecting a full shift in the industry is not only unrealistic but could affect the livelihoods of the local community depending on it negatively. Leaving tourism subsectors out of the BE can eliminate their opportunity to shift toward true sustainability. Therefore, here we propose establishing objectives that are more representative of the current state of CMT in LAC. Establishing partnerships between the private and public sectors has the potential to create a much-needed balance between foreign investment and local management. Montserrat's Initial Action Plan promotes a pilot project to create partnerships with hotel and resort operators, which could bring private-sector funding to support the local community. This could be supported by working groups with government representatives, tourism operators, and local stakeholders, as well as enforced through implementations of the necessary policy at the national level.

## **Conclusion**

This research provides clear evidence of progress made to date on the sustainability of blue economy (BE) management frameworks and tools being used. First, the classification scheme of countries in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region used here showed the level of progress of countries in the creation of strategies and plans to guide the development of the BE. Results showed that the BE is part of the national and regional discourse in 80% of countries in the LAC region, with Latin American countries taking a regional approach while Caribbean countries taking a national approach; all of which serves a specific purpose toward sustainable development in the region. Second, the sustainability assessment of the CMT sector within the context of BE strategies and plans illustrated how the sector contributes to the sustainable development of a BE and community. Results revealed that these strategies contemplate the need to make CMT growth inclusive to all and devise high expectations of social and economic benefits to be derived from the CMT portion of their BE strategies and plans. This contributed to the discussion on how the CMT under the BE plays a central role in the progress made toward the Sustainable Development Goals. Recommendations made here can be used to incorporate the important elements of effective governance strategy into future BE strategies.

There is an evident literature gap that studies the CMT sector under the BE, despite it being included in almost every BE strategy/plan. Future research on this topic could evaluate the

different types of tourism (ecotourism, responsible tourism, and community-based tourism) and how they fit within the BE discourse. Also, a quantitative approach to measure the outputs and outcomes of BE strategies is needed along with indicators to track the progress of the BE in LAC.

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