

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

MANAGEMENT OF RESEARCH DATA AT THE REGIONAL TOURISM OBSERVATORIES IN CHILE¹

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The main objective of this article is present the outcome of research related to the creation of Tourism Observatories in the Chilean regions. The study considered two dimensions: by one hand, the level of performance achieved in order to monitor tourism activity and secondly, explore the way in which they conducted the management of tourism research data, considering management and opening processes.

The main problem evidenced the Observatories of tourism was the constitution, organization and diffusion of the data which they provided. During the latest years' Chilean government has created a broad range of public policies oriented to develop tourism as a pivotal point in the national productive strategy. In 2010, Law No. 20.423 called "The Institutional System for the Development of Tourism" was enacted by the Chilean congress. The law objective consists in strength tourism activity through creation, conservation and use of national tourist attractions. The Chilean tourism development plan –2014 to 2018– considered the promotion of the sector in four dimensions: i) sustainable tourism in protected areas of the state, ii) the creation of Tourist Interest Areas, iii) tourism with cultural elements; and iv) create instruments for promoting tourism investment.

At the same time, Chile state is implementing a national policy for the management of scientific research and information data, which has involved diagnosing the capacities

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of i) scientific institutions (universities, research centers, technological institutes, among others), ii) scientists and researchers and iii) regulations of public research funds that promote science, technology and innovation.

Among the different scientific institutions that manage research data, the Observatories become tools whose work incorporates, to a greater or lesser extent, the totality of actions related to data management, independent of their scientific area or application sector. These management actions correspond plan, storage, processing, validation and dissemination of the information that they gathered.

Since 2007 to 2009 six Tourism Observatories were created by the government. These institutions were placed in different Chilean's provinces, from north to south. They were created as a platform to facilitate the management of research data related to tourism and, assess public policies to promote the sector. The objective of these Observatories consists in collect information for complementing with data generated by public sector - mainly linked to tourism in Chile as: the National Statistics Institute (INE) and the National Service of Tourism (SERNATUR) – and thereby contribute to decision making process. However, the operation of the observatories, so far, have faced a different level of compliance and challenges such as: lack of knowledge about the results, impacts, problems with their own objectives and the type of data management carried out.

In this regard, it became necessary to study the tourism observatories in two areas: firstly, the level of performance achieved according to their baseline purposes: monitor tourist activity and generate information to help decision-making and, secondly, place, with respect to the way in which they conducted the management of research data, considering management and opening processes. The justification for this study the operation of these Observatories is based even more, considering that two of them were closed in advance and of the four remaining, only two were able to obtain continuity financial support.

Based on the results obtained, the main problem evidenced in the tourism observatories was related to the constitution, management and dissemination of the data which they had to provide. At the same time, the performance of the Observatories was not necessarily exclusively economic, since, as established in the results, there was no clear correlation between the baseline amounts and the development of the functions. On the one hand, the Observatory of the Antofagasta region was the one that received less fundings, and on the other, the Observatory of the Araucanía Region was the second to receive a high approval amount, considering that both had an early closure of their functions.

The construction of the Perception Index offered a series of advantages for the analysis of the data. In the first place, it allowed synthesizing in a better way the obtained information and approaching the analysis dimensions from a more global perspective. By gather greater number of variables, it was possible to obtain results with higher analytical value or variables with greater properties. In this particular case, it allowed to know if factors such as the executing entity or financing source, explained in a certain way the perception of the performance level of the Observatories.

Institutional coordination was one of the biggest problems in the management of the observatories. Reason were the limited participation of the institutions and lack of the clear objectives for its actions. Moreover, the rotation of directors and asymmetries in the weight

of decisions also contributed a poor performing. However, it is necessary to emphasize that the observatories implemented by universities had a better evaluation of their functions. This situation could be related to the Chilean experience where the generation of scientific knowledge has historically been deployed by institutions of Universities. This aspect is considered as a learning experience for observatories, in the sense of considering the institutional trajectory of universities to plan research processes and generation of scientific research and information data.

The experience of the Observatories of tourism in Chile presented gaps both in the consideration of tourism as a discipline of study, as in the management of information and access to open data. In future instances, an aspect to be considered that can be extracted from this study is the foundational consideration of the aspects linked to research data and scientific information. This would even allow to generate protocols and coordinate the different observatories. The difference of objectives and mechanisms of each one prevented such coordination.

Finally, the complexity of tourism observatories in Chile can be transformed into an opportunity for promoting collaborative activities among universities and public sector. Also collaboration may be able to improve the procedures by which data are obtained and disseminated through the actors engaged with tourist sector. With this it will be possible to continue enriching knowledge about tourism for strictly disciplinary purposes and linked to productive interests.

