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## **“We are unknown and ignored as a tourism country.” Tourism publicity in Chile between 1929 and 1959**

PATRICIA VERÓNICA ISABEL VIDAL OLIVARES

*Universidad de Viña del Mar, Chile*

prvidal@puc.cl

*Abstract.* This article analyzes state promotion of the tourism industry in Chile between 1929 and 1959, a period when the state first took an interest in this issue. Through an analysis of the media, ministerial communications, and parliamentary discussions, this study reveals flaws in tourism publicity aimed at foreign countries, and reviews the roles and tasks undertaken by consuls, who acted as middlemen in the promotion of tourism, as “propaganda commissioners” – actors that promoted national tourism at a time when there were no clear standards established by the government.

*Keywords:* Tourism; tourism promotion; propaganda; Chile.

In 2017, tourism in Chile increased by 14%. As a result Chile now has more tourism arrivals than Peru, Argentina, or Colombia, according to Marcela Cabezas Keller, director of the National Tourism Service (Servicio Nacional de Turismo, SERNATUR) who stresses that Chile is “almost on a par with Brazil.”<sup>1</sup> Cabezas Keller indicates that this growth is due to the “National Plan for the Development of Sustainable Tourism implemented in recent years, based on the development of destinations, improvement of human capital and consequently, of services, diversification of products ‘and of course promotion’.” (*La Tercera*, 2018, p. 33).

When the current director of SERNATUR states that promotion plays an obvious role as a pivotal element in the current growth of this industry, she invites us to wonder what tourism promotion was like in the past, specifically between 1929 and 1959. It was during this period that the state first took an active role in tourism and took on the task of promoting and developing publicity for tourism in Chile for foreign audiences.

It is worth noting that when we speak of tourism, we are referring not only to an economic activity but also to a modern social practice that became massified with the coming of the railroad, the steamship, and the technologies associated with the production of images. All of this foment the industry through “the sales and marketing of destinations whereby maps, guidebooks, and guided tours shape what people choose to see while on holiday” (Berger & Grant Wood, 2010, p. 3). This means that tourism is a product of a postindustrial society, and that it is witnessing “the expansion of modern society.” This directly unites the industry with European and U.S. history of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and with historical developments in Latin America at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when forms and conditions of work allowed for the generation of modern forms of and time for leisure, such as international tourism (MacCannell, 2013, p. 3).<sup>2</sup>

These characteristics associated with tourism have led to a proliferation of research on this subject in the last twenty years. In the case of historical studies, through analysis of the leisure industry, the cultural perspective<sup>3</sup> has

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1 All translations from Spanish-language sources are by *Apuntes*.

2 John Urry and Jonas Larsen suggest that tourism “is one manifestation of how work and leisure are organised as separate and regulated spheres of social practice in ‘modern’ societies” (2012, p. 4). Consequently, “rather than being a trivial subject, tourism is significant in its ability to reveal aspects of normal practices which might otherwise remain opaque” (Urry & Larsen, 2012, p. 3). Thus, tourism becomes an opportunity to study leisure and, thereby, the social structures that it reflects (MacCannell, 2013, p. 11).

3 “Culture” is understood as “a constellation of symbols that carry societal meaning” that permits “people to make sense of their environment, and publicly order their behavior” (Geertz, 1973, in Merrill, 2009, p. 7).

enabled us to understand how human beings shape, conceive and present their societies to the tourist. As a result, there are now diverse studies of tourism on the American continent.

Some of these studies focus on how the industry has developed in the United States,<sup>4</sup> while others concern tourism in Central America. They focus on the relationship between the promotion and growth of tourism and U.S. interests, emphasizing how this relationship shaped tourism in the region, whether in its advertising or in its organization.<sup>5</sup>

When it comes to the rest of the continent, the existing studies are recent. This is the case of research on tourism in Brazil or Argentina. In the case of Brazil, De Assunção (2011) deals with issues such as motivations related to tourism, natural attractions, roads and transportation, lodgings, and hospitality. Damasceno (2011) analyzes tourism magazines to illustrate the role of the municipality of Petrópolis in the promotion of tourism.<sup>6</sup> In the case of Argentina, there are a variety of studies, including Pastoriza’s (2011) research on the state’s role in the development of tourism for Argentines; and Ospital’s (2005) study of how tourism promotion was carried out by both the private sector as well as the state, with the National Office of Parks (Dirección de Parques Nacionales) and its publications.<sup>7</sup> For the case of Chile, research has primarily concentrated on the infrastructure that made tourism possible, primarily from the optics of architecture and urban studies about hotels and roads.<sup>8</sup>

When we speak of tourism in Chile in the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it should be kept in mind that no matter what kind of political regime was in place or who headed the country, the promotion of tourism was seen as a positive. During these years, “states were able to demonstrate their concern for their citizens, draw contrasts with others, promote economic development, stress modernity, and build a stronger sense of nationalism”

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4 Examples of this historiography include: Cooks (2013) and Shaffer (2001).

5 See Berger and Grant Wood (2010); Berger (2006); Schwartz (1999); Merrill (2009). Merrill focuses on the analysis of imperialist conditions that develop around tourism, employing the concept of *soft power*.

6 Along the same lines, Montenegro’s (2013) study refers to the construction by the private and government sectors of tourist attractions in Brazil and Rio de Janeiro.

7 The author refers to state action in the area of tourism, which took place with a view to designing new policies to aid in the development of the industry as well as to promote public works; his concern was to unify provincial initiatives. Piglia (2012) studies the creation of tourist destinations by the state.

8 See: Booth (2003, 2008, 2010, 2013, 2014); Booth and Lavin (2013); Cortés, Basauri, Berc, Galeano, and Weibel (2014); Galeno-Ibaceta (2012); Casals (1999). Casals investigates the relationship between the state railway company (Empresa de los Ferrocarriles del Estado) and the promotion of domestic tourism.

(Zuelog, 2016, p. 148). This was the approach employed by the state to empower those who promoted tourism in Chile.

The establishment of tourism as a national industry took place at a time when a process of change was occurring within the Chilean state. It was during the first administration of Arturo Alessandri Palma and the first government of Carlos Ibáñez del Campo that the state was transformed into “an active agent of change,” a process that came to fruition with the development of a modern interventionist state in the 1920s, in which “reformism became the basis and the body of a strong state that incessantly augmented its control over the nation” (Rinke, 2002, p. 28). In this context, the Radical Party recognized the state as the institution charged with national development, which should therefore guarantee education and the industrialization of the country (Correa, Figueroa, Jocelyn-Holt, Rolle, & Vicuña, 2001). To implement this goal, “national budgets grew exponentially, especially between 1927 and 1931” (Rinke, 2002, p. 28), allowing for an increase in public investment. It was in this context of change and industrial growth, and as part of its role in modernizing Chile, that the government took on the task of organizing the tourism industry.

Thus, taking into account the questions discussed above and the context in which tourism was organized in Chile, this study analyzes how state promotion of this industry functioned when it was first organized, between 1929 and 1959. To this end, an analysis is carried out of parliamentary discussions, a report to the United States Congress, ministerial documents, and articles in the Chilean and U.S. media.

The article is divided into three parts. The first deals with the shortcomings of tourism publicity sent abroad, noting how little there was and the inappropriateness of its content in terms of promoting tourism. The second section reviews the role and tasks that Chilean consuls were asked to take on with the little material they had available, acting as pivotal agents for the promotion of tourism without the support of a government office in charge of this industry. Finally, the role of the publicity “commissioners,” actors who took part in the promotion of tourism for a decade without clearly established government criteria, is discussed. Taken together, these three sections demonstrate how these stimuli did not succeed in positioning Chile’s tourist attractions internationally during the period under consideration.

“We are unknown and ignored as a tourism country.” Tourism propaganda in Chile between 1929 and 1959

### Scarce and inappropriate publicity

The Chilean state began to organize tourism through Law 4585, promulgated in the summer of 1929.<sup>9</sup> This legislation established the Tourism Section within the Ministry of Development (Ministerio de Fomento), whose task was the organization and promotion of the national tourist industry by encouraging the construction of seaside resorts and places to lodge tourists; monitoring publicity, tourism trips, and hotel and guest house rates; and safeguarding the conservation of natural beauty, and the payment of taxes by tourists – all matters included in the law that governed the operation of the Tourism Section (Law N° 4585; Ministerio de Fomento, 1929a).<sup>10</sup> This law originated from the confidence of the tourism actors that a great many tourists would come from abroad, attracted by Chile's natural beauty.

Thus, one of the main goals related to tourism in Chile between 1929 and 1959 was to attract foreign tourists. However, it was not just any kind of tourist that was desired. No matter what political sector was involved, the goal was to win over “men of business, whose arrival in the country would provide the opportunity to bring foreign capital that would boost our industrial and other activities, which are not developed due to a lack of funds” (Cámara de Diputados, 1927). As a result, the media of the era followed every footstep of this type of tourist when they were in the country. There were Argentines and Brazilians, but the greatest interest was reserved for those from the U.S.<sup>11</sup>

To get this type of tourist to come to Chile, it was “necessary to prepare the country to receive tourists and so that they find the comforts and information that will make their stay pleasant and worthwhile” (Cámara de Diputados, 1928). The problem lay in the fact that most of country had to be prepared to welcome these tourists, who were more exclusive and spent more. Not only was it necessary to build roads so that they could freely travel around the country and hotels where they could stay in comfort, but they also had to be attracted to Chile in the first place, and this required creating publicity that was effective both in terms of content and quantity. It was

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9 Previously, tourism was fomented by the private sector starting in the 1910s.

10 See also: Decree N° 2072 (Ministerio de Fomento, 1929d), “Reglamento para la aplicación de la ley de fomento del turismo.”

11 “Ayer arribaron a Valparaíso los turistas norteamericanos” (*El Mercurio*, 1928a); “Un lujoso vapor con turistas norteamericanos llegó ayer” (*El Diario Ilustrado*, 1928); “300 turistas norteamericanos recorrieron ayer nuestra ciudad” (*El Mercurio*, 1928b); “350 turistas del Brasil nos visitarán” (*El Mercurio*, 1928c); “Turistas argentinos e ingleses llegaron anoche a nuestro país” (*El Mercurio*, 1929); “El verdadero y el falso turismo” (*La Nación*, 1928).

even more important to create a system of international promotion that positioned Chilean tourism in countries from where this industry wanted to attract tourists, since their visits would help Chile become known as an international tourism destination. It was hoped that in this way, tourism would demonstrate the advances made by the nation, since the industry was “also developed [as] a way of making people feel proud of their country and change international perceptions” (Zuelog, 2016, p. 145-146).

In the Chilean case, in the 1920s and 1930s, both the Congress and the media communicated a positive view of the varied geography of the country, demonstrating pride not only in its diversity but also in its resemblance to European landscapes, which would contribute to the growth of tourism in Chile. Thus, it was emphasized that Chile stood out as a country that:

[...] is varied in its climate and its physiognomy, since its territory includes the heat of the tropics and the cold of southern latitudes; the torrid deserts and the freezing fjords; the vineyards and planted fields; the lakes and the large shade trees; the majestic and varied mountains, apt for all types of fascinating sports activities. We also have thousands of kilometers of ocean of an unspoiled emerald color, a pagan deity provider of happiness and health. (Cámara de Diputados, 1928)

This opinion was shared by *En Viaje*, a magazine published by the State Railway Company (Empresa de los Ferrocarriles del Estado). This publication had a varied content and was intended to entertain those who traveled by train<sup>12</sup>; it presented Chile as a country “of great natural beauties, places that are incomparable for their climate and abundant hot springs of recognized medicinal value,” which provided the area of tourism with the tools necessary for “the development of an industry of unlimited assets” (Oyarzún, 1937). All these characteristics, above all those that brought the country closer to the beautiful landscapes of Europe, such as the snow-covered mountains, lakes, and cold climates to be found in the so-called “Chilean Switzerland,” the southern part of the country, and referring primarily to Puerto Varas, Valdivia, and the Lake Region in general,<sup>13</sup> meant that – from the point of view of the Chileans who promoted tourism through *En Viaje*

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12 *En Viaje* “went unchanged for forty years, becoming the most important specialized publication in Chile” (Booth, 2010, p. 21).

13 The construction of the idea of the south of Chile as a unified landscape is the result of a series of images transmitted by tourists in which the “Chilean Switzerland” (a symbol of the Chileanization of former Indian lands), the comfort of the trips, and the panoramas were situated in opposition to the inhospitable area of Araucanía and its incivility. This name came to be used due to the European immigration into this region (Booth, 2011).

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magazine and the Congress – that the country would win the competition for tourism that was beginning in Latin America.

A year after Law 4585 was implemented, the National Congress of Chile recognized that “the tourism publicity carried out has produced beneficial results and has demonstrated that the exploitation of this industry, together with signifying evident progress for our country, constitutes a factor of prosperity, both public and private” (Cámara de Senadores, 1930). As a result, some parliamentarians were ready to continue to invest in this industry at a time when the effects of the world economic crisis of 1929 hit the Chilean economy, in the form of the suspension of loans that countries such as the United States had provided to the Chilean state. This put Chile’s economy in a vulnerable position, because it was dependent on these loans to maintain the high level of fiscal investment of the 1920s (Gazmuri, 2012, p. 142-143). Amid this situation, a 1930 draft law authorized taking out new loans to help cover the million and a half pesos being spent “on publicity and other activities intended to attract tourists” (Gazmuri, 212, p. 142-143).

In the view of the parliamentarians, this leap of faith was based on facts: The publicity about our [natural] beauties in Argentina and the United States, carried out for only one year and in very nascent conditions for economic reasons, led to a sixty percent increase in the number of visitors compared to the best of the previous years (Cámara de Diputados, 1930).

This generated – at the beginning of the world economic crisis – “income for railway and hotel companies and private industries” (Cámara de Diputados, 1930), indicating that investment and attention to this area was a source for foreign income that should not be abandoned. Nevertheless, although the publicity brought positive results and drew praise when the state first became interested in tourism, this gave way to constant questioning and a focus on the lack of a consistent government policy regarding tourist publicity, which affected its development and scope in the following decades.

Thus, almost twenty years after the congratulations that were extended in the Congress, *En Viaje* magazine claimed that “in the United States, we are virtually unknown and ignored as a tourist destination” (*En Viaje*, 1948). Together with this denunciation, the officials in charge of tourism were singled out as being primarily responsible for this situation since they “are not sending one single publicity pamphlet abroad.” The problem was that in:

[...] travel agencies in New York, Washington, and other important cities of the great Republic of the North, there are showcases and display windows with pamphlets, posters, photographs and tourist information about Brazil, Argentina,

Mexico, Cuba, Uruguay and other [countries] but in these daily exhibits of the tourist attractions of the continent not even our name is mentioned (*En Viaje*, 1948).<sup>14</sup>

This lack of publicity abroad was a recurring problem in this period. In 1955, *En Viaje* alleged that:

[...] a Chilean personality who recently traveled to the United States was greatly astonished that in Miami, one of the most important cities of the Union, there was publicity for almost all the American countries, with the exception of Chile (*En Viaje*, 1955, p. 1).

This personality, who was not named by the magazine, noted that some countries “such as Cuba, have special agencies, located in strategic locations in the metropolis” (1955, p. 1) while Chile neglected its publicity, something that this publication had decided to criticize.

It was not only travel agencies that lacked publicity for Chilean tourism, a necessary element in generating public interest; the consulates and embassies suffered from the same deficiency. Manuel Trucco, Chile’s ambassador in Washington,<sup>15</sup> recommended to the Minister of Foreign Relations in 1935 that:

[...] with the goal of taking advantage of the trend of more tourists coming every day to South America, it would be advisable to provide this embassy, which will make sure that it gets to those who can best use it, complete information about the attractions in our country and the facilities and comforts that it offers to the traveler (*Embajada de Chile en Washington*, 1935).

The ambassador added that “if the government planned to designate a certain amount of money for publicity and the promotion of tourism, from this country to ours, we could look for investment” (*Embajada de Chile en Washington*, 1935) from North American investors. This comment was accompanied by a request to the office of tourism for:

[...] recent and appropriate photographs of the principal tourist attractions in Chile, without forgetting the excellence of the fishing and the sports facilities. News about progress in the

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14 The magazine *En Viaje* was published by the Ferrocarriles del Estado between 1933 and 1973, when its last issue was released (Booth, 2010, p. 21).

15 Trucco was president of Chile between August 20 and November 15, 1931 and a senator for the Partido Radical for the Octava Agrupación Provincial Arauco, Malleco y Cautín between 1926 and 1930 (Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional, BCN, n.d.).



country’s hotel industry would also be very useful (Embajada de Chile en Washington, 1935).<sup>16</sup>

The ambassador’s recommendations would not be followed by Tourism Services. The main problem in carrying them out, more than the lack of a budget that was stable over time,<sup>17</sup> was the scarce and not always appropriate materials sent to the various legations. As will be seen below, Tourism Services sent various materials that were inefficient in terms of attracting tourists. On the one hand, their content was not appealing to potential tourists who saw them; and on the other, the materials were not meant to be used as publicity abroad given the language in which they were written, the public at which they were aimed or the subjects they covered. While the materials might have provided information about Chile, they lacked information about tourist attractions, hotels, or the natural beauties of which the country was so proud and which it was so confident would become the focus of tourism.

The situation described above demonstrates the lack of experience of those who were in charge of promoting tourism in Chile. Those responsible for tourism publicity in the national level sent the consuls material that was practically encyclopedic and not appropriate for tourism or in quantities that would permit its promotion.<sup>18</sup> The General Consul of Chile in New York, for example, was sent the following:

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16 Similar requests made from other countries, including from the Chilean embassy in London and the Chilean consulate in Caracas, did not meet with better results (see: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 1948; Consulado de Chile en Caracas, 1936).

17 This situation was criticized in the message that accompanied Decree N° 821 (Ministerio de Fomento, 1935) and in Decree N° 257 (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 1955). In the *Diario Oficial* (1955), it is noted that the office charged with these functions had closed. The tourism budget was to be generated from tourism taxes established in Article 4 of Law 4585; its collection was regulated in Decree N° 2072, Article II (Ministerio de Fomento 1929d). During the first years of the 1930s, these taxes were not collected and were not included in the national budget. Later, in the 1938 budget, when tourism activities were under the Ministerio de Fomento, only the salaries of three individuals who worked for this service were included (Law N° 6151; Ministerio de Hacienda, 1937). In 1948, when tourism was under the Dirección General de Informaciones y Cultura del Ministerio del Interior, reference is only made to local tourism committees, which were created by municipalities, but there is no mention of the Servicios de Turismo (Law N° 8939; Ministerio de Hacienda, 1947). In the 1958 budget, when tourism services were under the Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, the sector was not mentioned in the budget (Law N° 12844; Ministerio de Hacienda, 1957). This makes it clear that income for tourism promotion was not regular, which leads one to doubt the level of interest in this sector among those who were in charge of the state.

18 In the case of Argentina, the *Guía del Parque Nacional Nahuel Huapi* of 1938 was divided into four parts: the first explained how to get to the park; the second described the sports activities available; the third referred to its history and ethnology; and, finally, the fourth described the “Flora, fauna, morphology and climatology of the Park” (Picone, 2013, p. 201). While this official guide was prepared for a specific location, it gives us an idea of how government institutions could conceive of and prepare tourist publicity.

[...] 1 History of Chile; 1 Geography of Chile: 1 Map of Chile; 4 Annual Reports of the Ministry (1934-35-36 and 37); 5 “Chile” Winter Sports; 5 Summer Vacationing Guides 1940; Various pamphlets (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 1940c).<sup>19</sup>

Other diplomatic posts, such as the consulate of Chile in Los Angeles, were sent “the little material on the subject that the Department of Tourism Services of the Ministry of Development made available,” to wit:

[...] 15 Summer Vacation Guides; 10 “Chile” (Winter sports); 2 “Panoramas and Color of Chile” (A. Roco del C.); “Chile” in English; 3 Chile Baedeker; 1 “Huasos Chilenos”<sup>20</sup> Album; “Lakes and Volcanos of Chile”; 1 Map of Chile; 10 Tourism Pamphlets; 16 Photographs (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 1940b)

The Chilean consul in Galveston:

[...] was sent ten guides on summer tourism, in which can be found considerable touristic information about Chile (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 1956).

The consulate in New Orleans received the following:

[...] 5 summer tourism guides; 5 political-economic maps; 3 Chile albums; and some pamphlets and postcards with Chilean landscapes (Consulado de Chile en Nueva Orleáns, 1958)

The Consul in New Orleans reported that the materials sent could scarcely:

[...] satisfy the demands of this office [so that the office itself has had] to buy “Chile” and “Visit Chile” pamphlets published by the Pan-American Union, which you undoubtedly know and since they are written in English they are appropriate for the requests constantly received (Consulado de Chile en Nueva Orleáns, 1958).

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In their tourist materials, tourism promoters in Mexico tended to modernize Mexican women overall while retaining certain traditional characteristics of indigenous women; they represented “change, progress and optimism” (Berger, 2006, p. 94-95). The author notes that these materials also emphasized roads, elegant hotels, and urban architecture.

19 Translator’s note: The titles of these materials have all been translated into English by *Apuntes*.

20 Translator’s note: a “huaso” is a type of Chilean countryman, who uses traditional dress.

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After examining the characteristics of some of the materials that were sent, it becomes more evident how inappropriate they were for the promotion of tourism. Because of the lack of tourism publicity, materials were sent to try to make up for what should have been delivered. The maps, both economic and political, provided information about the country’s economy and its administrative divisions, but said nothing about the tourism potential of this faraway land. The ministry’s annual reports, on the other hand, dealt with subjects that would be of no help to anyone who browsed their pages in search of information to plan a sightseeing trip to Chile.

As to specialized publications, one has to question the wisdom of sending them. The *Baedeker* on Chile, sent to Los Angeles in 1940, was the first modern tourist guide, prepared in 1930 under the auspices of the Tourism Section of the Ministry of Development<sup>21</sup>; it was thus out of date, since conditions in Chile had changed in the intervening ten years. At the time the *Baedeker* was prepared, there was an evident shortage of hotels, but this had changed by the time the publication was sent to the United States: the Hotel Pucón and the Hotel Puerto Varas were inaugurated in 1935 and 1936, respectively, and the Hotel Carrera opened in Santiago in 1939 (Cortés, Basauri, Berc, Galeano, & Weibel, 2014). These were modern buildings which, together with the construction of roads, better positioned Chile as a country capable of offering comforts that did not previously exist (Booth, 2013, 2014). Moreover, far from promoting tourism in Chile, the guide may have hindered it, given the backward country that was depicted on its pages. On the other hand, sending photographs and albums of Chilean *huasos* (who lived in agricultural areas of the country, were characterized by their shyness and attachment to the land, and were thus removed from the rhythms of the city) illustrated a dimension of Chile that, if not carefully put in context, could create confusion about its character and what the tourist could expect, rather than reinforcing a country that wanted to emphasize its modernity (see figures 1 and 2).

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21 While it is not noted which edition was sent, it can be inferred that it was this edition given the participation of the Tourism Section in the 1930 edition and the nearness in time, and not the previous Chile *Baedeker* of 1910.

Figure 1  
Note left by Admiral Sir Cyril Fuller, member of the British economic commission  
(*En Viaje*, 1941a).<sup>22</sup>

**Una opinión que nos honra**

**HOTEL CARRERA**

Santiago  
26 January 1941

Comandante de Gens y Lady Fuller  
Le damos muchas gracias por haber  
estado aquí durante su estancia.  
Por la buena atención que nos  
han brindado, consideramos una  
gran honra. Al día siguiente  
de su estancia quedamos muy satisfechos  
por haber estado aquí.  
Atentamente sus  
hospedados.

**(TRADUCCION)**  
Señor Gerente del Hotel Carrera  
SANTIAGO

El Almirante Sir Cyril y Lady Fuller tienen el agrado de manifestar que durante su estancia en el Hotel Carrera han estado rodeados de atenciones cariñosas, consideración y excelente servicio. Todo el personal ha sido muy eficiente y ha contribuido en todo sentido para que nuestra visita fuera lo más agradable.

El Almirante Sir Cyril Fuller, miembro de la misión económica británica, encabezada por el Hon. Lord Willingdon, y su distinguida esposa, han tenido la gentileza de expresar su complacencia por las atenciones de que fue objeto dicha delegación de parte del personal del Hotel Carrera, en el cual se hospedaron.

Los conceptos de la nota de tan distinguido huésped son un estímulo para todo el personal del Hotel Carrera, y el mejor reconocimiento del valor de dicho establecimiento, orgullo de la capital chilena.

**Hotel CARRERA**  
SANTIAGO

22 The note reads: “Admiral Sir Cyril and Lady Fuller take much pleasure in writing that during their stay at the Hotel Carrera, they met with every kindness, consideration and good grace. All staff have been most helpful and contributed in every way to make our stay a most pleasant one” [Translator’s note: approximate translation since original is hard to read] (*En Viaje*, 1941a). The Hotel Carrera did not exist when the *Baedeker* was published and consequently the services it provided – so appreciated by Sir Cyril and Lady Fuller – were not known abroad at the time.

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Figure 2  
Publicity of the Hotel Carrera (*Guía del veraneante*, 1956).



Nevertheless, some specialized publications such as the *Guía del Veraneante* or *En Viaje* magazine also have their limitations.<sup>23</sup> Both were published in Spanish by the State Railway Company and were aimed at internal or regional travelers and tourists. While both focused on tourism, their approaches were different. The *Guía de Veraneante* provided more specific information and included maps while *En Viaje*, as already noted, was intended to entertain rather than inform. Although both specialized in tourism neither could meet the needs of the North American tourist who did not speak the language. Consequently, all the information they provided about areas of interest, roads, hotels, and rates was of limited usefulness.

The dispatch of information was the responsibility of the Publicity Section within Tourism Services, and involved “preparing and proposing the means to inform within and outside Chile regarding the tourism areas and the natural beauties of the country” (Informe, 1938, p. 5). Nevertheless, the fact that the materials produced and sent to the consulate were inappropri-

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23 This magazine’s availability abroad is highlighted in one of its issues, in an article which states that it was available in the Embassy of Chile in Madrid and notes that acquaintances of the Minister of Foreign Affairs traveled to Chile because of the beauties of the country described in the magazine (*En Viaje*, 1951, p. 16). Ten years earlier, one could also find the magazine abroad (*En Viaje* 1941b, p. 1).

ate illustrates the lack of preparation of those who prepared and produced national publicity. First, a large part of the publicity sent was neither created nor promoted by the body charged with the promotion of tourism but by other state entities such as the State Railways, which published *Guía del veraneante* and *En Viaje*. Other organizations also produced publications, such as the pamphlet of the Pan-American Union.

The lack of adequate propaganda limited the possibilities for tourism in Chile. As *En Viaje* recognized, being the country with the “best climate in the world; with magnificent panoramas, succulent fishing and thermal springs of invaluable curative value” was not sufficient. One writer for the magazine made the same point upon noting that he was aware of this situation because he was “in a position to know that abroad there is no poster, not even one flyer that reveals the wealth of our tourist attractions” (*En Viaje*, 1946, p. 17). The same source wrote that “not all North Americans know about our unequalled natural beauties but they know by heart those of Mexico, Brazil, Cuba, Uruguay and Argentina,”<sup>24</sup> countries with which Chile had to compete if it wanted to win the race for tourism.

In its commentary, *En Viaje* sought to demonstrate the notable difference in comparison with the publicity carried out by other nations in the region:

[...] the name of Chile doesn't ring a bell in the United States and when tourists go abroad seeking new suns and new panoramas, it is logical that they are going to go to countries that they have at least seen on a poster and not ours, which they don't know about, not even by word of mouth comments [something that leaves us off the] tourist map of the continent and, despite our Lake District, of which we are so proud, we are utterly unknown (*En Viaje*, 1947, p. 13).

Both on the national and on the international level, there was concern about producing more and better publicity. If this was what Chile wanted, it would have to invest in it, which for a long time it failed to do – as illustrated above by the infrequency with which tourism appeared in the national budget. One idea to remedy this situation was to “promote the creation of a national fund for tourist publicity with the support of the state, trans-

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24 In the case of Cuba, the effort to position its tourist industry abroad through publicity that described the attractions of the island was successful and in four years, between July 1928 and July 1932, almost 600,000 tourists visited Cuba, including boy scouts, doctors, professors and students on summer vacation, athletes, scientists, lawyers, salesmen, socialites, families, couples on their honeymoons (Schwartz, 1999, pp. 4, 68).

portation enterprises, and hotel organizations” (*En Viaje*, 1934, p. 21-22). It was thought that this financing would make it possible to enhance the proliferation of publicity. In addition, internationally, during the Third Inter-American Congress of Tourism (Tercer Congreso Interamericano del Turismo), held in San Carlos de Bariloche in 1949, “there were extensive discussions about the need for governments to increase the publication of tourist guides, posters, and tourist promotion pamphlets” (*En Viaje*, 1949, p. 17), making these governments active participants in what each nation in attendance wanted to be known about their country.

At the Fourth Inter-American Congress of Tourism held in Lima, Peru in December 1952, publicity was the fourth of the five themes, and was divided into two sections. The first, on techniques and systems of tourist publicity, made it clear that when it came to this matter, the issues of concern to the various countries participating were much more complex than just the creation and massification of tourism.

Two issues were discussed as part of the second theme – factors and systems of tourist publicity. The first was the “preparation and financing of tourist publicity. Systems of cooperation. Direct and indirect publicity. Negative publicity”; while the second dealt with “the dissemination of tourist publicity. Customs preferences. Cooperation with embassies and consulates. Cooperation with private sector publicity entities” (*Embajada de Chile en Washington*, 1952), all ways to facilitate the dissemination of publicity in its different formats within the countries signing on. This last issue was noted in the *New York Times*, which highlighted that the second general assembly of this congress voted in favor of various recommendations, among them special customs and postal exemptions for publicity materials (Loayza, 1952, p. 310). The spirit that predominated in these initiatives was a desire to produce collaborative publicity, in which mutual aid would allow for the promotion of the diverse national tourism industries in the participating countries.

### **The role of consuls**

Despite the international promotion, the lack of stable government initiatives to generate publicity abroad was an undeniable reality. The lack of material meant that this matter ended up depending on the goodwill of the individual consuls. According to regulations, these officials had the “principal obligation to ‘promote commerce, navigation, and tourism’” (*Consulado de Chile en Nueva York*, 1946), so it would be expected that the conditions existed for them to fulfill their duties, but this, as we have seen, was not the case in many Chilean diplomatic missions.

At the beginning of the 1940s, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs congratulated the Chilean consul in California for “having prepared a work in which reference is made to the geographic, historical, and economic facets of Chile,” which this diplomat used “to give a lecture at the University of California and later published as a pamphlet accompanied with photographs of our country.” This ministry not only expressed its gratitude, but also stated it “was awaiting the pamphlets that were mentioned” by the consul (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 1940a).

This episode illustrates the importance of consuls in promoting tourism. Another example is provided by the actions of the Chilean consul in Miami in 1956. In communication no. 49 sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Consulado de Chile en Miami, 1956), the diplomat in question stated that “considering that Miami is one of the most important tourist centers in the United States, I thought it worth reporting on the advantages and beauties that our country offers the North American tourist.” With this in mind, “since I took over my post in this office I have missed no opportunity to engage in publicity, giving lectures at clubs, universities, television, etc., all of these illustrated by the cinematographic films in color which you are aware of.” These actions delivered results, given that from this time forward “10 to 15 individuals a day came to this office to ask for information about our country.” Despite diplomatic efforts, it was impossible to meet the demand that began to be generated through these initiatives, so the consulate requested that “300 tourist guides, pamphlets, posters, etc. be sent,” which would be displayed in local stores that “have offered to display any poster that I provide them, as well as the Offices of Tourism and Aviation.” In addition, the consul had made arrangements to ensure that this request would not result in additional costs for the Chilean state, since “the Aviación Transa and Cinta companies have offered to bring all publicity materials that the Department has to send for free in their airplanes” (Consulado de Chile de Miami, 1956), an offer that had been made earlier. This was an understandable measure since these companies would benefit if the publicity ended up being successful.

North American firms provided support for the activities of the Chilean consul in Miami because – according to *En Viaje* – for these businesses, this was “an excellent field for the development of tourism originating in the United States.” Thus, it was considered worthwhile “to intensify publicity about our country in North America and continue to do so permanently” (1938, p. 20-21) in order to attract North American tourists and turn their attention away from classic tourist destinations such as Europe and, more recently, countries located more close by.



“We are unknown and ignored as a tourism country.” Tourism propaganda in Chile between 1929 and 1959

The constant need for “a good publicity campaign, through posters, pamphlets, photographs, films and lectures,” which should “lead to positive results, not only in terms of the arrival of travelers, but also in commercial and industrial knowledge about the country” (Ministerio de Fomento, 1930) speaks to the urgency of spreading information about Chile. To this end, it was necessary to intensify the promotion of tourism abroad despite the few materials available for this task. In this context, the appearance and better use of various spaces for dissemination that did not entirely depend on the state, such as radio programs,<sup>25</sup> and the use of publicity “commissioners” were able, to a certain extent, to fulfill the Chilean state’s desire to generate publicity for the promotion of national tourism abroad.

### **The publicity commissioners**

These tourism promotion agents offered the state their services as publicists for national tourism in the destinations where they were going to travel or live outside Chile. One of their most common tasks was giving lectures and/or conferences about Chile. They received payment for this work, which was sometimes accompanied by publicity material. The purpose of the payment was to reimburse the cost of trips or transportation, although in some cases the purpose was not specified.

These commissioners were active in various places, mostly on the American continent, and were used for different goals. The occupations of those who took on the commissions were also varied. Between 1929 and 1941, they included professors, consuls, writers, journalists, an archivist of the Ministry of Development, and even chess players, taking advantage of their representation of Chile in international tournaments, in addition to individuals engaged in tourism in both the private and public sectors.

The decision about who should receive a commission was not made based on any public policy, did not follow established guidelines, and was not guided by the occupation of those who needed a commission. In some cases, the individuals who took on the task had some relationship with

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25 For example, the Cooperativa Vitalicia radio station, through its program “Hora pan americana” broadcast on long- and shortwave bands, sought to disseminate “typical symphonies and music from various countries,” increasing the knowledge of their listeners about the traditions of these nations, augmented by “cultural talks (literature, history, geography, biography, descriptions, etc.)” These transmissions included references to Chile and could be heard in other parts of the continent. To this end, the program asked for the monetary support of the government (Ministerio de Fomento, 1939c).

This was also done in Colombia, where the radio program “Divulgación americanista” played music from various countries, including Chile, and provided cultural information (*El Tiempo*, 1939).

tourism; in other cases, the selection of commissioners depended on the benefits their profession could bring to national tourism. Sometimes, the choice was guided by stays abroad for the purpose of sports, diplomacy or a trip, or because the commissioners lived in a place that the Chilean government considered to be of interest to boosting national tourism. For this varied group of individuals, being a commissioner was worthwhile because it gave them the opportunity to go abroad or to fulfill their need for funds to pay for their trips – in their entirety or for one a single stage. In fact, it was a society of mutual convenience, a mixture of potential possibilities for the state and individual needs, which shaped these agents of national tourism promotion.

One of the cases that illustrates this “society of mutual convenience” was that of the chess players on their way to a tournament in Brazil in 1937. They received a commission of 9,000 pesos “with the obligation that they engage in tourism publicity for our country during their stay abroad” (Ministerio de Fomento, 1937). It was not stated how they should engage in publicity, nor did they receive materials, so we can only speculate that their publicity was to be based on the knowledge that these players may have had about tourism in Chile. Despite their slim or non-existent preparation for engaging in tourist publicity, they were given a commission to travel to Brazil, putting them forth as potential publicists in a country that, like Chile, was trying to expand its tourist industry.

Some state bureaucrats became commissioners, including the writer Marta Brunet and the archivist of the Department of Tourism, Alberto Cumplido D. In the case of Marta Brunet, her work and fame were related to her contributions in the field of letters, and her trip to Argentina was related to her recent appointment as the consul of Chile in La Plata. It was this new role that led to her receiving a sum of 5,000 pesos for a publicity commission. She was to carry out “tourism publicity for Chile in accordance with the instructions provided by the Tourism Services of the Ministry of Development” (Ministerio de Fomento, 1939d). Thus, Brunet would be answerable to two bodies: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in her role as a consul, and the Ministry of Development as a commissioner of its Tourism Section.

Nevertheless, in the first instance, there was reluctance about giving a commission to Marta Brunet, since she had asked for it to cover the costs of her move to a neighboring nation (Ministerio de Fomento, 1939a).<sup>26</sup> In

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26 The costs of moving were not paid to consuls when they were assigned abroad so they had to cover these themselves.

order to receive the money for the move, she stated that she "could swap it for articles and lectures, all kinds of tourist publicity to be carried out in Buenos Aires, La Plata and other Argentine cities" (Brunet, 1939). When she was given the 5,000 pesos required to promote tourism in Argentina (Ministerio de Fomento, 1939b), it became obvious that Tourism Services had no clear criteria about what made a person worthy of a commission and the ways that they should carry out their activities. The writer asked for economic support to move to Argentina, and in order to obtain the necessary funds she made a commitment to the Ministry of Development to engage in publicity in the neighboring country, without a strategy or a plan of action.

Not all the commissioners asked for a commission from the government. The archivist of the Department of Tourism, Alberto Cumplido D., was sent on commission in 1929 in the "interests of taking advantage of an educational trip that will soon be undertaken by the corvette 'Gral. Baquedano'" which will visit the ports of "Acapulco, Manzanillo, San Pedro, San Francisco, Seattle, Vancouver, Balboa, Buenaventura, Guayaquil, El Callao, Mollendo, Valparaíso, Lota, Easter Island,"<sup>27</sup> and it was thought that it would be beneficial "to send a Delegate on the ship in charge of Chilean publicity" (Ministerio de Marina, 1929).

To fulfill his mission, Cumplido was given two films containing "tourist publicity to be shown in tourism centers and theaters in the cities visited by the corvette General Baquedano" (Ministerio de Fomento, 1929c). This material was accompanied by a "large number of posters to be hung abundantly in businesses, offices of shipping lines, streets, etc., complementing this publicity with exhibits of photographs in theaters, newspapers and the main compartments of the corvette" (Ministerio de Fomento, 1929c). To cover the costs that he would incur, the Santiago treasury put at the "disposal of the archivist of the Ministry of Development don Alberto Cumplido Ducós, the sum of three thousand pesos (\$ 3,000)" (Ministerio de Fomento, 1929c).

This commission, which was provided at a time when tourism started to be organized by the state, was much more comprehensive than future ones in terms of the materials provided, in addition to being the most coherent. When Cumplido was commissioned, resources and an assignment were given to a person linked to the institution. However, his work in Tourism Services did not position him as an expert in the field. While he was knowledgeable

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27 The voyage of the corvette is described on the website of the Chilean Navy (n.d.).

about the importance that this industry had in Chile, he did not have the necessary knowledge to carry out effective publicity, as in the cases of private individuals and state bureaucrats who had previously received commissions.

Finally, there are two more commissioners who are of interest because of the differences between them, which illustrate the lack of clear administrative policies when deciding on who could receive a commission, how it should be carried out, and the role played by consuls in the organization of the promotion of tourism abroad. They are professor Mauricio Tzschenska Kampf and Juan García de Kutzbach.

The former was a German university professor who taught at the School of Commerce and Industrial Economy (*Escuela de Comercio y Economía Industrial*) of the University of Chile; in addition, he was a member of the Office of Tourism of the steamer *Reliance*. This professor was granted a commission to carry out “publicity for Chile and give talks on the matter,” “taking advantage of a tourist trip around the world on the Hamburg-Amerika Line steamer ‘*Reliance*’ from January 10 to May 25 of 1937” (Tzschenska Kampf, 1937, p. 1).

To fulfill his mission, Mauricio Tzschenska Kampf explains that:

[...] Among the passengers I selected groups of ten to fifteen people who spoke Spanish and German, to whom I gave some descriptive talks about Chile, its history, development, population, industries, form of government, etc. [and when] there were interested passengers, especially industrialists and farm owners, I gave them tourism pamphlets, export guides, as well as photographs (Tzschenska Kampf, 1937, p. 1).

The professor stated in this report that it gave him great satisfaction “to note that the interest generated by these talks was much greater than my highest expectations. This was evident in the innumerable questions I received as well as by the large amount of information that they asked for” (Tzschenska Kampf, 1937, p. 1). In relation to this last point, despite the best intentions of this enterprising promoter of Chilean tourism, the limited amount of publicity material he was given “prevented the mission from being more extensive” (Tzschenska Kampf, 1937, p. 1). This once again illustrates the flaws in the Tourism Services which, in theory, should have provided the material necessary for Chile to become known abroad.

On the other hand, there are no records in the archives about whether there were evaluations of how successful (or not) these commissions were; there are only reports of who received the commissions, but no analysis by the office in charge. This, added to the lack of statistics about the tourists

who came to Chile, demonstrate that this was a public service that did not possess the tools that would allow for the planning of future policies.

In his report, Mauricio Tzschenka Kampf recounts that it was not only the passengers from the steamer *Reliance* who received publicity materials. The commissioner also distributed tourist pamphlets at famous international hotels, the majority of them in cities of the East, including the:

[...] Taj Majal Hotel, Bombay; Oriental Hotel, Bangkok (Siam); Hotel des Indes, Batavia (Java); Manila Hotel, Manila (Philippines); HongKong Hotel, Hong Kong; Astor Hotel, Shanghai; Gran Hotel Wagon Lit, Peking; Gran Hotel, Yokobama; Imperial Hotel, Tokyo; Royal-Hawaiian Hotel, Honolulu; Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles (Tzschenka Kampf, 1937, p. 2).

When looking at the list of cities in whose hotels the professor placed tourist publicity, one is entitled to ask about the utility of distributing what scarce publicity there was in such faraway places. It was difficult enough to get tourists from various countries in the Americas to come to Chile, either because they did not know about the country as a tourist destination or because of how costly it was for a tourist to travel to the country. The fact that Tourism Services pamphlets – which we know did not exist in large quantities – were left in these hotels demonstrates the lack of an administrative policy regarding how to enhance publicity. This work was carried out without any logical order and was limited to distributing information in any place that was available.

In the case of Juana García de Kutzback, her profession is not recorded in the documents that refer to her commission. She was provided with publicity to use in the United States through a “series of publicity talks about Chile” (*Embajada de Chile en Washington*, 1936a). What is interesting is the set of administrative misunderstandings that occurred in relation to the work of Mrs. Juana García de Kutzback.

At first, when the Chilean embassy in the United States learned of this appointment, it instructed “the Consul General, Mr. Grez, to look after the designated person in New York and help her out as much as possible with the mission that brings her to this country” (*Embajada de Chile en Washington*, 1936a). However, this did not happen – not because of any ill will on the part of the consul, but because of a series of misunderstandings that revealed a lack of planning and the opportunistic character of these commissions.

García wrote to the embassy a few months after it had been notified about her mission, to find out “about the location of a film on Chile which

should have been sent to her” by the Ministry of Foreign Relations “as illustrative material for lectures that she is to give in this country” (Embajada de Chile en Washington, 1936b). According to the embassy, in her letter García was “alarmed by the absence of this film which she considered indispensable to fulfill the principal objective of the mission” (Embajada de Chile en Washington, 1936b). This concern was communicated to the ministry in Santiago so that they would send the material that, according to Juana García, they had agreed to provide.

However, the Ministry of Foreign Relations had a different interpretation of the agreement with García. According to the ministry, she had been commissioned “to engage in publicity about Chile since she had provided similar services to the Department on other occasions and that when she asked for this commission, she stated that she had a definite plan for lectures to be given in the United States”; consequently, “and in order to facilitate her task, her request was agreed to” (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 1937). Nevertheless, it continued:

The department did not offer to send any kind of publicity material directly to the person in question, [she was only told] that she would be recommended to our representatives in the United States so that the Ambassador or the Consul General, if they consider it appropriate and favorable for publicity about this country, provide her with the publicity materials which they have available such as films, photographs, etc. if such materials exist in the entity, leaving it, as is normal, to the sole criteria of you or the Consul General, as the case may be, to provide the material requested or not (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1937).

Under these conditions, the provision of the film to Juana García Kutzbach depended on the consul and since Grez, in his role as consul general, did not believe that “the most appropriate way to transmit publicity about Chile was through paid lectures, which is what this lady does,” he refused to send her the film *Wings Over the Andes*, for which he had other plans (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 1937).

As we have seen, in the entity charged with tourism promotion, there was no directive to regulate the work of the commissioners or to identify the type of lectures that were considered optimal, how they should be given, what materials they should use, and – even less so – what topics should be dealt with in greater depth. This informality, whereby it seems, commissioners were not required to provide an initial plan explaining in detail the type of publicity that they would carry out, led to García not being granted the materials she asked for once she arrived in the U.S. The reason for this

may have been that her planned activities were not considered an appropriate way to promote tourism in Chile, or perhaps because the embassy or consulate did not have the required publicity material. The only cases in which descriptions were provided, in broad terms, of how publicity was to be carried out were those in which a request for a commission was denied or when there was an effort to reduce the amount of funds requested. In the rest of the cases for which information is available, those who received commissions promoted tourism in Chile as they thought best.

### **Conclusions**

When the director of SERNATUR stresses the importance that the promotion of tourism played in creating an efficient industry, which has led Chile to establish itself as one of the most popular tourist destinations in South America, this invites – from a historical perspective – research into the history of this now-vital field of activity. By asking this question, we have been able to observe how the promotion of international tourism in Chile illustrates the problems the industry experienced at a time when it was first trying to position itself on the international market. In this context, the generation of adequate and effective publicity was a concern evident in the discourses of various actors linked to the tourism industry, whether within the government or in the national and international private sectors; their interest in this area was present throughout the period studied. Nevertheless, in actual practice, this concern and interest did not bear fruit.

First, the preparation of systematic and organized publicity was an area where the government was always lagging behind. Little was invested and as a result there were always complaints from Chilean diplomatic missions in different parts of the world about the lack of materials. Most pressing and worrisome for national interests was the lack of publicity material in the United States, which limited the possibilities for the growth in tourism that the landscapes of the “Chilean Switzerland” could provide if they were known.

The difficulty behind the lack of publicity materials is that their production should have been monitored by the state, which also had to prepare them. In this sense, the government could not meet the expectations of Chilean missions abroad. A variety of materials were sent abroad, but most of these were documents unrelated to tourism sent in lieu of the specialized publications that did not exist. Nevertheless, magazines related to tourism published by the State Railways were also sent abroad: *En Viaje* and *Guía de Veraneante*. These were complemented by history texts and some pamphlets, maps, and photographs. Private entities, such as airlines, also played an

important role since they wanted to increase their business, and therefore generated and offered facilities to make up for the scarcity of publicity produced by the Chilean state.

The promotion of tourism, which the National Congress and the media saw as a way of letting the world know about Chile and its natural beauties, was an activity in which all investors linked to the sector seemed eager to help. The goal was to bring Chile out of touristic anonymity by promoting those landscapes of which Chileans were so proud, which would in turn make it possible to attract the foreign currency that was lacking due to the economic downturn. For similar reasons, this issue was reviewed in various countries on the continent in their legislatures, inter-American tourism conferences, and the media.

But one must ask how foreign tourists were to come to Chile if they did not know that the country existed? The lack of a stable policy on the promotion of tourism leads to an assessment that these first efforts were precarious because of flaws in the implementation and administration of the promotion of foreign tourism in Chile. There was no plan, no stable and long-lasting government policy, which led to the use of pre-existing entities and materials to promote this industry abroad. Indeed, much of the materials sent out had not even been produced to promote tourism. The Chilean consuls in the United States had to deal with this situation, and played an active role in generating the tourism publicity that they needed or acquiring it from the private sector. On the other hand, the publicity commissioners – people who were chosen not for their knowledge of tourism in Chile, but because of the opportunities presented by their trips abroad – are another example of how the state depended on agents, just like the consuls, with little knowledge of the tourism sector. They were given the task of promoting Chile around the world due to their goodwill and previous knowledge of the tourism industry, without having to follow ministerial instructions and lacking the materials necessary for the work with which they were tasked.

Finally, it is worth asking what it would have taken for the tourism industry to grow during this period. The answer provided by this analysis is that it would have required organization; that is, someone in charge of the initiatives who would have organized tourism promotion and created materials and publicity plans that matched the needs of the tourism sector. However, despite the expectations at the time regarding the growth in the tourism industry, this never occurred. Although now, almost 90 years later, this ideal is finally being fulfilled, the question still remains as to whether it was only more extensive and better promotion that was needed to attract tourists to Chile during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



“We are unknown and ignored as a tourism country.” Tourism propaganda in Chile between 1929 and 1959

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