

# Safeguarding Vernacular and Green Architecture as A Tourist, Cultural and Heritage Resource. *The Case of the Heritage Tourism Route of the 16 Churches of the Chilota School of Religious Architecture in Chiloé.*

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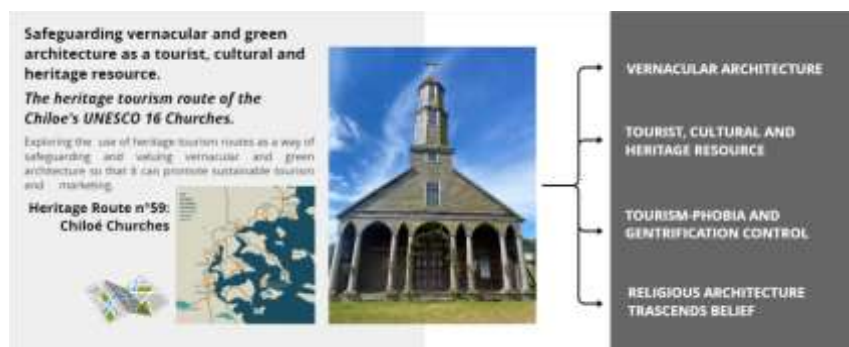
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**Abstract** - This research aims to explore the use of heritage tourism routes as a way of safeguarding and valuing vernacular and green architecture so that it can promote sustainable tourism and marketing. Ensuring the protection of cultural and architectural heritage through place marketing. The tourist route connecting Chiloé's 16 UNESCO protected churches, part of the Chilota School of Religious Architecture is selected as a case of study because: (1) they are part of the local vernacular architecture, (2) they are a tourist, cultural and heritage resource, (3) its heritage, facilitates the control of tourism-phobia and gentrification, (4) its religious architecture transcends belief for a historical and cultural appeal.

The methodology is carried out through an architectural analysis of the 16 churches. Followed by an analysis through word clouds using traditional media main headlines, based on previously defined parameters to create the filter search.

It is concluded that safeguarding vernacular and green architecture turns out to be a tourist, cultural and heritage resource, as can be seen in the valuing of the 16 churches of the Chilota School of Religious Architecture..

**Keywords:** *Place marketing, Vernacular architecture, Chiloé's churches*



**Figure 1.** Graphical Abstract. Own elaboration

## INTRODUCTION

The globalization of information and the ease of traveling long distances in today's world have caused great changes within an economic system that is constantly growing. And with this in mind, great threats have been discovered for certain places in the world that are developing rapidly as a result of tourism, marketing, real estate development, accessibility, etc. So, new challenges have also arisen for political, social and private actors in safeguarding and valuing the heritage of cities and settlements. And with these challenges also come opportunities to challenge established economic systems and in turn improve them. In this context, the present study seeks to explore and analyze how the safeguarding and promotion of cultural and historical heritage, material and immaterial, can stop being a burden for institutions and become a tourist, cultural and marketing asset for new and existing communities. As a case study, the 16 heritage churches recognized by UNESCO, located in Chiloé, are taken.

Chiloé is an island located in the Los Lagos region in southern Chile, it is surrounded by the Pacific Ocean and it has a strong heritage value for its richness in traditions, culture and vernacular architecture that can be seen in the 16 heritage churches recognized by UNESCO. Construction on the island of Chiloé is characterized by the use of local materials, mainly native wood and other plant fibers, which are present in constructions of high heritage value, such as churches, which correspond to the object of study. The arrival of the Jesuits in the 17th century and later the Franciscans in the 18th and 19th centuries was important in generating the current architecture of Chiloé. The Jesuit influence, together with the knowledge and cultural values of the tenants, made it possible to maximize the use of natural resources within the area. Wood is a fundamental material because the construction of the Chiloé culture has been based on it since pre-Hispanic times, Conditioning the work of the Chilotes, their mentality and their social life, such as their homes, tools and routes [1]. The foregoing is implied for geographical reasons, its location in the southern hemisphere allows the development of an exceptional forest, with a vegetation composed largely of a variety of trees such as Ciruelillo, Avellano, Coigüe, Ciprés, Canelo, Alerce, Ulmo, Mañío, among others. In addition, as far as ecclesiastical architecture is concerned, the process of evangelization by the Jesuit community meant the construction of a series of churches within the archipelago, which together with the knowledge of the local population, managed to create structures of significant vernacular and heritage value. Mainly due to the use of local woods.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The literary review of this study focuses on the following topics: vernacular and wooden architecture, place marketing, cultural heritage marketing, tourism marketing. Architecture without architects, creation from local knowledge and materials are parameters that form the basis of what is defined as vernacular architecture. The close relationship that the chilotes have with their territory is a result of the construction of structures built from elements available in the environment, which led to a greater understanding of the environment by the inhabitants, a close observation of nature's behavior and the use of every resource available for their purpose. Chiloé is a relevant case of vernacular architecture: around its islands multiple Catholic churches can be found, built mainly in wood. These are a reflection of the cultural richness and tradition of Chiloé, characterized by the link between local and European knowledge that is manifested in their construction techniques [2]. The arrival of the Jesuits came with an evangelization process that converted the indigenous people to catholicism [3], and together they designed and developed the chilote construction style. The churches have construction techniques and technologies that are capable of adapting to the requirements of the land, plus the use of the available resources together with the local knowledge about wood and carpentry joints are important factors to understand the churches from a technical point of view. The Chiloé School of religious wooden architecture was established in Chiloé after a social, cultural, and demographic decline due to disease, forced labor, and also slavery [3]. The churches of Chiloé are an exceptional example in Latin America of ecclesiastical architecture in wood. They account for the success of the syncretism of indigenous and European culture, being a clear response to the territory: integrating the landscape, nature and the community worldview. Over time, the struggle for the churches maintenance in Chiloé and their meaning for the locals has made them recognized as a cultural heritage. The case of churches in Russia is similar, such as the Kizhi Pogost Ensemble, a UNESCO World Heritage Site [4]. Precisely initiatives of this type realize the importance of Placemaking. This concept can be defined as a way to improve the quality of various spaces within a sector, in order to strengthen the community and forge a neighborhood identity [5]. This concept is generally used by architects and urban planners, a series of key elements are stipulated that determine a place as a Quality Place: Mixed uses, quality public spaces, preservation of historic structures, community heritage, arts, culture and creativity, green spaces, among others [5].

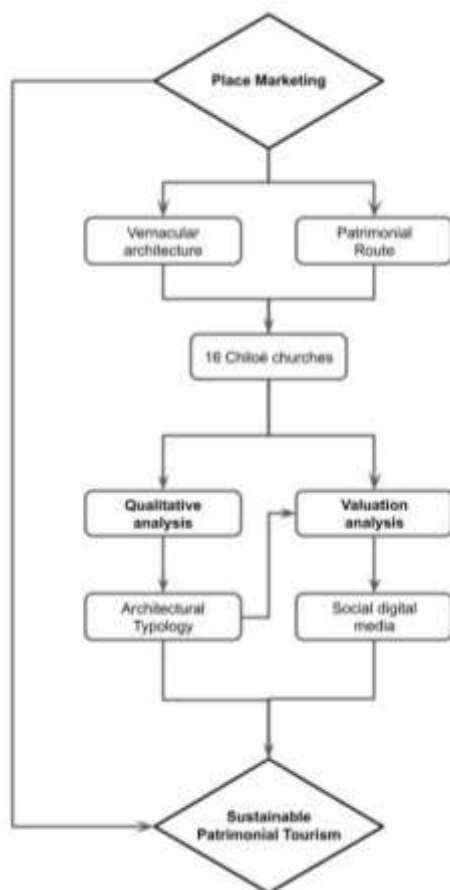
Place marketing is a fundamental tool to promote places, which must be present in the strategies of local governments. Resulting in a successful sustainable economic and social development. Currently, Branding strategies are important to advertise specific contexts [6]. And, with globalization, the importance of the territories to differentiate themselves from each other [7] is presented, so that unifying the 16 churches as UNESCO heritage seems to be the correct strategy. It is important to recognize the environmental internal and external factors to carry out a place marketing strategy [8]. Internal factors can be directly controlled by local political agents and taken into account to develop marketing strategies, such as an interconnected road network. While external factors, for example the weather, cannot be controlled, but can be monitored to minimize the threats they represent.

To understand the heritage and cultural value as an element of tourism development, it is necessary to mention Cultural Heritage Marketing. In order to convert the cultural heritage of an area into a tourist product, the existence of a story to transmit is important [9]. Also, it seems to be essential to develop an emotional link between the consumer and the history of the element, so that it is conceived as a living thing that unites the past with the present. As is the case with site museums, where the importance of maintaining the constructions and decoration according to the place's historical timeline predominates in order to give the visitor an authentic historical experience.

### **METHODOLOGY**

To determine the influence of vernacular and green architecture, represented by the UNESCO churches connecting route as a tourist, cultural and heritage resource for the island, the methodology will be developed in two fields of analysis. First, an analysis will be carried out under a qualitative approach regarding the architectural typology of each of the churches in order to identify the main elements that configure the area's vernacular architecture. The analysis will be carried out through a photographic and planimetric study of these churches, understanding that although all churches are recognized within the same architectural context and the same vernacular style, the conditions and characteristics of the construction on each island responds to its context and possibilities. And second, a valuation analysis of the route in question will be developed, based on the search for web page headlines according to predefined navigation parameters, whose objective is to take a representative sample of the places marketing implementation effect in tourism development. The word frequency associated with the enhancement of the respective

heritage resource under study will be analyzed, concluding on how the route concept directly contributes to improving the sustainability of the island's cultural heritage.











**Figure 2.** Methodology flowchart. Own elaboration









## RESULTS

The first churches built by Jesuit missionaries during the circular mission that took place during the 17th century took place mainly on the island's coastal edges, making the sea the main channel of connection and communication between them. Its character as an archipelago and insular territory conditioned the island's architectural and urban development, as well as its productive capacity for economic development. This notion responded to a type of habitability on the islands, which led to a clear and representative architectural style, as is the case of the 60 churches that are part of the province. This typology, characterized by a notable use and mastery of wood construction, is the so-called "Chilota School of Religious Architecture in Wood", whose character as a School is given by delivering a unique type of architecture in the place [10]. These communities, linked mainly by the religious action of the Jesuit circular mission, constituted a binding factor for the population. The churches, characterized by their design based on a volume with a gabled roof, a basilica plan with three naves and an imposing tower as a hierarchical vertical volume, today describe one of the main identity features that make up the cultural heritage of the Big Island of Chiloe. The striking configuration of its main facade with the cross imposing presence at the top of the vertical tower introduces a permanently religious symbol and makes it recognizable as a sacred place. Currently there are about 80 churches in Chiloe that stand out with this typology, only 16 are those were declared a World Heritage Site in 2000, which make up the 'Heritage Route No. 59 Churches of Chiloe'.

In order to expose the Chiloe's sixteen churches architectural value and identify their architectural style, three of the main material elements that make up the architectural heritage of the Chiloe church are analyzed: the construction system used in the structure of the nave, the cladding technique for its envelope and the volume that makes up the tower-facade [table 1], in which the use of native wood prevails in the design.

**Table 1. Chiloé school's churches that were selected as world heritage. Own elaboration.**

				
<b>Name</b>	Santa María de Loreto	Jesús Nazareno	Jesús Nazareno	San Francisco
<b>Location</b>	Achao	Aldachildo	Caguach	Castro
				
<b>Name</b>	Santa María	San Juan Bautista	Nuestra Señora del Patrocinio	San Antonio
<b>Location</b>	Rilán	San Juan	Tenaun	Vilupulli

				
<b>Name</b>	Santiago Apóstol	Navidad de María	Nuestra Señora de la Gracia	Nuestra Señora de la Gracia
<b>Location</b>	Detif	Ichuac	Nercon	Quinchao
				
<b>Name</b>	San Antonio	Nuestra Señora del Rosario	Nuestra Señora del Rosario	Nuestra Señora de los Dolores
<b>Location</b>	Colo	Chelin	Chonchi	Dalcahue

The Heritage Routes Program developed by the Ministry of National Assets was created in 2001 to respond to the need to provide citizens with free and self-guided tours to enhance the value of fiscal cultural heritage [11]. Since that date, a total of 76 circuits have been implemented throughout the entire national territory, consolidating an extensive cultural and heritage network that has encouraged the visit of both people living in the country and abroad. The concept of a heritage route as a tourist guide allows unifying the experience in a tourist package around the cultural heritage of the multiple localities, as well as forming an easily associable product to promote its tourist development.



Figure 3. Chiloé Churches Patrimonial route No. 59.

In this case, unifying the sixteen churches of the Chilota School of Religious Architecture as a tourism concept generates added value in the group they make up, promoting both the visit to each of these individually, as well as the experience of the tour between them, and also promoting the generation of activities around tourism on the island.

For the valuation analysis of the heritage route, the phrase "Churches of Chiloé heritage route" was googled and the first 10 search results of the general web were considered [figure 2]. When entering the study keywords, the first results that appear in the search are pages focused on promoting adventure tourism, an indicator that by forming a tourism product (in this case, a heritage route), it is positioned more directly and binding heritage experience within the field of tourism. The keywords associated with the search were: route, Chiloé, churches and heritage.



Figure 4. Words cloud. Own elaboration

### CONCLUSION

Chiloé is characterized as a highly attractive place from a geographical and cultural perspective. Associated with this, we are currently facing one of the main tourist niches in Chile, which is why establishing a correct relationship between tourism and culture is essential for the correct sustainable development of the archipelago, understanding both as fundamental elements for the place.

The churches of Chiloé in general, not only the 16 declared as world heritage, are inserted within these dynamics, making them a physical receiver of a living heritage, associated both with the place's religiosity, and with ancestral knowledge in terms of constructive techniques. In this sense, its exploitation as an object of tourism cannot be viewed from admiration point of view, but from understanding it as a fundamental part of the Chilote's daily life.

With this in mind, the establishment of the different heritage routes fulfills a double role within the archipelago's valuation system. On the one hand, they establish a kind of editorial line regarding how each one is made known, where local communities take relevance from their position as direct users, as a primary source regarding the church. The route's unification also implies it as an added value, thinking about the landscapes that accompany the route. The route's logic allows the construction of collaborative networks between the communities of each church, allowing the consolidation of heritage practices and strengthening the sense of belonging of each community from the autonomy and particularity of each case.

The system proposed by the church routes takes care of both the relationship with tourism, taking charge of the correct approach to the site, spreads and recognizes in turn a cultural wealth of each locality and the archipelago and finally allows the

consolidation of an identity associated with the place, establishing work with cultural heritage as a key element for sustainable development.

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