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**“Comparative analysis of the work carried out by
Pro Ecuador against that of ProChile, period: 2015-
2020”**

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Motivation and Purpose

Export promotion agencies play an increasingly important role in a country's trade and economy. Pro Ecuador is the entity in charge of executing the country's export and investment promotion policies and regulations, in order to promote the insertion of Ecuadorian products in international markets (Pro Ecuador, n.d.). Developing a comparative analysis that helps to promote exports and find best practices to do so, will allow this entity to prosper and identify the necessary aspects to advance and improve efficiency in its work. It is vital to analyze the knowledge acquired in International Studies, in order to analyze and compare the work carried out by similar entities in the region. This can serve as an example for Pro Ecuador, and bring benefits for the Ecuadorian company, the productive sectors, foreign promotion and the goods and services exports.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to God, for being present since my birth with his blessings, to my parents who are my guide and of whom I am very grateful and proud, to my grandparents, sister, and friends for always giving me their support and love. I thank God, for always filling me with blessings, health, and people who accompany me on my way.

Acknowledgment

I thank my father and mother, who took care of me and loved me unconditionally, filled me with pride and gratitude, and are the people I aspire to become one day. I thank my grandparents, sister, cousins, and friends, who were important pillars in my career with the support and love that I hope to reciprocate.

I thank Adrián Alvarado, for his continued willingness to help me in this process, for sharing his knowledge with us during the race, and for his generosity in supporting me.

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Resumen

El propósito de este documento es plantear recomendaciones en beneficio de las oficinas comerciales ecuatorianas, mediante el análisis comparativo del trabajo realizado por la agencia de promoción chilena, para mejorar las operaciones de Pro Ecuador, que es la entidad responsable de promover las exportaciones y atraer inversión extranjera. Para lograr este objetivo, se decide utilizar la herramienta Benchmarking. Bajo diferentes parámetros se elige un país con una oficina comercial de promoción de exportaciones líder en la región, esta entidad resultó ser ProChile. A continuación, se comienza a recolectar información de Pro Ecuador, para observar su estatus, virtudes y carencias; y luego continuar con el análisis y recolección de información de ProChile, utilizando fuentes primarias y secundarias. Por tanto, se parte de la comparación utilizando la herramienta Benchmarking, contrastando diferentes parámetros como convenios, promoción internacional, acuerdos comerciales, herramientas innovadoras, entre otros. Finalmente, luego de procesar y sintetizar esta información en tablas comparativas, se procede a realizar recomendaciones de manera sencilla y concisa a Pro Ecuador con miras a en un futuro realizar un plan de mejora.

Abstract

The purpose of this document is to make recommendations for the benefit of Ecuadorian commercial offices, through a comparative analysis of the job carried out by the Chilean promotion agency, to improve the operations of Pro Ecuador, which is the entity responsible for promoting exports and attracting foreign investment. To achieve this goal, the Benchmarking tool was used and it was necessary to find a country in the region with a leading office dedicated to commercial promotion in exports. This entity was ProChile. Next, information on Pro Ecuador was collected to observe its status, virtues and shortcomings; and then continue with the analysis and collection of information from ProChile using primary and secondary sources. Therefore, the comparison was made using the Benchmarking tool, contrasting different parameters such as agreements, international promotion, trade agreements, innovative tools, among others. Finally, after processing and synthesizing this information in comparative tables, recommendations are made in a simple and concise manner to Pro Ecuador with a view to carrying out an improvement plan in the future.

Introduction

The present work is the product of an investigation whose purpose is to carry out a benchmarking study so that the findings and recommendations proposed, serve as a first step for a future improvement plan, which is for the benefit of Ecuadorian commercial offices (Pro Ecuador), through the comparative analysis of the tools used in the promotion agencies of Ecuador and Chile during the last five years.

It is necessary to ask how to use tools such as Benchmarking to improve Ecuadorian promotion offices based on the practices of neighboring nations that are prosperous in this area. This is due to the fact that the countries that have a better understanding and capacity to manage their commercial offices with high rates of efficiency are currently at the forefront of world trade (Mardones, 2016).

Similarly, it is of vital importance to emphasize that the main activity of a country's promotion agency is to promote and increase foreign sales of goods or services. Precisely, exports are defined as the sale, barter, or donation of goods and services produced by residents of one country to another. In other words, it is the act of transferring property between two parties residing in different countries. The parties involved are the exporter or seller and the importer or buyer. In order to have the total number of exports in a country, the total number of goods produced and sold by the exporting country must be recorded, plus all the goods that have gone through an improvement or added value regime that are sold to another country. In addition, any service that residents legally provide abroad, with return in foreign currency for the importing country, must also be accounted for in this operation. This benefit is perceived by entrepreneurs as the opportunity to increase their income by locating foreign markets and participating in more sectors (INEGI, 2020).

As Seringhaus (1986) points out, export promotion agencies "are the public policy actions that guide export activity at the business, industrial or national level" (Seringhaus, 1986). It is concluded that these agencies have the purpose of providing the route or guidelines for a country to become known transnationally, in addition to helping companies and products to be able to succeed and face any adversity or barrier that may arise in the country of destination.

Today most countries require at least one export promotion agency, whether public or private. These institutions receive different names depending on their main function and the country where they operate, and are known as trade promotion agencies,

export promotion agencies, investment promotion agencies, export and investment promotion agencies, among others.

These promotion organizations generally develop their work and objectives by focusing on national and international work. At the national level, they emphasize supporting exporting companies, and those that have the potential to sell products abroad, the agencies themselves, provide attention and strategy to achieve it. Likewise, at an international level, promotion agencies, through their commercial offices located in strategic points abroad, focus on the search and development of markets abroad and serve as a guide for companies in their expansion processes to international level (Volpe 2020).

Chapter 1: Comparative Study Design

1.1 Analysis of the chosen methodology: Benchmarking

To achieve the general objective and solve the problem raised in this Thesis, a Market Study is carried out using the benchmarking tool, in order to compare and suggest Strengths of the leading promotion agencies in the region that can be implemented in Pro Ecuador. Carrying out a benchmarking involves the correct application of a methodology accompanied by an ordering and projection of a set of phases, actions, and stages.

The first step to achieve a correct use of the benchmarking tool is to prepare the comparative study starting with the investigation of Pro Ecuador, this in order to select the most important parameters to contrast. In this step, it is of the utmost importance to carry out a preliminary study of what will be the election of the export promotion agency, which must work as a reference in the region.

The parameters to be compared will be chosen carefully in order to obtain clear answers that can be implemented in Pro Ecuador, that is, to take the first step to be able to start a research process that provides valuable information for future decision-making in the Ecuadorian entity. It is important to emphasize that the benchmarking study and the indicators studied in it are not only evaluated based on the external entity, but also in the same organization that uses the tool. Under this concept, it is understood that the managed methodology is not a process of copying or imitating, but of coupling processes and good practices.

To achieve the objective of the proposed thesis, tools that provide added value to the research are used. First, the management of primary sources such as structured and semi-structured interviews with officials who perform their duties in commercial offices. Second, the data to be analyzed is found using reliable secondary sources, obtained mostly through sources such as articles, research, public statistics, among others.

Finally, with the execution of the analysis of the parameters chosen in both agencies, the elements that make the difference between Pro Ecuador and the equivalent agency studied will be recognized.

Based on this analysis proceeds the development of the comparative model through illustrative tables. This exposes the parameters collected and analyzed in a

clear and concise way, in order to know the applicability in the Pro Ecuador agency. Since the results are easily readable and understandable, the last step is to provide conclusions and recommendations based on the results obtained in the investigation for the interested parties.

1.1.1 Benchmarking Definition

Comparative Study or Benchmarking comes from a foreign language and is defined as a tool capable of improving a company's parameters, efficiency and ability to compete in the market. This is the case of a process that, through a market study, compares the company's objectives with the efficient practices of companies that are considered leaders and, as its name indicates, references in a given sector (Hernandez & Cano, 2017).

The term is relatively used in the year 1979, under the name of competitive benchmarking. The company that is today the world's largest supplier of toner photocopiers and accessories, Xerox Corporation, begins to debate its business model since it was losing, by selling its products below production costs. The multinational begins to examine how the products of its direct competitors were composed, the materials they use, their suppliers, their processes, among others. This event marks the beginning of the comparative evaluations, since Xerox by means of this method, achieves to lower the production costs in its machines, thus, it is ordered to implement this new tool to all the company's business lines (Cardenas, 2006).

On the other hand, although there is no uniform definition of the treated term, it is stated that each author creates his thesis according to his cognitive definition, perceptions, experiences, but always taking the case of the Xerox corporation as a reference. David Kearns, manager of one of the largest multinationals in the world, and a faithful admirer of the benchmarking methodology, defines this tool as a perpetual process that makes it easy to quantify goods, services and work practices of the best positioned companies at a global level (Kearns, 2007).

Finally, authors such as Kotler and Keller point out that benchmarking in theory, if used correctly, leads the entity that manages it to see positive changes in its position in the market, status in its area of competence, and specifically in its financial statements (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

In conclusion, the theories and concepts studies above allow to conclude that benchmarking resides in its functions of improving competitive advantages, this through the analysis of better processes that are practiced by similar or not in a specific industry. Theoretically, if the benchmarking tool is used correctly, it helps organizations to provide better service and products by comparing the performance of competitors. To achieve this, it is important to exchange information in order to identify strengths and correct mistakes by learning from the patterns of the company being studied.

1.1.2 Objectives Benchmarking

The benchmarking tool has both general and specific objectives that are pursued as a goal in companies (Codling, 2000).

Figure 1. *Benchmarking Objectives*

GENERAL OBJECTIVES	ESPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Examine the performance of other benchmark companies in the industry. □ Specify the path to follow and the steps to reach these results. □ Define an information base that helps establish goals and strategies for future implementation in the company. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a stage of strategic organization. • Find better processes that will lead the company to the desired results. • Define the new and avant-garde tools that may be applicable. • Start a pleasant conversation with the company that will be used for the confirmation, in order to improve the exchange of information.

Source: Codling (2000).

Produced by: The author

1.1.3 Types of benchmarking

As Gisbert and Raissouni (2014) declare, there are types of comparison or benchmarking tools, the most relevant are:

Figure 2. *Types of Benchmarking*

Types of Benchmarking	
Internal	Functional External
This type occurs when the measurement of a company's performance is within its limits. It is a comparison of the different departmental areas of the company. Here you determine who is doing better, their practices, internal conflict resolution,	Similarly, functional external benchmarking seeks to analyze competitors, but not necessarily from the same business area. This type is used when more than equaling the competition, you want to surpass it. To do this, the company conducting the study

and even learn from specific employees. In this process there are differences between the commercial processes of the evaluated entity, due to factors such as experience, organization, location, management, workers, among others. It is important to allow the effective exchange of information, since this brings benefits such as the motivation of collaborators to have better communication and a better work environment.	seeks best practices from any organization that has a reputation for excellence in any area. Therefore, the objective of said benchmarking is to achieve practices classified as excellent, which are firm proof of success, being these of any type of organization. In addition, it should be emphasized that functional external comparison can be very beneficial since it provokes interest in the investigation of comparative data.
External generic	Competitive External
On the other hand, generic external benchmarking, which consists of a comparison of the stages of achievement of an entity, with the highest international standards, this is demarcated to which industry it belongs. It has three subdivisions or fundamental objectives, the first is to be able to optimize the critical success factors in terms of customer satisfaction; the second is a functional issue concerning internal processes; the third and last one is of an operational scope tied to the operative processes and the time they occupy (Soler & Raissouni, 2014).	It occurs when there is a comparison of standards between direct competitors. It has the objective of indicating advantages and disadvantages, therefore it uses this information to know how certain new technologies or processes can work before applying them in the company. However, it is one of the most complicated types of benchmarking, since it requires a reciprocal exchange of information and in most cases, companies reserve their competitive advantages for themselves. Since competitive external benchmarking is very useful when looking for positioning of products or services, this type is the one used to achieve the objective of this work.

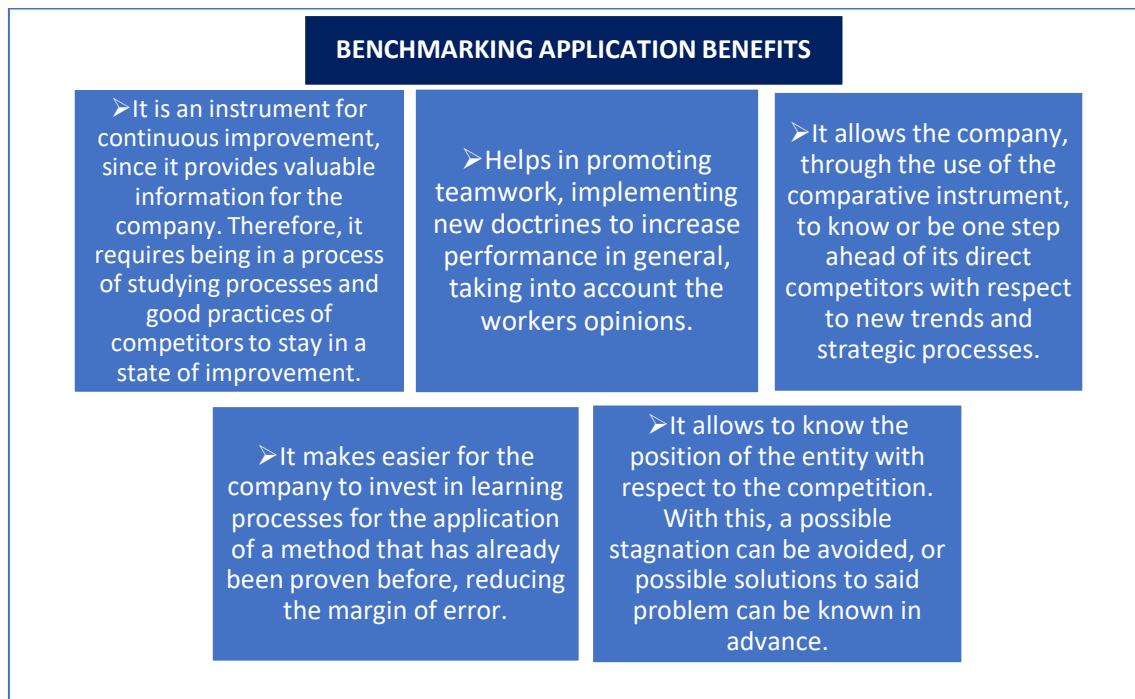
Source: Soler y Raissouni (2014)

Produced by: The author

1.1.4 Application Benefits Benchmarking

As stated by Intxaurburu and Cantonnet (2008), the benefits that the correct application of the benchmarking tool brings are correlated with the objectives sought by the company. However, it is found that the industries that use the comparison have advantages over those that are not (Cantonnet & Intxaurburu, 2008). The benefits are appreciated in the following illustration:

Figure 3. *Benchmarking Application Benefits*



Source: Cantonet and Intxaurburu (2008).

Produced by: The author

1.2 Commercial Offices

Investment is essential for growth and sustainable development. It expands the productive capacity of an economy and drives job creation and income growth. Recognizing this, governments around the world establish export and investment promotion agencies to raise awareness of existing investment opportunities, promote the export offer of their countries, diversify products, markets, exporters, attract investors who can foster the creation of employment and productivity growth, and facilitate their establishment and expansion in the country.

Depending on the time and context, export promotion agencies receive various names and definitions. As Horne-Bique points out, the vast majority of the promotion agencies are not only aimed at “increasing the total volume,” but also at “diversifying” the foreign sales of each country (Horne-Bique, n.d.).

Similarly, other authors such as Alonso and Donoso (1996), reflect those public policies taken as support for exports should have as their primary goal to optimize the competitive position of companies that are offering products and services to the

international market. In general, taking different points of view, there are general features that promotion agencies around the world present:

Functions

For the most part, the agencies are responsible for promoting the exportable supply, promoting investment in the country, and diversifying products and markets. Similarly, it is mentioned that in some cases the organizations are also in charge of creating, developing, and implementing programs that help improve business progress in general. In addition, in several countries, entities are given duties to promote tourism from their country to the world. In general terms, the trend of promotion agencies is to sell the country to the world, its products, its value offer, services, and diversify everything that foreign trade entails (Pareja, Vivero, & Martínez, 2015).

Legal Form

Export promotion agencies can be legally separated, which is the most common form. They can also be public, private or mixed companies, or they can even be departments within public ministries.

Reporting schemes

The export promotion entities have a scheme to be able to report their activities and compliance, as well as to prepare periodic reports on finances and functions. These reports are presented to the responsible ministry, and due to their compromise to transparency, they are also presented to the general public. In certain cases, the degree of detail of the report tends to vary, and can be limited in terms of disclosure, but when public resources are used, the reports are presented to bodies such as comptroller generals or accountability courts.

Management and organizational structure

For the most part, export promotion agencies choose to appoint the manager or executive director by election through the government or the ministry in charge of the organization. In many cases, the manager can even be elected by the president of the republic directly, or through a public contest. Due to this being a position that requires qualities of excellence, agencies usually choose to select managers who have previous experience in foreign trade, or in investment promotion in general terms.

The organizational structure of promotion agencies varies greatly depending on the region, location, attributes, economy, financing that the country has. A board of directors

usually has an average of 20 members, a number that tends to drop to almost half in Latin American countries.

Private sector participation

The participation provided by export promotion agencies varies depending on the region. In Latin America and the Caribbean, participation is lower than in other countries in the rest of the world. This is because in South America the people who represent the private sector are usually authorities from business associations such as chambers of exporters, or people who directly represent individual companies (Martínez & Piedad, 2007).

Sources and uses of financing.

Throughout history, promotion agencies in the great majority of cases have been financed with resources from the public sector, either through a fixed budget or periodic collections. In the same way, many organizations choose to obtain or raise revenue by providing specific services to the country's citizens and stakeholders. The uses that export promotion organizations give to resources are very varied, depending on the context of the country. Even so, agencies prioritize taking advantage of resources in international marketing events, exporter training programs, information services and mentoring with personalized advice (Martincus, 2010).

Presence in the country and abroad.

Export promotion entities seek to have a very wide network of commercial offices, both in their territory and around the world. However, in Latin America and the Caribbean it is not common to see a wide network of national commercial offices, this is due to two reasons: first, the countries limit most functions to a central headquarters, and second, they are concentrated in offices located in strategic cities scattered across the globe. However, many Latin American entities do not have their own offices abroad, in these cases they choose to go to the diplomatic officials of their countries in embassies and consulates abroad. It is important to emphasize that the circumstances of export assistance in terms of resources, time, experience, have a direct impact on the effect that trade promotion has on foreign sales.

1.3 Characterization of the company: Pro Ecuador

PRO ECUADOR is part of the Vice Ministry of Export and Investment Promotion, being the entity delegated to develop export and investment promotion policies, to promote the supply of Ecuadorian products and sectors for their entry into international trade. (Pro Ecuador, n.d.)

Pro Ecuador was born in 2011 as a replacement for the private company CORPEI, which was in charge for around 13 years of providing services that promote productive competitiveness and the best insertion in the country. Precisely, this work was carried out by Rafael Correa, former president of the Ecuadorian Republic during 2007 to 2017. The former president declared in one of his interviews the following statement:

“It is not about eliminating the private, it is about assigning to each one what corresponds to them: public policy, in this case commercial policy, is the responsibility of the State. If there is a private institution that wants to help us in this task, in good time, let's seek cooperation, coordination, complementarity” (Correa, 2011).

In addition, the president exposes during the same interview that Pro Ecuador seeks the diversification of products and international markets; but also, of the class of producers and exporters, since this translates into redistribution of income in the country. The head of state knew that the participation in foreign trade of small companies is transcendental, but without neglecting large and medium-sized companies, since our country needs equitable redistribution of income.

More than a decade after Rafael Correa's decision, it can be seen that the work it took to combine the experience and activities carried out by CORPEI; was a positive decision. It is dangerous for a country's trade policy to be managed solely by a private foundation, it could be called something democratically illegitimate and technically dangerous, because it does not necessarily have that vision of what a country is looking for, and it could be forgotten about that public vision.

In 2018 Pro Ecuador becomes a Vice Ministry. This decision is made in accordance with presidential decree No. 520, signed by former President Lenin Moreno. That date establishes that Pro Ecuador merges with the Ministry of Production, Foreign Trade and Investments. The dependency does not change its commercial name, and maintains autonomy, the change being solely to improve efficiencies.

1.3.1 Scope

PRO ECUADOR has a network of 27 commercial offices in 23 countries around the world, which places Ecuador within reach of the largest and most important international markets. The most important commercial offices are strategically located in the countries with the most affluence or the most importing potential, in which are mentioned: Italy, Spain, Bolivia, Guatemala, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Canada, South Korea, China, Chile, United Arab Emirates, Russia, Turkey, United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Iran, Japan, Sweden, Netherlands, Venezuela, France, Argentina, India.

Figure 4. *Foreign commercial offices Pro Ecuador*



Source: Pro Ecuador (2021).

Produced by: The autor

Likewise, there are 7 national offices operating to meet the needs of Ecuadorians within the territory, which are located in the cities of Tulcán, Quito, Ambato, Manta, Guayaquil, Cuenca, and Machala.

These commercial offices are strategically located to better serve the 24 Ecuadorian provinces, taking into account the different climates and exportable supply on Ecuadorian soil, which are divided by zones or regions:

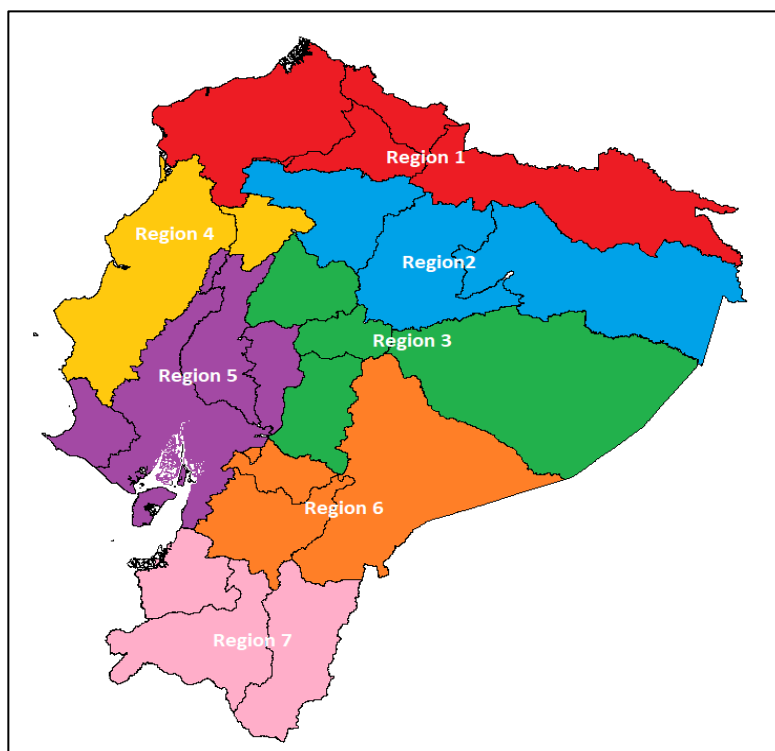
Table 1. *Zonal Offices in Ecuador*

Region	Provinces	Office Location
Region 1	Esmeraldas, Carchi, Imbabura y Sucumbíos	Tulcán
Region 2	Pichincha, Napo y Orellana	Quito
Region 3	Pastaza, Cotopaxi, Tungurahua, Chimborazo	Ambato
Region 4	Manabí y Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas	Manta
Region 5	Santa Elena, Guayas, Los Ríos y Bolívar	Guayaquil
Region 6	Cañar, Azuay y Morona Santiago	Cuenca
Region 7	El Oro, Loja y Zamora Chinchipe	Machala

Source: Pro Ecuador (2021).

Produced by: The author

Figure 5. *Regions of zonal Pro Ecuador offices*



Source: Pro Ecuador (2021).

Produced by: The author

1.3.2 Services

The fundamental services that Pro Ecuador as a strategic ally continuously provides to producers, entrepreneurs and large companies, is to offer a complete portfolio of specialized and high-quality securities.

The institute for the promotion of exports and foreign investments implements a work methodology called the 'Pro Ecuador route for the exporter' to support and encourage the work of all potential exporters and in this way internationalize their product. In other words, if there is a product or service and it is necessary to know if it is suitable for export, it is necessary to start at the orientation and advice stage where basically one learns how to develop export processes and know the restrictions in international markets.

Continuing, in the next phase of the route for the exporter, the person involved receives a visit from specialists, who value the true export potential of the product or service. After this step, and once the exporter's offer has been assessed, what is sought is access to the training and technical assistance stage. In this phase, specialized training and possible links to projects must be offered, such as product redesign according to the destination market, virtual store openings, exporter coaching, packaging design, tools that will help consolidate as an exporter and thus promote export culture.

In the same way, if the exporter is ready to export, and nevertheless seeks to learn strategies to diversify his market, the commercial promotion phase offers to show his products internationally to potential buyers through participation in business roundtables, trade missions and international fairs. This activity is carried out with the assistance of sector specialists and a network of commercial offices strategically around the world.

In short, Pro Ecuador has several functions, which include export promotion, investment promotion, service and advice to exporters, marketing and communication, training, participation in international fairs, reverse trade missions and business roundtables. Precisely these points or functions will be taken as the basis for the benchmarking analysis.

1.3.3 Situation

As mentioned, through Executive Decree 776, which takes place on May 16, 2011, the General Regulations for the Organization and Operation of the Institute for the Promotion of Exports and Foreign Investments PRO ECUADOR are established. This regulation was born with the objective of instituting and specifying the organization by processes of the entity, aimed at strengthening the quality provided in the services that

the institute must fulfill in order to fulfill the stated mission (Ecuador Government, 2012). The key points taken in this resolution are detailed below:

Headquarters and jurisdiction

The Institute for the Promotion of Exports and Foreign Investments in its foundation in 2011 defines as its main headquarters the office of the city of Guayaquil. In addition, it is resolved that its jurisdiction or power to apply the law in a specific case, be both national and international.

Pro Ecuador Mission

As stated in Pro Ecuador (2021), the mission of the institution is to promote the proposal to export goods and services from Ecuador and its exportable offer with a focus on diversifying products and markets; and in turn attract foreign investment, fulfilling the objectives of the national plan for Good Living.

Pro Ecuador Vision

To become a complete, inclusive, agile and transparent public organization, in order to position Ecuador in 2015 with products and services of excellent quality and added value, as well as convert the country into investment destination, generating a production of technology change.

Strategic objectives Pro Ecuador

Pro Ecuador and its Executive Directorate specify the methodological and operational guidelines of the institution through the Strategic Plan that establishes institutional objectives under the following clauses:

- Achieve a complete promotion program for the export of goods and services from Ecuador, which reinforces existing exports and causes the deconcentration and diversification of exporters, products and markets.
- Reach the transformation and empowerment of export proposals through investment generated by a production chain and technological innovation.
- Achieve a complete export culture, focusing on new players in international trade.

- Accomplish the strategic integration in foreign trade of the majority of Ecuadorian products, focusing on the exportable supply provided by small and medium-sized companies, as well as agents of the popular economy

Management positions

Pro Ecuador defines 4 main positions in its organization chart, with subdivisions for each function that helps achieve the business mission, the management positions are observed in illustration 6:

Figure 6. Organizational Chart/ Management Functions Pro Ecuador



Source: Gob EC (2012).

Produced by: The author

Corporate values

The rules that govern the institutional management of Pro Ecuador are:

- Veracity: Statistical information according to reality.

- **Accessibility:** All inhabitants without exception can make use of, or have access to products or services, methods, activities, information of the institute.
- **Continuous learning:** Predisposition of the person to accept cutting-edge information, and seek its implementation in the methodology.
- **Transparency:** Seek cooperation with society, with an open and public management predisposed to receive comments and opinions. Also, make public knowledge: methodology, databases, publications, results.
- **Productivity:** This value refers to the correlation between the products and services offered, with the resources used for it. Methods should be sought that help in optimizing managed resources.
- **Efficiency:** Create information for the Promotion of the exportable offer of products and services, foreign investment, prioritizing quality and time.
- **Quality:** Measure quality through the degree of satisfaction of internal and external customers. The quality of statistical information, products and services, methodology and processes will be taken as a reference.
- **Commitment:** Self-management of operators to know the benefits of being responsible in their position, to fulfill the mission and vision of the institution.
- **Opportunity:** Transmit information of the exportable offer in an optimal time and required for national and international clients.

1.4 Selection of the promotion agency for the Benchmarking tool

Selection among export and trade promotion agencies in Latin America.

Almost all of the South American countries have institutions whose function is to promote their country through exportable supply and investment attraction. As in the case of Ecuador, many countries that used to have a private institution to meet the promotion objective, choose to create public agencies.

In Latin America, promotional organizations have as their main characteristic that they have a wide variety of methodological and institutional issues. Even so, they also have several peculiarities or differences, mainly in matters such as organizational structure, financial resources, economic resources, human capital, actions carried out to promote their exports, the methodology used to evaluate performance, internal control

systems, consistency of the institutional strategy, and the number of national and international offices.

Despite all these differences, the agencies look for their performance to be complemented by the policies to promote the exportable supply that the country has, and the stability that these policies provide. In each Latin American country, it is common for organizations to be affected by the lack of continuity of a stable policy.

Authors such as Olmos (2019) highlight that the approach that has been given to export promotion agencies has assumed positive results. A clear example that they raise is that companies that are focused on a specific market, offering a prioritized product or service, tend to receive more and better assistance, and their export utility is greater than those companies that focus on various markets and non-prioritized products. The commercial agencies are precisely the ones in charge of providing the service of targeting markets and products, this through the consideration and investigation of the demand, and the potential that the offer has (Olmos, 2019).

To say of the importance given to locating commercial offices abroad, each country and agency have different criteria. Some choose to have a greater presence in key and strategic cities, to facilitate the insertion process in the country. Other countries prefer to have a limited presence abroad, in order to save resources that can be used to focus on current exporters and markets. Even countries in Latin America choose to rely on the diplomatic staff of consulates and embassies, so that exporters can participate in activities that help them to export more usefully and efficiently

Next, Table 2 shows a comparison of the agencies of each Latin American and Central American country, as well as the coverage that these entities have in terms of number of offices in a certain number of states around the world. The fact that the country with the greatest coverage of countries and the greatest number of export promotion offices is Chile with its agency ProChile is in the spotlight.

Table 2. *Commercial Offices in Latin America and Central America*

Country	Agency	Coverage
Colombia	ProColombia	34 offices in 32 countries
Costa Rica	Procomer	10 offices in 10 countries
El Salvador	Proesa	7 offices
Guatemala	DACE	9 offices

Jamaica	Jampro	2 offices in 2 countries
México	ProMexico	48 offices in 32 countries
Paraguay	Rediex	4 offices
Perú	Promperú	35 offices in 31 countries
Chile	ProChile	57 offices in 45 countries
Brasil	ApexBrasil	10 offices in 8 countries
Argentina	AAICI	n/a
Bolivia	Proexport Bolivia	35 offices in 35 countries
Uruguay	Uruguay XXI	n/a

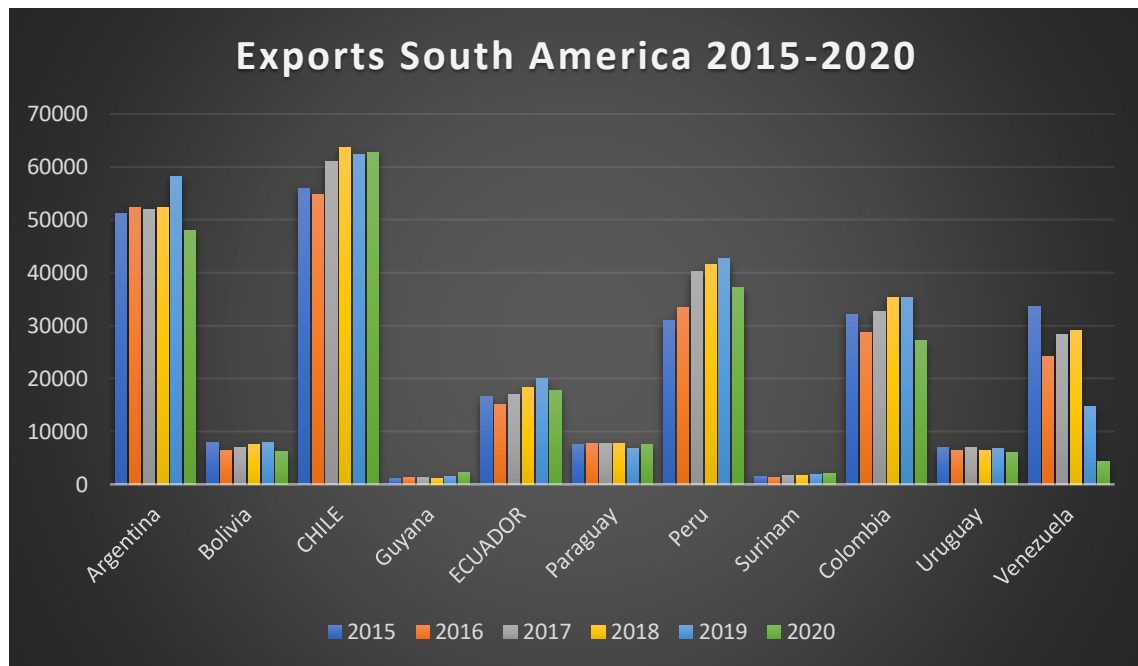
Source: Olmos (2019) and Institutions Websites2021.

Produced by: The author

Similarly, to delimit the issue, and choose the country with its most optimal commercial agency for the benchmarking study, a very elementary analysis of the total exports of South American countries in the last five years is chosen. The graph is made ignoring Brazil due to a purely remote issue, cultural differences, and language.

In the same way, it is decided to set aside the country of Argentina due to the difficult situation it is going through. The nation suffers a hasty change of the economic cycle guided by a weak external position, a strong detriment of the socioeconomic situations of the low and middle sectors, being difficult to find solid bases that show an improvement in the future. It is forecast that at the end of this year, Argentina's GDP may fall by around 10.5% (CEPAL, 2021).

Figure 7. *Exports South America 2015-2020*



Source: Expansión Datos Macro (2021).

Produced by: The author

As it can be seen in graph 1, the options regarding the countries that export the most in South America are Colombia, Chile and Peru. Of these three options, Chile was one of the nations that found the most preliminary information and organization in its commercial offices. In addition, the Chilean Republic is one of the only countries that does not have a disadvantageous position compared to the COVID 19 pandemic. The International Monetary Fund points out in its mid-year World Economic Outlook report that Chile is estimated to have an increase of about 11% in 2021 (International Monetary Fund, 2021).

Basically, what is sought in order to carry out the comparative analysis is to find a similar in terms of language, culture, territory and that is also performing its functions as an exponent in the field; so that the results can be more applicable in Pro Ecuador in a future improvement plan. After the analysis of the exports, the contexts, and the main exponent countries in the commercial area in Latin America, it is reflected that the most suitable country to be analyzed in the benchmarking study is Chile, with its ProChile commercial office.

1.5 Characterization of the company: ProChile

ProChile is the institution of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile delegated to promote the exportable goods and services supply, and favor the expansion of foreign investment and tourism. It has 16 regional offices and 57 international offices (ProChile, n.d.).

As article 36 of the legal powers of ProChile highlights, this entity is responsible for executing the policy expressed by the president with respect to the field of foreign trade, with regard to the promotion and diversification of exports of goods and services (ProChile, 2021).

The institution has solid foundations, it was born in 1974 under the name of Export Promotion Institute when 85% of Chilean exports came from the mining market, and barely 2.5% from the agricultural and fishing sector (Schmidt, 2006).

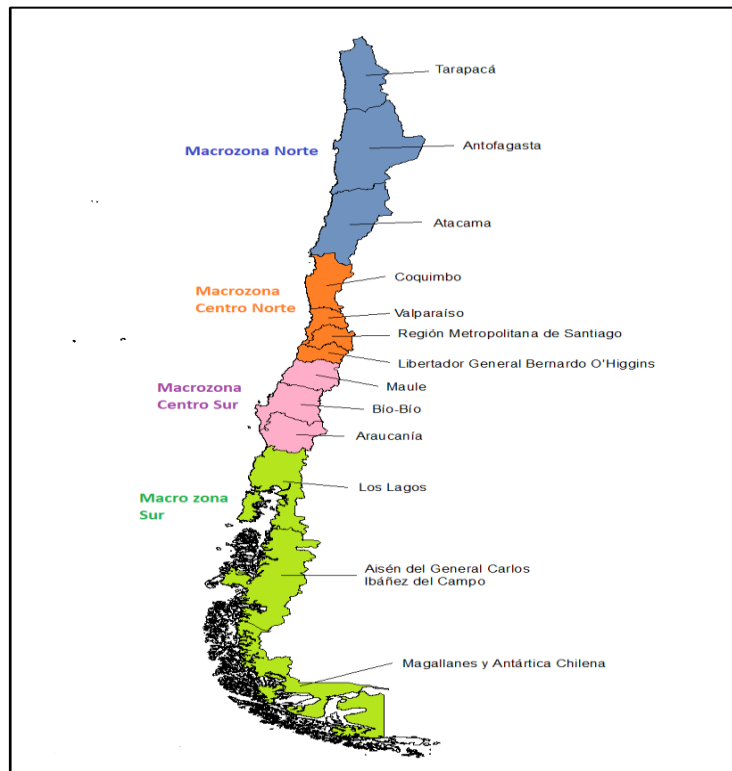
The idea was born mainly in order to promote more varied products abroad. In this way, by 1988 it was possible to diversify the products and target markets, seeking to eliminate dependence on Chilean copper. During these years, the wine industry, salmon, fruit, especially grapes, among others, are promoted. In recent years, the Chilean promotion agency has undergone several changes that show that it is a firm project which the government has as the main tool for the promotion and growth of the country. In 2019 ProChile becomes dependent on the Undersecretary for International Economic Relations, thus having more freedom in terms of administration and budgeting.

With these latest changes, ProChile focuses on several digital tools, trying to provide a modern service that is capable of adapting to the needs of each exporter. As can be seen, this institution has a long history, a solid internal structure, and consistently posed future strategies, which is why it is optimal for carrying out the comparative Benchmarking study to study in depth tactics that must be implemented in Pro Ecuador.

1.5.1 Scope

ProChile has a network of 57 commercial offices in 45 countries, making Chile one of the largest and most important markets in South America and worldwide. As mentioned, the Chilean country is the state in South America with the widest network of commercial offices, which are strategically located in the most important cities of nations around the world, among these states are: Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama, Dominican Republic, Cuba, United States, Mexico, Canada, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, Australia, China, South

Figure 9. *Regions of commercial offices Prochile*



Source: ProChile (2021).

Produced by: The author

1.5.2 Services

ProChile in its web portal proclaims that it offers various promotional tools in which Chilean's access around 60 international markets with their products or services.

Precisely the main services offered by the Chilean entity are characterized by being the most varied and innovative in South America. Although they fall into similarities, they are easily identifiable and known for the way they are implemented. One of the added values of ProChile's commercial agencies is the importance of adding value for the exporter with the preparation of very well-planned agendas. Said agendas of activities prioritize combining different methodologies, and doing so in a relevant time.

First, ProChile has international fairs, seminars and technical talks as one of its main activities for the promotion of exports. They seek to negotiate optimal spaces for the exporter, in which they can be instructed and approach new markets to grow the Chilean network around the world with potential market niches. The definition of the

calendar of international fairs is carried out in joint work with the private sector, in which they are informed of the context to choose the priority activities.

Second, another service that ProChile provides are the so-called trade missions. Chile divides these missions into three types. First, the exploratory missions, which aim to discover a new market niche with its peculiarities in order to help the exporter with a possible income from their product or service. Second, the traditional missions, which are based on exporters from the same sector looking to get new customers. Third, the so-called inverse or buyer missions, which seek to help buyers from countries where there is a commercial office, in looking for new Chilean suppliers.

Third, another service that receives a lot of importance from ProChile, are the business conferences. Chile is precisely one of the countries that best practices this method of promotion. The entity innovates by proposing macro-wheels and virtual participations at the beginning of the SARS COVID 19 Pandemic

Lastly, another fundamental service of ProChile with its exporters is the so-called commercial market intelligence. The Chilean entity appoints experts for the market study. This tool is diversified in the work of ProChile, since it has ten different types of formats. There are studies on distribution channels, sustainable trade, how to do business, a country guide and reports on trends. In a more technical format, market/service profiles and market/product profiles are developed. More limited are the fact sheets on: market/product, market/service and market/creative industries.

1.5.3 Situation

Headquarters and jurisdiction

ProChile defines the office located in the city of Santiago as its main headquarters. In addition, it is resolved that its jurisdiction or power to apply the law in a specific case, be both national and international. Therefore, ProChile is a type of organization belonging to the public sector, with national jurisdiction. Thus, the Chilean institute does not have a Secretary of State specializing in international trade, as commercial agencies usually do, and some of these tasks fall to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. ProChile has an administrative dependency of the economic direction of the ministry, working together with subdirectorates of the same (Paiva, 2016).

Mission ProChile

As stated in ProChile (2021), the mission of the promotion agency is mainly: Help with the sustainable development of Chile, through tools such as the internationalization of Chilean companies with the promotion of the exportable offer of both services and goods. This will lead to an eventual diversification of products and markets, attraction of investment and tourism, as well as improving the country and its image abroad through a network of experts and involved nationals and foreigners.

Vision ProChile

ProChile's vision for the future is clear and concise: to become the leading and cutting-edge public institution that supports the internationalization of Chilean companies.

Strategic objectives ProChile

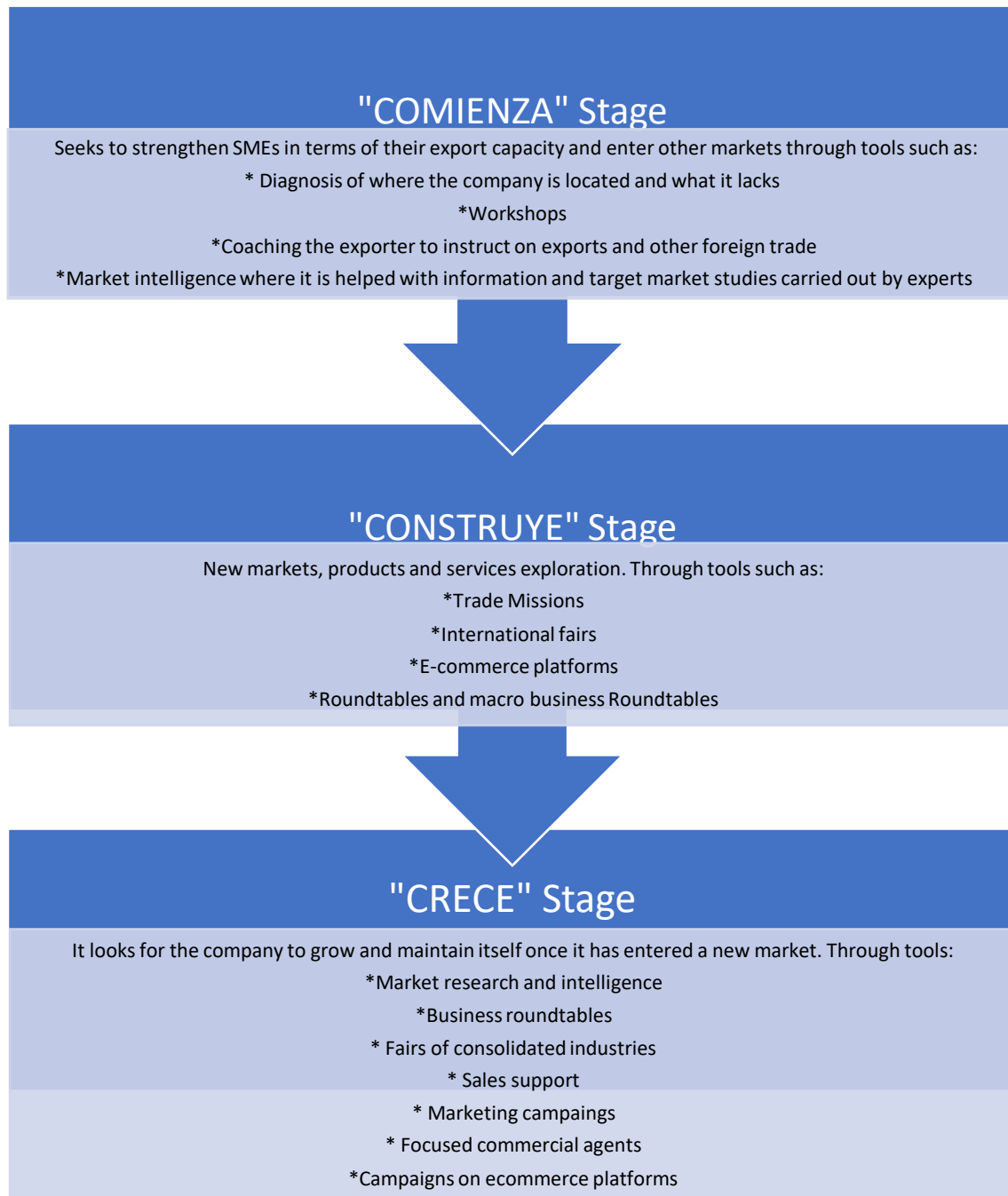
The Chilean Institute for the Promotion of Exports and Foreign Investments has strategic objectives which are mainly aimed at achieving the organizational mission. In recent years, the institution has implemented a new, more organized and distinct strategy to define sectors, markets, and tactical products that contribute to improving ProChile's actions in achieving goals and objectives. In this, it is proposed that the beneficiaries be at the core of the institutional methodology, so that the Chilean organization improves its management and services towards them. In addition, it seeks to implement inclusive sustainable trade policies, bring market opportunities closer to national industries, and support emerging areas that demonstrate added value.

ProChile defines that the beneficiaries will be exporting companies, mainly small and medium-sized ones. There are extremely important programs on export training issues, since in order to make this tool more efficient, SME's that are capable or have export potential are sought. With companies with export potential, what is meant is companies that are not selling abroad but that need support to be able to enter the international market, since they have a solid infrastructure and significant added value. For this delimitation of SME's, tools such as surveys are used in which critical factors are rated to know how capable a company is of overcoming the difficulties that may arise when entering a foreign market.

Once the priority groups of beneficiaries have been defined, ProChile also decides that the organization has methodological focuses of activities to be carried out, in which the following are mentioned:

- Take care of the image, foreign investment and tourism of Chile as a country.
- Increase the innovation degree in the institution and its added value.
- Prioritize the diversification of the exportable supply, promoting non-traditional exports, that is, non-copper products.
- Prioritize vanguard in digital trends and information technologies.
- Prevail the idea of sustainability, fair trade, gender equity, ancestral knowledge of native peoples, and use these factors as an added value of good practices in the Chilean country.
- ProChile (2021) defines help stages for a company, in order to know where a company belongs with respect to the markets it wants to enter. Three steps or stages were specified that are detailed in the illustration:

Table 3. *Aid Stages to companies Prochile*



Source: ProChile (2021).

Produced by: The author

Management positions

For the organizational chart of the Chilean institution, ProChile decided to divide the management of its organization into 7 departments, each of which has its specific function that helps achieve the objective of internationalizing and supporting exporters. The directorates are headed by the general director, which since 2018, when the law to

modernize the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and modify institutional aspects of ProChile was approved, is selected through public competitions and not in each change of regime by selection of the president. The 7 directorates in charge of the general director have diplomatic accreditation in order to facilitate their work with local authorities, these directorates are divided into:

- 1) Administrative Direction: in charge of the finances department, public purchases, technological projects, promotion programs control.
- 2) Strategic development department: in charge of tenders for the development of exports, promotion tools, market studies through the so-called market intelligence, integrated services for international sales such as education and training of potential exporters.
- 3) International Management: Coordinates all sub-departments and agencies around the world. The sub-departments are divided into world regions, the first is Asia and Oceania with 15 commercial offices, the second is North America with 11 representatives in this region, the third corresponds to Europe, Africa and the Middle East with 15 offices in this part of the world, fourth is South America and the Pacific Alliance with 11 commercial institutions, and lastly, the Central American and Caribbean region with 5 offices.
- 4) National Directorate: Coordinates the national sub-departments, in which are mentioned: Agriculture and food, Industries 4.0, services, creative economy, tourism. In addition, it is the department that coordinates the 12 national commercial offices, divided into 4 macro-zones of the Chilean country.
- 5) Strategic communication direction: provide communication of the work carried out by ProChile, in addition to establishing relationships with possible allies.
- 6) Marketing and events management: seeks to have an optimal exploration of opportunities for exporters through fairs and business roundtables. In addition, it coordinates the institution's marketing in order to sell itself better.
- 7) Directorate of legal affairs: In charge of national law and contracting and international law. In addition, it is in charge of the legal processes that are required for the promotion of exports (Ayala, 2006).

1.6 Parameters under study

The parameters to be evaluated to determine the applicable and feasible strengths in a Benchmarking study are of vital importance. Fortunately, promotion agencies are generally object of study, either by a public or private entity, to determine their strengths, efficiency, as well as their deficiencies. In the case of ProChile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through DIPRES or by its acronym "Chile's budget department", prepares a final evaluation report on ProChile's export promotion program. Its assessment process is based on basic points, in which 3 essential modules are identified (DIPRES, 2015), of which is taken as a reference for the comparative study.

Within the first Module, the author evaluates parameters such as commercial information, which includes the analysis of databases, market reports and products offered, new markets or potential markets, certifications and sustainability.

Regarding the second module, the essayist focuses on the capacity of Education and training for the development of potential exporters. Parameters such as assistance to the exporter through commercial offices or the use of electronic tools are evaluated. In addition, exploratory seminars, programs and missions are counted.

In the third module, the author focuses on Promotion Operations for the entry and consolidation of new markets. Here the analysis of the actions carried out by the Commercial Offices is collected, in which some are named as International Fairs, macro business rounds, creation of Commercial Missions, support for foreign investments, capacity to work with the exporter, among others.

1.6.1 Identification of the parameters to evaluate in Benchmarking

In order to identify the most important aspects that serve for the benchmarking analysis, it is decided to take as a starting point the final evaluation report of the ProChile export promotion program. This module highlights aspects such as commercial information, products offered, new markets, certifications, assistance to exporters, use of electronic tools, operations for the consolidation of new markets, events abroad, among other parameters.

All the guides presented provide an idea of the path that the Chilean entity is taking to promote its exports, however, for this Benchmarking, it is decided that it be modulated in six general parameters: The first three: PESTE matrix, Exports and supply exportable, trade agreements, serve to understand the context of both entities; and the

last three: international promotion, education and training tools, and innovative tools, serve as vital factors for comparative benchmarking.

First, the PESTE matrix helps to compare external aspects that affect the development of commercial offices. These factors are: Political, Economic, Social, Technological, and Ecological.

Second, exports and exportable supply is an important parameter to be evaluated. This quantification shows a correlation of the activities carried out by the promotion agencies of each country, together with the hypothesis of economic development caused by exports. Precisely this conjecture is verified by the Granger causality test, in which the author Wilfredo Toledo, states in his thesis through the study of Latin American exports from 1973 to 2013, that there is a relationship between exports and the welfare of a country (Toledo, 2017).

Third, a comparative module of the commercial agreements that each country has. Trade agreements are fostered in order to boost international trade and strengthen international relations between countries.

Fourth, it is important to develop a comparison model of tools that promotion agencies provide to inform and train exporters. Promoting products to other countries is not achieved if you do not work together with potential exporters. Under this premise, the support provided by countries to their companies that can offer products abroad is vital. The aforementioned parameter is used to analyze and compare the ways offered by agencies to provide business strengthening within international marketing, as well as in the execution of the necessary steps for export.

Fifth, international promotion is one of the parameters for the development of the proposed thesis. Promoting the country and its products abroad is the main function of promotion agencies, hence the importance of analyzing what activities are carried out by both ProChile and Pro Ecuador, and how the latter can take as an example activity to be implemented in its system.

Sixth and last, the use of any other innovative tool that represents an advantage for exporters. Here, logistics, social, ecological parameters and other instruments that commercial agencies provide will be analyzed.

Chapter 2: Benchmarking Analysis

2.1 Comparative model: Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural, Technological, Ecological Factors (PESTE matrix)

2.1.1 PESTE Matrix ProChile

The following Table helps to understand better the context that ProChile has in the Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural, Technological and Ecological spheres.

Table 4. *PESTE Matrix Prochile*

Factors	Diagnosis	Strongly disagree (0)	Quite Disagree (1)	Neither disagree nor agree (2)	Quite agree (3)	Totally agree (4)
Politicians	1. Does the tax legislation significantly affect the economy of the ProChile commercial agency?				X	
	2. Are there foreign trade regulation policies regarding the entry of imported products?					X
	3. Are there foreign trade aid policies regarding the sale of products abroad?					X
	4. Can it be said that there is government stability and public policies aimed at promoting investment in the country?			X		
Economic	5. Is there a permanent variation in the prices of the foreign trade industry where ProChile operates?	X				
	6. Does the current economic cycle have an impact on sales in the foreign trade sector where ProChile operates?			X		
	7. Do the prospects for economic growth in the countries where ProChile's commercial agencies operate significantly affect the market where it operates?				X	
Social	8. Does the socioeconomic level of the market niche (exporters) have a considerable impact on the demand for Chilean products?					X

	9. Does staff turnover affect the performance of the ProChile agency?					X
	10. Do the changes in the lifestyle of exporters, specifically in terms of the consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic, generate new potential exporters for ProChile to provide its service?			X		
Technological	11. In the foreign trade sector, is it of great importance to be a reference in the use of technological applications and innovative technology?					X
	12. Does the digital age, such as marketing and information and communication technology, impact the service provided by ProChile?					X
	13. In the sector where ProChile operates, to be competitive, is it a condition to be in a process of constant innovation?					X
Ecological	14. Do environmental policies affect the development and operation of ProChile's activities?				X	
	15. Does the market niche require ProChile to be a socially responsible company in terms of the environment?				X	
	16. Is the ecological factor a source of clear differentiation in the foreign trade sector where the company operates?					X
TOTAL		1	0	5	2	8

Source: ProChile.

Produced by: The author

2.1.2 PESTE Matrix Pro Ecuador

The following Table helps to better understand the context that Pro Ecuador has in the Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural, Technological and Ecological spheres.

Table 5. *PESTE Matrix Pro Ecuador*

Factors	Diagnosis	Strongly disagree(0)	Quite Disagree (1)	Neither disagree nor agree (2)	Quite agree (3)	Totally agree (4)
Politicians	1. Does the tax legislation significantly affect the economy of the commercial agency Pro Ecuador?			X		
	2. Are there foreign trade regulation policies regarding the entry of imported products?					X
	3. Are there foreign trade aid policies regarding the sale of products abroad?					X
	4. Can it be said that there is government stability and public policies aimed at promoting investment in the country?					X
Economic	5. Is there a permanent variation in the prices of the foreign trade industry where Pro Ecuador operates?	X				
	6. Does the current economic cycle have an impact on the commercialization of the foreign trade sector where Pro Ecuador operates?				X	
	7. Do the prospects for economic growth in the countries where Pro Ecuador's commercial agencies operate significantly affect the market where it operates?				X	
Social	8. Does the socioeconomic level of the market niche (exporters and potential exporters) have a considerable impact on the demand for Ecuadorian products?				X	
	9. Does staff turnover significantly affect the performance of the Pro Ecuador agency?					X
	10. Do the changes in the lifestyle of exporters, specifically in terms of the consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic, generate new potential exporters for Pro Ecuador to provide its service?			X		
Technological	11. In the foreign trade sector, is it of great importance to be a reference in the use of technological applications and innovative technology?					X

	12. Does the digital age, precisely marketing and information and communication technology, impact the service provided by Pro Ecuador?					X
	13. In the sector where Pro Ecuador operates, to be competitive, is it a condition to be in a process of constant innovation?					X
Ecological	14. Do environmental policies affect the development and operation of Pro Ecuador's activities?	X				
	15. Does the market niche require Pro Ecuador to be a socially responsible company in terms of the environment?	X				
	16. Is the ecological factor a source of clear differentiation in the foreign trade sector where the company operates?					X
TOTAL		3	0	2	3	8

Source: Interview.

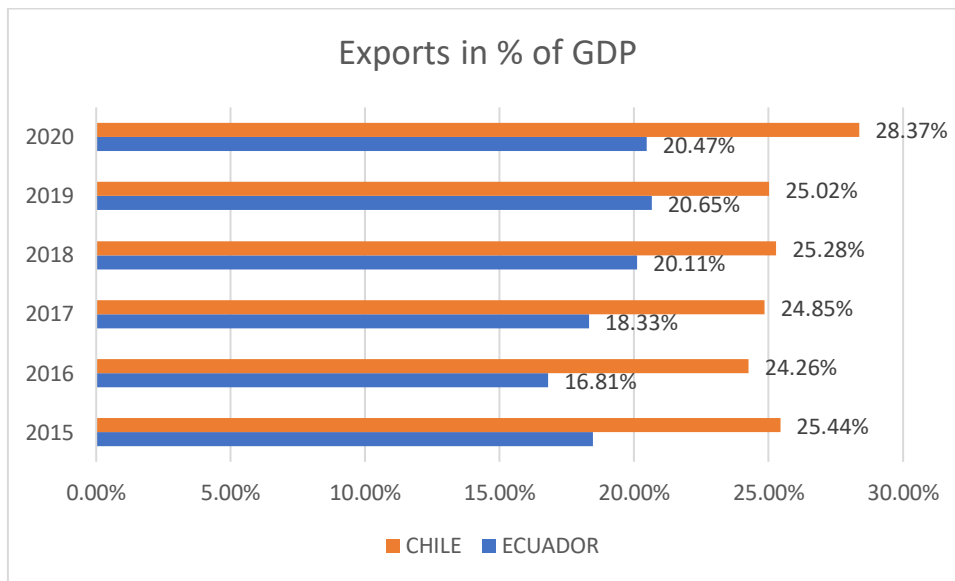
Produced by: The author

2.2 Comparative Model: Exports

2.2.1 Exports 2015-2020 in % of Gross Domestic Product

Exports are detailed below in relation to the monetary value of all final goods and services produced by Chile and Ecuador during the period between 2015 and 2020.

Figure 10. *Exports in % of GDP*



Source: Trademap.

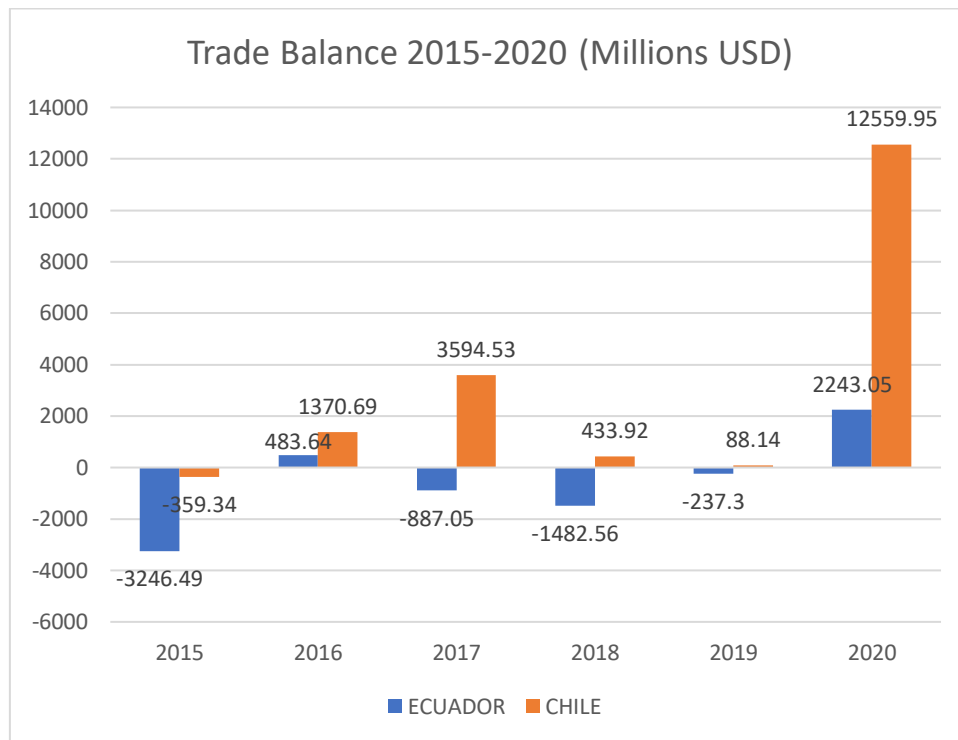
Produced by: The author

The graph shows that Ecuador's exports as a percentage of GDP show a very similar current to that achieved by Chile, with a tendency to remain during the first four periods studied, and with a significant increase during the last period of the year 2020. In other words, both states had a surplus in their trade balance, since imports fell due to the effects of the pandemic generated by COVID 19, and were less than exports. Despite this, it should be noted that currently, the Chilean country is doing a better job with its exports, since they grow by 0.59% compared to the previous year, while in Ecuador foreign sales fall by 11.22 % compared to the last period studied (United Nations, 2022).

2.2.2 Trade balance 2015-2020

The following graph analyzes another extremely important factor to examine the work carried out by both countries to promote their exports to the world, and the trade balance. This economic indicator shows the account at the end of a period in Ecuador and Chile, which exists between the payments made abroad, and the collections from abroad.

Figure 11. *Trade Balance 2015-2020 (Millions USD)*



Source: Trademap

Produced by: The author

This graph complements what was seen in the previous illustration, since the trade balance always goes hand in hand with the country's exports. In the case of Ecuador and Chile during the five years studied, it is observed that Chile is characterized by maintaining a trade balance in surplus, except for 2015 when it registers a deficit in this parameter. Quite the contrary, it happens in Ecuador, which is a country that usually registers deficits in its trade balance, except for the periods of 2016 and 2020. The work carried out by Chile in the 2020 period should be highlighted, where it registers an exponential growth due to the increase in its exports and the low number of imports due to the COVID 19 pandemic (Trademap, 2022).

2.2.3 Main Exported Products 2015-2020

Although both countries have a growing exportable supply, both have a clear dependence on certain products, which is why it is vital to analyze and compare the main products exported abroad by Ecuador and Chile during the period in question, as shown observe in the following graph:

Figure 12. *Main Exported Products ECU & CHL 2015-2020*



Source: World Trade Organization (2022).

Produced by: The author

The graph shows the five main products offered by Ecuador and Chile during the last five years. As can be seen, Chile has a very varied and open economy, which attached it to trade with foreign countries. According to data from the world trade organization, the Chilean country has a dependency with its main export products,

copper and other metalliferous metals and minerals, representing around 50% of its total exports (World Trade Organization, 2022).

On the other hand, Ecuador has a similar problem to the Chilean country, since its exports depend largely on one good, in this case mineral fuels, oils and distillation products. In other words, oil continues to be the export product that receives the most money in Ecuador, averaging between 2015 and 2020 a total of 32% of total income (Interamerican development Bank, 2020).

2.3 Comparative Model: Trade Agreements

Table 6. *Trade agreements Comparison*

	ECUADOR		CHILE	
	Agreement	Subscription date	Agreement	Subscription date
Multilateral Agreements	WTO members	21-Jan-96	WTO members	01-Jan-95
Free Trade Agreements	European Free Trade Association (AELC/EFTA)	25-jun-18	European Free Trade Association (AELC/EFTA)	26-jun-03
	European Union (EU)	12-dec-14	European Union (EU)	18-nov-02
	United Kingdom	15-may-19	United Kingdom	30-jan-19
	Chile (AAP.CE N°65)	10-mar-08	Indonesia	14-dec-17
	Colombia - Ecuador - Venezuela - MERCOSUR (AAP.CE N°59)	18-oct-04	Uruguay	04-oct-16
	Guatemala (AAP.A25TM N°42)	15-apr-11	Argentina	02-nov-15
	México (AAP 29)	30-apr-83	Hong Kong, China	07-sep-14
	Salvador (AAP. A25TM N°46)	13-feb-17	Pacific alliance	10-feb-14
	Nicaragua (AAP. A25TM N°45)	05-jul-16	Thailand	04-oct-13
	Cartagena Agreement (CAN)	26-may-69	Vietnam	12-nov-11
	Cuba (AAP 46)	10-may-00	Malasya	13-nov-10
			Turkey	14-jul-09
			Australia	30-jul-08
			Japan	27-mar-07
			Colombia	27-nov-06
			Peru	22-aug-06
			Panama	27-jun-06

	China	18-nov-05
	New Zealand, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam (P4/DEPA)	18-jul-05
	United States	06-jun-03
	South Korea	15-feb-03
	Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua)	18-oct-99
	México (ACE 41)	17-apr-98
	Canadá	05-dec-96
	Brasil	27-apr-18
	MERCOSUR (ACE 35)	25-jun-96
	Ecuador (AAP.CE N°65)	10-mar-08
	India	08-mar-06
	Bolivia (AAP.CE N°22)	06-apr-93
	Venezuela (AAP.CE N°23)	01-jul-93
	Cuba (ACE 42)	02-apr-93

Source: Foreign Trade Inf System, Banco Central Ecuador, Ministry of International Relations Chile.

Produced by: The author

Trade agreements are arrangements or alliances between two or more stakeholders in search of equitably opening their markets in order to develop economic activity between them. It is a tool that helps to access to opportunities for trade relations through agreements of mutual tariff preferences and reduce or even eliminate any tariff barrier for goods or services. In recent decades, treaties have also focused on issues of intellectual property, competition rules, investments, among others. Trade agreements come in different forms, the most prominent are free trade agreements, framework agreements, customs unions, preference trade agreements (Solano & Ubieta, 2019). As can be seen in the comparative table, Ecuador and Chile have and practice these agreements in their different forms.

According to information collected from the Foreign Trade Information System and from the websites of trade agencies, in terms of multilateral agreements, both Ecuador and Chile belong to the World Trade Organization (WTO), which is the entity

in charge of comply with global rules of trade between countries, and which seeks that the exchange occurs with fluidity and freedom between its member countries (Foreign Trade Information System, 2022).

Continuing with the analysis, with respect to free trade agreements, it is observed that Chile currently has a great and marked advantage in terms of the number of treaties with 31 compared to 11 Ecuadorians, highlighting the one they maintain among themselves with the AAP.CE N° 65 treaty.

2.4 Comparative Model: Training Tools/exporter training

The following table provides a comparative analysis between the tools provided by the Ecuadorian export promotion commercial entity, against the Chilean promotion agency. The agreed instruments are used in order to support exporters with information and training in their respective countries, to accompany them in their process of entering new markets and establishing the ones they are already in. The analysis is made of tools such as: assistance to the exporter, export training programs, seminars and workshops, guides for the exporter, market studies, supply and market adaptation programs, e-promotion, e-learning, and pre-internationalization.

Table 7. *Information and training tools comparison*

INFORMATION AND TRAINING TOOLS		
Type	ECUADOR Description	CHILE Description
Exporter Assistance	Pro Ecuador carries out a complete follow-up through three stages in which it provides personalized assistance to the exporter. This service is called Exporter Route, in which each exporter is segmented according to their business phase. The first is the entrepreneur or potential exporter who receives guidance and advice; the second is the sporadic or in-process exporter, who receives training and technical assistance; and the third is the consolidated exporter who receives world trade promotion. Since each level receives specialized attention, to pass from one level to other requirements must be meet, for example, the export potential test.	ProChile assists the exporter basically through mentoring courses. This service is described as being an action training and a real experience in international business. Usually, 5 to 8 sessions of 2 hours are held, with different themes depending on the needs of the companies that require the course offered. It is important to note that the Chilean commercial agency grants a participation certificate or diploma that gives prestige to the company that uses the course.
Export training programs, seminars and workshops	The Ecuadorian export promotion agency constantly offers training to exporters in terms of preparation for the entry of products to another market. These seminars do not have a fixed time since they depend on the topic to be discussed, they are usually carried out virtually, but they also occupy the face-to-face modality. It is extremely easy to access them, since Pro Ecuador has a calendar where information on upcoming events and direct links for registration are uploaded, that is, anyone can attend them.	ProChile offers the service of developing the company export potential, that wishes to do so and does not know how, through workshops. These activities are face-to-face or virtual for companies with the potential to export, nascent exporters, even for companies that are already exporters. The workshops have the objective of supporting these companies to help them grow and strengthen their internationalization and management capacity, they are usually held during session hours where export information, logistics and market opportunities are provided. Some workshops that ProChile has carried out in recent years were: Becoming an Exporter Workshop, Cycle of Workshops "Strengthen your Export Strategy".
Exporter Guides	Pro Ecuador provides guides for anyone who is interested in exporting. In this section you will find crucial and simplified information about the process that a product has to go through to reach the international market. The first information tool is focused on the general process for exporting, such as export requirements, pre- and post-shipment stages, and additional useful information such as trade agreements, certificates. The	

	second guide focuses on financial information for Ecuadorian MSMEs, where it is summarized how to calculate financial amounts for entrepreneurship, and in conjunction with private banking the requirements for financing. Third, the commercial agency provides exporters with flyers with information compiled on the specific requirements of the main products exported from Ecuador such as fish, coffee, bananas, fruits, cocoa, among others.	
Market studies	Pro Ecuador offers the exporter business opportunities through specific market studies, exposed digitally on its platform, where products and their acceptance in possible demanding markets are studied. In addition, emphasis is also given to studies of consumer profiles from different regions in the world, this in order to ease the understanding of a new market in the exporter	
Supply and market adaptation programs		The help provided by ProChile through programs to adapt supply and the market is an immersion process. This activity is carried out in person or virtually, and is focused on constant exporters. The working method is through 2-hour sessions, in which it is sought to have a specific number of 12 to 18 companies grouped by target market and sector. A peculiarity to highlight is that the Chilean commercial agency immerses itself in virtual sessions with meetings with company counterparts, in order to have a more precise knowledge of a possible change or adaptation of supply and market.
E-promotion		ProChile emphasizes support for exporters in promoting their e-commerce. Through the e-exporta program, the Chilean agency seeks that companies in their country increase the international sale of goods, services, digital content, through the use of electronic means. The main objective is to be able to penetrate other markets, using the commercial digital platforms of different countries. Today ProChile has 18 alliances and collaborations with international marketplaces, with 11 markets covered. In addition, it has agreements with private companies that provide e-commerce services around the world, such as Alibaba, the largest digital platform in China and one of the largest in the world.

E-learning	Pro Ecuador has a virtual course where it deals with everything about exporting, from the most basic terms, to everything that is required to export. The tool is found on the platform itself; any Ecuadorian person can register and complete the virtual study which consists of 4 modules	The teaching process that ProChile offers through virtual means is through online virtual courses. The last one carried out by ProChile was through 4 modules in which the basic concepts that are present in the internationalization process of a company are studied.
Pre internacionalization	The pre-internationalization process that Pro Ecuador gives is within the so-called exporter's route, and is presented through the export potential test where the real capacity of a company is known in its management, productive, economic, financial, and management capacity. international logistics to be able to export. Through this Pro Ecuador ensures what phase a company is in and if it is ready to go to market, and if not, help it with training and advice.	ProChile offers pre-internationalization services to companies through training cycles usually given in three or more face-to-face or virtual sessions for companies with export potential. In these sessions, personalized assistance is given to the company that wants to export to help it in the stages that it will have to face and how to start doing it. In the training cycles, the Chilean commercial agency invites experts for two-hour sessions, that is, the companies will have experts for their pre-international efforts.

Source: Pro Ecuador and ProChile.

Produced by: The author

The data provided by the commercial entities of Chile and Ecuador about the tools they use to provide information and train exporters are quite similar to each other. Mainly the names given to each program is what differs in the activities carried out by the entities. In both units, 6 activities could be analyzed in each one, both the one and the other commercial agency provide assistance to the exporter, export training programs, e-learning and pre-internationalization. Likewise, there are activities that Pro Ecuador carries out while ProChile does not, such as guides for exporters, market studies. However, in the same way there are activities that Pro Ecuador does not carry out, unlike ProChile, such as supply and market adaptation programs, and E-promotion.

2.5 Comparative Model: International Promotion

The exports promotion is considered as the combination of various political, economic, and technical factors, which motivates exports of non-traditional products, and their growth.

International promotion is defined as the set of different technical, economic, and political factors that encourage foreign sales of non-traditional products, and increase their total volume. The entities in charge of this, Pro Ecuador and ProChile have international promotion tools for their exporters, which are compared below. The factors analyzed are: Macro Roundtables, country brand, international fairs, virtual international fairs, immersion in the country, exploratory trade missions, business roundtables, trade mission, showrooms, tasting route, and contests.

Table 8. *Internacional promotion tolos comparison*

INTERNATIONAL PROMOTION TOOLS		
Type	ECUADOR Description	CHILE Description
Macro roundtables	The macro-rounds organized by Pro Ecuador bring together national exporting entrepreneurs and potential international clients willing to buy in Ecuador. Its purpose is to position the exportable offer, the image of the country and generate potential contacts in the international market. Due to the effects of the pandemic, virtual Macro Wheels have become more important in recent years. This service is intended for exporters who are at the yellow or green traffic lights of the "exporter's route".	ProChile works together with the commercial agencies of the countries belonging to the Pacific Alliance. Since 2011, when the agreement with Colombia, Mexico, and Peru was signed, each year a Macro Business Roundtable is held in one of the cities of the member countries, with the aim of promoting trade in goods and services among members and also with third parties' markets.
Country Brand	The brand used is called 'Ecuador Ama La Vida'. It gets criticism for being unfocused and only concentrating on tourism promotion. Currently there is no country brand, but one is being worked on.	ProChile gives significant importance to the country brand, to the extent that it understands the representation of the qualities of the products of the Chilean country. The commercial agency has provided this service through the so-called sector brand. The different exporting sectors are helped in their positioning in the world, through the creation and internal implementation of representative brands that strengthen the image of Chile once they go abroad. Successful examples of this method are wines from Chile, Salmón from Chile.
International Fairs	Pro Ecuador provides the service of facilitating the participation of international fairs to exporters who are at the green traffic light of the "Exporter's Route". The commercial agency complies as a companion in international fairs, fulfilling the preparation, execution and post-fair phase, where they evaluate the results of the fair. In recent years Pro Ecuador has been present at fairs such as Foodex, which is the largest food exhibition in Asia, among many other fairs known worldwide.	ProChile uses international fairs to a great extent to expose Chile's image abroad. These events seek direct contact between Chilean bidding companies that meet the participation requirements, with potential international buyers. In addition, the commercial agency seeks that these meetings are centers of information and identification of competitors, in order to better understand the market. Currently for the year 2022, ProChile has planned 44 international fairs in 19 countries.
Virtual international fairs	Pro Ecuador works with virtual international fairs in conjunction with the Production Ministry, Foreign Trade, Investments and Fisheries. In addition, it has provided support to entities such as FEDEXPOR for the realization of the first virtual fair 'Ecuador Food Fair', to support exports.	The Chilean commercial agency organizes international fairs in virtual mode to promote Chile's image abroad. This modality reduces participation costs and eliminates geographical barriers. The benefits of this method are ease of contact between merchants, participation in live conferences, virtual business cards, business appointments, discussion chats, among others. Currently in the year 2022 ProChile has scheduled 27 international fairs linked to 13 nations.

Immersion in the country		ProChile, through its Goglobal program, fulfills the pre-internationalization of a company, and in the second stage it is in charge of helping the exporter to carry out his work plan in the country of destination. This method is carried out during 8 weeks of accompaniment in the immersion process, involving the realization of a commercial agenda, access to personalized mentoring, networking, training and monitoring of the local industry.
Exploratory trade missions		The exploratory trade missions focus on companies being able to better adapt to a new market and all that exporting implies. ProChile helps exporters through meetings or segmented business roundtables, in which alliances are created with exporters, suppliers, importers, potential buyers, etc. In addition, this service is provided to companies that may already be established in one market and wish to open up to others. It is precisely the companies that have the best exportable offer that receive the most support with these programs.
Business Roundtables	Pro Ecuador holds business roundtables and provides support to them but organized by the Ministry of Production, Foreign Trade, Investments and Fisheries. They are meetings with national exporting businessmen with possible clients from abroad, in each of the sectors that are required to start possible business. One of the best achieved events is the 'Ecuador open for business', which was held virtually in 2020 due to the effects of the pandemic.	ProChile uses the business roundtables in a segmented manner, to which it gives the name of export meetings. They are organized according to the different productive sectors of the Chilean state, and they are a tool to generate contacts. The business roundtables of the Chilean commercial agency also seek to give importance to growing the Chilean exportable supply, which is why they focus on creative industries, industries 4.0, seafood, energy, mining.
Trade mission	Pro Ecuador organizes trade missions in order to promote the image of the country and its exportable offer. With this, the commercial agency has managed to generate potential contacts in the market with the support of the commercial agencies in the different cities where the commercial offices are located.	ProChile seeks to be a joint effort with companies, and grouped in routes. It seeks to create bilateral business with businessmen in the destinations of the route. Aimed at exporters and potential exporters in the field of fish and shellfish, meat, processed foods, fruit and vegetables, wines and beverages. ProChile provides support in the country where business meetings, technical visits, seminars and tastings are held. In recent years, a well-received mission was the 'Flavors of Chile' route.
Showrooms		The Showrooms established by Pro Chile are commercial exhibitions with the purpose of providing commercial management support for companies. They seek to generate knowledge of exportable products in the expert public, buyers, press, and open opportunities in new industries. One example is the Pisco Showroom, a Chilean grape-based brandy, organized in Brazil in 2018.

Tasting Route	<p>ProChile designs an ingenious way to promote one of its main processed products, Chilean wine. The name for this route of tastings and seminars is 'Chilean wine tour', and its objective is to promote this good in world trade. It consists of seminars and business roundtables around the world that help promote the bottled wine industry to national wineries that want to start exporting, or to exporting companies that want to position their brand or open up in other markets. The cost of participating in this event varies according to the size of the company, but they are very profitable compared to the benefit it presents.</p>
Contests	<p>The so-called competitions organized by ProChile provide the exporter with a tool that promotes the export of goods and services through management and financing support for projects of small and medium-sized exporting companies. Each contest has its requirements, they are aimed at exporters in the forestry, agricultural, service marketing, creative industries, and manufacturing industries. Some activities that the competitions finance are e-commerce strategies, visits to international fairs, legal advice, market research, conducting and attending workshops or seminars, setting up offices abroad, exhibitor participation in international fairs, among others.</p>

Source: Pro Ecuador and ProChile.

Produced by: The author

According to official sources provided by ProChile and Pro Ecuador, both entities have several tools that they use to promote their exporting companies abroad, and the products and services they offer. Commercial entities bear a strong resemblance in number and the services they provide. 11 parameters are analyzed, of which ProChile put into practice all, while Pro Ecuador 6 of them. It is observed that Ecuador and its commercial entity can improve in this area taking as an example certain activities of the Chilean entity.

2.6 Comparative Model: Innovative Tools

Table 9. Innovative Tools Comparison

ECUADOR		CHILE	
Program	Description	Program	Description
DIREX	DIREX is the Pro Ecuador exporters directory, with which the agency provides a simple search tool for all companies ready to export abroad. Potential buyers can search for an Ecuadorian supplier by product, city, or area.	Global X	Global X is an acceleration and expansion tool of Chilean companies classified as innovative. ProChile promotes the technological offer and diversifies it in the European market, by supporting investors, accelerators, corporations and governments. The Chilean agency offers and seeks B2B alliances, networking, access to networks in Chile and data and intelligence of the world market. Some sectors prioritized by ProChile are: SmartCities, Biotechnology, Digital Health, Technology and clean energy, Agricultural and food technology, circular economy, Digitization, automation, among others.
Virtual Catalog	The virtual catalog Pro Ecuador of SMEs. Here are potential exporting companies that have already received Pro Ecuador's training. Companies can be searched according to the product they offer, and their location or sector.	Exporta Facil	ProChile's Exporta facil tool is basically a benefit in logistical matters that the commercial agency makes available to exporters. This help is expressed in the fact that Mipymes companies can export products with preferential rates and simplified processes. It is an alliance with Correos Chile in which national and international shipments, which meet certain requirements in terms of weight and monetary value, can be sent with discounts and in a simpler way.
Web Directory Services companies	The tool facilitates compromise between exporting companies and national companies that complement their exporting process. These national businesses provide inputs and services such as packaging, accredited laboratories, product inspections, among others.	Sustainability	ProChile's Sustainability program aims to strengthen the country's competitiveness and exportable supply. What is sought is to help exporters to meet international requirements in terms of sustainability in the products offered. The Chilean institution creates the sustainability department to enhance the country's image as a sustainable strategic partner, and to promote programs that strengthen the triple impact exportable offer. Based on the UN's sustainable development goals, ProChile implemented the 'sustainability test', where companies can be evaluated to find out the level of sustainable management they manage, and thus receive personalized recommendations.

Exporter Test	The exporter test is the way in which Pro Ecuador gives a correct classification to exporting companies, in three stages: first, the entrepreneur or potential exporter; second, the sporadic or in-process exporter; and the third is the consolidated exporter. The test is carried out virtually, and it is vital to provide personalized attention according to the level detected for the exporter.	Mujer Exporta	The “Mujer exporta” program aims to encourage inclusive international trade through female economic empowerment in the export field. ProChile provides companies led by women with access to strategic information, tariff benefits, immersion and search for foreign markets, among other benefits. The Chilean commercial agency establishes alliances with related private companies and with organizations such as UN Women, OECD, Red Ibero, We Connect International. The requirements to belong to the program are that the woman must be the legal representative, they must own 50% or more of the property, and there must be a majority of women on the board.
Investment portfolio	The investment portfolio shows the private projects and public-private projects in which capital can be invested, which guarantees that small projects to large businesses can finance their expenses.	Pueblos Originarios	ProChile implements its program for the valuation of products and services of native Chilean peoples, which are recognized by the National Corporation for Indigenous Development (CONADI). It helps indigenous-led or indigenous-based companies to promote their products in conjunction with their origin, ancient history, social impact, quality, identity. ProChile includes chapters on Gender and Indigenous Peoples in Free Trade agreements. Currently, the internationalization program for native peoples is being developed, which has already benefited 19 companies.
Integrated Logistics System	The Integrated Logistics System is used in Pro Ecuador to help exporters with different services such as: Search and quotation of transport services with routes and itineraries; search and quotation of complementary services such as insurance companies, customs warehouses, packaging, etc.; calculate the logistics costs of the shipment, as well as the volumetric weight		

Source: Pro Ecuador and ProChile.

Produced by: The author

As for the innovative tools used by Pro Ecuador and ProChile, six are analyzed in each agency. It is important to highlight that the tools and the approach they have are very varied in commercial entities, which means that it is used to a great extent as a complement for the final benchmarking analysis. Pro Ecuador has programs focused on Information, joint work with national companies, virtual tests, investment portfolios. Meanwhile, ProChile and its programs focus on promoting innovation, logistics support, sustainability, inclusive trade, and support for indigenous peoples.

Therefore, once the comparison tables provided for the development of benchmarking have been made, in the next chapter it is necessary to create a complement to each of the agencies and analyze each of the comparative graphs. This in order to plan the necessary recommendations to improve the service of the Ecuadorian commercial agency.

Chapter 3: Comparative Analysis

3.1 Information collected in the Benchmarking Analysis

3.1.1 Comparative Model Analysis: Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural, Technological, Ecological Factors (PESTE matrix)

The comparison results made to the political, economic, sociocultural, technological and ecological aspects show that, in general, Pro Ecuador and ProChile maintain similar features, taking into account their similarity in the South American context. Even so, there are certain differences and key points that are important and must be highlighted.

In the political sphere, both countries show that they are power dependent on the government, despite this, the agencies have received the necessary support from the administration in the last five years with policies that favor free trade. Turning to the economic context, both countries agree that the economic cycle and growth prospects moderately affect the activities of their agencies.

Continuing with the social level, both agencies show that they have the same risks, affirming that they depend on solid personnel contracts in order to perform their tasks optimally, in addition to confirming that changes in the social context of exporters largely affect the way in which both agencies provide their service.

Turning to the technological field, it is stated that both agencies are aware of the innovation factors, and of the importance of being at the forefront of new technologies to improve the service to exporters. Finally, the technological factor of the PESTE matrix results in being the parameter with the most differences, since Pro Ecuador does not state that environmental policies affect its development, while ProChile gives great importance to the ecological sphere and to being a company socially responsible with the environment.

3.1.2 Comparative Model analysis: Exports

The comparison analysis in the field of exports shows results where the general movement or fluctuations between years are quite similar between Ecuador and Chile. Despite this, total exports by the Chilean country have a clear superiority over its

Ecuadorian counterpart. As indicated in the previous chapter, Chile does a better job in terms of foreign sales than Ecuador, despite the fact that they are very similar countries in terms of dependence on a single good, Ecuador with fuels, and Chile with metal ores, especially copper.

In addition to this dependence, and despite the fact that Chile has one of the largest copper reserves in the world, the country continues to base its exports on raw materials such as fishery products, cellulose pulp, fruits, among others. Due to this factor, the COVID 19 impact has a greater exposure in the Chilean country.

However, it is said that Ecuador is more dependent on crude oil than Chile is on metals and minerals, since the way of invoicing Ecuadorian oil is dependent on the price of WTI (West Texas Intermediate). This precisely means that the price in the world market has a direct impact on the income received by Ecuador, and that any volatility becomes very negative for Ecuador due to its dependence on crude oil.

As can be seen, both Chile and Ecuador have a good on which they depend to a great extent economically and statistically. However, both countries take measures to be able to reach a change in the productive matrix, in order to bring diversification in exports to their respective countries. In the case of Ecuador, the country is focusing on new sectors, such as forestry, biofuels, mariculture, petrochemicals, steel, shipyards. For its part, Chile maintains the idea of growing its exportable supply by focusing on other products such as inorganic chemicals, wine, beverages, wood, and the meat industry.

3.1.3 Comparative Model Analysis: Trade Agreements

Both Pro Ecuador and ProChile seek to get the most out of their exports and the economic stability of their respective countries through the use of trade agreements, whether they are multilateral or free trade agreements.

As a result, the comparative model of trade agreements shows that Chile has taken a giant step as a benchmark for openness in trade, and for this it takes the initiative to open the way to multiple new markets, through new treaties that facilitate free trade. This idea is observed in the number of free trade agreements of the Chilean country, which currently has 31, while Ecuador has 11. Despite this, it should be noted that Ecuador has reached important agreements in the last decade with its negotiation and ratification of trade agreements. with the European Free Trade Association, the European Union, and the United Kingdom.

It is extremely important for Ecuador and Chile to belong to the World Trade Organization, since this entity currently has 164 members, which represent 98% of international trade. In addition, the organization helps countries to negotiate agreements with a view to eliminating obstacles for the international exchange of products and services, but more importantly, it ensures equality for all, which is a very important idea if we talk about the context that Ecuador and Chile have against world economic powers.

Continuing with the analysis of the comparative model exposed, with trade agreements it is mentioned that this type of treaties are used when developed countries grant preferential treatment to the least favored with the elimination or reduction of taxes, tariff barriers and measures, non-tariff barriers that hinder free trade. In this sense, Chile signs very interesting agreements, DEPA for example, which is the digital economy association agreement with New Zealand and Singapore, which seeks to promote their countries as platforms for the digital economy, benefiting MSMEs.

As additional data, it is important to highlight the work that ProChile is carrying out in terms of trade agreements signed and under negotiation in its agenda for the modernization of treaties that it currently maintains. An example of this is the search for the renewal of the Chile-European Union Association, the Pacific Alliance and Associated States agreement, and the Chile-EFTA FTA. In addition, the commercial agency is in negotiations to expand the agreement it has with India, also the free trade agreement with South Korea and the economic association agreement it has with Indonesia. Finally, it is in talks to reach new agreements with new markets, such as with Trinidad and Tobago, and an economic association agreement with the United Arab Emirates (Agrarian Studies and Policies Office, 2022).

3.1.4 Comparative Model Analysis: Training tools for exporters

The methodology evaluation for the comparative analysis is basically to know what tools ProChile uses that Pro Ecuador can implement, and vice versa. This section analyzes the activities that help commercial agencies achieve their respective objectives, however, emphasis is placed on those tools that accompany the exporter in its beginnings, when it faces entering new markets, perfecting its brand and product before to go out to the international market, among others.

In total, 8 types of tools are analyzed to educate and train the exporter, of which Pro Ecuador complies with 6, as well as ProChile. They are classified with traffic lights

for a better understanding where green are tools that Pro Ecuador complies with, yellow are tools that can be complemented by ProChile, and the red color are for tools that Pro Ecuador does not implement as ProChile does.

Table 10. *Analysis: Education and training tools for the exporter*

Comparative Model Analysis: Training tools for exporters		
Comparative Tools	Analysis	Benchmarking perspective
Exporter Assistance	Both agencies comply with the assistance of the exporter, the Ecuadorian agency is based more on personalized assistance with the exporter's route, while the Chilean one on mentoring that any company can access in its first steps.	Views to complement ideas
Export training programs, seminars and workshops.	Both agencies focus their assistance on training on specific topics, through face-to-face or virtual modality, both agencies allow anyone to access these courses.	Pro Ecuador complies correctly
Exporter Guides	In this section, Pro Ecuador is the agency that is carrying it out today with great success. The way in which it acts is by providing information to the exporter about: the complete export process, financing tools, and information on the main exported products and target markets of Ecuador.	Pro Ecuador complies correctly
Market studies	The benchmarking showed that Pro Ecuador complies, since it constantly exposes on its website specific market and products studies for emerging Ecuadorian exporters.	Pro Ecuador complies correctly
Supply and market adaptation programs	ProChile takes advantage. Ecuador does not currently have a program that is similar to the immersion process offered by ProChile, through virtual or face-to-face business sessions to work with counterparts and create a synergy of ideas.	Tool with a view to being implemented by Pro Ecuador
E-promotion	ProChile busca trabajar en el creciente mercado tecnológico, mediante alianzas con las empresas de e-commerce más grandes del mundo. Ecuador no posee un programa e-commerce	Tool with a view to being implemented by Pro Ecuador
E-learning	It is observed that both agencies choose to invest in training, taking into account digital channels. In a very similar way, commercial agencies teach a course divided into 4 modules to become an exporter.	Pro Ecuador complies correctly
Pre-internationalization	Both commercial agencies emphasize that each company is different, so they try to provide assistance to each exporter before internationalizing in a very personalized way for	Pro Ecuador complies correctly

	each stage of the exporter. The exporter route carried out by Pro Ecuador should be highlighted, where it focuses on correctly locating the possible exporter in their respective stage.	
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Source: Pro Ecuador and ProChile.

Produced by: The author

The table analysis shows that the comparison of the education and training tools used by Pro Ecuador and ProChile for the benefit of the exporter shows that the channels used by both agencies are very similar to each other, and the main difference is the name that each program receives in their respective country. Of the eight tools under analysis, Pro Ecuador satisfactorily complies with five activities, one can be complemented with ProChile activities and there are two actions that can be implemented by the Ecuadorian agency following the Chilean example. In general terms, Pro Ecuador consumes satisfactorily with the training/training tools for the exporter.

3.1.5 Comparative Model Analysis: International Promotion

It is ruled with the analysis that the Chilean commercial agency processes activities grouped into three work axes: spread commercial information, train the exporter, and promote markets. Precisely this last section studies ProChile's tools for international promotion, it being important to note that about 80% of the budget of the Chilean agency is used for this activity (Frohmann A. , 2018).

For the exercise, 11 types of tools are studied to promote the country and its exporters internationally, in which Pro Ecuador complies with 6, while its similar ProChile has five more tools in its catalog carrying out all the activities that were compared. It is classified with traffic lights for a better understanding where green are tools that Pro Ecuador complies with, yellow are tools that can be complemented with ProChile, and red are tools that Pro Ecuador does not implement as the Chilean agency does.

Table 11. *Analysis: Internacional Promotion*

Comparative Model Analysis: International Promotion		
Comparative Tool	Analysis	Benchmarking Perspective

Macro roundtables	Both agencies provide assistance to the exporter, the Ecuadorian prefers to reserve this service for inexperienced exporters or potential exporters, on the other hand, ProChile carries out the macro rounds with the cooperation of the Pacific alliance, which can mean great benefits in time and capital costs.	Views to complement ideas
Country Brand	ProChile has several advantages, the work carried out with its sectoral brand, promotes the origin denomination of flagship Chilean products, such as wine or salmon. For its part, Ecuador tried to strengthen its country brand, without results due to the lack of focus of the project, focusing solely on tourism promotion.	Tool with a view to being implemented by Pro Ecuador
International fairs	Both promotion agencies attach great importance to this tool, but each one with specific characteristics or approaches. Pro Ecuador provides this service to companies that are ready and have experience in exporting, while ProChile focuses on promoting the image of their country abroad, as well as using the fairs as an information center for any exporter who wishes to attend.	Views to complement ideas
Virtual international fairs	It is noted that Pro Ecuador has begun to use these tools in recent years, while ProChile's experience is broader, and it has managed to establish a wide network of countries with which it cooperates.	Views to complement ideas
Immersion in the country	Although Pro Ecuador fulfills this function in its exporter route, it does not give the necessary emphasis as ProChile does, which has a program especially dedicated to helping an exporter to better enter a new market.	Tool with a view to being implemented by Pro Ecuador
Exploratory trade missions	Ecuador currently does not carry out exploratory trade missions, for its part the Chilean agency proposes meetings and business roundtables with foreign trade actors to facilitate entry into another market, even if the company already has experience and wishes to open up to another.	Tool with a view to being implemented by Pro Ecuador
Business Roundtables	In this section, both commercial agencies hold business meetings, focusing on generating contacts with foreign trade agents. Furthermore, the Chilean agency provides a focus on new industries, something that Pro Ecuador does not currently do in this type of business roundtable.	Views to complement ideas
Trade mission	The comparison of this section shows that both agencies give great importance to said tool, highlighting that ProChile has one more focus on creating direct business with companies, in addition to prioritizing the promotion of its flagship brands and products.	Views to complement ideas
Showrooms	Currently Pro Ecuador does not participate in this parameter, and the companies take the showrooms as a private initiative. On the other hand, ProChile	Tool with a view to being

	uses this instrument as another way to promote its flagship products and expose them to the public, buyers, experts and the press.	implemented by Pro Ecuador
Tasting route	Pro Ecuador does not give it a specific name or does not have a tasting route, something that ProChile does in a great way with Chilean wine. As can be seen, the Chilean agency focuses this tool to promote one of its main value-added products, which have greater recognition abroad, and which better position their country brand.	Tool with a view to being implemented by Pro Ecuador
Contests	It is a program that Pro Ecuador does not currently implement, while ProChile has a structured financial aid program, which can pay for many of the previous tools compared.	Tool with a view to being implemented by Pro Ecuador

Source: Pro Ecuador and ProChile.

Produced by: The author

The comparative benchmarking analysis regarding international promotion shows very similar schemes between Pro Ecuador and ProChile, in which activities are basically carried out with the same objective, but with different methodology and name. The comparison gives as a result that Pro Ecuador does not comply favorably if a balance is made with its Chilean counterpart, since, of eleven tools analyzed, six of them are not offered receiving red traffic lights, and five are services that can be complemented with activities of ProChile receiving a yellow light.

3.1.6 Comparative Model Analysis: Innovative Tools

The last section used for benchmarking is the analysis and comparison of innovative tools used by the commercial agencies Pro Ecuador and ProChile. To define a tool as innovative, it is decided to use the categories of innovation that respond to the requirements of the demand described by Frohmann: the first is to comply with standards such as quality, environmental, social; second is the adaptation of products to demand, that is, tools that help adapt a company to meet the requirements of a new country; and third is the optimization of marketing channels, that is, of the logistics chain (Frohmann, 2016). They are classified with traffic lights for greater understanding where green are tools that Pro Ecuador complies with, yellow are tools that can be complemented with ProChile, and red are tools that Pro Ecuador does not implement as if the commercial agency of the Chilean state does.

Table 12. *Analysis: Innovative Tools*

Comparative Model Analysis: Innovative Tools		
Innovation Category	Tool analysis	Benchmarking perspective
Standards: quality, environmental, social	ProChile focuses its efforts on this parameter, while Pro Ecuador does not. The Chilean agency is guided by the first parameter of Fohman, quality, environment and social. The first tool is Global X, where it promotes innovative companies, which are aimed at health, environmental conservation, green economy. In addition, ProChile has a sustainability program that seeks to promote sustainable companies in the world based on the UN objectives. Finally, ProChile innovates in the social area, by having programs that support companies led by women, and by indigenous peoples originating in Chile.	Tool with a view to being implemented by Pro Ecuador
Adaptation of products to demand	Pro Ecuador focuses its efforts on the second category of adaptation to a new market. Thus, through instruments such as: DIREX, virtual catalog, and the investment portfolio, Pro Ecuador facilitates the contact of companies with potential buyers. These innovative services range from web directories to complex databases of exporters that are ready to export. The benchmarking tool shows that currently ProChile does not have a tool similar to those of Pro Ecuador. Likewise, another service that is not fulfilled in Chile is the catalog of service companies, where exporters find partners to complete their sales process abroad. On the other hand, the Exporter Test is one of the most important services provided by Pro Ecuador, and that Pro Chile could implement in its repertoire.	Pro Ecuador complies correctly
Optimization of trade routes (logistics chain)	It is noteworthy that both promotion entities have in their catalog services for exporters focused on logistics, in Pro Ecuador the integrated logistics system, and in ProChile the easy export program. Both services focus on helping both financing and searching for companies dedicated to the national and international logistics chain.	Views to complement ideas

Source: Pro Ecuador and Prochile.

Produced by: The author

The latest analysis of innovative tools used by Pro Ecuador and ProChile shows that the agencies have different approaches, which makes this feature ideal for benchmarking purposes. In general terms, Pro Ecuador obtains a green traffic light in the adaptation of products to demand; yellow in the optimization of marketing channels, meaning that it can be complemented with procedures or ideas from ProChile; and a red traffic light in social and environmental quality standards, being able to rely on benchmarking with activities that it does not have in its catalog of services and that the Chilean commercial agency does.

The benchmarking analysis of the context of exports, trade agreements, and the PEST analysis, as well as training tools for exporters, international promotion, and innovative tools serve to deliver conclusions and recommendations, in order to meet the main objective of the proposed thesis, and complete the first step for a future improvement plan that serves the Ecuadorian commercial agency Pro Ecuador in improving its processes and expanding its catalog of services.

3.3 Conclusions

In conclusion, this work manages to develop a project that serves as the first step for a plan to improve the activities and tools that Pro Ecuador must implement in its catalog in order to progress its management, taking as a reference its similar one from ProChile. Once the present comparative research has been developed, the following conclusions are presented:

The benchmarking tool is very useful as long as it is studied and focused on activities that can contribute significantly to the competitiveness of a company; in this case, Pro Ecuador. In addition, with this comparative instrument, any characteristic that can be observed can be used in Benchmarking, since it is not only used for products, but also for services and processes. Benchmarking is definitely an optimal tool if it is analyzed that foreign trade arose from the need to exchange goods and services between countries with different capacities or absolute advantages, in this sense a comparative analysis proposes to implement best practices of a leading company in the international promotion industry.

Regarding research, it is concluded that the optimal commercial agency for a correct application of Benchmarking is ProChile. This determination is shown after an analysis of all the agencies in Latin America. Finally, we can conclude that the Chilean agency is the one with the most commercial offices, as well as the agency with the most countries covered. In addition, ProChile and its promotion of exports make Chile the country in South America, except for Brazil and Argentina, which has achieved the most exports in the last five years. Therefore, it is concluded that the reference country in South America in terms of helping exporters to promote products and services abroad, in addition to having a language, culture and territory similar to Ecuador, is Chile, with its promotion agency ProChile.

Given that the first theories of foreign trade are aimed at examining differences in the capacity of specialization in goods and services of each country, and that commercial agencies are dedicated to promoting exports by counting these differences, it is concluded that the most optimal way to carry out a Comparative benchmarking of two commercial agencies is through six comparison parameters: PESTE matrix, Exports and exportable supply, trade agreements, international promotion, education and training tools, and innovative tools.

Regarding the results of the comparative research, it is concluded that the three initial parameters compared help to understand the situation of both agencies. First, the political, economic, social, technological, and ecological context of the commercial agencies is thoroughly understood through the PESTE matrix, where ProChile shows a greater tendency towards stability than Pro Ecuador. Second, the export matter is analyzed, where it is concluded that Chile is a country with many similarities to Ecuador, since both had falls in their exports during the same years. This aspect was following the tendency of South America to depend on a single good, Metallurgy in the case of Chile, and the oil sector in the Ecuadorian case. Both countries seek to change their productive matrix and strengthen their exportable offer. Third, trade agreements, where it is concluded that Chile and its commercial agency give greater importance in trade agreements to open its economy to the world than Ecuador, reaching many more countries with a greater number of treaties than the Ecuadorian country.

Continuing with the three final parameters of the comparative research, it is concluded that these will serve as the main basis for achieving the general objective of this research: to compare the tools used by Pro Ecuador and ProChile in the last five years, with a view to the future elaboration of an improvement plan. First, it is noted that in terms of training tools for exporters, the Ecuadorian agency does a good job, focusing its services on the first phases that consist of preparation prior to export. Second, in terms of international promotion tools, it is concluded that this is the weakest and most deficient point of Pro Ecuador, while ProChile stands out for its work of promoting its products abroad through different tools to consider. Third and last in innovative tools, it is concluded that both Pro Ecuador and ProChile are correctly focused on different areas, which is the parameter where there is more synergy and complementation.

3.4 Recommendations

Benchmarking between the two agencies serves as a prelude to the improvement plan, but it is important to recommend that this method be carried out based on factors such as: external diagnosis, microenvironment, institutional situation, financing, in addition to working together with vital agents in foreign trade as productive associations, entrepreneurs, related public institutions, among others. Only by taking these factors and elements into account, it will be possible to comply with the correct application of new tools verified by ProChile, but more importantly, it will be known in greater depth if they can be applied in Ecuador knowing the opinion of those involved, referring to the government, the private sector, unions, exporters, among others. That they should work to obtain financing and the correct logistics so that the implemented tools serve all sectors.

Having mentioned the previous points, it is noted that the purpose of this work is to understand some tools that can be applied in Ecuador to promote exports. Once this objective is achieved, Pro Ecuador should focus on the points where the management of a structured improvement plan is proposed.

First, it must be proposed to the Ecuadorian Ministry of Commerce, the negotiation of new trade agreements like its Chilean counterpart. This activity would help the work of Pro Ecuador, although this entity is not in charge of generating new treaties, it could influence them and put pressure on the Ecuadorian entity in charge.

Second, with respect to education and training tools, it is recommended to focus on assistance to the exporter, complementing the work already done, but adding a possible personalized mentoring to any person or company that wishes it, as ProChile does. In addition, it is important to implement supply and market adaptation programs following the example of its Chilean counterpart, where it works with counterparts to improve the immersion process for exporters, considering supply, demand and the target market. Additionally, it is recommended to give greater importance to technological tools, since in a globalized world, one must work with E-promotion and seek alliances with the largest foreign trade technology companies in the world.

Third, Pro Ecuador is recommended to work hard on international promotion tools. Being the point that obtains the most opportunities from the Benchmarking comparison, it was determined that it is important for Pro Ecuador to complement its activities in Macro roundtables, following the example of ProChile that works with commercial

alliances to generate these. The cooperation shown by the Chilean agency is recommended for Pro Ecuador at international fairs, where it is hoped to establish networks with allied countries both in virtual and face-to-face mode. Business conferences are another tool that should implement ProChile's approach in new industries such as seafood, renewable energy, mining, industries 4.0, among others.

Continuing with the promotional tools, it is recommended that Pro Ecuador implements in its service catalog, tools such as help for immersion in the country to an exporter, and exploratory trade missions, which seek to help in a personalized way to enter a new exporter market. In addition, Pro Ecuador must implement showrooms and tasting routes, exposing flagship products to the world such as cocoa, coffee, or roses in a more optimal and innovative way. Another important tool recommended are contests, which will serve to finance exporters who deserve help for their export potential and future benefit to the country. Finally, it is highly recommended to work on the country brand, following the example of ProChile. An analysis should be made to know how the world sees Ecuador, and what it can offer, so that a strong Country Brand can be created that is not only focused on tourism, but on the country's image, investment attraction, product promotion and long-term positioning.

Finally, synergy in innovative tools with ProChile is recommended. The implementation of programs aimed at quality, environment and society are recommended; for example, promoting companies that work in the area of health, green economy, or environmental preservation. In addition, it is important to implement programs that promote companies led by women and indigenous peoples, so these programs can innovate and show the importance of women and indigenous people in the social sphere, thus promoting a more inclusive country. Also, it should be sought to complement the optimization in marketing channels, where a program similar to ProChile's could be implemented, where the exporter is supported with preferential rates and simplified processes in logistics issues.

Looking for the main goal, which is that Pro Ecuador can continue on its way to becoming a better export promotion agency, and that Ecuador benefits from increasing and diversifying its exports, through this comparative exploration it is recommended that this research work be continued. This will serve as a first step for the next do of an improvement plan. Such procedure must be focused on implementing and monitoring the tools analyzed in this work, which ProChile has carried out successfully and which can be implemented by the Ecuadorian agency.

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