



Closure of companies in the tourism sector in the municipality of Leticia: a characterization of the factors involved

Cierre de las empresas del sector turismo en el municipio de Leticia: una caracterización de los factores implicados

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is the predominant economic activity in the municipality of Leticia (Amazonas) since the natural potential of the territory has allowed it to consolidate itself as an international attraction. However, contradictorily, companies engaged in this activity have high closure rates. The objective of the investigative exercise was to characterize the factors that led to the closure of companies in the tourism sector in the municipality of Leticia. The study sought to know the leading causes of this phenomenon and the strategies developed by government entities to contribute to strengthening the sector. For this purpose, a mixed design of the nested type of dominant model (QUAN-which) in terms of the routes, and of a sequential kind, in terms of the procedure, which was executed in three stages, was implemented. Qualitative and quantitative instruments, such as the survey, documentary analysis and interview, were applied. The study found human and economic factors to be the main factors involved. Likewise, it evidenced the joint work of government entities and companies in favor of strengthening the sector. The main difficulties can be seen in the loss of interest in the business; family and personal problems: the change in the city of residence; the prioritization of other projects and activities; lack of budget; economic losses, and unfair competition in different areas.

Keywords: Company, entrepreneur, business economics, government, business management, tourism

JEL classification: L85; M15; M21.

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RESUMEN

El turismo es la actividad económica predominante en el municipio de Leticia (Amazonas), pues las potencialidades naturales del territorio le han permitido consolidarse como un atractivo internacional. Sin embargo, contradictoriamente, las empresas dedicadas a esta actividad presentan altos índices de cierre. El ejercicio investigativo tuvo como objetivo caracterizar los factores que conllevaron al cierre de las empresas del sector turismo en el municipio de Leticia. El estudio buscó conocer las principales causas de este fenómeno y las estrategias desarrolladas por las entidades gubernamentales, con el fin de contribuir al fortalecimiento del sector. Para tal propósito, se implementó un diseño mixto de tipo anidado de modelo dominante (CUAN-cual) en cuanto a las rutas, y de tipo secuencial, en cuanto al procedimiento, que se ejecutó en tres etapas. Se aplicaron instrumentos de tipo cualitativo y cuantitativo, tales como la encuesta, el análisis documental y la entrevista. El estudio arrojó como principales factores implicados los de tipo humano y económico. Así mismo, evidenció el trabajo conjunto de las entidades gubernamentales y las empresas en pro del fortalecimiento del sector. Las principales dificultades se aprecian en la pérdida de interés en el negocio; problemas de tipo familiar y personal: el cambio en la ciudad de domicilio; la priorización de otros proyectos y actividades; falta de presupuesto; pérdidas económicas y competencia desleal en diferentes áreas.

Palabras clave: Empresa, empresario, economía de la empresa, gobierno, gestión empresarial, turismo.

Clasificación JEL: L85; M15; M21.

INTRODUCTION

The current situation of the tourism sector in Colombia and internationally has been marked by the rise of conceptions that allude to it as the space to transcend the limited economic vision of its management (Millán et al., 2020). It is called



upon to constitute the basis for social-community development, contribute to human welfare, and guarantee decent conditions for new generations (Moreno-Luna et al., 2021).

Sustainability and support for local development are two fundamental dimensions of the sector, as they allow it to contribute integrally to the preservation of the environment and cultural heritage while generating employment and marketing opportunities for local products (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2020). However, despite the importance of local development, participatory approaches and linkages between governance and business owners have received less attention about macro-policies targeting key sector indicators (Gao et al., 2022).

In this context, fostering leadership among companies is essential to guide and define basic aspects that promote sustainable development. For this reason, systematic work must be carried out from the base where there is a close link between social actors and government entities (Rodríguez et al., 2022). In this context, a central challenge for integral and sustainable tourism is the linkage of all the representatives involved so that the planning and improvement of tourism development as a vehicle for social development constitutes the social purpose of the public sector, established companies, entrepreneurs, and the members of the territories themselves (Guerreiro et al., 2022). Therefore, it is necessary to understand the factors that limit or hinder these synergistic relationships in the local context, given that it is the fundamental path for strategic planning within the sector.

One of the issues that stand out is the durability and sustainability of the tourism enterprise in consolidating the new business. Analyzing the factors that lead to the closure of companies constitutes an imperative for improving the sector, not only from the perspective of economic activity but also from an integral approach, as already mentioned (Darcy et al., 2010). In this sense, it is necessary to explore the causes that generate the outflow of local companies and the impact on local development (Niñerola et al., 2019).

In the case of the municipality of Leticia, tourism has generated profound socioeconomic, cultural-symbolic, and physical changes (Aponte, 2017). However, the ephemeral birth and accelerated closure or inactivity of businesses have constituted a recent problem with considerable economic and crucial cultural and social implications (Chiara et al., 2020). Therefore, durability and sustainability are two indicators to be addressed in the sector's development.

In response to these arguments, this article aims to characterize the factors associated with business interruption in the tourism sector in the municipality of Leticia. In addition, as part of this characterization, the government-local business link and tourism development strategies within the framework of this relationship are explored.

METHODS

Design

The research, non-experimental and descriptive, was aimed at characterizing the factors that led to business interruption in the tourism sector in the municipality of Leticia. The approach adopted was mixed; specifically, a nested design of a dominant QUAN-qual type model was used. This specific mixed design was employed to collect quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, which allowed the use of the embedded method to achieve the elicitation of certain questions and consolidate the contributions of the dominant method (Hernández & Mendoza, 2018).

The strategy for conducting the research was organized in two dimensions. The first was concerning the predominance of one method over another, so it was decided to obtain and analyze simultaneously, which is typical of this type of specific design (Hernández & Mendoza, 2018). The second dimension was referred to the process, which was divided into three stages, namely:

First stage: Documentary review of the commercial registries and follow-up on the renewals of the commercial registration.

Second stage: Application of instruments to identify the causes that led to the business interruption of the tourism sector in the municipality of Leticia.

Third stage: Search for information on the strategies used by the representatives of the territorial entities to contribute to the strengthening of the tourism sector in the municipality of Leticia and the effects generated by the closure of these companies on the economy.

Population and sample

The population consisted of 97 owners/companies whose records of cancellation of the commercial registration of companies in the tourism sector in the municipality of Leticia were registered in the period (2015-2019). The cancellation records identified were managed before the Chamber of Commerce of Amazonas. As for the sample (n=78), it should be noted that it was determined using the following equation:

$$n = \frac{N \times Z_a^2 \times p \times q}{d^2 \times (N - 1) + Z_a^2 \times p \times q}$$

Where,

n= is the sample scope found.

N= scope of the population, of 97 records of cancellations.

Z= confidence level, which will be 95.5% (equivalent to 2).

p= probability of success, which will be 0.5.

q= probability of failure, which will be 0.5.

d= precision (upper admissible error in terms of proportion), which will be 5 %.

Data collection techniques

Two instruments were used for data collection: the survey and the interview, which were designed based on the frame of reference. The survey was used because it is a technique that allows obtaining data on a given problem based on the needs previously defined by the researchers. The survey was designed based on five categories (general information, economic factors, human/personal factors, organizational and market factors, and legal factors) and made it possible to explore in the final sample the state of the factors that conditioned the closure of companies in the selected period.

In addition, the interview was used to obtain information from the perspective of the subjects of the study, being the interaction the way to achieve this goal. This instrument responded directly to the qualitative route and the need to complement the answers obtained in the interview.

Finally, documentary and content analysis were used to review the commercial registries and follow up on the renewals of the commercial registration. This not only allowed the collection of data necessary for the study and interpretation of the results but also facilitated the identification of the categories describing the factors that conditioned the closure of businesses in Leticia.

Scope and limitations of the design

The initial sample design (n= 78) had to be modified due to the impossibility of applying the surveys in their entirety. Three factors were crucial in this modification: availability of time, willingness and consent of the owners, and the impossibility of locating the owners due to difficulties in updating the database. As a result of these decisions, the final sample was limited to 61.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The vital results achieved through the application of the instruments are presented. Because the research was framed in a nested design (QUAN-qual), the data were integrated into the analysis phase after their joint collection, providing a holistic presentation of the data (Hernández & Mendoza, 2018). This means that they will be presented jointly and enriched through discussion. This section is divided into four major indicators that make it possible to organize the factors associated with business closures for a better understanding. These indicators are reasons related to the creation of businesses in the tourism sector, causes of the closure of businesses in the tourism sector in the municipality of Leticia, effects of the closure of businesses on the regional economy, and the development of the tourism sector; and strategies managed by territorial entities to contribute to the development and strengthening of the tourism sector in the municipality of Leticia.

Reasons related to the creation of companies in the tourism sector

Table 1 presents the distribution of the responses in the 61 surveys applied to find out the motives related to starting a business in the sector. It can be seen that most of the owners (73%, n=45) associated the start of their activities in the tourism sector with entrepreneurship as the main motive. This is followed by academic training (16%, n=9), influenced by the course of studies in Tourism Business Administration, a discipline that has captivated several inhabitants of the territory. Finally, attraction or personal taste, which can also be considered a vocational issue due to how the qualitative results emerged, represented the least relevant motive (11%, n=7).

Although these motives may be represented, socially or personally, in different ways, they are related to professional development and personal values (Coque et al., 2013). In this sense, qualitative data suggest that owners perceive this venture based on two fundamental factors: developing a job of their liking and economic freedom/autonomy. Similarly, Marulanda et al. (2019) mention other factors, which were addressed to a lesser extent or indirectly by the owners, such as personal/professional challenges; fulfillment of goals; exploitation and consolidation of professional competencies; learning for life and personal growth; generation of jobs and the contribution to community development and human well-being.

One of the fundamental limitations explored in the substantiation of motives, in the opinion of the respondents, was related to the non-integration of these factors in a future personal project; scholars of the subject state that the conscious construction of life projects constitutes a priority for development at a personal and social level (Pérez et al., 2019). Therefore, the composition of these elements in a network of motives and aspirations, with the management of the company as the articulating axis of these life projects, could contribute in a sustained way to the maturation of the motivation necessary to achieve and sustain long-term goals (Sahebalzamani & Bertella, 2018).

Table 1.
Reasons related to the creation of Companies in the Tourism Sector

Motive	Relative importance (%)
Entrepreneurship	73
Academic training	16
Taste (attraction to the sector)	11

Source: Own elaboration.

Causes for the closure of tourism sector companies in the municipality of Leticia

The results derived from the application of the survey allowed the causes system to be grouped into four categories for better presentation and understanding (Table 2). In view of this distribution, the results will be presented using specific graphs that describe the behavior of the variables contained in each category.

Table 2.
Factors that influenced the closure of Tourism Enterprises.

Category	Factors
Category N°1	Economic Factors
Category N°2	Human and/or Personal Factors
Category N°3	Organizational and Market Factors
Category N°4	Legal Factors

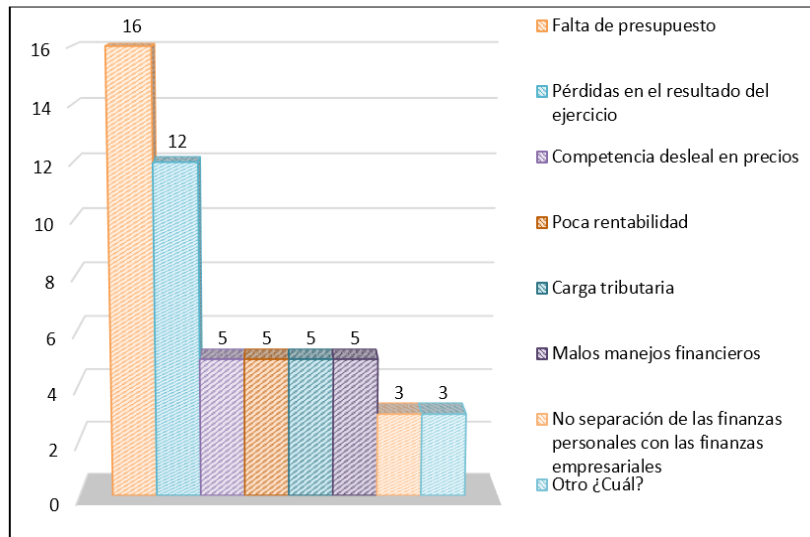
Source: Own elaboration.

Economic factors

Figure 1 shows the economic factors that had the greatest impact on the closure of tourism businesses. In the "Economic factors" category, the main cause of the cancellation of business registrations was or was associated with the lack of budget. The need for a large initial capital investment and the requirement of funds to achieve sustainability represented a stumbling block for the owners. Since most sales are executed on credit or credit cards, they (for example) have to have a capital fund available to purchase tickets with the airline while receiving payment from the end consumer.

Another cause was the loss in the year's result. Since tourism is such an expensive industry, there is a short-term imbalance between the direct costs of the service and the profits generated. The qualitative results suggest that the first years of the venture are particularly complex, as the closing of the business is subject to the achievement of economic stability and the recovery (or not) of the initial investment.

Figure 1.
Economic Factors



Source: Own elaboration.
Note: the figure appears in its original language.

In this sense, the responsible management of working capital is a challenge in the short-term management of the financing fund (García-Aguilar et al., 2017). According to these authors, efficient management facilitates financial stability, sustainability, service extension, and competitiveness.

Other causes, with lower prevalence, were related to unfair price competition. The difficult competition generated by many regional tourism companies has resulted in a lower profit percentage. The low profitability is based on the decision to sell in quantity to obtain a higher profit percentage without reaching the expected income ceiling.

Another indicator affected by this situation is the tax burden since legally constituted companies are constrained by obligations (tax, social, labor, etc.). These obligations can act sustainably as an aggravating factor of other unrelated factors, leading to their closure.

In a general sense, it was corroborated that although it is important to have the necessary resources, it is equally important that their management be supported by adequate market research and knowledge management in the financial area. Although economic factors cannot be minimized, they must be understood about other factors of human nature, such as the owners' schooling, the lack of knowledge of the market, or the employees' schooling and poor knowledge of the management of the company's cost, administrative and financial structures.

Human and/or personal factors

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the course and determination of the economic factors associated with business closure cannot be dehumanized. The greatest incidence was the loss of interest in the business (see Figure 2). The non-fulfillment of projected sales, the increase in price competition, and its psychosocial effects were reflected in low motivation, a factor the owners perceived as necessary for the sustainability of business management.

Another factor was the change in the owner's city of domicile. In this respect, the owners' life stage had an impact. For example, some young people who started as entrepreneurs later decided to start studies in another city. Another example is the case of people who have recently moved, who, at the beginning, consider opening a business in the sector as profitable. However, the study of the initial capital or the difficulties of the first stages led to the

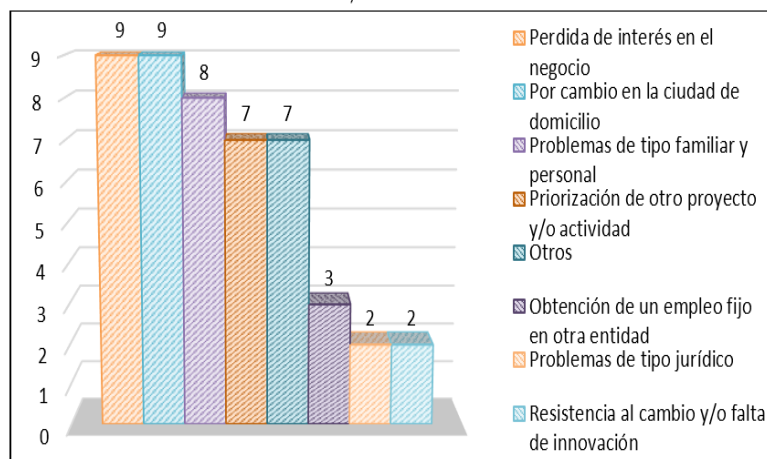
cancellation of the registration.

Other causes were evidenced in the family area of the owners: separation of assets due to divorce and prioritization of other projects and activities. Other causes were listed as "other" factors (death of the owner, health problems, or similar).

Of lesser relevance appeared obtaining a permanent job in another entity, which the owners associated with the choice of stability (profitability of the fixed salary) over the enterprise. There were also problems of a legal nature, resistance to change, and the need for more innovation. Regarding the latter, difficulties were noted, such as the owners' inability to carry out innovative strategies in the sale of tickets, the promotion of tourist destinations, and the establishment of alliances with other entrepreneurs in the design of better discounts and the provision of quality products and services.

Other socio-demographic indicators, such as those related to the owner's age group, also impact the possibility of staying in the company. The emergence of more attractive options for young people can undermine their commitment and permanence in the company. At the same time, a better educational background is a major determinant in keeping the company going. Economic factors cannot be viewed in isolation but influence and are influenced by those of a human and personal nature.

Figure 2.
Human and/or Personal Factors



Source: Own elaboration.

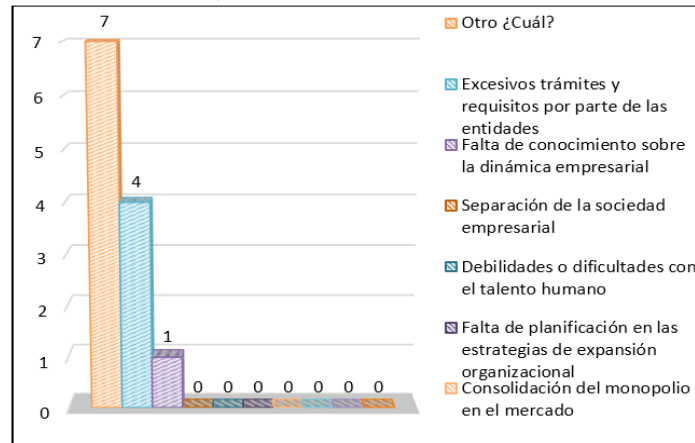
Note: the figure appears in its original language.

Organizational and market factors

This group of factors had the lowest incidence, as seen in figure 3. The factor with the highest incidence was "other," which is related to the cancellation of the commercial registration under the classification of "natural person." This is due to the benefits of appearing as a legal entity, which in turn is due to reducing the tax burden or protecting the family patrimony against possible legal figures, such as lawsuits or seizures. It may also be due to the acquisition of licenses or similar certificates.

Another group of causes was expressed by the owners about legal issues (excessive paperwork or requirements), the lack of knowledge about the business dynamics in the tourism sector, and the degree of unanticipated complexity in business management. This result ratifies the existence of insufficient general preparation, tinged by poor knowledge, inadequate individual representation of the sector and its requirements, and the personal implications of business management in the sector.

Figure 3.
Organizational and Market Factors



Source: Own elaboration.
Note: the figure appears in its original language.

Legal factors

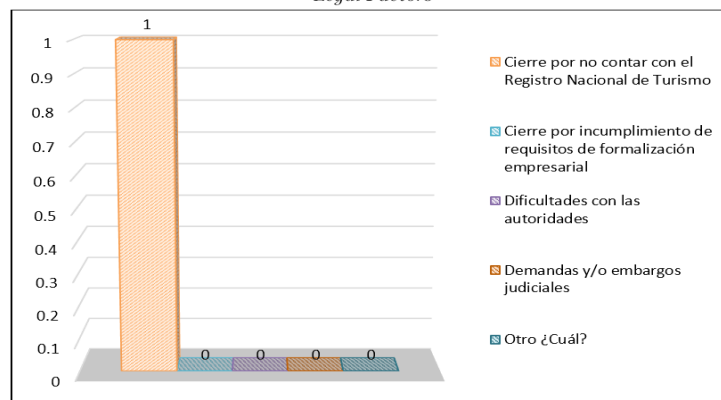
The fourth category grouped legal factors, which, as seen in Figure 4, had as its main factor the cancellation caused by non-registration in the national tourism registry. In this case, the cause originated because government entities closed the establishment, an action resulting in the cancellation of the registration by the owner. This was due to the resources to cover the payment of the fine prescribed for the non-renewal of the registration on the dates established for this purpose.

To close the description, it can be seen that, according to the analysis carried out, the factors that had the greatest impact on the closure of tourism sector businesses were: in first place, category 2 (human and personal factors); in second place, category 1 (economic factors); in third place, category 3 (organizational and market factors); and, in fourth place, category 4 (legal factors).

In a general sense, other aspects stand out, such as financial aspects, fundamentally the failure to achieve financial self-sufficiency. As has been shown, the failure of financing sources as the basis for maintaining cash flows during the initial development of the business is an aggravating factor for previous situations or other factors of human nature.

In organizational aspects, the main areas for improvement were evidenced in the design, execution, and control; the poor design of indicators and management methods for rigorous monitoring of the economic trends of the business, in particular, and of the market, in general. Finally, marketing needed to improve with promotion, location, and adequate reading of tourist movements and the target population of the business.

Figure 4.
Legal Factors



Source: Own elaboration.
Note: the figure appears in its original language.

Table 3.

Perceptions of the institutional framework regarding the closure of the companies.

Entity	Effects of the closure of companies on the economy of the region and its impact on the development of the sector.
Amazonas Chamber of Commerce	"The Executive President of the Amazonas Chamber of Commerce stated that the effects generated by the closure of tourism companies do not have a significant impact on the region's economy, because, just as a certain number of registrations are cancelled annually, the number of new registrations before the Amazonas Chamber of Commerce of natural persons, legal entities and establishments that open their doors to provide tourism services is greater and more significant" (Personal communication, September 2, 2020).
Government of Amazonas	"The Professional in Tourism, delegated by the Governor of Amazonas, stated that according to the statistics handled by the department, tourism businesses have been increasing, that is to say that there are more openings than closures of businesses, however, great care must be taken with vigilance and control by the mayors' offices, since this same dynamic of growth is an opportunity for informality" (Personal communication, September 15, 2020).
Municipality of Leticia	"The Municipal Tourism Directorate, considers that all closures affect in a certain way the economy of the region, however, if one takes into account the great variety of tourism businesses that the municipality has; both in lodging, travel agencies, operating agencies and tour guides, the imbalance as such does not occur because, just as one closes other businesses open" (Personal communication, September 15, 2020).
Amazonas Tourism Promotion and Development Fund	"The President of the Amazonas Tourism Promotion and Development Fund, stated that the closures of tourism companies generate a negative impact, pes leads to a loss of employment, whether direct or indirect; a lot of competitiveness is lost and a type of monopoly is generated in the sector. But seen in another way, it also generates a positive impact, because many of the companies that closed were using bad practices and creating dissatisfaction among tourists" (Personal communication, October 7, 2020).

Source: Own elaboration based on the accounts.

Effects of business closures on the region's economy and the development of the tourism sector

Table 3 below presents the main results of the interviews conducted with representatives of government entities (President of the Amazonas Chamber of Commerce, Governor of Amazonas, Director of Municipal Tourism, President of the Amazonas Tourism Promotion and Development Fund). This process was aimed at knowing the individual and collective representation of these representatives about the effects generated by the closures of tourism businesses on the economy of Leticia.

In this regard, it should be noted, in line with Boto and Mayor (2022), that the closure of companies, in many cases, hurts the economy and development of a region. Therefore, the closure of companies leads to a reduction in sources of employment and an increase in informal activities not covered by the law, which also affects the tax system. Another notable consequence is the need for more confidence in the authorities and the sector to support enterprises, which reduces the economy's dynamism.

They also agreed on the condition of the Amazon as a tourist destination. They highlighted its synergistic relationship with other sectors (air, land, and river transportation services, tourist guides, restaurant services, hotels and hostels, travel agencies, parks and museums, drugstores, bars and nightclubs, handicraft shops, supermarkets, marketplaces, among others). These results suggest that tourism generates economic development for the region and contributes directly to community and social development in its broadest sense. In short, the prevailing

representation was associated with tourism as a dynamic sector of the economy of the municipality of Leticia. Another element highlighted in its contribution to Leticia is preserving the region's cultural heritage.

Strategies used by territorial entities to contribute to the development and strengthening of the tourism sector in the municipality of Leticia.

As in the previous section, this section presents the results of the interviews conducted with the representatives of the governmental entities: Executive President of the Amazonas Chamber of Commerce, Governor of Amazonas, Director of Municipal Tourism and the President of the Amazonas Tourism Promotion and Development Fund, which were condensed in table 4.

Table 4.
Strategies for the Development and Strengthening of the Tourism Sector

Entity	Strategies for the development and strengthening of the tourism sector
Chamber of Commerce of Amazonas	"The Executive President of the Chamber of Commerce of Amazonas, expressed that the strategies developed by the entity are: to carry out business formalization days in order that the establishments of Commerce are legally formalized, to reduce informal work and in one way or another unfair competition; to carry out training and consulting on issues of interest to the different sectors" (Personal communication, September 02, 2020).
Government of Amazonas	"The Professional in Tourism, delegated by the Governor of Amazonas, stated that the Government of Amazonas and the Departmental Secretary of Tourism and Culture, have as a strategy the consolidation of Amazonas as a tourist destination, through the strengthening and promotion of the destination, the construction of an image and a portfolio of products robust and broad enough for the destination to be considered an excellent choice for vacation, business, entertainment, among others" (Personal communication, September 15, 2020).
Municipality of Leticia	"The Municipal Tourism Directorate, contextualized, that the strategies they develop are: the promotion of the Amazon as a tourist destination, work done in conjunction with entrepreneurs in the sector; strengthening the value chain, which are all people who provide tourism services or indirectly benefit from this sector; strengthening community tourism and support for these small initiatives, which is developed on the tourist corridor, which is the Amazon River, the road leading from Leticia to Tarapacá, and the indigenous communities that inhabit it; construction and maintenance of infrastructure, ornamentation and beautification in tourist sites; monitoring and control activities for tourism service providers to ensure compliance with current regulations and to provide quality services" (Personal communication, September 15, 2020).

Amazonas Tourism Promotion and Development Fund	"The President of the Amazonas Tourism Promotion and Development Fund announced that the strategies they are developing are as follows: "The President of the Fund for the Promotion and Development of Tourism of the Amazon, announced that they are developing strategies such as: strengthening the processes of business tourism sustainability, ensuring that all companies are certified in tourism quality and that they implement good practices aimed at the protection of children and adolescents, in order to reduce sexual exploitation in activities related to tourism; they also provide high-level training with people specialized in the protection of sexual exploitation; they have an agreement with the Universidad del Bosque to train in environmental sustainability processes" (Personal communication, October 7, 2020).
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Source: Own elaboration based on the accounts.

The representatives of the entities expressed a deep interest in developing efforts to promote and strengthen the tourism sector in the Department of Amazonas. The Chamber of Commerce, for example, conceived business formalization workshops to ensure that companies in the sector are formally legalized.

Another example came from the Amazonas Government's efforts to strengthen the department as a tourist destination in conjunction with the Municipal Tourism Department. The most important aspects were strengthening the value chain and community tourism.

The goal is to attract and keep tourists, a key objective for the region's economic growth and development. This was a weakness regarding the link with landowners because, in contrast, the merchants surveyed reported insufficient support from the government. This means that priority should be given to the relationship between government entities, as the ones in charge of implementing strategic plans, and the owners, as the base link of the sector.

Investments in infrastructure, sanitary equipment, basic sewerage, and drinking water services, among others, were highlighted as needs for improvement. Generally, this link must guarantee better living conditions for the region's inhabitants and tourism.

CONCLUSIONS

In addition to being a growing sector, tourism is one of the main sources of domestic income and employment while benefiting other sectors and regions where services and agencies are located that also benefit from this economic activity. Therefore, tourism strengthens economic autonomy, healthy lifestyles, knowledge management in terms of sustainability, the preservation of nature, and the conservation of cultural heritage.

Based on the importance of the tourism sector for the development of the region, the enterprises have generated an increase in new registrations before the Chamber of Commerce of Amazonas, compared to cancellations; however, it is transcendental to establish a clear diagnosis of the factors that led to the closure of the enterprises.

The study conducted revealed that the main causes were grouped into four main groups: human, economic, organizational, and legal factors. Their main expressions were the loss of interest in the business, personal/family problems, and the prioritization of other projects based on the stable profit over the instability of the enterprise.

Others were the transfer to another city of domicile, insufficient budget, economic losses, and weaknesses related to the knowledge and practical skills of the owners. In addition to these causes, the difficulties faced by entrepreneurs in the tourism sector in the municipality of Leticia acted as aggravating factors: the poor state of the road network, inadequate citizen culture, solid waste in tourist centers, poor integrated management of the sector, which generates complaints from tourists due to weaknesses in the service. Other barriers to the adequate development of tourism that impact enterprises and cause the closure of businesses are the limited public services, the ruptures in the governance-base business relationship, the need to improve infrastructure, unfair competition, and the frequency of inappropriate public behaviors.

Despite these difficulties, strategies developed by governmental entities and aimed at strengthening the department's value chain were identified. They also aimed at environmental processes and their protection and

improving quality tourism services. However, the merchants evidenced another representation, in which complaints are appreciated in the attention and support of the owners.

Finally, this divergence shows the vital nature of strengthening alliances between governance and landowners in the municipality of Leticia in order to strengthen the tourism sector. From this need, others emerge that should be strategic objectives in social-community development, such as promoting educational and responsible tourism, training activities for landowners and citizens, and preserving the region's cultural heritage.

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