ABSTRACT

The role of scientific communities in the construction of knowledge has been the assumption and validation of dominant paradigms which have come up in areas of disciplinary knowledge that have given rise to new approaches. This paper presents an analysis of the role of these communities in tourism, in a time when researchers must make use of critical knowledge in order to go beyond the denunciation of situations and facts and delineate liberating tendencies of cognitive and pragmatic conventions (emancipatory attitude). For this purpose, this paper approaches a critical-reflexive perspective about the importance and role of scientific communities for tourism, the challenges that these communities face in order to generate new approaches that can emancipate tourism from the traditional view that has been recognized from a cognitive and pragmatic point of view. Finally, a proposal about the fundamentals of a critically reflective posture is shown in the study and research in the scientific communities of tourism. KEYWORDS: scientific communities, tourism, knowledge, critical.

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INTRODUCTION

The construction of knowledge is one of the most complex issues in the field of epistemology because of the different currents of thought that study it. Some of the determining factors in the construction of knowledge are the purpose, the attitude of the researcher, the philosophical perspective, and the determination of the object of study, the theoretical and methodological orientation and the disciplinary formation of those engaged in such activity and the interest of the organization, community or association, among others. In case of tourism, the issue is doubly complex. First, the notion of knowledge has stranded on a positivist view of checking and verification. Secondly, because tourism, as an object of study, cannot have a universal and univocal meaning, but assumes multiple meanings and significance due to the diversity of disciplines that investigate and reconstruct it.

Something that is vital and crucial in the building knowledge in tourism, is the assumption of a critic attitude towards the formulation of a particular object of study and the proposal of new meanings for this phenomenon. For this reason, this study proposes to use critical theory perspective as emancipatory and transformation exercise in tourism.

The critical theory is a current thought that was born in a moment of historical crisis represented by Nazism, the reality of high consumerism and social industrialization. One of the documents that certainly contributed to the understanding of this trend was "Traditional Theory and Critical Theory" written by Horkheimer in 1987, who acknowledges that conceiving a theory independently means turning it again into a reified and ideological category (Feyerabend, 2003). According to Horkheimer’s critique of the traditional concept of science, this is based on an instrumental knowledge in which the materiality and historicity of objects collide, because the relationship between them is not observed. Traditional thinking asks what it is for giving as an answer a technical and operative response which dominates progress and social order. Another feature of traditional thinking is its relationship with the positivist foundation that identifies scientific knowledge as objective and attending observable and universal facts.
The critical theory sees the crisis of society as an expression of rationality, objectification and materialization, in which the subject becomes an object. It acknowledges that all knowledge based on a theoretical production framed a socio-historical and economic context. It does not deny the observation, but it denies being a primary source of knowledge; it doesn’t refuse to attend to facts, but it refuses to raise them to the category of reality. These characteristics will be taken into consideration later on to support the critical posture in tourism.

The recognition of what is scientific knowledge has been one of the tasks assigned to the scientific communities. Kuhn was the one who elaborated this definition in 1962. In these scientific communities, researchers establish what is, or is not, science according to certain characteristics and parameters. However, in the course of time the notion of these communities has been expanded to the academic community (Mainero, 2004), the disciplinary community (Girola, 1996) and the epistemic community (Villoro, 2002).

A disciplinary community is a group of people whose main aim is studying and working on specific areas of the reality of the object of study according to specific approaches and conceptual or technical instruments (Girola, 1996). Academic communities are integrated into an institution that takes a discipline and combined group of academics with certain research practices and patterns. These groups work in research centers whose main aim is the reformation and study of the object from a position in common, that is imposed by the institutional vision (Mainero, 2004). Villoro (2002) mentions that epistemic communities are determined by a specific level of production of their society allowing the access to specific data, technical means, information, theories and interpretations, delimiting the scientific reasons according to available information, available technology and conceptual framework.

However, for the purposes in this paper the meaning of scientific communities for the structure and function will be taken and exemplified by four communities of tourism, with the purpose of characterizing the typology identified around by these groups. In this case, the communities were chosen taking into account different
aspects: year of establishment, accessibility to information, representation in academic studies and critical work, and adaptability to the characteristics of the types set out in this research.

The representation of the scientific communities in tourism require a change in the way that their knowledge is conceived, especially nowadays when it is being represented by more complex, dynamic and international crisis scenarios. For this reason, the first research point is to identify outlined the scientific communities in tourism by highlighting the role that they have in the area they operate in and find out how they work. Subsequently, in the second part, the challenges that these communities are facing in generating touristic knowledge are presented and, particularly, this section focuses on their emancipation of knowledge in tourism of his traditionalism and on their openness to a critic scientific practice. Finally, in the third part, the critical posture as well as the epistemic elements for the dimensioning of a critical knowledge in the scientific communities in tourism are provided.

1. SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITIES IN TOURISM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

Scientific activity is characterized by the systematic work of intellectuals who form groups or communities, and beyond carrying on an individual work; they belong to a community that allows them to deepen the knowledge produced in the field of study of their discipline. Researchers and experts that are part of these communities establish the rules of conduct of its members, as well as fixing the research lines, orientation and construction of valid foundations for the understanding of the object of study.

One of the functions of the scientific communities is to validate the discursive topics on a phenomenon of scientific study that will determine the scientific status of the study. The acceptance of the topics depends on the methodological and pragmatic foundation presented, but also on common or individuals interests. In these groups, members develop common activities, perform and attend special
events, make formal and informal networks of communication, generate publications and public citations to support the union. Today, the technological resources have allowed the members of the scientific communities to interact synchronously or asynchronously. The notion of community is not limited to the "scientific" qualifier, since there are other denominations that depend on the perception that it gives, the work the researchers do, their contributions and the context in which they operate, among others elements such as disciplinary (Girola, 1996), academic (Mainero, 2004) and epistemic communities (Villoro, 2002).

The research practice of scientific communities is based on processes, activities and judgements that are accepted implicitly or explicitly by the members of such communities, as it can be seen by observational data, their type of language, theories, interpretations and paradigms, which help building a body of accepted knowledge (Villoro, 2002). On this sense, Gutiérrez (2007:7) mentions that "what distinguishes the production of scientific knowledge of the production of common knowledge is that it adheres on a guided method by a logic of action and some normative characteristics commonly accepted by members that constitute the science system. This method only acquires sense when it is directed towards obtaining a scientific knowledge and to the consideration of the scientific community ".

According to what was previously said, scientific communities could be understood as groups of individuals who, by following a method that is common to all of them, try to recognize and validate a paradigm that unites them around a single object of study. This takes place through a process of verification that is agreed upon by the members as something <<innovative>> or through guidelines to new approaches. At any rate, it must never be forgotten that scientific communities also are "a multitude of professional networks and researches overlapping, which are developing or changing the social structures, both within themselves and with the interaction with other social organizations or networks" (Mulkay and Sotorer cit. By Xiao, 2007:1)
In the case of tourism, qualifying a community as scientific can be a bit presumptuous because of the controversy that has arisen around the scientific or disciplinary status of its knowledge and to the diversity in the composition of the groups, their perspective of study and research. In addition, these communities are in a process of definition, profiling and precision of their scientific activity because the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches of the phenomenon have led to diversify their thinking and making it more complex. Therefore, it is important to understand these groups through their workflow, the links presented to the tourism sector and the way in which they build and transmit the knowledge.

Nowadays a variety of communities in tourism are established, such as: the *Association Internationale D’Experts Scientifiques Du Tourisme*⁵ (AIEST) in Switzerland, the Asociación Española de Expertos Científicos en Turismo (AECIT) in Spain, *Associacao Nacional De Pesquisa E Pos-Graduação Em Turismo* (ANPTUR) in Brazil, *Association for Tourism in Higher Education* (ATHE) in England, the Academia de Investigación Turística (AMIT) in Mexico, the Sociedad de investigadores (SOCIETUR) in Chile, the Asociación Venezolana de Investigación en Turismo y Hotelería (ASOVITH) in Venezuela, the Fédération Française Des Techniciens Et Scientifiques Du Tourisme (FFTST) in France, the Red de Investigadores en Estudios Críticos del Turismo (ESCRITUR) in Brazil, the Red de Investigadores y Centros de Investigación en Turismo (RICIT) in Mexico, the Federazione Italiana del Turismo (ASSOTURISMO) in Italy, among many others. However, for the purpose of this study four types of communities are exemplified (academic, epistemic, scientific and disciplinary). They are represented by ATHE, ESCRITUR, AIEST and AECIT and their way of approaching the different conceptualizations and their work will be presented further on.

The work of communities in tourism has been quite conventional. At the beginning, under the determination of post-war social context it was characterized by an instrumental perception according to which tourism became fundamental in the

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⁵ Especially the *Association Internationale D’Experts Scientifiques Du Tourisme* (AIEST) was recognized as the first scientific community in tourism founded in 1951 by Hunziker and Krapf.
economic recovery. This has been presented in the individual work of researchers, but especially in their joint work, which was published in journals considered to be the "alma mater" or "friends" of the communities in which they were integrated. This kind of involvement, particularly, is the one that had the greatest impact on the knowledge that has been constructed on tourism. For this reason, the publications of the study communities will be analyzed hereafter, in order to clarify how knowledge is built and the epistemic foundations of such communities.

One of the communities taken into consideration in this study is the AIEST. This community is renowned for having been the first to bring together researchers in a particular group, which started publishing in 1946 in the journal The Tourist Review. Initially, their investigations were focused on the recognition and solution of problems that were common in tourism and the investigations were based on the experience in this field. The most important issues are related with to hotel industry, image and national and international tourism promotion, particularly in countries such as Switzerland, France and Germany.

In the case of AECIT, its publications started in 1994 with specialized works on Spain like “La actividad turística Española”, additionally, the “Revista de Análisis Turístico” in 2006. Although this community states that they do not adhere to any ideology, it can be seen in the way they are focused on a line of training, management and tourism planning, which contributes to strengthening the idea of tourism as an "industry".

Studies in the academic training of tourism were also important, since this phenomenon grew impulsively the need for skilled people with the necessary knowledge to work in this sector. AIEST presented the first studies reflecting this concern in 1959. Subsequently, communities like ATHE, created general rules of tourism education at a national level (UK) in 1993. Their first topic of study they focused on elaborating guidelines about structuring curricula oriented to needs of hotels, attracting visitors, tour operators, etc. But since 2003 a change of perspective has taken place in the direction of a semiotic analysis of discourse in
higher education; hospitality, culture and tourism management; learning tools; sustainable education; curricula in higher education; personal development for preparing students to work in tourism and student motivation for theory, among others.

Such a perspective shows that academics of tourism have an interest in critical research, as it can be demonstrated by analyzing the critical work of the “Red de Investigadores en Estudios Críticos del Turismo ESCRITUR”. This community’s objective is "to encourage scientific research of tourism under the critical perspective, contributing to the advancement and diffusion of results that are intended to transform reality and knowledge” rescuing the epistemological and philosophical part. Although it is of recent creation, that they have tried keep alive the revision and construction of an alternative vision of the phenomenon. Their publications began in the Journal “Tourism em Análise” from its integration in 2011.

The influence of journals on the publication systems can be the key to emancipate the way in which the knowledge of tourism has been constructed. Tribe, Xiao, & Chambers (2012) recognize that these journals could not operate free of interest, which can be recognized through the links that the communities establish with different sectors. Xiao (2007) mentions that the social structure of scientific communities is formed through communication and the creation of networks. This structure can be analyzed from the relationship between researchers, social recognitions and the value of the researches observed in the published journals among other elements. Garvey and Griffith (cit. by Xiao, 2007) refer that these communications are part of a dynamic social system and of an internal social process in the research institutions. This means that the thought that dominates a community will be reflected in their publications, and in one way or another will have an influence on the way of thinking about tourism and putting it into practice.

The recognition of the role of the scientific communities of tourism and their way of contributing to knowledge is neuralgic to its emancipation from the conventionalism generated by the existing dispersion in the way of understanding and addressing
this phenomenon that has caused various paradigms in the study of the communities. Gutiérrez (2007:4) mentions that "tourism is a complex social phenomenon that operates at multiple levels and that traditionally has been approached by different disciplines assigned to different fields of study in the social sciences", this has meant an opening to its understanding beyond a quantitative view. Anyhow, it should be remembered that science is not continuous, that is to say that it is not linear, but there are times when scientific paradigms get in crisis until they reach a point in which there is a substitution. Kuhn (2004) calls this process of crisis "scientific revolution".

As for science, in which Feyerabend (2003) observes features of myth, the scientific in tourism gets this same tendency, because it works in order to find an absolute model of validity to make science, which does not exist since there are many models. This notion limits the thinking of the phenomenon, where studying its nature, cause and being, has been conditioned by the visible part. As sociological studies in tourism show the necessity of heighten the monetary benefits is very big, but this does not mean to be negative, even though it creates emptiness. Tourism involves a process of rescuing of what re-creates the individual in relation with the environment, the society and itself; it is a way of feeding the knowledge and understanding the world, which is not closed, but open. It is a way of being in movement with our senses and our social context.

The predominant tendency in the construction of knowledge in tourism has been oriented to an epistemic empiricist-positivist base, which has established an "obligation" to prove every possible fact of the phenomenon, according to the maxim: "while there are numbers, there is tourism". This has conditioned the prominence of new ways of thinking of anti-positivist cut. Despite the role of scientific communities of tourism seems not to be important, in fact it is. The simple fact of studying a phenomenon that happens in people's social life is more than enough. What is most worrying is that nowadays tourism has been turned into an activity that prioritizes the lucrative aspect. However, the social context of our times requires the re-thinking of man's actions and the knowledge it produces,
considering the reasons for building knowledge through science, which are nothing more than having a harmonious world.

2. CHALLENGES OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITIES OF TOURISM

The knowledge of tourism has been represented in the research circles as a complex area of study. The understanding its sense has led to its approach by different sciences and disciplines, as; accounting, law, politics, government, history, anthropology, to name just a few. This has provoked a dispersion in the generation of a model for studying the phenomenon. In this sense, speaking of the critical theory means understanding it as a way to emancipate the thought on tourism from the traditional point of view which has led to think of tourism only in terms of "economic benefits".

The necessity of observing the work done by the scientific community means recognizing that it provides determinant structures in knowledge about tourism. Clearing the question of whether tourism is science or not is part of the vicious circle that must be broken. This is why it is important to mention the obstacles that these communities find in tourism. First, they have to overcome the concept of science that they have and which has led tourism to become "empty" from many points of view”. Science as it is traditionally understood is an ordered set of knowledge that under certain models or methods finds an absolute and universal goal. The discussion on the possibility of a critical science extends the framework of understanding into more complex areas of study such as tourism.

The role of scientific communities in tourism, compared to the previous point, is to work the argumentation in the speeches in order to construct knowledge about the phenomenon which must be emancipated from the traditionalism which researchers continue to base their activity on, and which has turned into an operational and technical tautology. The structure of scientific communities has to do with its members, ideologies, links, and internal work, among others. The highlights are its publications, which give patterns to recognize the epistemic base of tourism, and which are the means through which it is possible to integrate the
critical thinking, working with the publisher guidelines, the openness to philosophical issues and the thorough review of works that contribute to the reality we are living in.

In the light of what has been said, it is interesting to observe the results of a questionnaire distributed to researchers of scientific communities\(^6\), and the interviews with their president. There is a low linkage between what is proposed, what is written and published, with the different needs and realities that tourism has. This is because there is a conflict between the common interests of the members of the communities and the elitism that weighs on them, as well as the limitations of training and generation of knowledge. This means that the time of scientific communities is reaching to a stage of renewal that has to transcend other schemes opening intellectual discussion forums.

The conditioning to recognized knowledge has been characterized as traditional science. Science from a critical perspective is not dependent on external criteria; since the globalization of knowledge becomes a critical theory inherent to knowledge, science has a social reality (Laso, 2004) that has to answer to its own needs, even if nowadays it is only focused on production. The scientific practice in tourism has to respond to a critical science that understands the phenomenon of tourism as something constant that renews itself in the end\(^7\), because according to the social facts, it adapts and \textit{re-generates} to \textit{re-create} its sense.

Critical science in tourism refers to the opening of a scientific language that breaks with the schemes of rigor, precision and universal univocal. This means that the

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\(^6\) The applied instruments was sent via mail to various researchers in the world, under a random selection, also members of various scientific communities, especially of the AECIT. The interview was made to the president of that community. The instrument can be consult in: https://es.surveymonkey.com/s/R8QGHWS in Spanish, and for English https://es.surveymonkey.com/s/RVL69BJ. Is important mention that the results are part of a terminal thesis Master of Tourism Studies in Mexico (UAEM).

\(^7\) For \textit{end} it is referring to the objective of scientific process in the knowledge of a study area, that is, the purpose for which a knowledge of \textit{X} fact or phenomenon is generated
search for knowledge should awake originality, since there is not a method, but many methods, and dogmas have to be broken in order to build new theories (Mardones, 2003). The challenge for the scientific communities in tourism is to break with these precepts and to be able to emancipate the thought of this phenomenon through the methodological opening that allows its understanding as a human phenomenon. Another challenge for the scientific communities of tourism is to carry the scientific practice to a level of understanding that does not pretend to be universal, but to dimension a contextualizing language of specific realities and issues.

3. FUNDAMENTS OF A CRITICALLY REFLECTIVE POSTURE IN THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITIES OF TOURISM.

The critical posture is an attitude based on a critical theory perspective which proposes a turn in the way of conceiving the knowledge due to the crisis that society is experimenting and to the excessive predominance of science, objectivity, materialism and belief in progress, to name a few. Through this, the ideological character of traditional science is reviewed, denouncing the falsely liberation processes from a projected attitude to the future that rescues the historical materiality of its thought (Dou Brovsky, 1974); this implies interpreting a model of emancipatory society, rational and in constant search of the social world. This posture implies philosophical reflection about the way knowledge is created rather than the trivial sense of assuming a denunciatory role under subjective judgments.

The fundaments that are taken from the critical posture weighted the reflection and the attitude in the way of generating knowledge (see image 1). Because, more than recognizing surface errors, its precept is the reflection of theory and practice from philosophy, through rational oriented towards an historical praxis able to conceive the total of humanity (Villacañas, 2001) as being one way of confronting reality, which is related to the social conditions.
Generating knowledge from the critical posture implies breaking from the process of mathematical order that is used to recognize what is *science*\(^8\), especially in the social environment; this foundation goes beyond abiding by verifiable and universal principles. According to some researchers, taking up this critical posture means creating a science which can get to a neutrality or abstraction in its fundamentals (Dubiel, 2000); however, the critical method pretends to release analytical-empirical methodological obstacles of positivism, that is to say to transcend the capitalist technical interest and to get to a human emancipatory interest.

The philosophical reflection of the produced knowledge towards the social environment that exists and the emancipation of the elements of the *right science* (model applied to natural sciences) is a fundamental part to transcend to an opening of the concept of science, especially in social and human sciences. In the case of tourism, it is about the reflection on the manner in which its knowledge is being built and the way in which social facts have determined its conception as an obligatory task. In the last years the critic has been stated in studies by some researchers, such as Alejziak & Winiarski (2005), Ateljevic, Pritchard, & Morgan (2007), Castillo (2011), Conde (2008), Panosso (2008), Przeclawski (2009), Tribe (2007), Vir Singh (2012), whose research is still inscribed into the traditional perception.

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\(^8\) The concept of science under the simplest argument refers to a system of proposals that originate in the theoretical work and whose systematic order results in a particular universe of objects, usually this model is applied in the natural sciences, however, the social sciences have made efforts to imitate it, forgetting that the social sense is complex and dynamic.
The critical positions of tourism that emerged towards the Eighties showed various sensitivities in the "tourist intellectuality" (Castillo, 2011). Some aspects that started the questioning of production in the touristic knowledge was the appearance of the neoliberal hegemony coupled with an economic speech of prosperity and overall progress toward “transformative” projects, competitive and productivity, marked as examples of the unfulfilled promises. The low sensitivity of researchers to understanding tourism beyond the big speeches, has inhibited the critical articulation that stopped having weight in the new generations and reducing tourism to a merely technical professional activity.

The traditional dominant positions of facts and proofs in tourism have taken its knowledge to a universalization and reification and to the loss of the epistemic sense involved. The domination of the paradigm of the natural sciences over the social and human sciences, in which this social phenomenon is included, had led it to the creation of methodologies in tourism as for verification and monitoring, and thus towards a constant data replication and statistics that make tourism "visible" to the researchers. Another factor that has determined the reification of tourism is the use of language and the dominance of the speech from the state institutions and well as the academic ones.

Sharpley (2011) refers that the academic interest in the study of tourism has primarily concerned the touristic education in general and the issues related to curriculum making emphasis on the administrative issue and not only regarding the business, but also geographic, social, ecological issues, among others. The domination of the discourse has been related with issues of power, in which the study of tourism, "far from hindering the knowledge, it produces it" as Teran (1983:38) points out. This idea refers to the understanding of the persistence of a speech generated by actors who emphasize the traditional views on tourism and submit it to the interests of certain social classes.

In addition to the discursive elements and the conditioning of power, the barriers and skepticism of the researchers towards new perspectives for tourism are also to be found. The theme of legacy, as well as the way of conducting research,
represent the traditional of the speech. The language and the communication used in their construction of knowledge also affect the way in which tourism is determinate and conceived. For example, the big tourist speeches issued by global institutions such as the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) indicate language as "a key driver of socioeconomic progress" for countries (especially for those in developing way), which has conditioned the theoretical construction of the phenomenon as a productive factor.

The necessity that tourism presents is the re-thinking in a reflexive critical framework that allows emancipating tourism from the traditional speeches that have alienated it. Hereafter is a methodological design that, on a first plan, revalues the conventional speeches, building on the philosophical thought to generate new interpretations of tourism as a social phenomenon of humanistic study (see image 2).

![Image 2. Structure of critical thinking in tourism. Source: own elaboration based on Castillo y Lozano (2006).](image)

The critical-reflexive proposal ponders three moments in the reinterpretation of the speech: understanding, interpreting and constructing. These elements are co-
implicated in the fundament that is *re-thought*, in the translation and transduction\(^9\) of the thinking in the language and the reflection that it builds to give way to an epistemological-critical construction of tourism. Subsequently, the critical discursive reflection of the produced knowledge through the description of the facts -which allows an understanding and appreciation of the touristic phenomenon- will allow its interpretation in a reality and in a certain social context that gives a re-signification in its sense (see image 4).

![Diagram](image)


The methodological process proposes a reflection on what is conceived as the knowledge of tourism through the elements of understanding, interpretation and critical construction thanks to which steps are made in order to build a humanistic vision in the theory and the practice. The contributions individually made by the researchers denote an important contribution to the understanding of the phenomenon, but groups of researches also have studied a way to establish a diagnosis over the status of tourism within the field of the sciences. These groups,

\(^9\) Transduction is a process of transmission and semantic transformation of the message
better known as scientific communities, also provide research tendencies and determine the construction of knowledge in tourism.

The scientific communities of tourism must open their horizons to dimension a knowledge that goes beyond the economic issues that have alienated tourism. It is very important to make way for a critical discussion of his thought that devote itself to the ethic and responsibilities of this phenomenon, through epistemological-philosophical reflection that is being suit by researchers whom realize the complexity of the times and the social dynamic it represents.

4. FINAL REFLECTIONS

The scientific communities in tourism are recognized in this way by the functions of a collegial work that present the following activities: organizing special events, working together, making common quotations, publication and validation of topics, specially the last two aspects being extolled among their tasks. The knowledge constructed by these communities reflects in their activities their positivist-epistemic base that forces the communities to checking and verifying facts, leading them to forget the human side of tourism. Different conceptions of "community" were identified, whose scientific assertions, despite the controversy about the status of tourism, should also be taken into consideration. Despite their collective nature, the need to transcend these collectives and make them become networks of tourism of the tourism thought has been recognized.

Tourism represents a science, if it is viewed from a critical point of view; although there is still skepticism, there is an opening for understanding its emancipation, with a challenge to observe it separately from the traditional scientific language. Therefore, the challenges for these communities in tourism are the following: going beyond the concept of traditional science, working with discursive topics that emancipate the technicality and operability of the phenomenon, opening to a philosophical reflection and the theoretical and practical balance of its reason in its language.
The critical posture in the tourism proposes a dimension of the conception of knowledge and gives a turn to the conventions of traditional science that have been presented in the investigations. This implies a philosophical reflection on the use of language by the scientific communities of tourism, which allows the opening to a new way of conceiving it, through understanding, interpretation and critical construction with epistemic fundamentals that give way to a humanistic vision of the tourist theory and practice.

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