

## The Exercise of Experiential Rural Tourism in the Population Nucleus of an Andean Community in Peru

Adderly Mamani-Flores<sup>1</sup>, Jorge Apaza-Ticona<sup>2</sup>, Alfredo Pelayo Calatayud-Mendoza<sup>3</sup>, Alfredo Calderón-Torres<sup>4</sup>, Yuselino Maquera-Maquera<sup>5</sup>, Hector Luciano Velasquez-Sagua<sup>6</sup>, Salvador Gerardo Flores-Chambilla<sup>7</sup>

### Abstract

*Experiential rural tourism requires the direct involvement of the local population and tourists. The purpose of the study was to detail and examine the progress and experiences of the implementation of this type of tourism. The elements studied include communication, mutual respect, socio-economic growth, cultural authenticity, shared cultural customs, reciprocity, appreciation of cultural identity and environment; as well as the perceptions and experiences of visitors and local inhabitants. The method used was qualitative, complemented with techniques such as detailed interviews with the local population and visitors, participant observation in the performance of this activity and content study. The outcome shows the complexity of this practice, underlining the relevance of a collaborative and participatory approach that ensures fairness, mutual respect and long-term sustainability for visitors and local inhabitants. Likewise, challenges and tensions linked to power, representation, authenticity and cultural integration are recognized, with the aim of optimizing the distribution of economic benefits for a more inclusive and responsible tourism.*

**Keywords:** *Cultural Identity, Cultural Tourism, Participant Observation, Local Population, Tourists.*

### Introduction

Experiential rural tourism has emerged as a sustainable and enriching option for both local communities and tourists looking for genuine experiences and authentic cultural exchange. In the town of Ccotos, located in the district of Capachica in the Puno region, this type of tourism takes on special importance due to the cultural and natural abundance that distinguishes the region. However, behind the charming postcards and promises of involvement in rural life, complex intercultural dynamics are hidden that require careful study.

Currently, in the Peruvian Andes, there has been a notable increase in experiential rural tourism. The increase and development of this activity is attributed to the interest of tourism agents who allow this activity to be maintained and promoted in the tourism sector. Although this activity suffered damage and decreased significantly due to the global pandemic due to COVID 19 and the post-pandemic, stopping for more than 2 years (2019, 2020 and early 2021); in addition to the conflicts and social movements that took place in 2022 and early 2023, due to political reasons, causing road blockades and the temporary closure of airports, affecting the arrival of tourists. Tourism in Peru is a delicate industry that can be impacted by multiple factors, whether political or social. Despite these obstacles, the government of Peru has implemented several strategies to reactivate tourism in a safe and responsible way. For example, a "Safe Travels" seal has been established for tourism companies that adhere to health protocols, local tourism has been boosted, and tourism has gradually been opened internationally.

The government of Peru, through the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism (MINCETUR) and its related policies, promotes and manages tourism activity and its various forms and types. Through the National

<sup>1</sup> Professor, Universidad Nacional del Altiplano Puno - Perú, Email: [adderlymamani@unap.edu.pe](mailto:adderlymamani@unap.edu.pe), <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5141-1366>.

<sup>2</sup> Professor, Universidad Nacional del Altiplano Puno - Perú, Email: [japazaticona@unap.edu.pe](mailto:japazaticona@unap.edu.pe), <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9085-4354>.

<sup>3</sup> Professor, Facultad de Ingeniería Económica - Universidad Nacional del Altiplano Puno - Perú, Email: [apcalatayud@unap.edu.pe](mailto:apcalatayud@unap.edu.pe), <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1213-0035>

<sup>4</sup> Professor, Universidad Nacional del Altiplano Puno, Perú, Email: [acalderon@unap.edu.pe](mailto:acalderon@unap.edu.pe), <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8716-139X>.

<sup>5</sup> Professor, Universidad Nacional del Altiplano Puno, Perú, Email: [ymmaquera@unap.edu.pe](mailto:ymmaquera@unap.edu.pe), <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7476-9205>

<sup>6</sup> Professor, Universidad Nacional del Altiplano Puno, Perú, Email: [hvelasquez@unap.edu.pe](mailto:hvelasquez@unap.edu.pe), <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2056-7277>

<sup>7</sup> Professor, Universidad Nacional del Altiplano Puno, Perú, Email: [sgflores@unap.edu.pe](mailto:sgflores@unap.edu.pe), <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7466-7268>

Directorate of Tourism Development (DNDT), this Ministry has the task of approving and renewing the National Strategic Tourism Plan (PENTUR), in addition to coordinating and guiding tourism activities.

In regulatory terms, we have the General Tourism Law No. 29408, which dictates the general guidelines for the promotion, development and regulation of tourism throughout the country. In this way, through the law enacted in 2009, the coordination required for the implementation and evolution of projects related to tourism activity carried out by regional and local administrations and public entities is carried out. These projects focus on social profitability, within sustainability and sector policies. In this way, sustainable tourism should be promoted on a national scale, with the aim of boosting socio-cultural and economic growth. This regulation establishes the obligations and responsibilities of governments at the national, regional, local and private sector levels in the promotion and management of tourism, encouraging the creation of programs and campaigns for the promotion of a tourism culture on a national scale. In addition, it demands that visitors must act with respect for the rights of individuals, the environment, cultural and natural heritage, as well as the multi-ethnic conditions of the various contexts at the national level. In relation to local governments, they are responsible for fulfilling the responsibilities stipulated in the Organic Law of Municipalities No. 27972, with regard to tourism.

The National Community Rural Tourism Programme, established at the national level, is based on the involvement and active intervention of national and foreign visitors in daily activities in the rural environment, with the aim of promoting sustainability, economic and social inclusion of rural inhabitants through the offer and participation in different activities related to tourism. It also has the support of non-governmental entities (NGOs) and travel agencies, which collaborate in the development of the activity in rural areas, from the analysis of the provision of fundamental services, accessibility, tourist resources, the preparation of promotional materials such as videos, photographs and guidance to the population through talks and suggestions.

The Titicaca National Reserve (RNT) is one of the entities that, in addition to preserving natural and landscape resources, promotes the social and economic growth of the inhabitants near Lake Titicaca. This is done through the promotion and promotion of sustainable tourism in collaboration with actors, authorities, the private sector and the local population, who consider this activity to be economically viable, either due to the characteristic natural landscapes according to the Presidential Resolution, No. 038-2021-SERNANP2021.

These entities and regulations often disregard the depth of intercultural relations that can arise in this activity, given that greater importance is given to the economic factor, such as the creation of income and jobs. Some research indicates that by taking into account cultural and social dimensions, we would be more aware of the relevance of intercultural relations and their short- and long-term impact on rural communities, considering these factors, e.g., the experience of tourists, resource constraints, cultural boundaries, identification of exotic cultural resources, and folk wisdom. Dealing with larger and more complex aspects that arise in the tourism sector, it is possible that these institutions adopt a conventional approach to tourism, focusing on the promotion of destinations and activities, without fully taking into account the cultural and social effect of this practice, causing a lack of studies and research.

Focusing on tourism in the Puno region, it was impacted, around March 2020, with travel limitations due to quarantine and the interruption of activities, causing a considerable effect in various areas. Since the second half of 2021, tourism has shown signs of recovery, with an increase in the number of both domestic and foreign tourists. However, during December 2022, January and February 2023, the Puno region experienced demonstrations and social unrest due to political turbulence.

The fieldwork began on February 12, 2023, despite the difficulty of access, direct observation of the situation of the place was also carried out. The first information collected was that the population indicated that at that time they had canceled reservations due to the existing uncertainty. Some families concerned about this scenario chose to give more importance to other activities that are carried out in the environment.

According to the data obtained about rural experiential tourism in the town of Ccotos, we can deduce that its beginnings and beginnings were not known as "rural experiential tourism", but rather as a scenic tourist place visited sporadically by individuals known as "foreign gringos" who visited Ccotos. This, according to the experience and practice of our informants, dates back approximately 30 years.

The popularity of this type of tourism is closely linked to activities such as the recreation of daily Andean scenes where the local population shares their wisdom and knowledge through traditions, customs in the process of routine activities dedicated to visitors where they also participate directly. The popularity of this type of tourism is strongly linked to activities such as the recreation of daily scenes in the Andes, where the local community transmits its wisdom and knowledge through traditions and customs, in the course of daily activities aimed at tourists, in which they also participate directly.

Although at first glance there could be a "cultural commercialization" in this scenario, it is important to recognize that in several situations, visitors who are actively involved in local activities demonstrate greater respect for cultural expressions such as the "Pachamama ritual", which represents gratitude to mother earth, celebrations, ceremonies, traditional wisdom, all of them with a specific sense that make it easier to appreciate and respect the local culture.

This type of tourism is a phenomenon that impacts the culture of the local inhabitants, since its execution involves an interaction between individuals from different and distant geographical and cultural areas different from the local inhabitants. Tourism often crosses geographical and cultural barriers, creating spaces for interaction that engage people in networks and cultural links that transcend the local sphere. It can also be interpreted as an expression of globalization insofar as it harmonizes these cultural traits through the movement of mass populations and the incorporation of supranational markets, transforming an image of the contemporary world into a good of exchange.

One of the greatest advantages of anthropology in the tourism sector is ethnography and its critical perspective on tourism. This perspective facilitates and encourages us to perceive the impacts, factors, transformations, adjustments, its culture of hospitality and intercultural practices, subjectivities, experiences, tensions, negotiations, disputes, among others, of tourism. However, this critical approach also entails its costs and rejections to this industry, since in certain interpretations it could conflict with commercial and mercantile interests, without taking into account the profound nature of this activity.

## Methodology

The qualitative approach, essential in the discipline, was used to understand in depth the cultural phenomena, human behavior, beliefs and values of the analyzed environment. Therefore, our study decided to employ this approach, which facilitates the search for a detailed interpretation of our problem in its natural context, focusing on understanding reality as it is presented,

This method allowed me to interpret the subjective perception and meanings that the local population and tourists assigned to their experiences and attitudes, through direct observation of the process of development of this type of tourism, semi-structured individual and group interviews, according to the circumstances, describing and interpreting the intercultural relations that occur within this social practice. For this reason, the techniques that were applied were direct observation that allowed observing and describing the complete process that the local population provides to tourists in the development of experiential rural tourism, such as the time of stay, visits to lodgings and various activities, implied witnessing and participating in the direct experience in the environment, since it is there where tourists interact in the daily life and activities of the local population. Valuable individual interviews were conducted to identify and understand detailed and personalized information from tourists and local residents from a personal and subjective point of view, prior to the choice of key informants. During the fieldwork period, group interviews were also conducted to understand how the local population manages and adjusts to cultural diversity in general, which confirmed the data obtained from the individual interviews.

The type of sampling was non-probabilistic and, within this context, intentional or selective sampling. According to Alveiro (2013), this type of sampling makes it easier for researchers to deliberately choose participants or cases that are considered most informative or relevant to the research, based on the experience, knowledge, or particular characteristics that are sought in the informants.

#### *Activities of the Research Process*

Activity 1: This first activity was divided into two phases, in the first a detailed observation of the service that the local population provides to tourists was carried out. In the second, the process and evolution of experiential rural tourism was detailed, considering the time, the programmed and spontaneous activities that are provided during the tourist's stay, assuming the role of tourist in this process. This activity took place in November 2023.

Activity 2: In this activity, 6 individual interviews and 2 groups were carried out with the local population, as well as 5 interviews with tourists who experienced and participated in experiential rural tourism, with the aim of recognizing and obtaining information about the intercultural relationships that occur. This activity was carried out after the description of the service, which was carried out in November 2023.

Activity 3: We are already in the process of transcription and analysis of data obtained through observation and interviews with the local population and visitors, which allowed us to identify in a deeper way the intercultural relations present in this process and the development of experiential rural tourism. We organize the previously established categories and emerging ones with the appropriate coding.

## **Results and Discussion**

### *Experiential Rural Tourism in the Town of Ccotos*

Given its location on the shores of Lake Titicaca, Ccotos offers spectacular landscapes such as transparent waters and beaches, which facilitate activities such as sailing, fishing and bird watching. In addition, it is possible to tour the surrounding islands.

Its settings encompass green hills, eucalyptus forests, agricultural land, panoramic views of Lake Titicaca and surrounding mountains. There are rural routes for hiking, cycling and enjoying the tranquility of the natural environment. From its entrance, there is a site known as "alley" that is surrounded by trees. During the tour you can appreciate the traditional native architecture, its houses are built in adobe, with thatched roofs and reeds. Inside the houses you can see fabrics that embellish the walls and furniture, with typical symbols of the region such as the kantuta and the hummingbird bird. Tourists have the opportunity to visit some local workshops, interact with artisans, and acquire some items.

Other cultural charms are manifested in the festivities throughout the year, signaling that they are moments to pay homage to local cultural and religious traditions deeply rooted in nature. These events feature music, traditional dances, traditional food, and other activities that take place at certain times and seasons of the year, with the most outstanding being those in February.

Ccotos offers beautiful natural landscapes that can be explored through guided hikes along local trails, tourists enjoy panoramic views of Lake Titicaca, observe the native flora and fauna and visit natural sites in this area either by long walks or perhaps by bicycle according to the tourist's choice.

*There is a whole tour we start from the Ancca Sayana viewpoint to the Titilino hill, this tour makes tourists observe for themselves the hills, the forests because that is where Lake Titicaca is seen, they take many photos and sometimes they want to stay there for longer (male, 30 years old, local resident).*

Tourists also participate in festivals and cultural celebrations that take place in the area according to the date of the visit, these festivities can include folk dances, traditional music, religious ceremonies and gastronomic events that reflect the rich culture and traditions of the region.

*When we have parties or celebrations, we take tourists so that they can participate either dancing, or watching them have fun just like the population, in the year we have different activities it is not that the tourist package is always the same, each month it has different activities and that is where we take tourists and participate in our activities (male, 63 years old, local resident).*

Experiential rural tourism promotes genuine interaction between tourists and the local community, fostering cultural exchange, mutual learning and intercultural understanding, "When tourists come to visit us, we try to always be with us at all times in what we do and what we do, they also always want to be by our side, they are very naughty and very curious" (male, 63 years old, local resident).

Visitors share experiences, stories, and knowledge with local residents, thus enriching their travel experience, while enjoying the natural beauty and cultural heritage.

### *Ethnography of the Experiential Rural Tourism Service*

In experiential rural tourism, visiting tourists immerse themselves in local life and culture, experiencing first-hand the traditions, gastronomy, daily activities and natural environment. The service was acquired in November 2023, in order to describe what I observed and lived in my condition as an anthropologist, this in order to describe the service that consisted of two nights and two days, this is a normal service, now if a tourist wanted to stay longer, you can opt for a service of more days, the families mention that some stayed even for fifteen days, therefore, this will depend on the decision of the tourist, on this visit we were 7 tourists including myself who made up the group that arrived at the lodging house of the Qoñi Wasi association, where we were received by the host family of 4 members.

#### *First Day*

In the morning, all the members of the lodging house welcome the tourists as a family, then they took us to see the lodging house and distributed us in corresponding rooms indicating the construction and structure of the lodging house, to be able to locate ourselves at all times, after that they leave us approximately 1 hour so that we can settle in the rooms and be able to rest a little from the trip. Then they took us to the dining room so that we could have breakfast in the company of the host family, it is at this time while we have breakfast they tell us what are the activities to develop in the course of the stay, after breakfast they also gave us some time to rest.

In the course of the day they took us to hike starting at the Ancca Sayana viewpoint, which is a viewpoint that is located at the entrance of Ccotos, and where a statue of an eagle can be seen, some steps were built to make access easier, then in the course of the walk they explained that these mountains are "apus" who protect the population of Ccotos at all times.

This hike lasted approximately 3 hours since, it takes place with constant breaks, thinking about the health of tourists, this mountain is characterized by being a natural viewpoint that allows you to have a view of the lake, the nearby islands and even part of the border with Bolivia.

Already at the time of return to the lodging house we go to the dining room for lunch, which takes place at approximately one in the afternoon, there it is usual for tourists and the local population to talk about the experiences of what was visited, tourists show the photos captured during the course of the walk, they consult the names of the places seen. After lunch they take time again to rest in their rooms.

At about three in the afternoon we proceeded to dress in traditional garments that were provided to us, already dressed we went down to be able to go to the central courtyard of the house where a dancing bonfire was held, and they presented 3 dances representative of Ccotos (Kaswa, Karamachu and Negritos), not only was the presentation of dances made, but we were also invited to participate dancing and enjoying the dance together with the host family who gave us they teach the respective steps and movements of each dance.

*The tourists are very curious, when they see us dance they also dance with us and although they do not do it so well, they try to be able to match us since they tell us that they are very lively and happy dances, not only do they see us but they come to dance with us, in the course of the dance we explain the meaning of the dances, not only do they dance, but they also learn what it means (male, 30 years old, local resident).*

Around seven o'clock at night we went to the dining room to be able to have dinner, in the company of the host family.

*Tourists eat little so we don't serve them much, sometimes at night they just have a coffee or water, they really like coca tea and muña mate and, sometimes, they don't even eat anymore, sometimes they leave food on their plates, it's not because they don't want to if they don't eat just a few (male, 30 years old, local resident).*

Around 8 p.m., if the weather is suitable, that is, that there are no strong winds as usually happens on some days, a short walk is made to appreciate the sky and make the stars visible, on this first day the weather was favorable to be able to go out, so they lent us ponchos and blankets so that we can go out and see the sky and the stars, There was a clear view of the sky, I saw here that some tourists converse fluently with some members of the host family who accompany us on this walk, we talked about the constellations, the clear sky, the tranquility that is felt in the place, I could notice that the language does not become a barrier to be able to communicate, since the tourist manages to understand the local population and vice versa, at times they use some words in English but most of them speak and understand Spanish.

*There are some tourists who can't speak Spanish well, but we do our best to understand each other, they talk to us about constellations because they are very clear, they teach us a little about the stars, we learned about the southern cross and how they align in the sky, but they always speak a little Spanish and sometimes English, but we still understand each other, that is why we send our children so that they can learn more English and we can understand each other better (male, 63 years old, local resident).*

Approximately from eight to nine at night, after dinner, we are left alone for a moment so that we can appreciate the sky and the stars, which in turn are reflected in the lake, this allowed us to be in a moment of relaxation and calm, but the host family is always there looking out for us in case something could happen, Then, at the end of this first day, at about nine o'clock at night we returned to our rooms so that we could start with our rest.

*Tourists usually sleep early so we take them to their rooms at the latest at nine or ten at night, sometimes a little more, we are always aware of them, they are like children that we have to take care of, some want to be alone and others want us to accompany them (male, 63 years old, local resident).*

At the end of this first day, the host family makes preparations for the next day and they usually rest at approximately eleven o'clock at night, which is the usual time for their rest.

### *Second Day*

On this second day the family asked us to accompany them in the preparation of breakfast by taking us to the kitchen at six in the morning and we participated in the preparation of the supplies that are required to be able to prepare the quinoa porridge, they showed us the hygiene that is maintained in the process since we contribute to the washing of the products, They asked us to help in various activities in my case, I stirred the contents of the pot and chopped the cheese this quinoa porridge, it has to be beaten until it reaches the exact point of cream, as indicated by the cook, she also mentions that some tourists give some recommendations, such as using less amount of salt in food, Do not consume a lot of sugar for the sake of people's health, this habit is already considered by the family and that is why both inputs are used in smaller quantities in all foods.

At eight in the morning we go to the dining room to have breakfast transferring our dishes to the table, together with the host family, already at the table they tell us what the subsequent activities are, the host family tells us that to consume any food in the day it is necessary and important that everyone is present,

In the event that not all the members are present, at least two to three people have to be present to accompany us at the table, here you can notice the importance of the union of the family in these activities.

After breakfast and rest, we were transferred in a motor boat to Tikonata Island, on this island is located a site museum, with pre-Inca archaeological remains that we were able to visit, in the course of the trip people commented that only in Ccotos there are the "swimming cows", it is an event that takes place after carnival, where cattle are taken to the island so that they can feed and mate, is that in that season there is an abundant amount of grass that can be consumed by cattle. When we arrived on the island we traveled a rustic road through the most striking places of this island, here we could notice that there are also lodging houses with a unique circular shape, the guides indicate that these lodging houses belong to other associations of the island, the population who live on this island received us with great cordiality inviting us to buy some handicrafts that they make themselves, then we went to the local museum, here there is a viewpoint with a beautiful landscape of Ccotos, here we could find an arch made of stone built by the same population. Once in the museum there is a person who explains each of the archaeological remains it contains, they indicate the areas where each of the archaeological pieces were found, they explain the approximate period to which it belongs and the interpretations, meanings given by the local population, this activity lasted approximately two to three hours. Then we went to lunch in the dining room of the same island, at approximately 3 in the afternoon we returned to Ccotos.

Then we move to our rooms to rest for a while, after a while the family invites us to accompany them in the planting of potatoes, goose, beans, oats, quinoa, barley and wheat, indicating in detail how we should grow them, they teach us and then they ask us to put it into practice, while we are cultivating they tell us that the planting season normally occurs in the months of November and December. They also took us to participate in the care and grazing of cattle and sheep, it was observed that people talk to the animals indicating that they should only feed in the place where grazing is carried out since they are not allowed to invade other spaces.

At five o'clock in the afternoon, the bike ride begins, the tour consists from the lodging house towards the beach of Ccotos, in the course of which we were able to pass through the square of Ccotos, the rustic pier, alley of Ccotos, visit to the artisans, we could observe some of the most striking landscapes such as the sunset of the sunset, we could also observe the houses in the area, the chapel of Ccotos, we visited ceremonial places near the beach. On the tour they were not explained by the accompanying guides.

*We also have to inform ourselves to be able to explain to tourists, they are very curious, tourists like to ask all the time about everything they see, and we are prepared to answer, they are already prepared because they already know some things, they know and know a lot, and we clarify what they want to know (male, 30 years old, local resident).*

Then we returned to the lodging house, and at the end of this second day at approximately seven o'clock at night we went to dinner, accompany you with the host family and we began to interact about the experience lived, we shared photos, exchanged personal information, generating an atmosphere of trust, then we went to our rooms and be able to get ready for the return of our trip, At the time of leaving and going to our return vehicle, we could notice an emotional moment where the host family and we said goodbye with gestures of affection and hugs leaving some memories and some with the promise to return in the future.

The host family indicates that this service consists of two days and one night, it is something conventional, but in some cases there are tourists who decide to stay and extend their visit for more days so they mention that they are prepared for this type of case, indicating that there are many more activities that tourists can do and that two days is sometimes not enough.

*Tourists sometimes don't want to leave, they want to stay, and they stay, most of them have already planned their visit to several places, that's why they leave, but they always leave us their contact to know how we are doing and we also communicate with them to find out how they are (woman, 62 years old, local resident).*

The host families offer the service according to the weather and the various activities that take place at the time of the year, for example, in the month of October, November and December there are agricultural activities, fishing and textiles, in the months of January, February and March, there are more festive and celebratory activities.

Visitors get to know the daily life of rural families up close, sharing their home-cooked meals and participating in their own activities, by participating in agricultural and livestock activities, such as planting and harvesting crops, feeding and caring for farm animals, producing cheese and other dairy products, and fishing in Lake Titicaca. These activities provide a hands-on, educational experience on traditional agricultural practices.

*They help us to sow or harvest according to the season in which they do not visit, they see how we grow potatoes, beans, quinoa, they first see us, then we explain how they have to do it, and then they participate with us in the planting (woman, 62 years old, local resident).*

Visitors learn about traditional crafts, such as weaving through demonstrations and workshops given by local artisans, where they can also purchase some products such as monteras, chucos, vests, chullos, chuspas, etc., as souvenirs of their visit.

*When I start knitting on the ground the tourists are watching, they record videos and take photos of me, I teach them how to knit, they also want to make and sometimes they manage to weave small animals and dolls that they take as souvenirs (woman, 40 years old, local resident).*

### **Accommodation and Lodging**

In Ccotos there are rustic lodgings, family lodgings and guest houses. Rustic lodgings consist of simple rooms built with the same materials that the population builds their houses, family lodgings are more spacious and comfortable, have a better finish and are managed by the host family. The guest houses already have all the basic sanitation services. These options often offer a more authentic and closer experience to the local population.

Some accommodations can offer panoramic views of Lake Titicaca and basic services such as homemade food and cultural activities organized by the host population, as mentioned by a local villager.

*I had to modify my house to make the tourist feel more comfortable since before the rooms were very small and there was a lack of lighting, I improved the infrastructure based on the internships I was able to visit, such as the island of Anapia, where this type of tourism is also practiced, I took the idea from there since it has a very beautiful infrastructure and combines with the nature of the place (male, 30 years).*

In some cases, lodging can be limited since we only find three associations and each of them has about 5 to 6 lodgings managed by 7 families. In the months of January, February, August and September, these accommodations are insufficient, due to the number of tourists who want to book the service. Therefore, it is advisable to plan ahead and communicate directly with the accommodations to check availability and services offered by them and the travel agencies they work with.

*There are some months that we are full, we even had to reject some passengers, this mostly in the months of January, February and August and even December, but even so at least every month we always receive tourists, there are times that they contact me, because I manage social networks, also travel agencies such as ASTURS, that now they are training us in gastronomy, they also send us tourists, if all of us from the association are in the possibility of bringing tourists, but since we are an association we have to divide the tourists equally (male, 30 years old, local resident).*

Contact can be direct with individuals or associations through online booking platforms, website, Facebook, as well as consult with local travel agencies with which they are associated in the city of Puno and Arequipa. They also mention that it is the tourists themselves who recommend to their family, close friends and others, that they can visit this destination since it is a unique experience to enjoy.



*We have our own website where we publish our services and that is also why they contact us, we have Facebook, and other social networks so that they can contact us and they can visit us, technology has helped us a lot to be able to reach those who want to visit us, sometimes agencies pay us very little so it is convenient for us to have direct contact with tourists, that is why we also serve them very well so that they are satisfied (male, 30 years old, local resident).*

The characteristics of the accommodation and lodging are rustic style with its own and traditional style integrating into the natural and cultural environment of the area. The constructions are built, using local materials such as adobe, stone and wood, and they do it collectively since when a settler builds his house, the majority of the population accompanies the process and the culmination of it, demonstrating reciprocity in this activity.

As for basic services, the population mentions that years ago they were lacking, but now they already have them. The houses have drinking water and sanitation thanks to the Basic Sanitation project (SABA), of the Ministry of Housing, Construction and Sanitation (MVCS), there is electricity service and also Internet, since there are 2 antennas that improve the spectral signal, it is important to keep in mind that the services improve the accommodations that are increasingly suitable for tourists.

*The house looks very clean and very nice, I find it authentic comfortable, it is comfortable, people show a lot of hospitality, we have access to activities and eat local food, we experience life in the countryside and we like to appreciate nature and get to know the local culture (Male tourist, 35 years old).*

Tourists have the necessary and adequate comfort in the accommodations where they spend the time of the service enjoying the hospitality and authenticity of the experience.

Cleaning and personal hygiene is a habit acquired and adopted by the host population, it is worth remembering that years ago it was not given much importance because it was a rustic context and lacked services.

*Before we did not clean the house much because it got dirty all the time, now we have to clean every now and then because tourists arrive and the house has to be clean, we also wash ourselves since we are with the tourists constantly accompanying them, I see that the tourist is very clean, he bathes all the time and cleans his hands a lot, he walks around with alcohol in his hand (male, 30 years old, local resident).*

This is a learning that the population that practices tourism was adopting by the contact it generates with tourists and also by the constant training they receive, this is shown as something positive that improves the quality of life and improves the health of the population.

#### *Socio-Economic Influence and Sustainability*

Tourism in Ccotos plays an important role in local development and in the preservation of the natural and cultural environment, it is an important source of local employment, creating job opportunities in sectors such as the incursion into tourism, crafts and transport, diversifying activities so that the population benefits.

*We were not the first to start tourism but as they saw that tourists come and visit us, they go to the stores to buy, they visit the small businesses, they saw that and they began to increase their products, also those who had boats began to rent to tourists so that they can visit the islands, some began to sell some local products, they were encouraged to be able to offer something to tourists. This activity is contagious and there are already several family members who are encouraged to be part of this (male, 63 years old, local resident).*

By diversifying the local economy, reliance on traditional activities is reduced and generates more activities that complement each other.

*We are not only dedicated to tourism, we make our farm, we take care of our animals, we also go fishing, that is, we do several activities where we also take tourists so that they can participate in what we do every day, tourists like to participate in our*

*activities, they like to dance with us, they like to do what we do and they also give us some ideas to improve what we do as a result. For example, Jordan (a 32-year-old French tourist) taught us how to brush our teeth correctly without being asked (male, 26 years old, a local resident).*

This improves the quality of life of local residents and reduces migration to urban areas in search of economic opportunities by the younger population, some young people decided to study careers such as: official tourist guide at the Institute of Public Higher Technological Education "San Salvador de Capachica", others decided to study tourism at the National University of the Altiplano Puno, some studied gastronomy, pastry, bar tending and other careers related to the sector, then return to Ccotos to improve the services offered by this form of tourism.

### *The Cultural Tourist in Ccotos*

The cultural tourist who visits Ccotos can vary, but in general this type of tourist is usually a person interested in exploring the cultural, historical and traditional richness of a destination Rodriguez (2001). According to the visitor's book, the origin of the tourists is mostly from Europe, specifically from France, Spain and Germany, the tourists are between 20 and 40 years old, entire families also arrive, all of them with the interest of knowing new tourist destinations in rural places.

Tourists who visit Ccotos have a strong interest in the local culture, traditions, history and cultural heritage, as they are motivated by the opportunity to learn about the customs, crafts, music, dance and other cultural manifestations of a region, it is open to interact with the local population, participate in traditional activities and learn from the experiences and knowledge of local residents. They value opportunities for cultural exchange and direct contact with the community, show respect and appreciation for the local culture, are interested in learning about the different traditions and ways of life of the local people, and value the opportunity to experience the cultural authenticity of the destination.

*We look for places that distance us and disconnect us from what is happening in the world, this visit allows us to be reborn, it gives us energy to return to our country and resume our work. In my country I sell insurance, and coming here allows me to do my job with more energy when I return (woman, 40 years old, tourist).*

This type of tourist seeks experiences that allow them to immerse themselves in everyday life, valuing local cultural activities and events such as festivals, celebrations and demonstrations of local crafts and gastronomy, usually has a greater sensitivity towards the conservation of the environment and the preservation of cultural heritage, is committed to sustainable tourism practices and respects local rules and regulations to protect the natural and cultural environment.

*Every time we travel to places like this it helps us to be good with ourselves, we always respect and adapt to them, Ccotos is a beautiful place very different from where we come from, they have a very beautiful life next to their landscapes and their culture allow us to know more about them (male, 37 years old, tourist).*

The perceptions of tourists vary widely according to their individual experiences and their previous expectations, most of them tend to perceive experiential rural tourism as an experience where they immerse themselves in the local culture and the daily life of the rural population, they consider that it is an opportunity to interact with the local inhabitants, participate in traditional activities and share moments with them contributes to this perception of authenticity, they value the hospitality and warmth of the local community from the first contact they experience with the locals: *"The welcome is friendly, the whole family seems to have been waiting for us for a long time, because they receive affection and kindness"* (woman, 27 years old, tourist).

The willingness to share knowledge and experiences is favorable since it is accompanied by a cozy atmosphere this, usually leaves a positive impression on visitors, they usually include the appreciation of the natural landscapes that Ccotos offers, such as Lake Titicaca and its surroundings enjoying in turn outdoor activities, such as hiking, boat rides or simply contemplate the natural beauty, contributing to an enriching and rewarding experience.

Tourists often value the opportunity to learn about culture, traditions, and lifestyle by participating in cultural activities (Bartra & Flores, 2005), allowing them to better understand cultural identity and deepen their connection with the local population.

### *Relevant Cultural Activities*

Local crafts include handmade fabrics, revaluing artisanal techniques generating income for local artisans and offering visitors the opportunity to purchase local products.

Traditional gastronomy, which is based on local ingredients and recipes, promoting and preserving some traditional dishes, making use of local ingredients, traditional and folkloric music and dance (Villa, 2019). These cultural expressions are important because they preserve the musical styles and traditional dances shared with visitors through shows and presentations.

*We always make artistic presentations, tourists like this because they can dance and see how we dance, we use our local clothing to demonstrate our cultural identity, our dances show the details of our clothing, the kantuta, the hummingbird, the geranium, they are part of our culture* (male, 30 years old, local resident).

Traditional festivities and celebrations. Traditional knowledge related to agriculture, fisheries, natural medicine and other ancestral practices that value the role of local knowledge in the sustainable management of natural resources.

The language and oral traditions, the stories, myths and legends that are part of the cultural heritage of the community. The local architecture, which includes houses built with natural materials such as stone and adobe, reflecting the history and identity that keep the cultural heritage alive.

All of these cultural elements reflect the cultural practices and history of Ccotos, and not only enrich the visitor experience, but also contribute to strengthening the sense of belonging and cultural pride among local residents.

### *Influence on Local Cultural Identity*

Experiential rural tourism not only promotes the preservation and revaluation of local traditions and customs, but also strengthens the sense of belonging and cultural pride among the residents of the community (Cruz, 2011). When it comes to highlighting activities, festivals and traditional celebrations. Local residents have the opportunity to share their culture with visitors, reinforcing their commitment to their ancestral cultural practices.

*We are proud of our culture, there are some brothers who don't even want to come to Ccotos anymore, and they are even ashamed, on the other hand we are very identified, and we carry the name of Ccotos high, many people value it more than us, but those of us who live here, are proud to belong to Ccotos* (male, 58 years old, local resident).

In the words of Cruz (2011), experiential rural tourism values cultural heritage, including traditional architecture, crafts, gastronomy and artistic expressions. This contributes to strengthening the sense of cultural identity among local residents by recognizing and celebrating the uniqueness of their cultural heritage.

Participation in tourism activities highlights the local culture and history strengthens the cultural self-esteem of the population, local residents are proud to share their traditions with visitors and to be recognized for their cultural richness, generating greater awareness about the importance of local culture among residents, as they interact with visitors and share their cultural knowledge and experiences, Residents develop a greater appreciation for their cultural heritage and their role in its preservation.

Interaction with tourists interested in the local culture promotes the creation of interpersonal bonds between local residents and visitors (Terry, 2017). This fosters a mutual cultural exchange that contributes

to greater understanding and appreciation between the different communities, contributing to the development of a collective identity in Ccotos by focusing on the promotion of shared cultural values and the preservation of ancestral traditions, this strengthens the sense of cohesion and belonging among the residents.

The participation of the local population in experiential tourism activities implies the transmission of knowledge, skills and cultural values from generation to generation, this transfer of knowledge not only ensures the continuity of traditions, but also reinforces the sense of belonging and pride in the local culture (Paredes et al., 2012). This type of tourism gives visitors the opportunity to know and appreciate the local culture in its authentic context through direct interaction with the population, tourists develop a greater understanding and respect for the cultural practices of Ccotos, which in turn leads to promoting their appreciation and preservation.

Tourism fosters collaboration and social cohesion within the population, since it involves local inhabitants in the organization and provision of tourist services, this sense of collectivity strengthens cultural identity and guarantees its long-term preservation in the words of Sariago (2014), therefore, this type of tourism has a significant influence on the local cultural identity by promoting the preservation, valorization and celebration of the cultural heritage of the region. This practice strengthens the sense of identity and cultural pride among local residents, while fostering greater cultural awareness and the development of interpersonal bonds and a collective identity in the community, promoting the preservation, transmission, valuation and development of their local cultural identity.

Experiential rural tourism offers visitors the opportunity to participate in activities and experiences that highlight local traditions and customs, including participation in cultural festivals, demonstrations of traditional crafts, religious ceremonies, and local celebrations.

*When tourists see us doing our ritual to Pachamama, they like it, we explain what it means and they also practice it, sometimes they are amazed because we talk to the environment, they begin to practice it, they even tell us that they will practice it in their country because the environment deserves respect (male, 30 years old, local resident).*

Local residents share their traditional knowledge and skills with visitors through activities such as farming, fishing, weaving and cooking, which leads to the transmission of knowledge helping to preserve and transmit ancestral cultural practices to future generations.

This experiential rural tourism contributes to the recovery and revitalization of cultural practices that have been relegated or abandoned over time. This can include the revitalization of textile techniques, traditional agricultural methods, and ancestral culinary recipes.

*Some of our siblings did not know many of our local customs and traditions, with tourism we had to rescue those traditions, asking our parents and grandparents about our culture, they taught us to grow potatoes in a traditional way, always asking permission from the land, because if we did not do it would go badly for us, today we teach this not only to our children but also to tourists (male, 58 years old, local resident).*

Tourists visit archaeological sites, as well as explore natural beauty through activities such as hiking, bird watching and visit protected areas, this valorization of the architectural and natural heritage contributes to its conservation and protection.

The local population plays an active role in the practice of experiential rural tourism, participating in the planning, implementation and management of tourism activities, this ensures that the experiences offered are authentic and respectful of the local culture, and that the benefits of tourism are shared equitably in the community.

Tourism promotes a sense of pride and cultural belonging among local residents, by highlighting and celebrating the richness and diversity of their cultural heritage, this contributes to strengthening the cultural

identity of the community and encouraging respect and appreciation of its heritage by visitors (Clavitea, 2015).

## Conclusions

The advance of experiential rural tourism in the population center of Ccotos has been distinguished by a cooperative and participatory approach between the local community, authorities and external entities committed to the sustainable growth of tourism in the region. The development of experiential rural tourism in Ccotos has required the construction of appropriate tourist infrastructures, the promotion of cultural activities and the conservation of the local natural and cultural legacy, creating a favorable environment for interaction between visitors and the local community. The implementation of training and awareness programmes has helped to enhance the skills of the local community in the management of experiential rural tourism, encouraging the assimilation and appreciation of its resources and customs by the residents of Ccotos.

In the exercise of experiential rural tourism, a process of direct interaction between visitors and local residents is perceived, in which daily activities are shared, they are involved in cultural events and intercultural dialogue is encouraged, creating bonds of friendship and solidarity between both groups. The experiential rural tourism of Ccotos has contributed significantly to the appreciation of cultural identity and local legacy, fostering a sense of pride and belonging among the residents of the region. Contact with visitors from various regions of the world has made it easier for the inhabitants of Ccotos to recognize and appreciate the abundance of their culture, traditions and lifestyles, motivating the conservation and dissemination of these components to the next generations. The positive appreciation of visitors towards the local culture, added to the interest in getting involved in traditional activities and learning about the history and traditions of Ccotos, has enhanced the self-esteem and perception of the local population, favoring their socioeconomic growth and general well-being.

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