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Cultivating Women's Empowerment through Agritourism: Evidence from Andean Communities

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Received: 30 April 2019; Accepted: 25 May 2019; Published: 30 May 2019



Abstract: Tourism has the potential to empower women, particularly in rural areas. However, little is known about whether it can have the same effect in Andean communities, mainly because the traditional social and cultural structures of those communities have limited women's ability to empower themselves through traditional economic activities. Through interviews with residents participating in agritourism development in seven communities across the Cusco and Puno regions (Peru, South America), this study examined the role of agritourism development in the empowerment of women in those communities as well as the ways in which it has changed traditional gender roles. Study findings revealed that agritourism contributes to four areas of empowerment for women: psychological, social, political, and economic. However, the culture of the Andean communities still has considerable influence on gender dynamics and may prevent women from garnering all the benefits of tourism development. Agritourism development in those communities should incorporate gender-related cultural considerations to navigate and overcome barriers, thereby allowing the maximization of empowerment benefits for women.

Keywords: gender roles; indigenous communities; sustainable tourism

1. Introduction

For many communities, particularly those in remote mountainous areas, tourism is an opportunity to generate economic, social, and environmental benefits. However, these benefits are not always equitably distributed. Males tend to be privileged in tourism development marketing and media efforts [1]. This male-centric approach translates into men benefitting from engagement in tourism activities while women are either unable to participate or prohibited from partaking in them [2]. Furthermore, evidence indicates that tourism development in destinations facing social and economic challenges, such as poverty, has a negative impact on women's roles within their communities. For instance, it can contribute to female participation in prostitution, not always by their own volition [3].

Tourism development can also erode family dynamics, especially in communities with traditional values. Van Broeck's [4] study of traditional Turkish communities involved in tourism demonstrated that although tourism provided women with additional income and improved their quality of life, family bonds were weakened when business needs were prioritized over family. Even when women started tourism businesses, men often took over and diminished women's roles and participation over time. Extant research has also shown that in some cases tourism has served to perpetuate traditional gender roles and expectations, mostly related to women being tasked with domestic chores when tending to tourists [3].

Yet, tourism continues to be seen as a modicum for empowering women [5]. Tourism creates employment opportunities for women who otherwise would not have access to work outside their homes, allowing them to generate additional income for their families and reducing their economic dependence on men [6,7]. In communities that have traditional gender roles, such as rural or indigenous ones, the development of tourism fosters the empowerment of women, which increases their self-esteem, independence, and agency to be household decision-makers [8–10]. The latter is important because women managing family income tend to use it more efficiently (e.g., fulfilling all family members' needs) than men [11].

While these positive impacts suggest tourism can benefit women, little is known about the factors of tourism development which induce women's empowerment and alter their roles within communities and households [12]. Women's empowerment and their new roles can lead to new behaviors, which can result in both positive and negative changes in expectations of behavior and power (or lack thereof). These, in turn, have the potential to affect family dynamics and social structure [4]. Thus, the purpose of this study was to address this gap by identifying how agritourism development in indigenous communities in the Andes empowers women to take on new roles beyond those dictated by traditional lifestyles.

Furthermore, gender equity and women's empowerment have been recognized by the United Nations as necessary for the attainment of sustainable development [13], which agritourism has the potential to help in accomplishing [14]. However, pursuing gender equality in certain places like the Andes may require special attention as gender roles are deeply entrenched in their traditional culture. As such, role changes, even those related to tourism endeavors, can generate conflicts within such indigenous communities [15].

2. Literature Review

The involvement of women in tourism is a potential driver for community development, especially in rural areas [16]. Such involvement also produces multiple positive and negative effects on women, which are more pronounced in small and micro family-based tourism initiatives [12,17,18]. Tourism enterprises provide positive impacts for women such as employment opportunities that otherwise would not be available to them [17]. Employment in tourism allows women to improve their social status within the community [10,18,19] and can facilitate gender equity [12]. Beyond economic gains, tourism can also empower women by increasing their self-esteem, identity, and independence, as it encourages them to engage in activities other than homemaking [16,18,20] and to further their education [10,17]. While these workforce opportunities for women allow them to have a stronger presence in private and public spaces of traditionally male-dominated communities [17], they also result in negative impacts such as the disruption of gender roles in family and social structures [12]. Additionally, in tourism enterprises women are often unable to grow in professional environments and are relegated to low-income and low-skill positions that are considered extensions of their family roles, such as housekeeping [17].

Evidence of both positive and negative impacts of tourism development on women indicates that it is critical to take a closer look at the factors that facilitate or inhibit women's empowerment through tourism. This is especially pertinent to pursue sustainability as stated in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which highlight gender equality and women empowerment as important issues to be addressed to attain it [13,21]. Andean communities, where social and cultural traditions dictate strict gender roles, provide a unique setting in which to examine women's empowerment through tourism. Furthermore, the involvement of those communities in agritourism provides an opportunity to extend the understanding of how this niche area of tourism development influences women's empowerment.

2.1. Empowerment through Tourism

Scheyvens [19] analyzed tourism planning and development processes, and determined that although environmental, economic, and cultural considerations were incorporated, there were

none that addressed issues related to gender. There have been efforts to examine the role of community involvement in tourism development which have illustrated considerable benefits of tourism for community members [16,18,22]. However, it should not be assumed that these benefits are gender neutral as men typically receive these benefits [2,19]. To address such gender considerations, Scheyvens [19] developed a framework to identify how tourism influences four types of empowerment—economic, psychological, social, and political—among community members.

Economic empowerment relates not only to a community member's ability to be employed and generate income, but also to ensuring that the income comes from reliable sources. Additional considerations are related to the distribution of economic benefits across the community given that power structures may constrain benefit distribution. Psychological empowerment relates to community members' attitudes. For instance, a psychologically empowered individual is self-reliant and independent, whereas a psychologically disempowered individual is apathetic and submissive. Social empowerment refers to the extent to which a community's sense of cohesion is affected by tourism. In some communities, tourism facilitates the creation of social development projects or groups, which strengthens community unity. In other communities, tourism has contributed to the increase of social problems such as crime and prostitution. Political empowerment refers to the degree to which community members are included in decision-making processes. It also includes the concentration of power within the community and its members' ability to dictate tourism development.

Scheyvens' [19] framework emphasizes the need to address gender roles in tourism development within indigenous communities. Scholars have applied the framework to rural tourism to assess levels of disempowerment in Mexico [23] and community involvement in Chinese villages [24]. Strzelecka et al. [25] used the framework to evaluate empowerment as a predictor of community member support of tourism in rural Poland. Although the framework was developed to assess levels of community empowerment through ecotourism, it was contextualized for this study to assess the influence of agritourism on female empowerment. However, its application specifically to assess women's empowerment through agritourism is limited.

2.2. Agritourism

Extant research has provided evidence of the multiple benefits that stakeholders can attain through agritourism. Economic benefits include the generation of additional income for farms, the revitalization of rural areas through the creation of new businesses, the creation of new job opportunities, and the reduction of dependence on agriculture [26–28]. There are also non-economic benefits, for instance, educating the public on the role and value of agriculture [20], restoring the bond between urban and rural areas, and preserving family heritage such as historic buildings and traditions [22,26,29], as well as other types of heritage such as rural landscapes [14]. Importantly, Barbieri [14] stresses that agritourism fosters more economic, socio-cultural, and environmental sustainability in comparison to other types of agricultural enterprises.

Women play a major role in agritourism, as they are often the leaders of such enterprises and contribute most of the work required to operate them [22,30,31]. Studies have shown that women assign a greater value to their participation in agritourism because they consider it a viable option to generate additional income for their families that offers them job opportunities while increasing their independence [32]. Evidence also indicates that women particularly value agritourism as a tool to educate the public about agriculture and local food systems, help their community, and promote sustainable development [30–33].

However, most studies related to gender issues in agritourism focus on farm contexts that are not universal, and can only be representative of their particular locations, such as the United States [34,35] and some European countries [22,31,36]. Agriculture in South America, particularly in indigenous communities, presents a different context distinct from those examined in previous studies [37]. Because these communities do not possess the resources and actors existing in the United States and Europe, previous findings do not reflect the reality of agritourism in Andean communities. Within this

context, the purpose of this study was to determine the impact of agritourism development on the empowerment of female Andean community members. Informed by Scheyvens' [19] empowerment framework, this study specifically sought to answer how agritourism development in traditional Andean communities influenced women's (1) psychological empowerment, (2) social empowerment, (3) political empowerment, and (4) economic empowerment.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Approach

In conducting this study, the researchers followed an interpretivist paradigm, acknowledging the unique insights of community members involved in agritourism. This facilitated the creation of knowledge in a collaborative manner between study participants and researchers [38] that enabled researchers to expand the scope of the empowerment framework [19]. Given the characteristics of this paradigm, a qualitative approach to data collection was utilized to provide opportunities to increase the understanding of how agritourism influenced women's empowerment in Andean communities. The use of in-depth semi-structured interviews allowed participants to fully elaborate on their answers and researchers to further inquire and probe participants on topics of particular relevance in the interviews [39,40].

It is necessary to acknowledge that the majority of the research team has backgrounds that may have influenced the study. Most team members are Peruvian and native Spanish speakers, which allowed a more accurate design of the interview guide as well as its application. In addition, their extensive research experience in agritourism allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the activity context and complexities. The one non-Peruvian team researcher has extensive experience in tourism product development, which allowed them to take on the role of auditor. The researchers involved in data collection interacted with the study communities both as researchers and as tourists experiencing their agritourism offerings. This may have influenced the researchers' perspective as they viewed the communities through a tourist gaze. It may have also influenced the community members to see the researchers as tourists, which may have led them to avoid expressing negative opinions about the tourism activity. However, this prolonged engagement provided the research team with in-depth and first-hand knowledge of the agritourism offerings and community dynamics, which was crucial for interpreting the data.

Several techniques to enhance data trustworthiness were applied [41]. Data credibility was addressed through the use of prolonged engagement. Purposive sampling through the identification of community members that participated in agritourism initiatives ensured the transferability of findings. Dependability was accounted for by incorporating a non-Peruvian research team member, who provided an outside perspective on the data and researcher triangulation. Dependability was also addressed through peer debriefing, which allows for correction in case there are disparities between respondents' and researchers' views [42]. Lastly, confirmability was addressed through an audit trail that was used to decrease the chance of discrepancies when different research team members conducted interviews [41,42]. The audit trail comprised a detailed record of all steps taken from the beginning of the study, such as raw data, field notes, protocols, materials, and instruments, to ensure data trustworthiness [43].

3.2. Study Setting

The study took place in seven rural communities in the Peruvian Andes (Cusco and Puno regions) that offer diverse agritourism activities: Misminay, Amaru, Raqchi, and Paru Paru-Saccaca in Cusco, and Hatunqolla, Amantani, and Llachón in Puno (Figure 1). These communities were selected based on several criteria. One of them was their diverse agritourism offerings, which range from textile weaving (e.g., Misminay, Amaru), pottery (e.g., Raqchi), sowing and harvesting of crops (e.g., Paru Paru-Saccaca), spiritual rituals (Hatunqolla), artisanal fishing (Amantani), and cattle herding (Llachón).

Another criterion considered in their selection was their different managerial structures. Misminay operates as an exclusive experiential tourism product of a large tour operator; Amaru and Paru Paru–Saccaca belong to consortiums of communities associated for tourism and conservation purposes, respectively. Hatunqolla, Amantani, Llachón, and Raqchi operate individually and are community managed. It is also worth noting that with the exception of Misminay, all initiatives are included in the Peruvian government’s directory of rural community tourism providers.



Figure 1. Study settings (Peru, South America).

Furthermore, the study communities have a shared cultural Quechua ethnic background and similar economic characteristics. The regions where these communities are located, Cusco and Puno, have limited economic power and high percentages of the population living under the poverty line (above 20%) [44]. In terms of economic activities, all study communities have agriculture as their main economic activity, which they look to complement through agritourism offerings. Tourism is regarded as a desirable economic activity because these regions are the most visited by international tourists due to attractions such as Lake Titicaca in Puno and Machu Picchu in Cusco. This also means that the communities receive more attention from the government, are included in the strategic development plans, and receive greater support for tourism development from the Peruvian Ministry of Trade and Tourism [45]. These communities have kept ancestral customs, embedded in their everyday life activities and traditions such as clothing, cuisine, crafts, and music. This includes the expression of traditional gender ideologies of machismo and marianismo. Machismo refers to a set of attitudes, beliefs, and values that favor male dominance over women, whereas marianismo refers to the attitudes and behaviors expected of women such as passivity, caretaking, and nurturing [46]. These communities were selected purposively as they possess the characteristics needed to gain a deeper understanding of how agritourism can empower women. The decision to purposively select them, rather than use a representative sample of agritourism participants, was driven by the authors’ use of the interpretivist paradigm and need to gather qualitative data to gain a deep understanding of the relationship between agritourism and women’s empowerment [47,48].

3.3. Data Collection

A leader managing the tourism affairs for individual or collective initiatives publicly represents each community included in this study. Purposive sampling was initiated by contacting these tourism leaders via email or phone. A visit to each community was scheduled that allowed the research team

to interview the tourism community leader, partake in the collectives' tourism activities, and recruit additional participants. A total of 12 interviews were conducted in November 2015 involving 24 participants; six interviews were with tourism community leaders and six group interviews included members of the community offering agritourism activities. Although both men and women were included in data collection, in many cases men acted as interpreters for women when the latter only spoke Quechua or had a very basic level of Spanish. In-depth interviews followed a semi-structured protocol guided by extant literature on Scheyvens' [19] empowerment framework and agritourism. The interview guide inquired about general community characteristics, involvement in agritourism, and perceptions of women's role in the community pre- and post- participation in tourism.

3.4. Data Analysis

Native Spanish speakers of the research team alternated leading the interviews, while the others provided support in note-taking, evidence gathering (e.g., photos), and probing (i.e., asking follow-up questions for participants to expand on their answers). On average, interviews lasted 42 min and were audio recorded and transcribed. After data collection, thematic analysis was performed through open and axial coding, supported by investigator triangulation and peer debriefing. Open coding allowed for the identification of concepts and meanings within the data and the development of relevant themes for each. Axial coding, guided by Scheyvens' [19] framework, then allowed the identification of empowerment categories and relationships among the identified themes. Finally, one of the Spanish-speaking researchers translated the emergent themes and supporting quotes into English. Then, another Spanish-speaking researcher reviewed the translations to check for accuracy in idiomatic expressions. Ultimately, evidence of all four of Scheyvens' [19] empowerment categories were identified in the data.

4. Findings

Quechua culture follows ancient practices, which permeate all aspects of these communities' everyday lives and are evident in their gender roles. Women's main traditional role is to take care of the house and their family; as such, their responsibilities are limited to housework. Men's role is to be the provider and decision-maker; traditionally they are the only ones who generate an income for their family. As the heads of household, they represent their family in public spaces, and have a voice in community matters. In communities such as these, both men and women participate in agriculture; however, men are the ones that manage all income related to it.

4.1. Psychological Empowerment

The data shows evidence of psychological empowerment, as agritourism provided opportunities for women to improve their self-esteem and sense of pride through education, cultural manifestations, and improved status within their families and communities [49]. Understanding such empowerment requires first identifying the status quo of gender roles in these Andean communities, in which women's responsibilities in the family and in the community are dictated by cultural practices. A male participant of Amantaní gave the following description:

That is the custom, here there's still machismo, it still exists . . . Even though I know the [gender equality] laws, in Amantaní it still exists. Women are always a little . . . marginalized. For example, to get out of the house and go to a festivity, we go to the Sunday meeting, men and women, but women always have to walk three meters behind, they cannot walk together, or paired, never like that.

Yet, recognized gender inequalities are not viewed as negative, but rather as a manifestation of their customs and traditions. This demonstrates the importance of culture in determining gender roles in these communities, roles that are not questioned as they have been passed on through generations. One participant explained: "It's not mistreatment, they are always there. It's a custom; women are

not offended by it". This limitation to women's psychological empowerment is further evidenced by gender-differentiated access to education opportunities, like learning Spanish, which is deemed only important for men to learn: "In Amantani everyone speaks Quechua, there's not a single person that speaks Aymara and . . . women, most of them don't speak Spanish". Altogether, these quotes provide evidence of conclusions on how barriers to psychological empowerment could lead to women's feelings of inadequacy and inferiority [49].

However, the development of agritourism in the Andean mountains has facilitated increased self-esteem and a sense of independence in women, as their everyday activities, such as weaving, are attractive to tourists. This has allowed women to grow by becoming entrepreneurs and leaders in their group initiatives, as an Amaru female participant, aided by her husband in translation, explains:

According to what she's saying they [women] used to get together every Monday, 30 people. Now they have a space, back then they got together just to weave and now they have a space of their own. We have done things ourselves, is what she's saying.

This evidence demonstrates that agritourism related to the production of handicrafts made from locally grown materials helps women feel a sense of pride in their culture and family heritage. Additionally, it contributes to psychological empowerment by elevating women's presence within their communities. Daily activities that went unnoticed by other community members have become visitor attractions, as a male participant from Amaru expressed: "The same way they were showing you [their textiles], just like that they started, but they didn't think tourists would come because of it, but now they have a space of their own". As a result, participating women conveyed a greater understanding of the value of their customs, and often they lead the efforts to preserve them, acting as "keepers" of their traditions and cultural knowledge [49], as an Amaru female participant stated:

You have to value it [our culture], not look down on it. The experiences from the community, its traditions. Weavings too, the experience of their mothers, of their grandparents, they have to keep them going, not let them get devalued.

Women's recognition of their value in preserving and promoting their cultural heritage through agritourism provides evidence that this form of development promotes psychological empowerment, even in communities where cultural and social traditions may limit such opportunities.

4.2. Social Empowerment

Perceptions of agritourism's effect on community cohesion were assessed to elucidate social empowerment for women in these seven communities. Findings indicate that agritourism creates the need for tourism business structures that support social equity. Otherwise, women's eagerness to participate in tourism endeavors could result in domestic abuse, as men can interpret it as a challenge to their status and role in the family. A male participant of Amantani shared an example of this challenge:

I felt bad to see a woman coming down to the port at noon, all day, until 4 pm to see if they would bring her any tourists, at least two. It's 4 pm and she didn't get any tourists, she goes back home and her husband hits her. 'Where were you? Why are you down there all day?'

The study communities have created a tourism association system to deal with inequity in agritourism endeavors. Association members choose a leader, whose term length is a maximum of two years. Tourism associations are a common organization model in these communities as they allow community members to support each other, strengthen their agritourism offerings, and fairly distribute benefits and responsibilities. A female participant from Amaru explained how profits and clients are distributed among association members:

Let's say we have five people [tourists] right now. From that we get around 200 soles, we distribute that among us here. When we have a lot of tourists, we divide them [with the other association members], and we also work together in other things . . .

These associations have guidelines for their tourism operations that all members must follow to ensure good quality service. They also establish a rotation system that allows an equal distribution of benefits among all members. Community members involved in tourism comply with such rules, as described here by a female participant from Raqchi:

There's a lady in charge, she has a list. According to that list, she distributes the visitors so not only one of us gets tourists, and we have to follow the rules. It's a rotating [system].

Guidelines also incorporate a penalty system to apply to members who are at fault (e.g., tardiness, unkempt houses). The severity or recurrence of these faults can result in skipping a rotation, which ensures that member's compliance with all regulations. A Raqchi woman explained the penalty for tardiness:

We have one rule; we need to be on time. Let's say ... visitors arrive and we have to be there at 3:00 pm and until 3:15 pm ... if I'm late, I will be fined [by the association]. I need to be on time.

Participating in a formal association and adhering to their established rules, especially the rotation systems, allow women to have an equal chance at benefiting from agritourism activities. In other words, tourism associations give women the same status as men in the creation and delivery of an agritourism product. It also elevates their status within the community because their traditional activities extend benefits to the agritourism product either directly (e.g., assisting with chores to prepare for tourists) or indirectly (e.g., selling crafts to tourists). Collectively, these efforts strengthen the sense of cohesion and collaboration among community members [49], as a male Amantaní participant explained:

My wife, my partners, everyone participates. We figure out how much money we have made, then we distribute it, this much for entrance tickets, this much for grocery shopping. Then we have holidays coming up, Christmas for instance, so for Christmas we set apart a small amount of money for the children and for the community's celebrations then we can give some coca leaves, beer, sodas, participate with the community ...

For the tourism association system to function effectively, there must be mutual support for agritourism activities within the households of association members. The participation of both husband and wife is necessary in order to increase efficiency, as a woman from Llachón expressed: "Both, because only one could not do it alone. Between the two of us, we do things faster". Men also acknowledged the need for participation from both genders in agritourism activities, although less in terms of job efficiency and more in relation to the fairness of leaving women in charge of all tasks related to tourism. A male participant from Amaru indicated the following: "We help each other out; if we left them [women] alone, I don't think it would be right. We support each other". Women's involvement in agritourism development can empower women in the social dimension, as long as it is supported by organizational structures that can guarantee the same access and benefits as men receive.

4.3. Political Empowerment

The political dimension of empowerment assesses the extent to which women are represented in decision-making related to community matters, their participation in the development and implementation of tourism projects such as agritourism, and the existence of outlets for their issues and concerns [49]. In this sense, culture is still a major influencing factor in the perceptions of decision-making in the everyday context of the Andean communities. Such influence is reflected in their political structures, as women are not considered for leadership positions, unless the position is related to caretaking or family matters. For instance, the top authority in these communities is the lieutenant governor, a position traditionally held by men. Hence, when a male participant of Amantaní was asked about a woman being the lieutenant governor, his response was as follows: "Women cannot

be in those positions. Only on the maternal club, or the children's, those can be women, but not the lieutenant governor". This sentiment reflects the status quo perception that women are not suited for leadership roles.

The social structure of the studied Andean communities is also affected by this culturally driven political organization, as it reflects women's status as lesser than men's. For instance, when inquiring about the number of community members, they refer to the number of "heads of the family" (i.e., men) rather than the actual number of people, as an Amaru man answered: "How many people are part of the Amaru community?—Us, head of the family, we are 215 currently. Yes . . . head of the family, the men". However, tourism creates opportunities for women to be politically empowered by taking lead of the agritourism initiatives. Furthermore, they are taking on multiple roles that give them a voice in the decision-making related to the tourism activity, which is uncommon in public spaces. Evidence of this was provided by a female participant of Raqchi who stated: "We are the ones that are always put in the board, we lead. We stick up for the association". This expresses how women's roles in the tourism associations facilitates political empowerment by giving them the space for taking on leadership roles.

In brief, Andean women involved in agritourism are embracing their new-found roles and taking pride in their new responsibilities. They are also committed to taking on tasks they would not perform conventionally within their communities, such as public speaking and networking. A woman from Raqchi explained: "When we need to negotiate, we are the ones that have to talk. When we have to invite someone, or go to a tourism fair, we are the ones doing the presentations". There is evidence of agritourism development being conducive to women's political empowerment in Andean communities. However, such empowerment is somewhat constrained due to the influence of culture in their political structure.

4.4. Economic Empowerment

Data indicated that agritourism has enabled the economic empowerment of Andean women, as these activities have provided them with business opportunities and the ability to control the income these activities generate [49]. Traditionally, both men and women in these Andean communities take part in agriculture, which is the main economic activity and one that demands intensive physical work, as explained by a male participant from Hatunqolla: "Well, from the beginning, for instance with farming we both do everything, always the both of us". Despite the participation of both men and women in agriculture, the income generated from agriculture is only collected by men. Tourism has created the need for an additional workforce, which in turn creates employment opportunities for women outside their households, as a female participant from Amaru explained: "Sometimes tourists bring money and so not only the men work, we both do. It is positive. For both. To bring families together."

However, the employment opportunities generated by tourism tend to resemble tasks women would normally undertake in their households while men remain in charge of managerial and operational aspects and continue managing the family finances. This was evident when speaking with a male participant of Hatunqolla about the distribution of tasks and responsibilities between him and his wife when offering agritourism activities: "Sometimes the only difference is in the shopping, most of the time I do the shopping on my own, the bookings, too, with the agencies or collecting money or billing."

Therefore, women are often left to undertake more physically demanding tasks such as cleaning lodging facilities and cooking for tourists, which do not require special skills and pay less. This begs the question of whether this actually empowers women, or merely replicates their traditional role within their community in a different context [7]. Discussion has emerged to determine ways to empower women economically while enabling their empowerment in other dimensions. Women in these communities are aware of this disparity and consider their own participation and effort to be greater than men's. A female participant of the Llachón community described the situation like this:

What do women do here in Llachón?—Us women work more, yes, now I'm working with tourism, first I do the cleaning, then I do laundry, I wash the sheets, then I sweep my dining room, I mop my kitchen, everything.

Perhaps generating additional income for their families may not be sufficient to foster equity in these communities and an approach that incorporates other aspects, such as training, is necessary so that men and women can take advantage of emerging employment opportunities. Involvement in tourism encourages further empowerment as better employment opportunities can only be attained through the development of skills, especially those closely related to their traditions and customs [50]. This is also evident for all community members, like this male participant from Paru Paru–Saccaca, who fully explained the multiple benefits obtained from their involvement in agritourism:

When tourists come, families are being helped, economically, the families, especially women. For example, before, when there was no tourism, when women did not work, for example, in gastronomy, in medicinal plants, handicrafts, they only depended on their husbands that had to work and bring money in. And women would generally only be housewives, they had to do laundry, they had to cook, nothing else.

Collectively, these findings indicate that the economic empowerment of women in these Andean communities can be a double-edged sword. Agritourism development does provide women with additional income, which contributes to their independence. However, it can also hinder their professional growth, as they are restricted to operational positions that do not demand any additional training or education.

5. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to identify the way agritourism development has empowered women in their roles in seven Andean communities. While agritourism is generally posited as an empowering opportunity for women [31,51], this study's findings indicate that this is not always the case. Women experienced different levels of empowerment across the four dimensions identified by Scheyvens [19]. While there is evidence that agritourism in this region can empower women, there is also the potential for agritourism development to result in detrimental effects for women, which poses challenges for the sustainability of this development strategy [12,17,18]. This is of particular relevance in this study given that sustainability can be constrained and influenced by social and natural contexts [15]. More attention has been given to the role of the natural environment, in terms of resource conservation and preservation [52]. However, it has also been observed that cultural embeddedness can have great influence on the sustainability of tourism offerings [15].

In terms of psychological empowerment, it is apparent that while men acknowledge women's disadvantaged position, they are reticent to recognize it as abuse or inequity. Male community members defend such gender dynamics as an element of their traditional culture. It is worth noting that this perception of women's roles was not present in all studied communities. Some communities that belong to the same Quechua cultural group were more willing to acknowledge disparities and more open to make efforts to address them. Nevertheless, agritourism in these Andean communities has improved women's psychological empowerment as a whole, as it encouraged women to lead efforts for the recovery and preservation of customs and traditions. This is an aspect of particular significance in agritourism because it facilitates the continuity of cultural heritage and traditional agricultural practices [22,26]. The findings of this study extend these benefits of agritourism to illustrate that women can achieve psychological empowerment from their role in cultural preservation through agritourism. This suggests that emphasizing cultural preservation and recovery led by women can result in ensuring sustainable tourism development which aligns with Wright and Annes' findings in French rural farms [31]. Hence, similar results can be attained in other indigenous communities that offer agritourism, and involving women can represent a valuable tool for the advancement of sustainability.

Some of these communities, but not all, embrace the notion of members of both genders contributing to tourism activities. This is of particular importance when women participate in agritourism, as there is evidence to suggest it improves their social status and provides them more visibility in public spaces [31,50]. This social empowerment overlaps with political empowerment, as social status can affect women's participation in political matters. In terms of political organization, evidence from this study suggests women are often excluded from traditional structures, and therefore have no influence in decision-making processes related to community matters. However, the creation of tourism associations and organizations within these Andean communities has provided leadership opportunities for women. Assumption of these leadership roles gives women a voice and decision-making power, even if limited by the scope of tourism activities. The importance of associations in increasing women's political empowerment aligns with similar results found in Guatemala [53] and results related to networks in southern France [54]. Therefore, the implementation of strategies and policies that encourage the participation of women in leadership roles in similar communities could further aid in the improvement of political empowerment.

Findings also show that agritourism generates both opportunities and barriers to women's economic empowerment. Development of agritourism in the Andes has empowered women by providing them job opportunities outside of their households and the chance of generating additional income for their families, which supports similar findings in Uganda and Turkey [2]. However, these opportunities can also limit empowerment, as these jobs are low-skilled, and thus, low-wage. Given the similarities of the study findings with similar cases outlined in the literature [2], similar results can be assumed in other rural communities in the Andes. Therefore, it is vital for tourism development plans to incorporate strategies to strengthen women's soft and hard skills, which will allow them to compete for positions on the same level as men [16]. Otherwise, women's limited participation in tourism employment will be perpetuated, which could also affect their levels of empowerment in the other three dimensions. Furthermore, sustained low income and inability to fill positions other than manual labor can reinforce political and social structures where women are relegated to lower social positions and are unable to advance in them, which the United Nations World Tourism Organization in their Millennium Development Goals states as a major issue to be corrected to increase women's empowerment [2,50]. Beyond the scope of tourism, this is also addressed in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as a major challenge that requires greater attention and effort to be overcome [13,21].

Although agritourism development in these communities presented avenues for women's empowerment, it did not always succeed in getting male community members to broaden their culturally influenced views of women's roles in society. While women's involvement in agritourism does garner benefits for them and their communities, gender equity is not fully realized, and the presence of machismo and marianismo remains. These roles are deeply embedded and represent a major hurdle in the accomplishment of gender equity, which seems to also be the case in rural communities in Nepal according to Acharya and Halpenny's [16] study. Therefore, similar challenges can be expected in other rural communities, and development plans should account for them early on in the process. However, these hurdles should not be considered insurmountable. Instead, overcoming them should be seen as a long-term challenge. Changes in gender dynamics brought on by women's participation in agritourism development should be the focus of future studies. Understanding how these changes affect, both positively and negatively, all dimensions within communities in the Andean mountains (i.e., psychological, political, social, economic) will provide valuable information to support future agritourism development efforts. Additionally, changes in women's roles within their households and their communities should also be looked at closely, as negotiation processes by men and women will allow for measures to be taken and guidelines to be developed that minimize disruptions in family dynamics and continue promoting gender equity.

Altogether, this study sheds light on the role that agritourism plays in advancing or inhibiting women's psychological, political, social, and economic empowerment in Andean communities. These

findings demonstrate the influence that each dimension of empowerment has on one another. Therefore, agritourism development should aim at incorporating all aspects of empowerment; otherwise, efforts will be ineffective and most likely their results will be short-lived. Furthermore, this study provides opportunities for further research and greater understanding of the dynamics between gender and the tourism activity in communities with particular contexts, such as the ones included in this study. Specifically, future efforts focusing on the role of agritourism in women's empowerment should attempt to identify the level at which women perceive their empowerment to be sufficient, so that policies can be developed to ensure the techniques identified in this study are achieving that level of perceived empowerment. Most importantly, these findings indicate that careful planning and prioritization of gender equity issues should drive agritourism development in Andean communities.

Author Contributions: Formal Analysis, C.B., C.G.A., S.S.; Investigation, C.B., C.G.A., S.S.; Writing—Original Draft Preparation, C.G.A.; Writing—Review & Editing, C.B., C.G.A., and W.K.; Project Administration, C.G.A.; Funding Acquisition, S.S.

Funding: Data collection for this research study was funded by Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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