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Sustainable Tourism Practices in Indigenous Communities: The Case of the Peruvian Andes

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ABSTRACT

The Peruvian government has supported community-based tourism (CBT) for the last ten years seeking to improve the well-being of marginalized rural communities sustainably. Yet, the notion of sustainability among these CBT providers has not been formally assessed, nor the impact of different managerial models in such a notion. Thus, we interviewed members of seven CBT initiatives operating in the Peruvian Andes to evaluate their level of understanding of sustainability and their awareness of the impacts their activities produce. Analysis yielded five themes and 17 sub-themes which altogether illustrate interviewees' understanding of sustainability attained throughout their path of developing CBT. Findings revealed these CBT initiatives implement many sustainable practices, likely due to the training they receive from supporting agencies. Notably, they assert CBT should remain complementary to agricultural livelihoods as to allow benefits to outweigh negative impacts. Findings also show management and networking inefficiencies in need of improvement to increase sustainability.

KEYWORDS

Sustainability; tourism impacts; networks; Peru; community-based tourism

Introduction

Tourism development is usually promoted among indigenous communities possessing a rich cultural or natural heritage to foster economic wealth. Such an intended outcome depends on the adoption of sustainable practices which entails the implementation of policies and action plans to conserve the suite of resources in a destination while remaining competitive by generating benefits for visitors, the private sector and local people (Polnyottee & Thadaniti, 2015). Despite the global progress on sustainability, politicians, providers, and researchers agree more effort is needed to make the tourism industry more sustainable because often, economic priorities override social and environmental concerns (Dodds & Butler, 2010). In this regard, community-based tourism (CBT) deserves further investigation due to its capacity to improve people's quality of life and community well-being in rural destinations (Amir, Ghapar, Jamal, & Ahmad, 2015; Goulding, Horan, & Tozzi, 2014). However, like with any form of tourism involving the consumption of resources, CBT is not inherently sustainable (Cánoves, Villarino, & Herrera, 2006). Ghaderi and Henderson (2012) state that the overuse of natural and cultural resources

for CBT purposes raises villagers' concerns because negative consequences may outweigh the benefits produced.

Seeking to promote sustainable socio-economic development of rural communities in marginalized areas, the Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism developed in 2007 the National Program of Community-based Rural Tourism, which supports local tourism initiatives to complement a primary economic activity (MINCETUR, 2008). This program has triggered the burgeoning of CBT initiatives in the Peruvian Andes and the emergence of many government and non-profit institutions seeking to provide technical training and marketing assistance to local communities. Yet, no formal assessments of these CBT initiatives have been undertaken which may hinder their sustainability due to several internal (e.g. community leadership) and external (e.g. economic climate) failures (Amir et al., 2015; Goodwin & Santilli, 2009). Aiming to fill such a gap, we interviewed members and leaders of seven CBT initiatives in the regions of Cusco and Puno to assess their familiarity with sustainability and their perceptions of the range of positive and negative impacts tourism has brought to their families and communities. In doing so, we bring into the discussion different managerial models in terms of tourism organization and management structure that CBTs adopted to elucidate the role that associations and partnerships have in their sustainability.

Evaluating locals' perceptions is important due to the conundrums of CBT success, which while decreasing socio-economic, political, ethnic, and gender disparities (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013), can also diminish cultural authenticity and increase dependence on tourism (Kontogeorgopoulos, Churyen, & Duangsaeng, 2015). It is important that evaluations move beyond quantitative approaches measuring residents' perceptions to more thoroughly understand the intricacies (e.g. reasons, impacts) behind tourism development (Nunkoo, Smith, & Ramkissoon, 2013; Sharpley, 2014). This is particularly important in developing countries, as this study aims within the context of CBT. As such, study results can help government agencies, non-profit organizations and tour operators supporting CBT to adjust their managerial and programming strategies to minimize potential threats and maximize intended benefits within the providing community (Goulding et al., 2014; Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2015). The incorporation of different managerial models into the discussion of the study results also contributes to the broad set of CBT outcomes available in the literature.

Literature review

In many communities, tourism has become a common collective action to solve shared problems or seize opportunities (Vogt & Jordan, 2015). Within this context, CBT emerges to emphasize the communal involvement from the early planning (e.g. developing an integrated vision) to daily management (e.g. resource monitoring) tasks (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009). Yet, quite often these initiatives result in the marginalization and subordination of some community members, eroding their sustainability (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005). Thus, it is consistently suggested that CBT should be developed along with programs to increase leadership skills and empowerment among locals beyond mere technical capacity-building (Gascón, 2013; Okazaki, 2008). However, these suggestions are not easy to implement because they tend to require significant financial resources and personal commitments

which are difficult to attain (Lapeyre, 2010; Tolkach & King, 2015). Further complications arise with the contested notion of sustainability that requires the holistic integration of the positive and negative impacts of tourism development within different levels—from the provider to the surrounding communities—of analysis (Barbieri, 2017). The next paragraphs review the benefits and challenges of CBT and the collaboration strategies suggested to pursue its sustainability.

The sustainability intricacies of CBT: benefits and pitfalls

International organizations support the development of CBT given the many benefits it can bring to indigenous communities, especially related to the conservation of natural and cultural resources, empowerment and increased sense of ownership among local people, improved communication infrastructure, job creation and increased incomes, and reduction in rural depopulation (Amir et al., 2015; Goulding et al., 2014). When CBT services are women-operated, economic emancipation and increased gender equality have also been documented (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013; LaPan, Morais, Wallace, & Barbieri, 2016). Yet, claiming sustainability also requires the assessment of negative impacts that tourism can produce. In the case of CBT, environmental deterioration, socio-cultural disintegration, and economic inequality have been reported resulting from either weak managerial capacity (Goulding et al., 2014) or inadequate institutional support from donors and non-governmental organizations (Lapeyre, 2010).

The literature comprises guidelines to augment the aforementioned benefits and decrease the negative impacts of CBT in the quest for sustainability. A major emphasis is placed in ensuring self-governance and social cohesiveness among locals because internal community conflicts can undermine involvement and tourism success (Lapeyre, 2010). Towards such an end, Farrelly (2011) suggests appraising different decision-making models beyond democratic systems, as some cultural groups have showed discomfort with decisions adopted by majoritarian vote. In seeking broad community involvement, Amir et al. (2015) emphasize to seek the involvement of family and community members with diverse skills, talents, and ages as to maximize benefits and seek long-term viability. In this regard, it is especially important to involve women in the decision-making process because they tend to be key players in CBT (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013).

Taking actions towards the preservation of natural resources and landscapes in the community is also critical to enhance the overall tourist experience (Cánoves et al., 2006) and fulfill locals' desire to maintain their natural surroundings as original as possible (Amir et al., 2015). A major threat to CBT destinations is the inappropriate development of infrastructure usually associated with lack of land use policies which leads to overcrowding of some places while causing abandonment of others which tends to harm natural and cultural resources (Holladay & Powell, 2013). Thus, conservation efforts should be accompanied with well-designed educational services targeting tourists (e.g. signage) and locals (e.g. workshops) because increased knowledge fosters supportive attitudes towards resource management, positive environmental behavior, and conservation philanthropy (Tichaawa & Mhlanga, 2015). For example, adequate interpretation has led community members formerly involved in high impact extractive activities to shift to nature-based tourism (Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011).

Economically, it is expected that CBT generates enough profit to be distributed in the community and facilitate overall development. However, this is not always the case due to the incipient—thus low—market demand for this form of tourism (Tolkach, King, & Pearlman, 2013) and the predominant control by non-local tour operators who retain a large proportion of the profits (Lapeyre, 2010). Tichaawa and Mhlanga (2015) add that CBT's economic contribution to local communities is usually minute because of weak provider-tourist business interactions. Thus, to maximize the multiplier effect of CBT while reducing economic leakages, it is imperative to increase business readiness among locals by strengthening the economic linkages in backward (suppliers-providers) and forward (providers-tourists) interactions (Holladay & Powell, 2013).

Pursuing CBT sustainability: networking platforms

Pursuing sustainability in CBT requires the presence of strong networking platforms (Polnyotee & Thadaniti, 2015), which can occur within a community, between the community and supporting agencies, and among local CBT initiatives (Tolkach et al., 2013). The within-community networking refers to the joint efforts among members of the community that may involve informal sporadic collaborations and discussions as well as permanent and formal associations. These networks are critical in CBT because they usually emerge from an energized individual or small group of members with a vision of local tourism development (Chemnasiri, 2012; Rocharungsat, 2005). Yet, the actual realization of CBT requires a local leader with the capacity to involve other community members and who has a clear understanding of the benefits and responsibilities that tourism entails (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009) as well as the prevailing needs in the community (Chemnasiri, 2012).

Networking between the community and supporting public and private (e.g. tour operators, non-profit organizations) agencies has received most of the attention throughout literature (Holladay & Powell, 2013). Positive effects of agency support are usually reported as financial aid, such as subsidized micro-entrepreneurship loans, which only happens when funder's exercise of power over the community is prevented (Tolkach et al., 2013). Non-economic external mechanisms (e.g. creation of advisory boards) also contribute to the welfare of the community and their resources, although to a lesser extent (Sakata & Prideaux, 2013). Ideally, supporting agencies should facilitate efficient communication to foster active participation of the community, develop analytic tools to make informed decisions based on a destination's actual diagnosis, and invest adequate resources to build the operational, marketing and management capacity of community members involved in tourism (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005). Attaining those positive results require developing policies to assure long-term empowerment and decision-making capacity of locals and strategies fostering the economic diversification and increased competitiveness of the destination (Iorio & Corsale, 2013; Kompula, 2014).

The third networking level occurs when various CBT initiatives decide to work together forming a consortium. However, this type of networking is difficult to achieve due to different social identities, values, and resource priorities across communities (Rocharungsat, 2005). These differences can be negotiated by designating a representative entity (individual or group) to coordinate and manage internal (within and among CBTs) and external (with public and private stakeholders) tasks. Still, problems may arise when one

or more communities feel they are at a disadvantage because of unbalanced representation across members (Stone & Stone, 2011).

In brief, the extant literature indicates that CBT is conducive to the sustainable development of rural communities, although residents often perceive that the negative impacts of these initiatives override the positive ones and just a handful of locals reap economic gains (Amir et al., 2015; Goulding et al., 2014). Yet, the extent to which CBT providers are aware of the sustainability of their initiatives in terms of the positive and negative impacts produced needs more investigation (Nunkoo et al., 2013; Sharpley, 2014). The pursuit of sustainability in CBT requires strong networking platforms (Tolkach et al., 2013), whose strength may depend on the power relations and the leadership within the managerial model followed (Farrelly, 2011). Yet, the extent to which the governance and networks emerging from different managerial models determine the sustainability standing of CBT providers is not known. Thus, this study sought to eliminate both major information gaps by understanding the notion of sustainability among members of CBT, their level of awareness of the impacts of their offerings, and the extent to which those are associated with different managerial models.

Research methods

Study setting

We conducted this study along the Cusco-Puno tourism corridor in the Peruvian Andes, which anchors in Machu-Picchu (Cusco) and Tititaca Lake (Puno) protected areas, both well-known international destinations. Spanish and Quechua are official languages in Cusco; Spanish, Quechua and Aymara in Puno. Given their strong cultural and natural heritage, many CBT initiatives have emerged along the Cusco-Puno corridor targeting tourists who want to enrich their visit by experiencing first-hand the Quechua-Aymara living culture. We selected seven officially recognized CBT initiatives geographically dispersed in the region to participate in this study. Misminay, Amaru, Saccacca and Raqchi are in Cusco while Hatun Qolla, Llachón, and Amantaní are in Puno (Table 1).

We purposefully selected these CBT initiatives taking into consideration two criteria. First, they are based in communities that have similar cultural and economic characteristics. Culturally, all these communities are Quechua and largely practice their ancestral lifestyles, beliefs and community governance processes. Economically, these communities are deemed “vulnerable” due to their reduced political and economic power (MEF, 2016). Settled in very high altitudes, between 3,380 and 3,840 meters above sea level, community members face harsh living conditions taking into consideration their agriculture-based livelihoods. Secondly, we chose CBT initiatives with different managerial models in terms of tourism organization and management structure. Amaru and Saccacca operate as part of greater CBT consortia known as “*La Tierra de los Yachaq*” (8 communities) and “*Parque de la Papa*” (6 communities), respectively; the remaining CBT initiatives operate independently. Misminay is managed through a tour operator with the support of a non-governmental organization (NGO), Amaru is managed through an NGO exclusively, Saccacca is a community managed with the support of an NGO, and the remaining (Raqchi, Hatun Qolla, Llachón, Amantaní) are exclusively community managed.

Table 1. Key characteristics of study communities.

Initiative	District	Tourism organization	Management structure	Development stage ^a	Life cycle ^b	Flag offering
Cusco						
Misminay	Maras	Independent	Tour operator and NGO supported	Strengthening	Settling	Textiles
Amaru	Pisac	Consortium (Tierra de los Yachacs)	NGO supported	Strengthening	Emerging	Textiles and trekking
Saccacca	Pisac	Consortium (Parque de la Papa)	NGO supported and community management	Consolidating	Settling	Potato
Raqchi	San Pedro	Independent	Community management	Consolidating	Maturing	Pottery and archeology
Puno						
Hatun Qolla	Atuncolla	Independent	Community management	Consolidating	Maturing	Trekking and archeology
Llachón	Capachica	Independent	Community management	Consolidating	Maturing	Kayaking and archeology
Amantaní	Amantaní	Independent	Community management	Consolidating	Emerging	Textiles and landscapes

^a“Strengthening” indicates that offerings still require improvement and “consolidating” means that offerings are well established. None of the participating initiatives is considered fully consolidated (MINCETUR, 2016).

^bIndicates the number of years that the community offers tourism and not the experience of the interviewee. It was constructed from interviews and documentary review and grouped as: Emerging (5 years or less); Settling (6–10 years); and Maturing (11 years or more).

All these CBT initiatives are in full operation but are officially classified at different development stages. Misminay and Amaru are “strengthening” initiatives because their offerings still require improvement while the remaining ones are “consolidating” because their offerings are well established (MINCETUR, 2016). Based on the number of years offering tourism, two initiatives are emergent (5 years or less), two are settled (6–10 years), and three are matured (11–18 years). All participating CBT initiatives offered homestays and demonstrations of their ancestral arts, livelihood practices, knowledge, and traditions. However, their flagship offerings differed based on their own expertise and resources. Four initiatives offered hands-on activities of their traditional arts (textiles, pottery) and three outdoor recreation activities (trekking, kayaking), clearly emphasizing distinctions among them (e.g. knitting vs. wool dyeing, trekking with or without llamas). Some initiatives also capitalized on their unique resources to craft their tourism offerings. Raqchi and Hatun Qolla offered tours to nearby archeological sites, Amantaní spotlighted their privileged views of Lake Titicaca, and Saccacca highlighted the repertoire of potato varieties grown in the area for centuries.

Data generation and analysis

The research team contacted the selected CBT initiatives and asked for their participation in this study. Once the research team arrived into the community, the CBT leader asked their peers for their willingness to participate. We conducted 12 interviews in 2015, which included 24 individuals (18 members of the CBT initiatives and 6 tourism leaders). More women (15) than men (9) participated in the study, their ages ranged from 28 to 62 years old. We followed in-depth semi-structured procedures to ensure the efficient use of participants’ time while given us freedom to elaborate on specific emerging themes (Patton, 2002). Predetermined questions focused on four main topics:

(1) community (e.g. what are the main economic activities? what festivities do you celebrate?); (2) CBT initiatives (e.g. how is your CBT initiative organized? who is involved? do you recruit new participants?); (3) perceptions of tourism impacts (e.g. what changes have you noticed in your community since you started hosting tourists?); and (4) sustainability (e.g. have you heard before the word “sustainability”? what sustainable practices you follow?).

Participants chose the location (e.g. kitchen, front yard, communal space) and format (individual vs. group) of interviews to facilitate a natural and fluid participation (Patton, 2002). The members of the research team, all native Spanish speakers, conducted the interviews in Spanish alternating leading (following the questionnaire script), supporting (assisting with probing), and note-taking roles. Interviews, averaging 42 minutes each, were voice-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Framed within inductive methods, we used open and axial coding for data analysis using the original Spanish transcription. First, two researchers independently read all interviews to identify emerging topics which we used to develop initial coding categories (Patton, 2002). Then, both researchers went back to the data for actual coding; we built onto the existing coding frame when additional themes emerged. Once we finalized theme categories, we established relationships among them. We peer-debriefed throughout data interpretation to ensure confirmability of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After coding was complete, the third researcher reviewed the coded materials to ensure consistency in data interpretation (Patton, 2002). After analysis was completed, one researcher translated the themes and quotes to English; the other two researchers reviewed the translations to ensure appropriate idiomatic and expression accuracy. We have given aliases to our participants to protect their confidentiality and included the name of the initiative or the consortium next to it.

Study findings

Data analysis yielded five themes and 17 sub-themes (Table 2), which altogether illustrate participants’ understanding of sustainability attained throughout their path of developing CBT.

Table 2. Emerging themes and sub-themes.

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Discerning tourism sustainability	1a—Conserving community resources 1b—Avoiding tourism dependency
2. Managing their resources for tourism	2a—Using local products 2b—Cleaning public areas 2c—Noticing climate change
3. Conversing about tourism impacts	3a—Increasing the household income 3b—Spreading economic benefits 3c—Recovering natural resources 3d—Enhancing our quality of life 3e—Rejecting negative impacts
4. Governing CBT	4a—Democratizing decision-making 4b—Evolving commitment 4c—Coordinating efforts 4d—Recognizing others’ support
5. Growing the tourism business	5a—Growing slow but steady 5b—Building partnerships 5c—Identifying growth constraints

Discerning tourism sustainability

This theme denotes that although many participants had difficulty providing a formal definition for sustainability, their narratives and practices consistently showed strong efforts towards managing tourism sustainably. Most indicated this was the first time hearing the term or that they could not recall its meaning. Yet, Jorge (Raqchi) provided a classical definition emphasizing the long-run benefits beyond economic return:

It is simply tourism in a way that not only benefits them economically but that also improves their quality of life and that also protects the environment. It has something to do with the long run, of creating benefits not just for right now but also for the future; so that the next generation, their children, can also benefit from this activity.

Nonetheless, participants' narratives and observed behaviors demonstrated they follow several practices that are frequently deemed sustainable. Efforts for *conserving community resources* were salient, like Jacinta (Amaru) who explained the need to value local traditions "by keeping them alive and not rejecting them". Consistent with their livelihoods, participants emphasized the conservation of their agricultural resources even by imposing strict community regulations to protect their crops. Elmer explained zoning restrictions of Amantani:

The haba suyo [bean region] is the open field, where animals have to be. [...] If someone doesn't have time to graze their sheep in these areas, then they have to ask the municipality for permission, pay to have their animals in their house.

Participants expressed a commitment to *avoid tourism dependency* because it could hinder their culture, livelihoods and self-sufficiency:

Tourism is a complement. I say to myself, what happens if tourism isn't forever? What happens if there's a war? If there's an earthquake? Tourism is over. If I'm only going to live of tourism then my food is not guaranteed. And I'm not going to eat money, right? We want to work in tourism, but without losing our culture, without losing agriculture. (Juan, Saccacca)

In their quest to avoid dependency, participants explained they balance their agriculture and tourism activities through "seasonality". Some talked about "tourism seasonality" explaining they work the land when the family is not receiving tourists. Others mentioned that climate conditions (e.g. rain) mandated when to prioritize agriculture over receiving tourists.

Managing their resources for tourism

Participants consistently explained that they were managing their resources because these were the pillar of their tourism offerings. Elmer (Amantani) explained the need to tend their lands because these were part of their tourism offerings. As such, his family would receive tourists no more than twice a week so they could tend their lands, because otherwise "my lands are going to be deserted, and what is the tourist going to see there?" Such tourist-driven vision strongly emerged when participants stated their determination to *use local products*, like Pedro (Parque de la Papa), who explained about the food offered to tourists: "Everything is produced here, the potato, the quinoa [...] If you found a lady serving a plate of noodles [to the tourist] here, I think they would be punished." Manuel (Hatun Qolla) explained that they use local ingredients to

safeguard tourists' health: "If you buy from a supermarket then the product can be chemical or fertilizer-based and that can harm the tourists. It's in my conscience that the products must be healthy and natural."

Cleaning public areas (e.g. plazas, roads) was another way that showed how participants managed their community resources based on their tourism activities. For example, Raqchi (where Inca archaeological sites attract tourists regularly) scheduled clean-ups twice a month, while Amantaní (where tourism is intermittent and seasonal) organized them two days ahead of tourists' arrival. Although most participants explained that cleaning public areas was a community effort and expected from all their members, some mentioned that it was only compulsory for those involved in tourism.

Across the board, participants were very vocal on *changes in the climate* they were noticing, usually in terms of extreme low and high temperatures and rainfall variability including late hailstorms. Consistently, participants were concerned with the impacts of climate change in their livelihoods. As such, some explained how they are adapting their tourism offerings due to climate change:

Right now it burns too hot, that's why we take our visitors [for hiking] between three-thirty or four, because by then the strong heat has decreased a bit. [...] It is completely forbidden to leave on the boats [for lake rides] after noon [...] it is prohibited because the tempest comes. (Elmer, Amantaní)

Conversing about tourism impacts

Throughout the interviews, participants were constantly referring to the benefits that CBT has brought to their families and communities in different ways: "I believe that tourism, whether directly or indirectly, supports almost all of us, everyone directly or indirectly is benefited" (Elsa, Raqchi). Most commonly, participants talked about the direct economic gains in terms of *increasing the household income* of families hosting tourists in their homes: "We make enough to support our children now, we also have some extra to buy things, we have a little more money now to give the children too" (Berta, Amaru). In that regard, participating men and women often mentioned that CBT is enabling women to gain economic independence, ultimately increasing the household income. Yet, many recognized that community members not involved in CBT capitalize on tourism by selling their handcrafts. Notably, the pursuit of additional income was not an end itself, but a means to enhance the education of their children with the hope they will manage the business later on:

[I engaged in tourism] for my children, so that they get education. I look for them, to have a profession, I yearn for that, for them to finish college [...] If they studied, let's say, administration, they can manage our business. (Manuel, Hatun Qolla)

Participants argued that CBT allowed to *spread of the economic benefits* to their entire community: "[tourism] helps the whole town because if I need to buy potatoes or eggs, anything, I tell our partners: 'papito, sell me rice or a small egg or a hen or a guinea pig'" (Ernesto, Misminay). They also acknowledged that the more activities they offer, the more income enters to the community because a portion of CBT revenues goes back to the community. In Parque de la Papa, both participants emphasized that tourism contributes broadly to their communities because they use community revenues to improve

public infrastructure and strategic investments (e.g. cattle). Furthermore, Juan explained how that money could even help members in economic distress: “In each community there’s always orphans, there’s widows, elders. Then, it is the community’s decision to help those people. With that [tourism] money they can buy some groceries, help children, and get supplies for the school.”

Participants also brought up non-economic benefits especially in terms of *recovering natural resources*. Participants explained that CBT has encouraged families to conserve native plants, especially medicinal herbs (which were waning in their community) because they incorporate them in their tourism offerings: “We have ornamental, medicinal plants that we still keep. For instance, I have muña in my house. We are already mindful of the fauna, and we are protecting it” (Elsa, Raqchi). We also observed they used *muña* from their gardens to provide tea throughout the day, and harvested some leaves of *capulí* to ameliorate the altitude sickness of one researcher. Although most frequently families involved in CBT drive conservation efforts, it was a communal effort in Parque de la Papa:

We have gathered many plants and have invited the oldest elders, and middle aged, and youth so as to transfer knowledge. Then the elders, the grandfathers knew what part of the plant is very good for some things, for some illness, its stalk, its root, its leaves. (Juan)

Participants proudly explained that CBT has *enhanced their quality of life* at family and community levels. According to Elsa (Raqchi), families live in better sanitary condition because they need to meet tourism standards:

Before, like in any other community, we lived untidily. [...] We had the guinea pigs in the kitchen, the hens, the pig, the cattle on the yard, and so on. But when we were trained to host tourists, they have told us that everything has to be hygienic, clean, tidy, for the tourist.

Increased sanitary knowledge of water treatment, waste management, and recycling has reached entire communities because agencies’ training courses are public. Participants also mentioned that CBT has improved community harmony: “[CBT] leads to a culture of how to get along between locals” (Pedro, Parque de la Papa). Community health in terms of population re-growth also emerged in communities with strong tourism activity (Amantani, Raqchi):

Twenty years ago locals migrated to Lima, Arequipa to search for a better future. [...] Now around Wiracocha god’s Temple there is a lot of tourists; [locals] don’t leave anymore, on the contrary, they are coming back and our population is growing. (Elsa, Raqchi)

Negative impacts derived from CBT did not emerge in the interviews. When probed, most participants rejected them by taking a self-defensive position against others’ perceptions, such as: “Others may see negative effects because they do not understand what tourism is” (Ernesto, Misminay) and “Those not working [in tourism] envy us. They do not want to work [in tourism] because they are lazy” (Mariana, Llachón). Some explained that benefits offset the negative impacts produced: “We don’t want to consider that [negative impacts] because we value the positive [ones]” (Melina, Raqchi). A few recognized that tourism has brought more solid waste, especially plastic bottles and bags, and behaviors not in tune with community values: “They have found some [tourists] smoking marihuana. That to me is demeaning [...] Or that a tourist undresses in front of them [locals] and jumps naked on the river” (Pedro, Parque de la Papa).

Governing community-based tourism

Participating communities governed CBT development by mobilizing their members to establish associations with a common goal. Most mentioned this was not an easy task, and even more difficult when forming consortiums: “An association of communities is a multi-community work. For example, one community thinks one thing; the other community thinks another thing. It’s hard to make each other understand, to reach an agreement” (Juan, Parque de la Papa). In their path to govern their communities, the existence of strong *democratic decision-making* processes was salient. All communities elected a president, usually for a two-year term, following a universal voting process in which all men and women of age (ranging between 17 and 20 years old) participate. Tourism associations had similar democratic procedures to elect their governing board. However, interviews revealed that the same members tend to be reelected, which participants justified—when probed—with other members’ disengagement in leadership and required training: “They always elect us because they do not go to training sessions [...] Don’t have time they say” (Mariana, Llachón).

CBT resulted from an *evolving commitment* among members. Most mentioned the long and arduous process endured to reach their current state, often characterized by an extended initial excitement among community members followed by high dropouts when tourists did not arrive in large quantities: “Some, right away, wanted money, wanted tourists. [But it had to be] little by little” (Jacinta, Amaru). In narrating how they paved the way to CBT, participants voiced their many sacrifices, usually monetary: “To start, because we didn’t have funds, it was very difficult. Every decision [we made], we had to put from our pockets, and it was a lot” (Melina, Raqchi). As such, although participants were amenable, and some even enthusiastic, in welcoming new members into their CBT associations, they all stressed newcomers should adhere to minimum requirements to compensate their accumulated knowledge:

[New members] must pay since we started. [...] In those years we suffered a lot, and now the plate is ready to serve. [They] can pay little by little the amount. [...] If a new member enters, he won’t suffer like we did because we are leaders now and he can learn quickly from us. (Ernesto, Misminay)

Coordinating efforts within and among CBT associations was key to CBT development. To form an association, community members need to identify a resource (“something interesting in the community”, Jorge, Raqchi) capable to attract tourists. Thus, although many CBT associations co-exist, their offerings complement and do not overlap each other, either within or across communities: “[New initiatives] must have other activities that are not the same like the ones in our communities [...] because there cannot be competition among us. So, every community offers different activities” (Gisela, Yachaq). Coordination efforts within associations usually focused on rotating tourists (“We rotate, so we get only two or three groups per month”, Berta, Amaru), seeking a fair distribution of revenues among members: “Through this rotation system we all benefit because we all get money. It’s not like some benefit more” (Renzo, Raqchi). Hatun Qolla devised a unique strategy to distribute tourism revenues among members: “We have decided to have just one room for visitors. That is in the regulation to foster rotation and equity” (Manuel).

Throughout and across interviews, participants recognized the *support received from others* in their CBT development. Most often, assistance came from government and non-for-profit agencies in the form of training courses that although focused on tourism-related matters, could span other activities (e.g. leadership, cultural appreciation): “We have also been trained in ecological agriculture, and that’s what we do and what we serve [cook] to the tourists that come” (Melina, Raqchi). Yet, participants expressed desire to learn more: “We want more gastronomy training to be able to serve other main entrees” (Berta, Amaru). Some participants acknowledged that the ultimate goal of these training courses is to empower community members so they can stand on their own: “Then, the Parque de la Papa, since it’s already a ‘grown-up’, can sustain itself. So, they [support agencies] are trying to draw [the aid] out little by little, gradually” (Pedro).

Growing the tourism business

Participants recognized they were not yet reaching their entrepreneurial vision and needed to grow their operations by increasing the number of offerings, improving the quality of their services, or expanding community involvement. They frequently referred to their *slow, yet steady, growth* over the years despite their effort: “Each one has made an effort and we continue to move forward, maybe not in huge steps but we are on our way” (Melina, Raqchi). When talking about tourism growth, many mentioned their long-term vision to enhance tourists’ satisfaction: “I have more vision because I plan to improve, I’m not satisfied with what I got. We need to improve to give them [the tourists] a good service, better quality” (Jacinta, Amaru).

In growing their businesses, and CBT overall, participants referred to *strategic partnerships*. Many mentioned collaborations with travel agencies, although these were bittersweet. For some, they were instrumental to capture tourists; for others, such relationship was problematic especially due to lack of transparency in the fees charged to the point that some no longer work with them. Some participants identified key players in CBT development within and across associations and several mentioned how leaders of well-established CBT initiatives host emerging ones for a short time to share good practices. However, some leaders explained why they no longer offer these internships:

We were pioneers, in Cusco-Puno. Because since we developed experiential tourism we received almost all the [current] masters to make their internships with us [...] And we have shared our experiences, how we developed, everything. When we went to visit them to see how they were operating, you can see another Raqchi in the other side; the practices, decorations, everything exactly the same. So, since then, we stopped hosting internships. (Jorge, Raqchi)

Participants mentioned that their *growth was constrained* mainly due to reduced external support, especially from their local government, and limited community involvement. Some mentioned they needed broader community participation to increase their tourism influx, like Juan (Saccacca) said: “We need to add CBT in all communities of the Parque de la Papa, right now we only have it in two communities [...] We want to implement more!” However, Gisela (Yachaq) explained why tourism is not widely distributed across all communities: “Other communities must be trained because they are always

claiming ‘why don’t we get any [tourists]? It’s because they are not trained. Then, we cannot sell a poor quality service to tourists.”

Discussion and implications

Major findings

This study contributes to our understanding of CBT by bringing different managerial models (tourism organization and management structure) and development stages to the perceived assessment of sustainability. Overall, findings suggest that managerial models may influence the holistic appreciation of sustainability, especially in terms of having a long-run vision of CBT and the set of positive and negative impacts it brings to providers and the entire community. In that regard, the influence of the tourism organization (consortium vs independent) was more evident than the management structure (tour operator, NGO supported, community management). Less evidence was found regarding the effect of development stage in the perceived sustainability of CBT.

Study participants perceived a breadth of benefits that CBT is bringing to them, their families, and communities beyond economic gains, findings that are well-documented in the literature (Ghaderi & Henderson, 2012; Goulding et al., 2014; LaPan et al., 2016). In this regard, it is worth praising the shared conviction of the (agri)culture-tourism interdependency to attain sustainability, which adds to the existing knowledge of the need to reduce tourism economic dependence (Swarbrooke, 1999). That is, study participants recognized tourism as the vehicle to recover and conserve their resources while stating that such recovery is critical to attract and satisfy tourists. The effort to recover the personal cultivation of some medicinal herbs (e.g. *muña*) to incorporate in their tourism offerings was salient. Some of those herbs (e.g. *muña*, coca leaves) are currently heavily commercialized, thus have a broad geographic and economic access. Yet, participants’ desire to spread their local non-commercialized resources is an additional burden they undertake to increase tourists’ experience that may even represent a greater societal benefit (e.g. *in-situ* germplasm bank). Without diminishing the value of the benefits participants perceived from CBT, it is worth mentioning the colonialist discourse in which they were framed (e.g. “Before, like in any other community, we lived untidily”), which recorded and observed data indicate that they are adopted in the front stage because they are an imposed requirement to host tourists. Yet, we also observed that some of these practices were carried to the back stage of the tourism operations, heavily influenced by the incoming of new religions in some communities.

Study findings add to the existing knowledge on the perceived benefits of CBT (e.g. Acharya & Halpenny, 2013; Amir et al., 2015; Goulding et al., 2014) by identifying differences across communities with different managerial and tourism structure. For example, some acknowledged community harmony while probing indicated that such harmony was not present throughout the region. Specifically, some explained that the lack of broader community involvement in tourism was caused by laziness and impatience at early development stages, or that the recognition of negative impacts in the community was due to envy. Acknowledgement of the economic effects in the larger community also had some variations. As expected, those involved in CBT in areas with large tourism affluence had a clearer understanding of how their own tourists help other local industries

(e.g. Misminay) and even have reversed former outmigration (e.g. Raqchi) as compared to other communities with less tourism flow.

Several differences were also evident across communities with different managerial models and development stages. Participants' emphasis on avoiding tourism economic dependency was less salient in study communities with CBT initiatives more established and operating without the support of an NGO. These findings may support the notion that the sustainability of CBT is more conducive at smaller scales (Cánoves et al., 2006), which is especially important for small communities settled in geographically challenged and weather-wise vulnerable areas like the Andes. More notably, results suggest as a plausible hypothesis that the overall sustainability vision of CBT was greatly influenced by its tourism organization. Participants within a consortium model (Yachaq, Parque de la Papa) had a holistic appreciation of CBT in terms of recognizing the long-run benefits for the community, acknowledging negative and positive impacts, proactively seeking the conservation of their resources as a tourism asset, orchestrating efforts to minimize internal competition, and assuring quality standards. Conversely, members of independent CBT initiatives tended to focus on the immediate benefits to their families, showing a stronger presence of few members leading the CBT initiative, and strongly voicing the need of CBT pioneers to be compensated by newcomers because of their initial human and monetary investments. Yet, these findings could also be associated to other factors, such as geopolitical characteristics or type and extent of support from agencies and organizations.

Practical implications

Study findings bring a manifold of practical implications that communities and agencies can use to enhance the sustainability of CBT in less developed regions. In doing so it is important to emphasize that unfamiliarity with the term "sustainability" should not be taken like ignorance or disregard of sustainability because all the participating CBT initiatives were implementing a plethora of sustainable practices with the aim of assuring sustenance for future generations. Different levels of familiarity with the substantive definition of sustainability while undertaking many sustainable practices, even within the same community, speak for two things. First, the key role that supporting agencies play in reinforcing the implementation of sustainable practices in CBT (Holladay & Powell, 2013; Lapeyre, 2010) given that more knowledgeable participants explained having learned about sustainability from training. Second, it is important that CBT initiatives and training courses build upon the tangible and intangible assets of the community to pursue sustainability. For example, commitment to work together (e.g. cleaning public areas, forming associations) towards a common goal emerged in this study, which may relate to the *minka*, an ancestral practice relying on collective voluntary work towards a shared benefit or future reciprocation (Townsend, 2012).

The overall rejection or downplay of negative impacts associated with CBT challenges evidence that locals have concerns related to the overuse of natural and cultural resources (Ghaderi & Henderson, 2012). Yet, participants' perceptions of abundant benefits and few negative impacts should not portray CBT in the Peruvian Andes as "the" sustainable model to follow given that field observations showed some unfavorable issues. For example, we frequently observed "staged authenticity" trying to fit the information that private and

public agencies provide in their promotional materials portraying seemingly primitive scenes in contrast to modernity. To avoid tourists' rejection when perceiving signs of modernization (Cole, 2007), it is important that more effort is placed to educate providers and tourists engaged in CBT that culture is dynamic and as such it changes over time (Lenzerini, 2011). For example, we suggest that providers acknowledge the incorporation of foreign ingredients in the food offered or highlighting the use of a local (e.g. quinoa, potato) versus non-local ingredients (e.g. rice, noodles) as compared to a rotund (and unrealistic) rejection.

CBT in the Peruvian Andes is an example of collective action in which members have come together to seize an opportunity (Vogt & Jordan, 2015). Yet, findings showed issues existing at the three levels of collaboration networks required to develop CBT (Tolkach et al., 2013). At the within-community network level, findings reveal a sense of oligarchy as only a handful of members, usually community leaders or CBT pioneers, were the ones attending training sessions and assuming leadership roles. The most evident issue affecting community-agency networks related to participants' relationship with travel agencies as some stated lack of transparency (e.g. fees, host allocation) which calls for better communication and increased participation in decision-making (Iorio & Corsale, 2013). We also found little evidence of networking across CBT initiatives (merely in Yachaq and Parque de la Papa), usually associated with reduced interest across initiatives. As such, it is imperative that agencies increase their efforts to improve leadership and empowerment (Gascón, 2013; Okazaki, 2008) across members of CBT initiatives to develop strong networks given that limited participation can hinder the spread of benefits across the community (Polnyotee & Thadaniti, 2015; Tolkach et al., 2013).

Limitations and recommendations for future research

These findings shed light for future research, which should take into account limitations of the present study. This study only included participants involved in CBT, either because they host tourists in their homes, or lead or support activities offered. As such, future research should expand this scope to include other stakeholders within the community not directly involved in CBT (e.g. residents, local businesses, local government) to capture a broader view of the sustainability of CBT, which deserves much more scrutiny given its intricacies (Espeso-Molinero & Pastor-Alfonso, 2017). In doing so, it is also important that future studies assess objective indicators beyond perceptions at different levels of analysis (e.g. family, community), which can help to guide planning efforts at the community or regional levels.

Differences found across CBT initiatives with different tourism organization but similar managerial structures suggest that a deeper examination is needed to contrast within and between independent/consortium models, which was a second limitation of this study. Future studies may consider examining the influence of the CBT models, particularly on the level of community member involvement, adherence to sustainable practices, and benefits garnered. It emerged from the analysis that the CBT initiatives in Cusco and Puno have different organizational structures and management models in their CBT initiatives. Thus, it is advisable that future studies focus on one particular region, or include multiple ones, to be able to discern whether managerial and tourism structures—and not geopolitical factors—influence the perceptions of sustainability.

Concluding remarks

This study investigated the perceived state of sustainability among seven current CBT initiatives in the Peruvian Andes, which we selected to capture different managerial models and developments stages. Findings indicate that these initiatives have implemented and comply with a suite of sustainable practices, notably related to the conservation of their natural and agricultural resources. Yet, many of these practices emerged from public agencies and NGOs training that seek to evoke a westernized approach to “authentic” experiences without acknowledging the dynamism and natural evolution of culture due to different factors, notably globalization. Participants also had a clear understanding of the breadth of socio-cultural (e.g. enhanced quality of life, women’s empowerment) and environmental (e.g. recovery of medicinal herbs) benefits that CBT produces in addition to the economic gains their households and communities obtain. However, participants’ involvement in CBT deter them from acknowledging negative impacts that tourism can bring along. Hereof, it is critical that negative impacts are acknowledged to develop and implement corrective measures to increase sustainability.

CBT in the studied communities resulted from orchestrated efforts, yet, most participants recognized that much more human (e.g. training) and financial (e.g. infrastructure) resources were needed to consolidate their initiatives. As such, few are the ones benefiting from the limited resources available, most likely related to lack of leadership. Despite being necessary to recognize—and even compensate—CBT pioneers within communities, it is also important that agencies increase their efforts to train a larger number of community members. In doing so, it is critical to encourage members to take over leadership roles and be more proactive in seeking capacity-building opportunities. It is also important to regulate the CBT offer as to not exceed the demand. Participatory planning process could be suitable on this effort as direct (e.g. lodging, foods) and complementary (e.g. agricultural experiences, handcrafts) services could be arranged among interested members based on their family expertise and assets.

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