

COMMUNITY TOURISM AS INSTRUMENT OF ERADICATION OF POVERTY: POTENTIAL FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT IN CUZCO (PERU)

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In this article we propose the model of management of Community Tourism for the region of Cuzco, since this form allows a greater participation of the local population in the management of tourism of the region across different organizational structures of collective character as well as in the distribution of benefits in the rural areas.

Cuzco lodges a big quantity of rural areas nourished of natural resources, historical buildings. Also there is a wide range of attractions in the surroundings: Inca old ruins. Although its main tourist attraction is the historical Sanctum of Machu Picchu, considered as the most extraordinary example of landscape architecture in the world and was listed as World Cultural Heritage in 1983 as part of a cultural and ecological set. Located 2.400 m. from Machu Picchu, it surprises for the way in which the stones are laid on a narrow hillock at different levels, which rims form the cannon that takes us to river Urubamba. The Historical Sanctum protects a variety of biological species in danger of extinction and several Inca settlements, among them the most important one Machu Picchu.

The set Cuzco-Machu Picchu is the most visited tourist Peruvian destination. The city of Cuzco was visited by 861.687 tourists in 2009, of whom 71 % was foreign, especially from South America followed by the USA and some countries of the EU, as United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and France. 94 % of them visited the Sanctum. The hotel offer in the region is wide and it has an accommodation infrastructure adapted to the international tourism, although the level of occupation and the average stay is limited.

Even though 45 % of the population devotes themselves to the agrarian sector, tourism is one of the most important sectors in the region. Although it is not possible to determine exactly the weight of the tourist activity in the region of Cuzco, the hotel and the restaurant sector accounted for 6,4 % of the regional GNP.

Tourism redeems a relevant role in the Cuzco economy, contributing to the development of activities that aim the needs of the tourists as accommodation service, restaurants, hobbies, culture, gastronomy, etc. This contributes to the economic growth of the region and it is an alternative to relieve poverty, in a country where 32 % of the families live in a situation of extreme poverty, 49 % and 67 % of homes are not provided with water supply nor sewers; and where the illiteracy rate and gender violence are very high.

The importance of the Community Tourism in Cuzco is gathered in the Strategic National Plan of Tourism of Peru - PENTUR, which has as its main target to reach sustainable tourism as the tool for socio-economic development in Peru; in the Strategic Regional Plan for the Region of Cusco, the Q`ente Plan, which target is to achieve that by 2020 Cusco is a competitive and sustainable destination, as well as a driver of regional and national economies, generating social well-being with opportunities for all economic sectors, and in the Lineaments for the Community Tourism in Peru, in which the rural community tourism in Peru is defined as «all activity that is developed in a rural environment done in a planned and sustainable way, based in the participation of the local communities and organized for the benefit of the community, being the rural culture a key component of the product ».

This model of management has been applied in the National Program of Rural Community Tourism in Maras; Raqchi and Pampallaqta; the weavers of the Chinchero and the Pope Park.

The application of the model of management of Community Tourism in the rural areas of Cuzco is going to enable the community to preserve their ethnic identity, the evaluation and the transmission of the cultural heritage in all its forms, since the indigenous cultures are bearers of values, history and identity. It regains greater importance the local culture of the area, its customs, its gastronomy and its own history. It is also going to make it possible for the tourists to participate in the traditions and life style of the local community.

It is also going to generate wealth in the rural areas, through the participation of the local community in the tourist management, so that the benefits impact on the community itself, offering the opportunity to create small labour-intensive businesses and facilitating the incorporation of the woman in the labour market. In this way unemployment is rectified in problematic areas and it smooths situations of conflict and economic friction. 25 % of the employed Cuzco population is related directly or indirectly with the tourist activity. The employed population used directly in tourist services works mainly in restaurants, entertainment and transports, although these numbers should be filled with the population who has employments related indirectly to the sector.

Tourism also has important multiplying effects on the GDP of the region because of the set up of tourist companies, for the revenues generated by the companies that supply the tourist companies and for the progress of the economy in the region. Its multiplying effect is of 1.815 millions, in other words, for every dollar that is deposited in the Peruvian economy, tourism turns it into 1,81 dollars. In 2009 tourism generated in the region 2.440 million dollars as currencies, topped only by oil export.

Bearing in mind the socio-demographic and economic characteristics associated to the sector, community tourism can be a tourist model of management adapted for this region since most of the area is rural, they devote themselves to agriculture and cattle and have

a high level of poverty; from what it can be an alternative to the strengthening of the area and can contribute to a reduction of the level of poverty, generating employment in complementary activities to agriculture and cattle.

But so that the community tourism generates these important benefits in Cuzco it is necessary to improve the connectivity of the region, reduce the problem of congestion in the Sanctum of Machu Picchu, upgrade the housing conditions offered to the tourists and improve the access to the TIC to be able to offer them to the tourists. It is also essential to generate quality services and to reduce external dependency. For which it is necessary to redirect the touristic policy towards the model of Community Tourism.

