Title of the Story: SIBAYO RURAL AND COMMUNITY TOURISM

Destination Name: (include any state, province or region)
Cañón del Colca
Country: Peru

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Nomination Category: (Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)
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☐ Decarbonizing the destination supply chain
☐ Culture & Communities
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Issues faced

Sibayo, is located on the banks of the right bank of the Colca river, in the high part, to 66km. of Chivay, in the Province of Caylloma, in the department of Arequipa, with an altitude of 3810 msnm. It is one of the smallest districts in the province of Caylloma. Its traditional town is called Sibayo Rumillacta which means stone town, it is of pre-Hispanic origin with a Collagua cultural heritage that belongs to the Aymara language; it is a town that is very attractive for its traditional stone architecture and its living culture that allows visitors to obtain a unique and anecdotal experience in their visit to the Colca Valley. To think of Sibayo is to imagine a town of Collaguas descendants with a high pride in their ancestral heritage and beliefs.

The district’s economy in the past has been based on livestock production, especially alpacas and llamas; it was one of the most forgotten districts in the Colca, with a high level of poverty and therefore malnutrition, lack of cultural identity and a high migration rate. According to the UNDP in 2007, Sibayo had a human development index of 0.3260, which gave us an unfavorable outlook for the population, with a per capita income in 2007 of 258.6 soles and a disaggregated analysis of the HDI indicators shows an unequal distribution of achievements in education and life expectancy.

Therefore, the greater this inequality, the greater the decline in the HDI of the district resulting in a gap in new opportunities, access to achievements and empowerment between women and men.

In the 1990s, the municipality of Sibayo began to show interest in preserving the traditional architecture of the old town. The National Institute of Culture also intervened in declaring Sibayo as a Monumental Rural Urban Environment, so the mayor’s office found it necessary to establish a Municipal Ordinance that prevents the construction of houses that are not in the traditional form of a single floor with a stone façade, thatched roofs and wooden doors.

In 2001, the objective of diversifying the economic activities of the district began, opting for rural community tourism, promoted by the local government as a leadership initiative, which after the rejection of the people only began the plan in 2005. As a result of these achievements, Sibayo has been recognized as one of the five intervention zones of MINCETUR’s Rural Community Tourism Program, which seeks to strengthen the development of Rural Community Tourism as an instrument in the fight against poverty.

Sibayo is the first experience of Rural Community Tourism in the Arequipa region and to date has been obtaining positive results, therefore the objective is to lead at the national level as the best rural community tourism enterprise, developing different strategies and actions, taking modernity but without losing traditions, with a permanent control and monitoring of the activities that will be developed in favor of the proposal which will be used from a greater and better participation of the
local population, who by offering and making known their culture managed to strengthen and raise their standards of living.

After the pandemic, tourism activity in Sibayo fell to 0% of visitors, which had a negative impact on their income and all the projects they had planned as an association, now with the new technology, access to the internet and the globalized world they are promoting their tourism business again through social networks, attending trainings, as they believe that there is no better way to revalue their culture and craftsmanship than showing it to the world with the activity of tourism.

Methods, steps and tools applied

The rural community-based tourism experience developed in Sibayo sought to benefit the community, develop local capacities, include the population, and integrate productive activities with tourism activities, within the framework of institutional synergies between the private sector, local authorities, and civil society.

The people of Sibayo have gone through difficult times, but today they shine for their embroidery, looms and handicraft workshops, thanks to an interesting community tourism project implemented in the area, which the villagers have been able to take advantage of by training and working together. Especially noteworthy are the colorful traditional costumes, the Quechua language, gastronomy, as well as ancestral rites and ancient legends, maintaining important links of deep respect for nature.

In 1996 the town of Sibayo was declared as cultural heritage of the nation, where a process of stimulation of constructions in their homes is undertaken, in 2005 the municipality began actions aimed at promoting tourism, in 2006 students from the National University of San Agustin through a conference were the first tourists who received Sibayo. In 2008, the first organized group of tourists stayed in stone ”living houses” and 576 tourists were received that year.

Sierra Sur and the NGO Coordinadora Rural were the ones who promoted the associativity of the villagers to get involved in tourism activities; after three meetings, six villagers decided to formalize the association and from there they began to develop experiential tourism in Sibayo. It is necessary to mention that this association called ASETUR began its actions on March 24, 2006 with 34 associates, for the tourist service of Sibayo under the name of ”Rumi Llaqta”. An important fact to highlight is the work of the Spanish government through the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), which since 1997 has been carrying out a comprehensive project for the recovery of heritage in the Colca Valley and the district of Sibayo, which has strengthened citizen participation, the municipality and improved infrastructure and visitor services. In 2008, ASETUR participated in the local resource allocation competition (CLAR), organized by Sierra Sur, and was able to qualify its business plan, which included the creation and implementation of its experiential tourism offer and the necessary technical assistance. Within the framework of the work with Sierra Sur and in coordination with the Municipality, the offer of experiential tourism was developed, which was based on the recovery and habilitation of their old stone houses where lodging and food would be offered, within a concept of coexistence of the daily life of the farmer, which includes participation in planting, handicraft making, firewood collection, walks, etc. Then came the process of training and sensitization through various workshops, lectures, exchange of experiences with the population involved in issues related to Gastronomy, House Keeping, Hospitality, Guiding, Customer Service, among others. In these training workshops the tourist product was determined which took into account the following points: Experiential houses, Hiking (archaeological remains, others), Canoeing, Cycling, Eco museum, Living culture The district of Sibayo, received help from countless institutions both public and private as the District Municipality of Sibayo, the Autonomous Authority of Colca and Annexes provided support that is recognized by tourism entrepreneurs.

The square and the streets of the town have an impeccable stone finish that exhibits iconographies, which were made by local master craftsmen experts in stone and boulder works; behind the square a
group of houses in refurbishment with local materials; And, in the upper part, the Santa Maria Pata Tourist Complex has a handicraft store, a small museum and a cafeteria, a handicraft interpretation center called "Eco-museum of the Collagua culture" in which the local arts and crafts used in the elaboration of alpaca fiber handicrafts are exhibited. There is also a cafeteria where typical products of the area can be consumed, and a handicraft store that exhibits natural fiber fabrics, young people from Sibayo trained as local tourist guides, who are learning foreign languages such as English and French, through training courses given with the support of various institutions and by young foreign volunteers. Likewise, young high school graduates are studying languages and tourism and hotel management at universities and institutes in Chivay and Arequipa. The recovery of the traditional gastronomy, which includes innovations that allow improving the presentation and tasting for tourists, for this purpose the cooks of Sibayo were trained with chefs from Arequipa and the Gastronomic Society of Peru (APEGA). The Paraq’ra archeological zone is located three km from the main square, where fortifications and a pre-Inca cemetery, where the Juanito Mummy is located, can be seen. The authorities and the community managed to get the custody of the mummy to be in charge of the National Institute of Culture, which allowed it to stay in the territory (and not be transferred to a museum in the capital) as part of a ceremonial center relevant to the memory and community belonging. In the Colca River, precisely in the lower part of the pre-Inca cemetery, is the starting point for adventure canoeing. This activity has been promoted and is managed by a group of eight young people who make up the Sibayo Adventure Tourism Association (ASTUAR). This activity, which began in 2011, was co-financed through a business plan competition promoted by the mayor’s office. There is a fish farm located 500 meters from Sibayo’s plaza, where visitors can observe the process of trout farming by the villagers and purchase trout for preparation in the kitchens of the houses.

At present we can find: Vivencial houses: these are houses that are located in rural environments and therefore are surrounded by nature and inspire peace, silence and tranquility. They have a bedroom, patio, bathroom and kitchen. These houses are built of stone, adobe and mud; eucalyptus roofs covered with straw. Food: Their cuisine is based on organic products (crops that do not use fertilizers or chemicals). The development of tourism activities has been mainly based on three institutions: the Sumac Pallay Artisans Association (AASUPASI), the Rumillakta Tourism Services Association (ASETUR), and the Adventure Tourism Association (ASTUAR), which make up the Sibayo Tourism Consortium. ASETUR has developed an offer that includes experiential houses, mystical tourism, gastronomy, and chasque guides. Twelve microenterprises have been established, run by women, which permanently receive national and especially foreign tourists. Women’s participation is more active, with 87% of the association’s members being women. This is understandable because men’s main economic activity continues to be agriculture and herding, while women complement their families' economies through this tourism alternative. It is the women who are in charge of providing food and lodging services and exhibiting typical female clothing and handicrafts, which is a way to improve gender equity and women’s empowerment.

Commercial management in Sibayo is usually done through a network of contacts and through tourist agencies with whom they maintain commercial relationships. They also use the internet through a virtual platform such as Facebook, brochures, cards that the associates themselves send out and verbal recommendations, which is a powerful vehicle for spreading the word about tourism.

Key success factors

Since the local management assumed the commitment with the population to promote rural community tourism, the villagers have felt supported and identified with their authorities and this allowed the momentum for the villagers and their families to put the desire and effort necessary to believe in tourism and all the economic, cultural, social and environmental benefits it brings; They arranged their little houses, their kitchen, arranged their toilets, decorated their homes, met to discuss
what tourist package they would sell, went to internships, began to empower themselves and trust in the activity of Tuismo.

That is why over the years both the district municipality of Sibayo, AUTOCOLCA, GERCETUR, MINCETUR, UNWTO, international travel agencies, hotels, organize fairs, conferences to expose a variety of tourism as AVIT, WORKSHOP, regional and national promotion fairs where representatives of the community of Sibayo traveled to different countries promoting their tourism services and handicrafts nationally and internationally. Now with the new normality that Covid-19 has brought us, MINCETUR promotes Community Tourism ventures within "YTu¿Queplanes?" which is a virtual page designed with promotional packages of different tourist destinations.

Lessons learned

The beginning of tourism work in Sibayo was not an easy task, since initially the local population rejected tourists thinking that they would bring diseases or steal children, the members of ASETUR themselves were not convinced of the viability and business potential of this activity, noting that this attitude changed since they participated in the Tourism Congress, organized by the Catholic University of Arequipa, which changed those negative thoughts and decided to start with tourism activity.

The use of ICTs by members has become an important task because the new normality after covid-19 has generated the use of social networks more frequently, internet data consumption, the issuance of electronic tickets and reservations are given virtually so AUTOCOLCA and the District Municipality of Sibayo are conducting ongoing training for the proper use of smartphones and social networks; Of the associations dedicated to rural community-based tourism in Sibayo, 75% of the tourism entrepreneurs are senior citizens, most of whom were not familiar with this type of technology, but their participation in the talks is constant and participatory.

Results, achievements and recognitions

The implementation of community-based tourism in Sibayo has led to economic dynamism as a complementary and not a substitute activity; environmentally, the promotion of sustainable rural tourism that conserves the environment and optimizes the management of natural resources; socially, the emergence of the concept of associationism; in terms of culture and education, the contribution to the recovery of culture, gastronomy, folklore and customs allows tourists to learn about the multiculturalism, multilingualism and biodiversity of the country. And finally, the opportunity to attract tourists who practice environmentally responsible behavior.

Before the pandemic, the number of tourists in the Colca Valley grew significantly, according to Autocolca, 243,720 tourists entered the valley in 2019, 54% of them foreigners and 24% nationals. According to MINCETUR data from 2013 to 2019, the months with the highest tourist influx are from May to October. In 2019, 3,027 tourists have been registered that make Rural Community Tourism in
Sibayo which represents 1.24% of the total income to Colca in 2019, making a disaggregated analysis 26% are from France which are the ones that in greater quantity visit the district of Sibayo, 20% from Germany and another 20% from Spain.

According to PROMPERU, tourists visiting Sibayo are characterized as young people between 40 and 70 years old. This shows that there are more and more older people with health, money, culture, and a desire to continue enjoying life and experience new forms of tourism.

The data obtained and the entire community aware of the figures that increase year after year with tourism, theses were written about the perception that the villagers have of rural community tourism, mentioning that tourism has positively affected their economy, their quality of life and culture, since without tourism their town would be isolated and they would not receive additional income from an activity that is very important. Thanks to tourism, they have been able to have access to housing sanitation services, such as equipped bathrooms, kitchens and bedrooms with a certain degree of comfort that they did not have before and which they can have and use on a more daily basis. Therefore, tourism has helped to improve the living conditions of the people involved in rural tourism in terms of hygiene and cleanliness, because the standards of cleanliness required to serve tourists and the need to meet those standards is high; Also, they can make known their customs and maintain their cultural manifestations such as their religious festivities of San Juan Bautista (June 24), San Pedro and San Pablo (June 29), their traditions, dances (inti killa, wayra, misti wawa), music (huallyacha and the pucllay), history, typical clothing (hat, bodice, blouse or shirt, skirt, chumpi and phullu with typical iconography of Collagua style, and that of the men: black hat, vest, shirt, shirt, pants, chumpi made of alpaca fiber), in gastronomy promote the authentic, rescue dishes with ancient recipes and the use of ingredients purely from the area, revaluing not only recipes but products of agricultural origin coupled with recipes and proposals of the Novo-Andean cuisine (sara sara, uchu party, comibo, potato snack, chanchu broth, trout broth) concluding that the initiative to carry out rural community tourism in Sibayo achieved the recovery and revaluation of their traditions and strengthening their self-esteem.

Finally, it is expected that being at this point of a global pandemic and taking new marketing alternatives, due importance is given to technology: Thanks to ICT, tourism entrepreneurs in Sibayo can provide direct information of their offers to end users, attracting the public to their product and contracting in an individualized way, increasing their added value and making them more competitive against the monopoly of rural tourism at the national level. ICTs are key in the tourism sector, both for the management itself and for the commercialization, promotion and marketing of tourism products.

Additional references
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