

The Impact of Tourism on Cultural Identity in Peru

To what extent does tourism, as a facet of development, impact cultural identity? Many developing countries rely on tourism for both economic growth and infrastructure development. This reliance on tourism has led to a phenomenon known as nation branding, or the act of applying “corporate branding techniques to countries.”¹ Nation branding allows countries to create a favorable national image that attracts both foreign investors and international tourists, but little is known about how the process of nation branding to increase tourism affects communities, especially cultural identity. This paper delves into background information about development, tourism, and identity, then explores how the three factors interact in Yanque, a small town in Central Peru. By examining the narratives of Yanque residents, this paper reveals that tourism has negatively impacted the cultural identity of Yanque because identity is manipulated and defined from “above” through the national branding strategies of the country. This paper also identifies three negative impacts on cultural identity: 1) community members are marginalized; 2) culture is essentialized and commodified, and 3) traditions, customs, and values are negatively impacted.

Methodology

Since changes in cultural identity are difficult to measure using large-scale statistical methods, this study adopts the case study method and employs process-tracing, which “attempts to trace the links between possible causes and observed outcome.”² It draws directly from anthropology—more specifically ethnographic methodology—to grapple with concepts of culture, identity, and change in Yanque and surrounding towns. During a one-month research trip in Yanque in June 2019, the author of this study joined community members as they went about their daily lives and interactions. Additionally, they gathered interview data and relied on existing documents to explore the causal relationship between tourism, national branding, and cultural

change. In total, the research team collected twenty-five interviews from Yanque residents. These interviews were conducted as part of Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies Dr. Eric Hirsch's, research, which was approved by the Franklin and Marshall Institutional Research Board. Interviewee selection was completely random. The interviews ranged from fifteen minutes to one hour. Individuals were asked to answer the following questions: 1) What is the cultural identity of the community in Yanque, in terms of food, clothing, language, way of life? Is the cultural identity of Yanque different from other communities in Peru? 2) Is there tourism in Yanque? If yes, please describe? 3) What is the relationship between Yanque and AUTO-COLCA, meaning how does the government influence tourism in the area? 4) How has tourism changed Yanque and its people? 5) Do you believe that the overall impact of tourism is positive or negative in the town of Yanque?

Before presenting the findings, a few caveats are in order. First, findings are based on existing documents and original interview data, and more research is merited. Second, culture, identity, and change are extremely complex concepts and hard to fully capture in this short analysis. Lastly, this paper argues that tourism and nation branding are among the contributors to cultural change in Yanque, but not the sole factors. More research is needed to tease out the nuances in the relationships between these issues.

Definitions and Clarifications

Tourism has been commonly viewed as a tool for development, including in the Colca Valley in Peru. But what is “development” and what does the academic community know about this process? For some, it has many positive connotations—it refers to growth, maturing, and expansion. “Development” is also potentially negative and ethnocentric; thus, it remains a highly

contested term, and the academic community is split on whether different aspects of development have an overall positive or negative effect.

Early work on development mostly focused on purely economic aspects; however, that changed with Amartya Sen's groundbreaking work *Development as Freedom*. Sen expresses that development should concern itself with "the expansion of capabilities for a person to lead the kind of life they value and have reason to value."³ Sen's work recognizes that the previous emphasis on economic wealth and trade in developmental studies ignores the importance of multiple aspects of individual freedoms as well as the human and social aspects of the developmental process. He outlines five instrumental freedoms, "political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security," which complement each other to improve an individual's liberty to live their life.⁴ As such, Sen argues that a person's ability to live and practice their culture is an instrumental freedom because he values people's choices. For this study, development will be understood as the implementation of strategies and structures that advance a multifaceted process of promoting freedoms for all citizens. This holistic definition is unlike earlier understandings of development that solely focused on economics.

It is also helpful to define the concept of culture. Like many of the concepts discussed above, the definitions of culture and cultural identity have been contested over time. In 1996, David Matsumoto defined culture as "the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next."⁵ This definition remained dominant until 2008. Then, Helen Spencer-Oatey defined culture as "a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioral conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each member's behavior and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behavior."⁶

This definition considers how culture might influence someone's behavior and understanding of others.

Although the definition of culture continues to evolve, scholars agree that culture incorporates values, beliefs, knowledge, traditions, and behavior and is something that is learned, shared, and passed down. Culture affects the behavior of an individual and how they understand the world and others. Thus, cultural identity is best understood through discourse, both internal and external. Cultural identity is deeply connected to who a person is and part of someone's identity stems from their culture. Nevertheless, many agree that cultural identity encompasses more than a shared lifestyle among people.⁷ Toyin Falola argues that cultural identity involves “issues of history, environment, values, social stratification, knowledge, power, and wealth, which are also the domain of development.”⁸

Tourism as Development

Many nations rely on the tourism sector to promote economic expansion.⁹ Tourism is not only “a social phenomenon; it is also a big business.”¹⁰ According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, tourism is associated with “sustainable economic growth” because it leads to predictable patterns of consumption and production.¹¹ *The Role of the Tourism Sector in Expanding Economic Opportunity* by Caroline Ashley, Peter De Brine, Amy Lehr, and Hannah Wilde, explains that tourism promotes economic growth in three ways: 1) increased employment opportunities as well as earnings 2) “inter-sectoral impact” by bringing together different sectors such as construction, food, and transportation; And 3) changes in “livelihood strategies” and the economic aims of local communities.¹² In Peru, the tourism sector has grown exponentially in the last few decades. This growth has been both in the formal sector, such as restaurants, hotels, and tours, and the informal sector, such as street vendors and informal guides.

Many disadvantages also arise from the industry. Some documented consequences of tourism are the commercialization of culture and economic dependency.¹³ Tourism thrives off the demand of visitors from other nations. As shown by Tamar Diana Wilson, the relationship between tourist destination countries and the countries of origin of their visitors is often asymmetrical and therefore, dependent.¹⁴

The literature suggests that there is a pattern of foreign control over the local tourism economy of developing countries.¹⁵ In the interest of keeping up with the structural and commercial demands of tourists, governments seek out foreign investments and loans. Through investments, foreign countries and institutions “influence the development of projects, tourist-oriented or not, in the Third World by tying loans to specific political formulations and policies.”¹⁶ This influence is broadened by the prevalence of transnational corporations that gain ownership of industries and companies in the host country and retain control of decisions and finances.¹⁷ The literature concludes that political and economic decisions in tourist destination countries are “subordinate to “foreign pressure groups and privileged local classes,” leaving low income and middle-class locals at a disadvantage.¹⁸

The influence of international actors on the local economy disproportionately affects low-income communities in the host country.¹⁹ This gives rise to exploitative labor conditions such as low wages and excessive hours.²⁰ Tourist destinations thrive on being the “cheap option,” and as Wilson notes, “tourists do not go to Third World countries because the people are friendly, they go because a holiday there is cheap.”²¹ The priority is then, not to benefit the local community, but rather to advantage tourists and investors by remaining low-cost. Furthermore, in the local communities, the industry is seen as “a quick and easy way to earn foreign exchange and receive much higher income” from tourists and foreigners.²² This consequently extracts interest from

sustainable plans for economic growth in the nation by giving priority to the tourism sector.²³ Moreover, tourism development diverts resources from local communities and makes living conditions more expensive for those who live in the region.²⁴

All of these negative effects are important and yet scholars have not fully explored another set of effects: the effect of tourism programs on culture. The literature that does exist about this issue suggests that tourism shifts the social and cultural values of a community because it has a significant impact on the way of life.²⁵ According to academics, the tourism industry marginalizes community members, and this causes both a social and “spatial” divide among the people.²⁶ Formal tourism can be exclusionary and elitist, leaving low-income and minority groups to enter the industry through informal means, such as prostitution and selling food/crafts in the street. Additionally, the industry contributes to “the rise of social problems such as crime, juvenile delinquency, and prostitution.”²⁷ Moreover, the academic community asserts that the “commodification” of culture along with “staged authenticity” are also problems that arise from tourism.²⁸ Research reveals that tourism results in “the disruption and corruption of traditional values and behaviors.”²⁹ This is due to the above-mentioned lifestyle changes which manifest themselves in the evolution of cultural values; meaning that traditions, native languages, rituals, will slowly lose relevance and begin to die out. Similarly, communities that are supported by the tourism industry experience the “commodification of culture.”³⁰ This refers to the fabrication of culture to gain money from tourists. This phenomenon negatively impacts the integrity and understanding of “1) material artifacts; 2) performance; and 3) everyday activities.”³¹ The construction of culture for profit leads to the destruction of cultural identity and a manifestation of a culture that is less than authentic. Ultimately, tourism is detrimental to the social and cultural values of host communities because the industry causes lifestyle changes that distort identity.

In truth, it is difficult to say whether tourism is “positive” or “negative” because it presents both advantages and disadvantages. Richard Sharpley and David Telfer argue that tourism is successful when “the benefits accruing from its development are not outweighed by the cost or negative consequences.”³² This is important to keep in mind when assessing tourism in Yanque.

Nation branding

To fully understand the effect of tourism on cultural identity in Peru, one also needs to better understand the recent trend to “brand” nations for international tourists. This modern phenomenon applies corporate branding strategies to countries. As explained by Keith Dinnie in his book, *Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice*, a national brand is an effort to control how one’s nation is perceived by outsiders. Dinnie defines a nation brand as “the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences.”³³ In essence, one could argue that this brand is meant to create a unified and favorable image, including its cultural aspects, to attract foreign investments and tourism.

Nation branding is an interesting project because it considers not only the goals of the marketer but also the visions and perceptions of the consumer.³⁴ In every exchange, there is a unique relationship between the buyer and seller. Dinnie explains that in most cases of nation branding, the consumer is the one that “forms a mental vision of the brand.”³⁵ This is especially relevant to national branding because the international community holds “pre-existing national stereotypes” that are embedded in the discourse about developing nations.³⁶ National brands must “coexist effectively with the prevailing zeitgeist” to be successful.³⁷ Overall, the creation of a national brand is complicated and delicate work that involves working with how a nation wants to be perceived and how they already are seen by the international community.

Regarding tourism, it is common to find countries that have similar attractions to brand themselves in identical ways. Whether it is “a mixture of truth and lies, elisions and exaggerations” each country has “built itself around some perceived essence or some identity” that sets them apart from other countries.³⁸ This demonstrates that a nation brand must incorporate culture and national identity to differentiate itself from other brands but most importantly remain authentic to the specific region. The brand consists of visual and sonic manifestations, history, a homeland, territory, language, and peoplehood.³⁹ Nonetheless, “it would be impossible to effectively develop a nation brand identity that drew upon every strand of a country’s national identity.”⁴⁰ Thus, national brand strategists must be selective about what is included in their national vision and what is not. Scholars have noted that “if a country keeps defining how people belong, it also defines how people do not belong” and will marginalize certain communities and identities.⁴¹

In general, then, the tourism industry is dependent on a positive national brand to attract tourists. Thus, the nation branding enterprise, based on promoting a particular national identity and set of cultural stereotypes, is meant to enhance tourism. This raises the question: What impact does this branded and controlled process of tourism have on communities? Specifically, what does it do to a community’s culture? The literature generates two expectations for the effects of tourism, on cultural identity specifically: 1) cultural erosion and 2) “McDisneyization,” or rationalization. Cultural erosion, as described by E. O. Wahab, S. O. Odunsi, and O. E. Ajiboye refers to a change in the cultural values of a given society. The authors argue that development, in the forms of urbanization and industrialization, has “altered the totality of our social institutions.”⁴² As the world is now more advanced and interconnected, individuals can explore and experience different cultures and lifestyles. Due to this phenomenon, the authors argue that “we have lost the organic community with the living culture it embodied.”⁴³

Second, tourism can affect the cultural identity of a region through McDisneyization, which sociologist George Ritzer describes as “a society characterized by rationality is one which emphasizes efficiency ... and control over uncertainty.”⁴⁴ Ritzer believes that aspects of everyday life and tourism have been standardized so that there are few surprises. For instance, Ritzer gives an example of standardized meals as part of a tour package. He states that in the past, tour groups would be given standardized meals from their tour company because local food was too “different” for tourists to eat. Nevertheless, now, due to McDonaldization, “tourists can be safely left on their own at most locales since those who want standardized meals will almost undoubtedly find them.”⁴⁵ Currently, tourists travel overseas to get an authentic or different experience from their daily lives, but still want accommodations in these countries. Countries adapt to the needs of their tourists to gain more profit. Ritzer suggests that the worst-case scenario is that all countries will be essentially the same.

In sum, tourism can have both positive and negative effects on the host community. On the positive side, tourism generates revenue, promotes cultural exchange, and brings about infrastructure changes. Nevertheless, tourism also has many negative effects.⁴⁶ Regarding culture, academics have identified two kinds of change: it can lead to the commoditization of culture, cultural erosion, and McDisneyization.⁴⁷

This research explores how tourism and nation branding in Peru have influenced Peruvian cultural identity in one area of the Andes region. While researching in Yanque, Peru the author noticed an interesting dynamic between the local community and the tourism industry. Tourism was undeniably affecting the local culture in several different ways. Some of those include the performance and manipulation of culture as well as the disruption of traditional values. Since

there is not very much written about these issues, this project furthers our understanding of the relationship between culture and tourism when nation branding has taken place.

Tourism Promotion in Yanque

Before visiting Peru in 2019, the author saw a commercial for Karikuy Tours that portrayed different “essential” aspects of Peruvian culture and identity. It emphasized ceviche, chicha Morada (a drink made from purple corn), and papa rellenas (stuffed potatoes) as culinary staples of the country, as well as chuyos (hats), alpaca sweaters, Pachamama (mother earth), Peru negro (musical group) and Huayno (dance). Nevertheless, while visiting the country one notices that the culture portrayed in the video is not universal, and there are many aspects of Peruvian identity that were excluded in its brand.

Similarly, while researching in the Colca Valley, a popular tourist destination in the south of the country, the author witnessed the direct effects that national branding and tourism have on the local community. Some men and women changed from their typical jeans to traditional outfits because “that is what tourists prefer.” The English language is prioritized over Quechua in local schools. Regardless of the economic benefits, tourism appears to chip away at the cultural identity of this village. This research explores this topic more systematically to determine if the author’s perceptions were accurate.

History of Tourism in Peru

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, the relationship between international tourism and culture is especially strong in Peru “due to its natural and cultural attractions.”⁴⁸ Along with agriculture and mining, tourism is one of the main industries in Peru, contributing “10.1 percent to the country’s GDP and supports 1,366,500 jobs.”⁴⁹ The biggest destination in the country is the archeological site of Machu Picchu, bringing in about 71 percent

of tourists in 2013.⁵⁰ According to the Computer and Enterprise Investigation Conference (CEIC 2019), Peru's annual tourism revenue was 3,904.000 million US dollars in 2019.⁵¹ Additionally, the CEIC recorded the number of monthly visitors to the country per month in the year 2019.⁵²

The government has been involved in promoting tourism since the late twentieth century. In 1964, the Corporation of Tourism was created to “take a political direction of the sector” as tourism increased and the country built infrastructure to sustain its tourism efforts.⁵³ According to Rodrigo Miranda and Rodrigo Rubio, in their work *Políticas Públicas, Beneficios Privados*, the “public strategy for development in Peru relied heavily on creating a climate of confidence and an international image of stability.”⁵⁴ In 1977, the country created The Fund for Tourism Promotion (FOPTUR), to “finance and execute the official promotion of internal tourism and develop facilitation activities and commercialization of tourism services.”⁵⁵ The 1984 General Tourism Law specified that to develop a tourism sector that is “integrated and equilibrated” the industry should include different sectors.⁵⁶ Therefore, the National Council for Tourism was created, with members from all different state entities such as subnational governments and town leadership, along with The Federation of Hotel Workers, the National Society of History, and the National Geographic Institute.

After a prolonged economic crisis, marked by political corruption and increased violence from the guerrilla organization, the Shining Path, in the 1980s, when both tourism and foreign investment went down due to the lack of stability in the country. Alberto Fujimori was elected president of Peru in 1990. He implemented one of the most severe structural adjustment packages in Latin America called “Fuji-shock.”⁵⁷ Fujimori ushered in neoliberal reforms through “state enterprises beginning to be privatized, trade laws were liberalized, protective labor laws

were abolished, and state spending was further curtailed.”⁵⁸ These market reforms had a profound effect on the tourism industry. In 1996, the Commission for the Promotion of Peru (PROMPERU) was created as a contemporary version of FOPTUR. This commission assumed the same roles as its predecessor with the added duty of “promoting a national image.”⁵⁹ In 1998, a new law was created called the Development of Tourism Activity, which stated that a priority of the tourism sector was to “stimulate the development of tourism activity as a means of contributing to the growing economy and developing favorable social relations for the country.”⁶⁰ That same year, the government said that the country received 600 million foreign tourists.

The 2000s proved to be formative years in Peruvian tourism. In 2000, after Fujimori had been removed from office, PROMPERU released the Manual of Conceptual Framework of Tourism in Peru, which specifically outlined tourism development and investments for the country. The manual cites that tourism overall is “an economic activity” and thus its sustainability relies on its ability to “generate profits for investors.”⁶¹ PROMPERU views tourism as a business in which its success is measured based on revenue. Miranda and Rubio mention that this section of the manual neglected potential issues between tourism, the environment, and society.

PROMPERU, under the Ministry of Exterior Commerce and Tourism (MINCETUR), continues to be the guiding force for tourism in the country. On their website, it details that their mission is to “position Peru in the world through the promotion of its image, its tourist destinations, and its export products with added value,” therefore contributing to the development of the country.⁶² Additionally, PROMPERU has a specific website for internal tourism and another website for international tourism. The first things you see are 1) the “Marca Peru”: “the Peru Logo,” which is the official logo of the nation, and beautiful images of different locations in the country. Aside from this physical and visual brand, the country has branded itself as “the richest

country in the world” having everything from a rich cultural history to adventure to gastronomy and more.⁶³ It is important to realize that the Peru brand is centered around having infinite options for tourists. The country is so “rich” that tourists can truly do anything. They can visit the Amazon, the valley of the volcanoes, Machu Picchu, and the Ica desert all in one country. The unique thing about the Peru brand is that it is multidimensional, and therefore it adapts to every tourist’s dreams and desires.

The top destinations to visit in Peru, according to the PROMPERU website are, Puno, Lima, Ica, Cusco, and Arequipa.⁶⁴ Arequipa, in the southern part of the country in the Andes and the home of Yanque, is known for its volcanic activity, unique architecture, and cuisine. The city is also the gateway to the Colca Canyon, one of the world's deepest canyons, which is a popular trekking and condor viewing destination.

The official tourism authority in Yanque and surrounding towns is not directly PROMPERU, but another entity called AUTOCOLCA. According to AUTOCOLCA’s Master Plan Pamphlet (2006), PROMPERU “did not dedicate nearly enough time and resources to the Colca region and thus, the actual promotion of tourism in the Colca Valley has been assumed by AUTOCOLCA.”⁶⁵ Therefore, the two agencies work in conjunction to promote Arequipa and the Colca Valley. AUTOCOLCA operates under regional law N° 24521, created in 1986 and a subsequent law N° 28537, which states that there is a national interest and a need to “exploit and promote the area that is the Colca Canyon” and surrounding cities.⁶⁶ The regional leader of AUTOCOLCA explained that AUTOCOLCA is a public institution that oversees tourism in the twenty districts of Caylloma and three annexes, and each year, 300,000 people visit the region. On their website it states that AUTOCOLCA's mission is “promoting, organizing and managing

the growth and consolidation of tourism in the area, as a means to achieve economic development, raising the quality of life of the regional population.”⁶⁷ The agency has complete autonomy over the region’s brand as they are the entity that “publishes propaganda that allows it to publicize the benefits of the area.”⁶⁸ According to the leader the canyon and condor are the main tourist attractions of Caylloma Province, but “it is more than condor and canyon.” Despite his assertion, most of the promotion of the valley is centered around the canyon and condor, as seen in the entity’s propaganda, website, and even their logo which is a condor in a valley. He asserted that every community has a “live culture” and that is a major attraction. He ended the interview by stating that—“we are like God, in all places and sometimes nobody sees us,” which illustrates the amount of power that AUTOCOLCA has over tourism and branding in the region.

According to the interviewees, AUTOCOLCA does not appear to build community or ask for local input. During the visits to some of the villages, the author spoke to individuals who felt like they had no say in tourism ventures in their towns. They felt like their communities had more to showcase and give but were not consulted during the “branding” process for the region. It appears that the entity takes branding into its own hands and through this, the cultural identity of the region is defined by the agency and not the actual people. Altogether, these experiences, along with many others, gave the author insight into the interesting dynamic between tourism, national branding, and cultural identity. Due to the experiences in Peru, along with the country’s demographics, the town of Yanque was an excellent place to explore the impact of tourism on local culture.

The Effect of Tourism on Culture in Yanque

The Colca Valley region is very well known for many things, aside from the often-highlighted UNESCO-recognized Wititi dance, condors, and traditional dresses. For example, the

Uyo Uyo ruins, thermal baths, agricultural traditions, the cabana and collaguas cultures, and so much more. Yanque itself is a quiet and small town but it is filled with friendly, and hardworking people. The town and the surrounding area are rich with fertile land that is found on hills and mountains. During the day, men and women hike up the mountains to check on their crops and feed their animals. The author observed that individuals not involved in agriculture and/or live-stock were somehow involved in the tourism industry.

Many interviewees value tourism because it brings them economic growth and improved infrastructure. For instance, one interviewee, Pedro, had to do most of his travel by walking years ago, but now there are more accessible roads with more buses between villages and Arequipa. Similarly, Jocelyne noted that in Cabanaconde there has recently been an effort to build more hotels and improve restaurants because of an increase in tourism due to the neighboring attraction “The Condor Cross Viewpoint.” She told the author, “the people are happy with tourism,” demonstrating that the view that tourism has had a positive impact. For Ernesto, there is also an undoubtedly positive link between tourism and the economy; “there are no gains if you do not work in tourism. Tourism helps significantly.” Similarly, Keldi, a store owner in Cabanaconde, mentioned that the economy was certainly benefitting from the increase in tourism to the region. She said, “no tourists, no business.” Naomi, who runs a local cafe in town, agreed with Ernesto by saying that tourism does seem to fill the gaps and help the economy.

In the remote town of Huanca, the townsfolk yearn for more tourism. Mercedes head of the tourism commission for Huanca said “we have a lot more but what we are missing is the economy”; she is referring to tourism. In the past, development agency Sierra Sur took the initiative to improve tourism in Huanca. While the agency was in the town, they were able to cultivate tourism ventures. Nevertheless, when Sierra Sur left, the industry collapsed. Mercedes longed for

other development initiatives to return and intervene to assist in tourism development. Despite the current difficult economic period, Mercedes indicated, “I love my town. What is missing is showing it off.” Similarly, in the town of Lari, several interviewees mentioned that there is an unequal distribution of tourism throughout the Colca Valley. The town of Lari appears to be left out, while others thrive from tourism. One person said, “we are missing tourism, and we are not taking advantage of what we have.” Interviewees wished that AUTOCOLCA would provide some assistance to aid Lari’s tourism industry.

In terms of cultural traditions, at first glance, the culture of the region appears to be intact and thriving because women are seen wearing traditional dresses, children are seen dancing the Wititit, and people walk around with their llamas and alpacas. Nevertheless, the ethnography of the region, as well as the interviews reveal that there is an ongoing conflict between cultural identity, tourism, and branding.

Thus, the data demonstrate two sets of findings. First, there are some economic benefits from tourism. However, second, the branding initiatives by AUTOCOLCA have excluded community members and have negatively impacted the cultural identity of Yanque. Importantly, the industry does influence the way culture is presented and sold to tourists. Although there is a decline in the traditional/indigenous culture in the valley, it is still being sold to tourists as if it were intact. For instance, Celia mentioned that tourists prefer to see the vendors in traditional dress saying, “tourists like it when we wear traditional clothing,” and that it is an unwritten rule to wear the clothing when tourists are present. While it is common for the older generation to wear traditional clothing out of custom, conversations with interviewees reveal that younger generations utilize traditional clothing for monetary purposes. This finding echoes the work of Sarah M. Lyon, and E. Christian Wells in their book *Global Tourism: Cultural Heritage and Economic*

Encounters, which explores the relationship between tourism and the commodification/manipulation of culture. The authors find that tourism is a transaction that leads to “shifting values and meanings of heritage” to ultimately “serve development” and tourism.⁶⁹

Additionally, several interviewees noted that traditions were being lost due to western influences. Trini, who worked at the ethnographic museum in the nearby town of Chivay, mentioned that a lot of traditions are being lost. She showed us traditional knit bags that were used to carry crops from the farmlands to people’s homes or the market. Trini confessed that now plastics bags are used more than knit bags because plastic bags are imported from China, making them cheaper and more accessible. Next, she showed us a beautiful knit blanket that was made by hand and then another that was made by a machine. She said the tradition of knitting is also dying because older generations are not teaching their children and generations after how to knit. When questioned about the traditional dress, Trini said that while older generations wear them daily, she mostly only wears them for fiestas (celebrations) and that younger generations do not wear the dress for daily life. Many interviewees noted that younger generations are becoming increasingly westernized and older generations are failing to pass down traditions and customs.

Another interviewee, Gerardo, added that many traditions, most of the agricultural, are being lost because the younger generations are disinterested. Older generations in Yanque grew up tending the land and later took on agriculture as their profession, nevertheless, younger generations prefer the tourism industry over agriculture, as it is perceived to be more lucrative. In the article "Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values," Ronald Inglehart and Wayne Baker add to the discussion that economic development has a profound effect on people's lifestyles and cultural values.⁷⁰ The two argue that prosperity prompts people to

move away from their traditional values.⁷¹ This generational change in priorities is relevant in the town of Yanque and others alike.

Culture is also fabricated for the sake of tourists. One of our interviewees, Cesaria, owned a store in which she sold some “indigenous statues.” When questioned about their origin, Cesaria laughed and said that she makes the statues based on what she thinks the tourists are looking for. Vendors and tourist entrepreneurs are catering to tourists, indicating that the local culture is being manipulated for touristic purposes.

Furthermore, some of the interviewees mentioned that the importance of the indigenous language, Quechua, is reducing due to tourism and lifestyle changes. Celia and other interviewees said that Quechua is not being taught with much emphasis and that instead, English has become a more attractive language for individuals to learn. Similarly, Naomi, who runs a small cafe in Yanque, plays English-language music in her restaurant instead of Spanish-language music because it is what tourists prefer. Restaurants and cafes in the area are doing something similar with their menus. Typical Peruvian plates have been altered by adding pasta or fries to appease tourists. Thus, on the one hand, tourism in Yanque seeks to immerse tourists into the rich traditional culture of the region, and on the other hand, aspects of the industry are westernized to comfort the tourist.

Ultimately, AUTOCOLCA is promoting tourism with little to no community input by excluding the local community from their regional branding efforts. When speaking to Keldi, a former AUTOCOLCA employee, about AUTOCOLCA, she was very critical of the agency. She mentioned that Cabanaconde is not seeing any of the monetary benefits from Cruz del Condor, despite being so close to the attraction. This is a sentiment that was echoed by Liliana, owner of

a hostel, in Yanque. Liliana added that AUTOCOLCA does not have “a plan for tourism development that is coherent with reality.” This alludes to the lack of communication between the agency and the local community, especially those involved in tourism. Overall, Liliana is disappointed with AUTOCOLCA because she believes there is more, they can do. She said they can start by emphasizing different traditions, customs of the region aside from the Witi and the condor because “that is not all that we have here in the Colca Valley.” She ended by saying that AUTOCOLCA “barely collaborated with the village.” This is something that interviewees from across the valley agreed with. They did not feel supported, understood, or even acknowledged by the agency; these individuals might as well have been props in their towns.

When speaking to the current AUTOCOLCA employees Fernando and Francisco, the divide between the locals and the agency was further emphasized. Fernando reported that “tourism generates gains, and it leads to economic movement.” When questioned about the negative effects that the tourism industry had on other industries in the region, he responded by saying that no negative consequences were arising from tourism. Similarly, when speaking to regional manager Francisco, the research team was reassured that AUTOCOLCA has an overwhelmingly positive impact. Francisco stated that “tourism is our potential.” When questioned why some of these communities, like Lari and Huanca, do not benefit from tourism like other towns in the valley, Francisco responded that there is only so much they can do because some towns do not have the infrastructure or services to support tourism. While the agency does help with educating entrepreneurs about best practices, they rarely provide funding to support towns that lack infrastructure. When asked about the relationship between tourism and culture, Francisco said it benefits the communities because aspects of the culture are being revived and strengthened. He did add that “sometimes people do not want to share their cultures.” This comment places some

blame on communities for unsuccessful tourism, while the communities would blame AUTO-COLCA for not supporting their efforts.

These interviews demonstrate that the industry does impact the way people embody, present, communicate, and sell their culture to tourists. This is evident in individuals' adaptations to please tourists. Whether it was wearing the traditional dress or including a side of fries with the traditional alpaca, locals are making active decisions with tourists' interests in mind. Individuals correlate catering to tourists with gaining more revenue, and they are correct. As mentioned in earlier sections, McDisneyization is the standardization of the tourism industry that leaves no room for error or surprises. The theory explains that although tourists travel to gain an authentic experience, they still want the comfort of their western societies. Thus, locals in the Colca Valley aim to meet tourists' expectations for money and in the end, everyone will be providing the same services and experiences because that will become the new standard. This process ultimately eradicates differences and threatens authenticity.

Ultimately this dynamic has led to the slow death of traditions and customs due to generational differences and western influences. This phenomenon is closely tied to cultural erosion. As societies become increasingly modern and industrial, cultural values tend to change. In Yanque and surrounding cities, infrastructural development and modernization have changed the traditional way of life in the valley. Additionally, western ideals and expectations brought by tourists also shift cultural values and lead to the deterioration of traditions and customs over time and generations.

Lastly, there is a consensus among the individuals involved in the study that AUTO-COLCA is doing a terrible job of promoting the region accurately and involving the community in the branding process. The entity has taken it upon themselves to define the identity, traditions,

and culture of the region and propagate that brand and in turn, have marginalized community members. The distanced and unbalanced relationship between AUTOCOLCA and towns in the Colca Valley is a microcosm for national branding projects in Peru. Generally, branding in the nation is done from the top-down, with little involvement from the local community, and aims to accommodate tourists.⁷² Ultimately, this demonstrates that for as long as branding excludes local and indigenous populations, national brands and propaganda will communicate an essentialized image and exclude relevant narratives and identities leaving locals no choice but to adapt to this image to meet tourists' expectations and gain as much profit as possible as seen in Yanque and sounding towns.⁷³

Interestingly, while the data suggest that tourism has a profound effect on the cultural identity of Yanque and neighboring regions, many of the people involved in the study did not seem to notice or care. This is because tourism's economic benefits outweigh the negatives for this group of people. Many of the people interviewed crave tourism and will do anything to increase their profits, even sacrifice, fabricate, or accentuate aspects of their culture. Regarding AUTOCOLCA, much of the frustration with the agency stems from a lack of access to the branding process and exclusion from the formal tourism industry. Interviewees wish to be a part of branding so that they can have some autonomy over their tourism ventures, revenue, and businesses.

Lastly, some communities have taken advantage of tourism and combined the industry with cultural projects to prompt a sort of "cultural revival" and gain revenue. In the town of Lari, tourism is not a big industry, and this was obvious by the lack of infrastructure and sheer lack of people. Nevertheless, after speaking with the local government, the town is making efforts to

join the tourism industry. One of the officials explained that every year on August 10th, the community goes to the Amazon River and pays “pagachi”—tribute, to “Pachamama”—mother earth. The local government planned to combine this tradition with a marathon up the mountain, at the end of which, runners/tourists could view and possibly participate in the spiritual event. When asked about the intrusiveness of tourism into an integral part of their culture, Isidro said that tourists would just watch, not interrupting the event. Although this could be another exploitative tourist attraction that commodifies culture, Lari residents saw the event as a good economic opportunity, especially for a struggling tourist town. Similarly, one of the interviewees, Liliana, and a few other members of the community of Yanque came together and initiated the “Wititaso” a few years back to revive the dance tradition, involve youth, and collect money from tourists. Every morning, as the tour buses are arriving at Yanque, children of all ages dress up in a traditional dress and dance the Witit in the town square to receive donations and entertain the tourists. These two instances reflect the overall sentiment among individuals in the valley that tourism is good for the economy. The next section discusses the greater implications of these findings.

Conclusions

This research offers some interesting findings for scholars of development, tourism, and nation branding and generates new hypotheses to test in future research. This study shows that regional branding by AUTOCOLCA along with the increase of tourism in the Colca Valley has left the locals involved in the study with mixed feelings and results. As the literature suggested, tourism is met with positive feedback from the community because it leads to favorable outcomes such as infrastructure and economic growth and development. The people whom were interviewed concur that tourism’s overall effect is positive, and they believe that the industry filled

an economic void in the valley. Still, these benefits of the industry prompt some to turn a blind eye to the negative outcomes of tourism, specifically on cultural identity.

This study shows that tourism is affecting the cultural identity of Yanque. Many of the interviewees described instances where they actively changed their actions, image, or demeanor to accommodate tourists but also to get more profit. This case study confirms that McDisneyization and cultural erosion are direct effects of the tourism industry. Second, this case study allows us to delve into how branding strategies, for tourism, also alter cultural identity. It is evident from the case study that while people are happy with tourism, they are unhappy with AUTOCOLCA's role in the industry. This is because interviewees report that they do not have a say when it comes to how their towns are being portrayed and sold to tourists. This not only leads to an unrealistic representation of the culture but also the marginalization of locals from the formal tourism industry. Interviewees agreed that the towns rarely see the full economic benefits because AUTOCOLCA holds all the autonomy. This finding is certainly true to nation branding in Peru because the relationship between Yanque and AUTOCOLCA is a microcosm of what happens across the nation.

Ultimately the findings also tell us much about neoliberalism. Nation branding took place as part of the neoliberal ideas and strategies that were heavily implemented in Peru by President Fujimori. These findings add to the literature that criticizes neoliberalism's neglect of culture and the multidimensionality of the development process and how that ultimately negatively affects local communities.

Some might suggest that there is no real threat to cultural identity because the interviewees themselves do not find this problematic. While this is true, this research demonstrates that the issues of cultural erosion and McDisneyization, among others, are present in Yanque, and

whether residents are bothered by this or not probably depends on their specific relationship with and role in the tourism industry. Many of the individuals involved in the study reap economic benefits from tourism and for them, the economic advantages of the industry outweigh the cost.

These findings raise some related questions that are beyond the scope of this paper but can take several forms in future research. First, it is important to further delve into the issues of tourism and indigenous/ethnic/Quechua identity in Peru. Second, further research is required to understand the causal relationship between tourism and cultural identity in the neoliberal context of Peru. Additionally, this research raises many questions regarding the Colca Valley and the structural/economic disadvantages that have led to a dependence on tourism in the area. Therefore, a deeper understanding of Yanque and the cultural identity of its residents is necessary to understand the forces that are contributing to cultural change in the region. This can be achieved with more interview data and a longer ethnography of Yanque and surrounding towns.

Finally, this paper adds criticism and context to the academic discussion of nation branding as a part of tourism development and its impact on culture. Leaving behind the question: What does the future hold for cultural identity, tourism, and national branding efforts in Peru? This research demonstrates that when regional brands are created from the top-down, there will be a disconnect with the local living culture, identities, and narratives, which ultimately leads to an inaccurate representation of the region. Leaving locals with the option of adapting to the present brand and compromising aspects of their identity for profit.

Looking ahead, there will continue to be a conflict between national and regional brands and cultural identity for as long as local actors are excluded from the branding process. For brands to be both successful and accurate, they must include the local community in the discus-

sion and process. Participatory development is the best practice for establishing the tourism industry in this region and others alike. A participatory model of tourism development in Yanque will lead to tourism ventures that are coherent and concurrent with reality. Conversations between branding strategists and local actors can lead to the formalization of tourism activities, opportunities, and business in a specific region. This favors the local community because they will gain autonomy over the way their culture is portrayed and communicated to tourists and at the same time directly reap the benefits. Concurrently, the tourism industry will benefit as well because tourism ventures will be more agreeable with the local culture and reality. As the tourism industry continues to grow in the Colca Valley and Peru, the government, and branding strategists must commit to collaborate with the people when elaborating a national brand to maintain cultural integrity and authenticity while also benefiting and respecting the local communities.

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