

RURAL MARKETING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP SOCIAL IMAGINARIES IN PERUVIAN FARMING COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

Rural Marketing is a methodological approach that is being used successfully in many rural communities in developing countries to agree on small-scale economic production models that guarantee peasant families decent living conditions and sustainable development options. This research conducted an ethnographic study in the Centro Poblado de Santa Rosa, a rural community in Peru with one of the highest poverty rates. The study inquired about the social imaginaries of the inhabitants and explored development strategies agreed upon with the population in order to elaborate a new agenda that favors social transformation. Rural Marketing strategies were shared with the community as an opportunity to generate social consensus that would summon them to build a rural economic progress project based on the cooperation of all social actors in the community.

Keywords: Rural Marketing, Social Imaginaries, Agricultural Development, Rural Poverty, Peru.

INTRODUCTION

Rural towns in Peru acquire privileged positions due to their geographical position, close to natural resources and diverse microclimates that foster an economy of food sovereignty. The country has become the world's leading exporter of quinoa, second in organic coffee, third in avocados, fourth in dried peppers and fifth in grapes. Non-traditional agro-exports totaled in 2015 a figure of 4,345 US million, and replaced crops that were traditionally planted 20 years ago, such as mango and asparagus in the 90s, citrus, grapes, avocados and legumes in the 2000s, and since 2010 organic products such as coffee, quinoa and cocoa, as well as fruits such as pomegranates, blueberries and tangerines increased. The greatest export demand belongs to the line of *superfoods* or *superfoods*, such as kiwicha, quinoa, cañihua, and to a lesser extent spices such as turmeric or organic ginger (PROMPERU, 2011;2014;2014;2015a;2015b).

Peruvian agriculture has established itself as one of the fastest growing export sectors in the last 20 years, and its success depends to a large extent on rural and social marketing strategies, which are necessary when one wants to enter international markets, where both developed and emerging countries have dominance in different products (Turkey, USA, Brazil, etc.). Marketing has been configured as a vital tool for decision making in order to carry out

innovation processes aimed at sustainable growth of business models in rural sectors (Barrientos Felipa, 2018).

The above competitive advantages, together with the current demographic bonus, foster Peruvian economic growth (Central Reserve Bank of Peru, 2015), but need other factors to enhance the socioeconomic conditions of the region: There are high unemployment rates, unstable incomes due to dependence on seasonal agricultural products, lack of institutional support, among other factors that must be intervened to increase living standards. Rural areas in neighboring countries such as Colombia or Ecuador face similar vulnerabilities, especially for the female population (Moreno-Vallejo & Kerchis, 2019), who face severe inequalities in economic opportunities and decision making, or the child population (Zúñiga Escárate, 2019), who suffer from cases of chronic malnutrition, despite being located in the same food producing areas.

Vulnerabilities are also seen in economic matters: although quinoa is one of the most exported products in the country, some of the production chains are weak due to the high level of informality and lack of alliances between regional producers and cooperatives. Most regulatory agents (regional governments, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, local mayors) oversee individual producers and hinder alliances and cooperatives between actors (producers), which would have the potential to invigorate production processes if they were given the space to form alliances (Mercado, 2018).

This is not surprising considering that these rural communities have historically occupied the territories and have developed through inherited cultural dynamics, such as religious influences and traits of Inca ethnic groups, such as the Quechua, Awajuna and Aymara. These developments have taken place naturally and have not followed land-use plans or pre-established economic schemes. The agribusiness sector in Peru has been consolidated since the 1990s, in parallel with ecotourism or community-based tourism initiatives (Cabanilla, 2018). In response to regional economic policies on rural development, models of small family business cooperatives were transformed into legally established commercial networks. These have been articulated according to the phases of their production (agro-productive, agro-industrial, agro-exports and agro-commercial businesses), and although export levels are increasing, a modernization of the beginning of the productive chain, which receives the lowest percentage of profits in the business chain, is necessary. Investment is required to improve competitiveness, especially in traceability, connectivity, technological appropriation and articulation with all stakeholders involved (Castro et al., 2018).

Traditionally, commercial practices in rural Peruvian communities revolve around sales systems by independent individuals who generally operate informally. These areas lack established chains or franchises due to their difficult access: they lack road infrastructure to maintain an efficient supply chain (Sarkar & Kundu, 2018). Much of this community economy transits through shopkeepers. These stores are configured as social meeting points, opportunities to have a vendor to barter, and even get microcredit from these informal supply chains, which a 'chain store' would generally not achieve in these sectors (Sarkar & Kundu, 2019). Now, the Peruvian state is present in these contexts through public works, access to education, as well as road infrastructure construction. Particularly noteworthy is the implementation of a Comprehensive Health Insurance (SIS) that has expanded coverage and protected these vulnerable populations, although there are still gaps in the articulation of services or human resources with low remuneration and incentives (Gutiérrez et al., 2018).

It is precisely the lack of job opportunities that puts at risk the initial trajectory towards employment of young people and adults in these communities, since there are conditions such as low productivity in the agricultural sector, lack of access to land, studies or obtaining work experience, which inevitably has repercussions on the precariousness of work (Urrutia & Trivelli, 2019). The state has allocated scarce resources to meet these needs, which generates uncertainty in the population, which observes that there are no opportunities to energize its productive sector and circulate the harvested products, which generates conditions for these young people to migrate and not returning to the community.

This situation motivates the present research, which seeks to diagnose the Municipality of Centro Poblado Santa Rosa, a community that has not yet implemented policies for economic, social, educational and infrastructure transformation. Its citizens do not know the benefits of implementing development and planning policies in accordance with public policies that promote sustained economic growth. The presence of the state in this locality is limited to the presence of educational centers with idle infrastructure, which generates feelings of vulnerability and lack of protection in the community.

Rural Governance in Peru

During the period between 2001 and 2010, Peru experienced economic and investment growth that characterized it as a country with the potential for economic, political and social development. This economic boom did not diminish the deep social inequalities it faced, especially in rural areas. Although some contemporary governments have implemented social welfare policies, the Peruvian state has recognized some of its mistakes, such as focusing primarily on economic development without strengthening social policies; and has focused on developing and implementing social programs aimed at attacking poverty and benefiting the most vulnerable groups (Jiménez Monsalve, 2014). The country was able to take advantage of the rise in commodity prices to invest in social development, which is evidenced by a process of poverty reduction, not accelerated, but sustained.

The communities must organize themselves to jointly solve the basic needs of the services originated in the initial stage of invasion and the formalization of the land obtained in this modality, seeking to obtain property titles. The formation of the community allows them to have an administrative organization to represent them before the state for their security (neighborhood organization), food (soup kitchens) and education (creation of educational institutions).

The community should have a certain degree of autonomy to execute its participatory budget, which is established as a meeting of board of directors' presidents. However, these directors present projects that are sometimes unrelated to the community development plans (few communities have one) and the general population is unaware of the channels to which they should turn to manage productive projects, limiting themselves to waiting for their authorities to be the managers of development in their district. This leads to the fact that transcendental decisions are arbitrated by municipal officials, who arbitrarily distribute budgets, often to the benefit of those localities close to the administrative body in charge (Díaz Bravo, 2014).

Any project for social development must be adapted to the culture of the beneficiaries, since the population is the one that must participate, assuming responsibilities in the development process, thus empowering the community. This should allow their active and autonomous inclusion in their own development and implies that interculturality in the

implementation of programs is fundamental: the different social actors should be included, analyzing the daily coexistence, their conflicts, as well as the perception of both the executors and the beneficiary population and these social actors (Arizábal Gárate & Linares Portilla, 2013).

There is a growing interest in developing social programs or projects of the State through the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion, but there are low levels of community trust that affect economic factors and social capital in order to establish public policies that become viable alternatives for development and productive growth through a modern and efficient state that guarantees appropriate local governance processes in favor of vulnerable populations. The programs developed by the government have not had the expected effect due to the lack of cooperation from the communities, due to the lack of trust they have in the state (Romero Chauca, 2010). There is a crisis of trust among the vulnerable urban communities due to the lack of interest of the state, that the economic subsistence of these communities is due to family trust (family nucleus), interpersonal trust and trust in the church to which they belong, which is configured as the only institution in which the villagers see their needs appeased thanks to the social network they form. Due to these governance crises, it is difficult to implement projects in rural areas, which should aim at the social appropriation of community economic development, which has been successful in other international contexts.

Experiences in International Rural Marketing

As evidenced above, the concept of a social network for development is vital for rural populations. In the Peruvian case, the predominant social actor is often the Church, which is configured as a support network that organizes the social and productive relations of the community, which can be an example for officials who want to implement the policies established in these rural population centers. This concept of generating a network is not new, and has been popularized in socioeconomic studies. The paradigms of modernization have been changing in the world, and in this area they have been replaced by what is known as rural development processes (Van der Ploeg et al., 2000).

Networks have become a development paradigm that, when combined with economic policies and theories of innovation and learning, have succeeded in energizing productive sectors in rural areas. The importance acquired by rural marketing as an engine of development is inescapably mediated by ICTs, since the generation of commercial networks depends to a large extent on maintaining the connection to information systems. Despite the problems that could affect this type of experiences - such as lack of training that result in inefficient marketing - connectivity enhances product promotion capabilities, ensures greater control over their prices and improves their traceability when shipping (Mohammadi et al., 2018).

The Peruvian state operates mainly as vertical networks, while rural communities should aspire to form horizontal networks that link them to more general processes. In this case, vertical networks operate like the agro-industrial food sector in which these peasants only belong to one link in the production and distribution chain, when they should aspire to distributed networks that allow for multiple processes in the local environment and link them to broader economic networks (Murdoch, 2000). Networks should be promoted in public policies so that productive processes can be successfully articulated with economic dynamics (Murdoch, 2000).

This rural development dynamic is associated with multilevel, multi-stakeholder and multifaceted processes that represent a break with some modernist and extractivist state projects. Local initiatives and practices that coordinate rural actors have generated socio-technical models

that organize agricultural production in a more horizontal way, generating spaces where distribution and marketing are incorporated into these processes (Van der Ploeg & Roep, 2003).

These agricultural production processes evolve to sustainable models such as agro-ecological production, processing and value chain in situ in rural spaces, agro-tourism, multifunctional agriculture, credit associations and cooperative funds where farmers organize all levels of production, distribution, marketing and negotiation (Schneider, van der Ploeg, & Hebinck, 2014). Social actors are constantly re-defining these practices according to the relationships and interactions that emerge from these new ways of interpreting value production in rural spaces, which contributes to their appropriation of the processes and to dynamically foster socioeconomic relations of less favored rural communities (van der Ploeg et al., 2015).

But it is not enough just to inject capital into rural communities, especially if there are no applied methodologies to transform their vocation and generate self-sustainable markets. These spaces have great potential for generating networks of rural consumers and producers through large-scale rural development credit. However, making the transition from short supply chains, which are characteristic of these contexts (Marsden et al., 2000), to national and international supply networks is a great challenge, since it requires the help of entities that have the financial resources necessary to execute this type of project. Only modern banks make such a transition possible, which is a major challenge for policy makers in emerging markets, who have to balance the interests of communities with the benefits of private banking. Farmers may even resist inclusion in financial markets, so there are also options to implement public rural banking schemes to achieve economic inclusion (Dadzie et al., 2013).

Historically, the implementation of large-scale rural economic projects requires to a large extent the articulation of rural marketing with the social structures of each community. In developing countries, the transition from traditional agricultural societies to modern management schemes has created great challenges in integrating thousands of rural communities into the rest of society (Skinner, 1964, 1965aa, 1965bb). This task demands long-term projections that will establish a sustainable and long-lived development in these societies before implementing modern strategies that generate disruptions in the peasant way of life and go against the traditions rooted in these communities.

These types of schemes that seek such inclusion in rural sectors depend to a large extent on the diversification of practices according to the context in which they are established. If there is no general marketing management scheme that is transferred to the rural context and incorporates elements of social marketing, service industries, rural tourism, among other innovations in the countryside (Krishnamacharyulu, 2010;2011), integration between local, regional and national administrations will not be achieved, allowing the diverse profiles and economic practices of these 3 levels to generate sustainable economic development models.

For example, in cases of sustainable tourism in rural areas, it is necessary to develop viable scales in indefinite periods of time, which is achieved by incorporating local knowledge into information systems, promoting the adoption of internet and online marketing to form businesses, usually in multi-criteria systems that fit the needs of each community and allow promoting not only agricultural production to potential customers, but also generating alternative routes of financing, such as ecological trails or tours of rural facilities (Andreopoulou et al., 2014). Another factor to consider is the incidence of alternative food networks that emulate short supply chains, but innovate with modern information systems and allow the development of joint strategies in farmer cooperatives around market needs: There is pressure from consumers, who

demand more variety and quality in products, and by following and meeting their needs without resorting to intermediaries, they enhance the development capacity of a producer community, as demonstrated by various European or U.S. organizations (Renting et al., 2003).

It is clear that without the integration of processes in various development areas (regional knowledge, information systems, administrative and commercial schemes, comprehensive training) that are specifically related to multifunctionality, competitive rural development processes will not be generated. To achieve economic growth in vulnerable regions, there are various options such as introducing multifunctionality schemes that make it possible to visualize the relationships between rural development processes that help to map the reconfigurations in the use of underlying resources: land, labor, local knowledge, nature, and other potential resources characteristic of each rural settlement (Knickel & Renting, 2000).

These potential resources also refer to the social capital relationship that must be included within any rural development project (Cosyns, Van Damme, De Wulf, & Degrande, 2014). Such capital is indispensable to achieve sustainable development goals, since by not considering the complexity of social capital relationships in farmers' lifestyles, any type of intervention to enhance economic development is doomed to failure. In cases where there is no institutional support to achieve these development goals, rural entrepreneurship initiatives are configured as alternatives to promote commercial relations in rural population centers.

However, the independent sector cannot always meet all the needs of a community, since its main objective is not the generation of employment or economic growth (it is not its social purpose, nor are they trained for it), and they have limited capacity to generate jobs that do not revolve around activities at the first level of agricultural production. In Peru, in the face of state disconnection in certain hard-to-reach areas, rural entrepreneurs have contributed to the development of the most remote regions and contributed to economic growth, to the point that more than 80% of commercial activities in rural areas are driven by entrepreneurships (Lekhanya, 2018). It is worth highlighting that the most successful cases are those that receive support from public and private institutions, which finance, train and accompany these entrepreneurs. Given this reality, this study approaches the Municipality of Centro Poblado Santa Rosa from an integral perspective that empowers the community to take ownership of the process and allows a first diagnosis of their situation, which will facilitate future support programs.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological design is qualitative in nature, and was structured from the methodological triangulation technique. Three main approaches were used: The first one is the so-called Qualitative Interviewing Method (Roulston, 2010) the second one was based on ethnographic research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Goldman & McDonald, 1987; Guber, 2004, 2016; McCracken, 1988; Murchison, 2010) and the third one refers to the techniques of PAR or Participatory Action Research (Martí, 2017), which considers that the social scientist must share the objectives and methods with the social base in which he/she intervenes, since in this way research is not done for the masses, but emerges from the social base itself (Fals Borda, 1980). Based on this triangulation process, the following actions were defined to collect the necessary data to carry out this research (Kršlak, S. Šehić., & Ljevo, 2021).

The research instruments designed and applied to collect the information were: (1) Participant observation, (2) Interviews with social actors, and (3) Focus groups with Secondary School students.

Considering that the project had a duration of six months (October 2018-March 2019), in the first stage, the technique of Social Mapping construction was used to identify the most relevant social actors within the community. This approach is linked to the theory of Participatory Action Research (PAR). In the second stage, the information was collected using Roulston's qualitative approach, based on ethnographic research. To begin data collection, an unstructured interview was conducted with each of the most representative social actors in the community. These actors were identified through stakeholder mapping, a theoretical approach linked to Fals Borda's PRA. The actors interviewed were: municipal authorities, ronderos, social leaders, teachers, parish priest, youth, and entrepreneurs.

Once the information collected in each of the instruments was processed, the Data Triangulation was performed. The 3 instruments allowed to approach the most relevant aspects about the perceptions and social imaginaries (Castoriadis, 2007) of the inhabitants.

RESULTS

The first approach to the social fabric of the community that is the object of this study was based on participant observation. This first approach allowed the team to identify six main axes of analysis that served as a reference for the design of the other research instruments: interviews and focus groups. These axes are: (a) infrastructure, (b) economic development, (c) education, (d) security, (e) social development, and (f) Peruvian state programs.

After processing and analyzing the data collected in the research process, the most relevant aspects about the inhabitants of the municipality of Santa Rosa were highlighted in each of the thematic axes defined in the research process:

Infrastructure

The villagers request the maintenance of existing roads rather than the creation of new ones. They require the State to build a drinking water treatment center, as they currently get their water from the ponds near the towns. They lack robust connectivity through telecommunication networks that allow them to have access to mobile telephony and internet.

Economic Development

They consider that the current productive apparatus does not generate enough jobs to employ the economically active population, leading to the migration of this population. They recognize that although there is a large extension of land that could be the basis for the development of productive projects, these areas are not being cultivated due to the lack of technological support and advice to implement crops that are profitable and require little water consumption. They also consider that although there is no tradition of associating agricultural projects of traditional crops (passion fruit, coffee and banana) with livestock projects for raising pigs, possibilities should be explored to establish agricultural-livestock relations, which would generate more jobs, higher productivity and therefore higher income for the peasant families in the municipality's population centers.

Education

There are large schools throughout the community and in the annexes of the communities, but due to the small number of students, this educational infrastructure is underutilized, to the point that assigned teachers have no student population to serve. This happens because in the municipality most of the students are older adults and children, and young people between 17- and 25-years old leave in search of job opportunities and technical and higher education. They aspire, in addition to the various trades in the agricultural field, to pursue liberal professional careers. Some say they want to be policemen to collaborate in the municipality and not migrate from it, but this would depend on whether there is a local educational offer for technical training.

Safety

Despite the small size of the communities, the inhabitants perceive a sense of insecurity, which in their case is reflected in robberies and cattle rustling. Although there are peasant patrols, they are not well organized. Since they are made up of adults, there is no cultural practice that promotes generational change in these organizations, and there are not enough leaders with the profile to lead a peasant patrol. This is evident in the perceptions of young people, who value the peasant patrols positively, as they preserve order in the community, but when it comes to assuming leadership positions to carry out activities for the benefit of the community, there is not a high level of commitment on their part.

Social Development

The tendencies towards migration of people of productive age have generated that the population center is inhabited in a higher percentage by older adults and children. The migrants who are outside the country and the educators are the ones who declare a greater capacity for commitment to develop actions for the benefit of the community, since the young people believe that they have, due to their youth, a greater capacity to carry out common tasks, because the adults have many disagreements when they carry out communal work.

Peruvian State Programs

Nominally, almost all of the Peruvian government's social programs are present; however, there is no cohesion or teamwork among the authorities. There are beneficiaries of some social programs, being the scholarship program called 'Beca 18' to access higher education the most recognized. However, other programs such as the community center called TAMBO are underutilized, since the state managers in charge are present sporadically, which hinders the state-community relationship. Since the presence of authorities is so precarious, young people do not identify the activities carried out by these authorities, which leads to a lack of interest in politics. Likewise, some residents consider that social programs have caused apathy in the beneficiary population in relation to their active participation in community development actions. They consider that these beneficiaries are unwilling to participate in community work for the benefit of all.

DISCUSSION

The project schedule was developed between October 2018 and March 2019. During this period of time, a work agenda was jointly elaborated with the community of the Santa Rosa, which allowed to explore the individual and collective imaginaries of its inhabitants. Although this research was exploratory, the intention of the researchers was to systematize the worldviews of the peasant communities of this territory in order to identify how they represented themselves as individuals and as a human group in the present and in the immediate future. Possible community initiatives were also explored to have a positive impact on the economic and social progress of the inhabitants of these rural communities.

During the participant observation process, the researchers were careful not to misrepresent the facts observed in context, or in the "speech acts" (Searle, 1994). The first thing to consider was to establish the speech acts that represented the "raw facts" and the "institutional facts", considering the difficulty involved in describing and classifying them.

A distinction was made when talking to a social leader, to know if this person represented his organization or represented himself as an individual. Likewise, when talking with the parish priest, with teachers and with state officials representing social programs, it was important to know if these institutional representatives were constructing a discourse in accordance with their status as institutional spokespersons and when they were making judgments as citizens.

In relation to infrastructure, the issue most valued as an absence by adults is access to basic rural sanitation. The fact of not having access to drinking water, in addition to worsening the standard of living of the community, is a lack of infrastructure that the community cannot solve independently, since it requires an economic investment that only the State is in a position to implement.

A cultural aspect that speaks of these times of technological scientific dominance is expressed in the fact that for young people, the greatest demand in infrastructure is represented by access to connectivity through communication networks with cellular telephone and Internet services.

By identifying the asymmetry between the State resources invested in educational infrastructure represented by the fact that there are large educational infrastructures that are underutilized due to the small number of students, the study explored the possibility of the community establishing agreements with universities and technological institutes so that these entities could offer training programs in agricultural technologies through social responsibility actions. In this type of synergy, the higher education institutions could develop technology transfer projects to rural communities through non-formal education processes and the population could acquire technical knowledge that would allow them to improve the agricultural production levels of the small farms in the Municipality of Santa Rosa.

With regard to security in rural areas, universities and technological institutes can work to strengthen organizations such as the rural patrols in order to guarantee greater security for small productive units scattered throughout rural municipalities. Since cattle rustling is the crime that has the greatest negative effect on small family economies, training members of the "rondas campesinas" (self-organized groups comprised of farmers in the community) in efficient security strategies can not only protect the economic assets of rural families, but also generate institutional strengthening of the "rondas campesinas" as community institutions that are highly recognized throughout the community.

Considering that teachers and immigrants living abroad are the people who show the greatest commitment when it comes to assuming development for the benefit of the entire community, it is important to design a strategy to identify stakeholders who can work in an

agenda that can be coordinated by these actors, who, using the low operating costs that social networks allow today, can develop development actions and campaigns for the benefit of the rural population.

The implementation of this project in the Santa Rosa population center allowed to identify an important feature about the undesired effects of social programs to close the poverty gap in rural areas, for example the finding that many of the beneficiaries of social programs show disinterest in participating in community development actions that have been part of the cultural traditions of rural communities for many years. They consider that being beneficiaries of a State social program makes them a kind of "special" member of the community, which discourages them from participating in collective actions organized by community organizations.

The fact of having incorporated Rural Marketing strategies in the design of this research allowed to identify that although in Latin America this type of approach is not widely used, it offers interesting possibilities for the development of rural communities because the community link that is built from the strategies of this approach of social intervention is also social, cultural and economic. In this sense, if each member of a rural community is able to identify the economic difference involved in participating or not in a collective community initiative, this will translate into better levels of productivity in the family economy represented in better living conditions, decline of the migration process, since young people will find in the productive family units conditions of economic development that will underestimate the precarious working conditions of rural migrants when they arrive in the city, where they get poorly paid jobs that do not provide optimal conditions for individual or family economic development.

CONCLUSIONS

When analyzing the economic, psychosocial and security factors that affect the sustainable development of the Santa Rosa population center, Querocotillo District, Cutervo Province, the inhabitants of the Santa Rosa population center require a communication infrastructure that allows them to generate conditions for economic development in order to market their agricultural products, articulating between their small productive units, which would affect the migration phenomenon of young people of productive age.

Despite having natural sources of fresh water, they demand an infrastructure for the storage of drinking water and an integral and sustainable management of the same. They are aware of the effects of climate change on their productive lands and request technical assistance and financial credits from the State for the implementation of eco-efficient irrigation systems for banana, passion fruit and coffee crops. This would replace flood irrigation practices and optimize available freshwater resources.

They also request social assistance and technical assistance programs for the development of productive activities. They consider that the best help they can receive from the State to overcome structural poverty is the promotion of infrastructure for basic sanitation, communications and agricultural and livestock technology.

Finally, the families that promote small agricultural and livestock production units request a Concerted Development Plan that involves the entire community and promotes the strengthening of community organizations such as the "rondas campesinas" and the creation of producers' cooperatives that will allow them to strengthen the economic and social development of the families of the Santa Rosa population center.

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