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Estefanía Sánchez-Cevallos, Ana Patricia Armijos Maurad, Verónica Mora-Jácome
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ROLE AND PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND WOMEN IN “EL CISNE” PARISH, BASED ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM

Estefanía Sánchez-Cevallos, Ana Patricia Armijos Maurad, and Verónica Mora-Jácome

12.1 Introduction

This chapter analyzes the role of young people and women in the development of religious tourism in the parish of El Cisne. For this purpose, some factors that identify this role will be analyzed and there will be a delimitation of the aspects that currently foster tourism development in this zone. Some key elements will be included in this chapter. Initially, there is a conceptual analysis of religious tourism that discusses its beginning, development, and components.

In order to familiarize the reader with the region under study, we present a detailed analysis of this place. We contextualize the main themes that define this territory and characterize some indicators of interest, such as population, structure of economic activities, and tourism development as well as the history, worship, and faith related to the Virgin of El Cisne.

This chapter also presents the results of the quantitative research conducted in the parish of El Cisne that attempted to identify the participation and role of young people and women from this parish in the development of religious tourism. These results are presented in tables and figures in order to have a better understanding of the findings obtained. It is worth mentioning that the present article is the result of the research project called “Rural tourism as a development axis in the parish of El Cisne, in the county of Loja, province of Loja: Designing a model based on gender and inclusion”. This project was carried out by professors from the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL), located in the province of Loja, Ecuador.

12.2 Conceptual analysis of religious tourism

When we discuss religious tourism, it is important to remark that tourist activity, as it is currently known, is relatively recent in comparison to religious activity (Acerenza, 2012), which is an ancient practice. In ancient Greece, religion drew people to gather in certain places.
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It was a group activity in which people participated in various ceremonies. Their beliefs and Panhellenic sanctuaries were part of their Greek identity. These sanctuaries were the venue for Panhellenic games such as the Olympic, Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian games in honour of the gods Zeus, Apollo, and Poseidon. In order to participate in these events, people had to be male and have athletic features. They were from different places and had to be wealthy to cover costs that included food, transportation, lodging, etc. Cities such as Elis, Nemea, Argos, and Corinth were crowded by a number of people who attended these events, which attracted many people and demanded a variety of services (UNICAN, 2015).

Similarly, in Jerusalem, Christians travelled in caravans to visit their temples, especially during religious festivals such as Easter. These events are mentioned in the Bible, in the Gospel of Luke (2:41): “Every year Jesus’ parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover”.

Therefore, as in Greece and Jerusalem, diverse religious events are today held in many cities around the world, in which processions and pilgrimages to sanctuaries take place. There are a variety of religions, but in Catholicism one of the main events is the pilgrimage of the Virgin Mary that takes different names depending upon the country. For instance, the Virgin Mary is called the “Virgin of Los Remedios” in Chile, the “Virgin of Guadalupe” in Mexico, the “Virgin of El Cobre” in Cuba, the “Virgin of Aparecida” in Brazil, “Our Lady of Luján” in Argentina, and the “Virgin of El Cisne” and the “Virgin of El Quinche” in Ecuador. The flow of visitors that participate in those religious events has been called religious tourism. In this type of tourism, the pilgrims, who have a particular belief or come from a certain place, have a spiritual motivation to visit specific places in order to participate in a religious event. As Martínez (sf) indicates: “religious tourism is the result of a faith that leads a sector of the population to move from one place to another in order to be able to enter a place that is considered sacred, and whose main and peculiar is that it allows the visitor to have a closeness with the divinity that cannot be reached in another place appreciated as profane”.

Religious tourism is understood as the visit to sacred spaces and symbolic sites by means of pilgrimages, religious routes, and visits of devotion to spiritual sites. These places of worship have a great religious relevance for the pilgrims. Currently, there are many reasons that motivate people to undertake religious activities. Cánoves (2006) argues that it is complicated to establish the exact reasons for visiting a place of religious significance. Perceptions and feelings cannot be elicited from the visitors, who are motivated by many reasons, including religion, culture, and heritage. Although we often try to differentiate religious and secular tourists, they are linked. As Smith (as cited in Cánoves, 2006) points out, “The relation between pilgrimage and tourism is similar to two opposite end-points of a line; in between these extremes, we have a plethora of sacred-secular combinations that include religious tourism”.

On the one hand, we have the spiritual degree of qualitative experience. On the other hand, we have the experience of not only being in a pilgrimage, but also the added value of knowing a place and its people. Cánoves (2006) explains that religious tourism must be considered a sightseeing trip in which the religious element is one of the main purposes. People are motivated to take this trip in search of a religious experience. It is important to acknowledge the following definition of tourism given by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 1994): “Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes”. It is worth mentioning that other purposes would include religion and pilgrimage.
Based on the aforementioned points, it is clear that pilgrimages are a form of religious tourism. It is necessary to highlight the fact that religious tourism has been conceived as a part of cultural tourism (Consejo Nacional de Cultura y las Artes, 2011). In this respect, Porcal (2006) states that the people who travel not only sightsee, but also do other tourist activities during their stay in the destination. This means that they can also participate in various cultural activities, including religious ones.

Through a broad understanding of religious tourism, it can be concluded that this type is conceived within cultural tourism. Pilgrimages are an expression of this and a manifestation of culture in which the intangible values of society are shown. Religious tourism has become more and more important in the tourism industry in Ecuador. In the year 2017, cultural activities related to religion represented 59% of revenue for the country (Ministerio de Turismo del Ecuador, 2017). These activities mean economic and social progress for the places where they are held. In economic terms, there is currency income for the locals, and in the social aspect, there are cultural values, which are values attributed to the collective memory that are strengthened across different generations.

Therefore, religious tourism can be seen as an economic driver for a given zone. Tobon and Tobon (2013) explain that religious tourism is a social and economic phenomenon that attracts interest due to the economic impact and the opportunities for additional revenue brought by visitors. Thus, this type of tourism creates spaces for business, income sources, and employment for nearby communities. These opportunities are reflected on the development of tourism. Directly or indirectly, all people from a specific place could be benefited through religious activities within a frame of dialogue in which all the pertinent sectors are involved. Additionally, a balance of activities, which includes the disadvantaged sectors, will be also achieved. UNWTO (2007) indicates that pilgrimages and other events allow us to easily establish peace among peoples and promote “solidarity tourism” that contributes to a struggle against poverty and to the sustainable development of humanity.

12.3 Analysis of the studied zone

12.3.1 History of the parish of El Cisne

El Cisne’s population dates back to the time of pre-Inca cultures. It is believed that these people were part of the Paltas-Ambocas culture, which was an Indigenous tribe from the zone of Chucubamba, currently known as Chuquiribamba. These inhabitants arrived in this place by the year 1560 (Ilustre Municipio de Loja, 2019). During Spanish colonization, the territory of El Cisne belonged to the Province of Ambocas, which encompassed other towns inhabited by Indigenous people, including San Lucas and Chuquiribamba. The lands set aside for El Cisne were extensive since they included cliffs and irregular terrain that still remain, according to the provisions of the Real Audiencia de Quito and the municipal ordinances of Loja (Ilustre Municipio de Loja, 2019).

In the past, El Cisne had many more inhabitants and was divided into some smaller towns such as Nona, Ari, and Ganajapa. However, many historians (Martínez, 2003) mention that this zone was struck by plague. For this reason, numerous people decided to abandon the place, while the ones who stayed there died. At that time, one century after the foundation (1660), this town had only five Indigenous people, who were tributaries of the Crown (Martínez, 2003). At the beginning of the 16th century, El Cisne was entrusted to Capitan Don Juan Pancorvo, but later, his wife, Mrs. Felipa Arias del Castillo, took over the duties established by the King that included helping, protecting, and defending the natives of the
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Inland (Martínez, 2003). Finally, El Cisne was declared a civil parish during the presidency of Dr Gabriel García Moreno in the year 1873.

The term “El Cisne” comes from the Quechua word “Cuizne”, which means anywhere. This name was taken by the inhabitants, and, over time, with the changes in the language and the influence of the Spanish, it became the term “Cisne”. Other authors claim the opposite; the name of the small town was given by the Spanish as allegory and symbolism when the worship of the Virgin Mary started in this place in the year 1956. It is believed that, at that time, there was a severe drought and then came the pouring rain. Thus, this place is named El Cisne, after the web-footed aquatic bird that grows by the lake side.

(Ojeda, 2010)

Similarly, in other sources such as the municipality of the parish of El Cisne (Rangel, 2008), the following is mentioned about the origin of El Cisne:

As in medieval towns and, unlike the rest of the parishes, the population of El Cisne was formed from village settlements. The streets were irregular and narrow, but the town was organized so it was possible to orient oneself. The majority of the houses were one story and built with adobe, wattle and daub, wood, and straw at the beginning. The population was gripped many times by hunger, but a divine intervention helped these people. This is the origin of the faith in the Virgin Mary, to whom they built a small temple that became the most important landmark of El Cisne.

(GAD El Cisne, 2008)

The construction style of El Cisne has allowed its inhabitants to protect themselves from adverse weather conditions, especially when temperatures drop below 12°C. It is worth mentioning that the urban fittings are not totally compliant with the foundational urban fabric, that is, the distribution of urban fittings around the central park. This aspect has been adapted to the land topography and the religious events held. All in all, the priority is the urban equipment for the basilica and the blocks nearby.

12.3.2 Characterization of the parish of El Cisne

Ecuador is a South-American country with an area of 256,370 km² and a population of 17,096,789 as of 2019, according to the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC, 2010). The country is divided into four natural regions: the coast, the highlands or Andean region, the Orient or Amazon region, and the insular region or Galapagos Islands. There are a total of 24 provinces distributed in these four regions; each province is formed by districts (‘cantones’), and each district is formed by urban and rural parishes.

One of the provinces in the highlands of Ecuador is Loja. Its population as of 2019 was 516,231. When comparing this population with that of 2010, which was 467,671, we can observe an increase of 10.38% in this province (INEC, 2010). The main district of the province of Loja is called Loja as well. The district of Loja is comprised of six urban and 13 rural parishes. In the urban area, the population is 331,009 and in the rural area it is 185,222 inhabitants. This means that 64.12% of the population is concentrated in urban zones, whereas 35.88% lives in rural areas (INEC, 2010). With respect to rural areas, the female population is 93,564 and the male population is 91,660 (INEC, 2010).
The parish of El Cisne is 70 km north-west of the city of Loja. It is located at latitude 3°50'9.19" south and longitude 79°26'22.96" west, on the vertex of the mountain El Chayalama. This parish covers an area of 106.31 km² and is 2,440 m above sea level. The temperatures here vary between 14 and 21°C. El Cisne borders the parish of Gualel and a part of Salati to the north, the parishes of San Pedro de La Bendita and Zambi to the south, the district of Catamayo and the parish of Chuquiribamba to the east, and the parishes of Guayquichuma and Salati (province of El Oro) to the west. This town was declared a civil parish in 1873 under the administration of its first lieutenant governor, Mr Plácido Cuenca. Later on, it was declared an ecclesiastical parish during the presidency of Dr Gabriel García Moreno. In terms of political division, the parish of El Cisne consists of the following neighbourhoods: Ambocas, Chaquircuña, Agua del Milagro, Huasir, La Nona, La Concha, Mil-lubo, Santa Teresita (Municipio de Loja, s.f.).

Table 12.1 shows the main indicators with respect to the socio-demographic data of the parish of El Cisne.

As shown in Table 12.1, the parish of El Cisne has 1,628 inhabitants, 58.1% of whom are male and 51.9% who are female. These inhabitants are distributed in the eight neighbourhoods that were mentioned above. Regarding unmet basic needs, an index to measure service coverage, education, and housing is at 79.8%. At a domestic level in Ecuador, there has been migration to Europe and the United States. This situation is similar in El Cisne, with a migration rate of 0.40%. Moreover, according to information gathered while studying this zone, many inhabitants from this parish migrate to the Ecuadorian cities of Catamayo, Loja, Machala, and Quito.

In Latin America, 80% of the population lives in urban zones, that is, cities. Therefore, these zones are more developed (Naciones Unidas, 2015). There is empirical evidence that this trend is similar in Ecuador. In other words, there are more people in urban areas than in rural ones, with a population growth in urban areas that went from 62.7% in 2010 to 64%, according to the to the projections of the last census. This means an increase of 1.3 percentage points (Ministerio de Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda Ecuador, 2015).

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<th>Table 12.1 Socio-demographic indicators of El Cisne</th>
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<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
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*Source: INEC (2010); Land management and development plan for El Cisne (2015).
Table made by the authors (2019).
*Unmet basic needs.
**A2 Service of health care, promotion, and prevention.
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As for sector of healthcare, there is a healthcare subcentre of the A2 type; this type has been identified by the Ministry of Public Health as an establishment that provides services of health promotion, disease prevention, health recovery, rehabilitation, and palliative care throughout the life cycle. These subcentres offer medical care through comprehensive medical care teams (Equipos de Atención Integral en Salud - EAIS). These establishments have an area for outpatient clinic but do not provide hospitalization services. This situation hinders medical care in case of emergency. With respect to accidents or serious diseases, people must go to nearby cities such as Catamayo or Loja for medical care (Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado Parroquia de El Cisne, 2015). Regarding the level of education, 10.14% of the population in school age has completed secondary education, whereas 33.96% are in a state of illiteracy. Only 7.73% are enrolled in higher education, that is, they study in a university or college (INEC, 2010).

The economically active population (EAP) by group of activity is mainly concentrated in agriculture and skilled labour (48.64%), followed by service and sales workers (11.98%). The third group is formed by elemental workers (11.13%), followed by undeclared workers (10.7%). Therefore, according to data from the Land Management and Development Plan (GAD Parroquial de El Cisne, 2015), the majority of the economic activities of the parish are typical of the rural sector and include subsistence agriculture, agricultural production, livestock, tourism, trade, and services. Trade is one of the activities that creates employment opportunities in this parish. The main characteristic of this is that it revolves around the sanctuary of the Virgin of El Cisne. This trade mainly consists of offering lodging services and selling foods, beverages, souvenirs, etc. It increases on the days of religious festivals, and during the months with the most visits to the sanctuary (from April to August). It is necessary to indicate that young women have an important participation in these religious activities.

In relation to the craft industry, there is a handmade candle factory managed by the Diocese of Loja. Most of the souvenirs are made by merchants using basic handmade techniques. Unfortunately, these merchants know a limited number of techniques to make these souvenirs, which does not allow them to improve the quality of their products. However, after some on-site visits, it has been observed that merchants are organized into several associations in order to join efforts to sell their products in the cities of Catamayo and Loja. Souvenirs have been on sale for more than a century in this sector. Initially, merchants came from other towns to offer their products. As of 1974, on the initiative of one person from this parish, they began this activity. Currently, more than 39 families sell their products, and, in the season of festivals, 29 more merchants also do so; that is to say, there is an increase of 74% during religious festivals. The souvenirs on sale include religious cards, novenas, key rings, scapulars, bracelets, rosaries, pictures, books, decorations, etc. (Román, 2018).

Due to religious tourism, there is a daily visit flow to the statue of the virgin of El Cisne. These visits have an effect on the social, economic, cultural, and political life of the population of this parish. It can be seen that this tourism, which has mainly religious and cultural purposes, boosts the economy of El Cisne. The visit to the basilica of El Cisne for processions and pilgrimage has become a tradition. These activities have been carried out on the days of religious festivals for more than 22 years with the participation of adult and young pilgrims (older than 12 years of age) (Román, 2018). There is also a noteworthy presence of women in this tradition; they seem to be in charge of preserving the faith in the family. Furthermore, the reasons to participate in these religious events vary depending on the age. For instance, adults do it because of their religion and tradition, while young people do it due to tradition, leisure, and recreation (Román, 2018).
The main tourist attraction of the parish of El Cisne is the statue of the Virgin and the basilica. The location, the topography, the different climate zones, agricultural activities, and religious buildings contribute to the landscape and appeal of this place. In addition, the four most relevant religious festivals are held in the months of May, August, September, and November in honour of the Virgin. We can add the festivals to celebrate the declaration of El Cisne as a parish, which are held on May 1. In these activities, the typical cuisine is the main attraction and includes the following dishes: sango, repe, ají de cuy (guinea pig with hot sauce), green plantain, dried beef, roasted guinea pig, chicha de maíz (corn drink), barley rice, and wheat. It is worth mentioning that there is a prevalence of women in these festivals, who have a more representative participation than men.

In cultural matters, music is a significant expression in the festivals. There are traditional bands that play Andean instruments such as quenas, flutes, bass drums, pinkillus, huyllacos, fifes, trumpets, quipas, rondadors, and drums. Their musical style is based on traditional Andean music that includes yarabi, samba, and pasacalle. There are also typical town bands that bring entertainment to the festivals, becoming the quaintest cultural expression of the parish. During the festivals in May, September, and August, town bands from other provinces join local bands in order to pay tribute to the Virgin of El Cisne.

12.3.3 Devotion and worship to the Virgin of El Cisne

The origin of the statue of the Virgin of El Cisne dates back to 1548. According to records from 1928 and 1930, there was a severe drought and the inhabitants started to migrate to the main district of the province of Loja and other provinces of Ecuador. Before abandoning this place, it is believed that the Virgin came to the people’s rescue, saying that it was necessary to build a temple in her honour at the place where she appeared. With a previous commitment on the part of the inhabitants, the answer came in form of rain that made the land fertile (Martínez, 2003). After this miracle, people collected money and went to the city of Quito to commission a sculpture from Diego de Robles. In 1596, once the work was finished, the sculpture was named Guadalupe and sent to Loja. In this city, the sculpture was placed in a small chapel built by its inhabitants. The sculpture is made of cedar wood with a dark red colour and is 66 cm tall with a base of 16 cm. The Virgin preserves her tender and lovely face despite the retouches to which she has been subjected over time, especially after the fire of the church of San Sebastian (Martínez, 2003). She is beautifully dressed in traditional clothes that have been donated by devotees. The crowns and sceptres of the Virgin and the Child Jesus are overlaid with gold and adorned with gems (weighing around 2 kg). She also has a halo 80 cm in diameter (Ortega & Barros, 2011).

The statue of the Virgin of El Cisne has had several names over time, including the following: Our Lady of Guadalupe of El Cisne, Our Lady of El Rosario of El Cisne, Our Lady of the Angels, Our Lady of the Annunciation, and Our Lady of the Nativity (Paccha, 2006). All these names reflect the devotion and worship to the Virgin Mary in her different manifestations. Once the statue arrived in El Cisne, the history of its population changed course. First of all, the inhabitants embraced religion and spread their devotion to the Virgin. Second, there were a number of favours done by the Virgin to her devotees. These events, especially her miracles, made the Virgin of El Cisne more popular and attracted devout visitors from different parts of the Ecuador and the north of Peru (Loaiza & Eguiguren, 1928).

Considering the low population in the area and its inhospitable situation, its inhabitants were asked to relocate to the nearby parish of Chuquiribamba and take the statue of the Virgin there. Something strange happened afterwards. Chuquiribamba was hit by strong
wind gusts, so the frightened people asked the inhabitants from El Cisne to go back to their place of origin and take the statue with them. Later on, with the purpose of raising funds to build the main altarpiece, the statue of the Virgin was taken to the city of Zaruma (a district from the province of El Oro in the coast region). After the canonization of the Brotherhood of Our Lady of El Cisne, the pilgrimages to her sanctuary began. Apart from the regular processions to the sanctuary of El Cisne during the religious festivals, there were other processions to the city of Loja that took place at different times due to serious situations that occurred in this city (Rodriguez, 1934).

As evidence of these events, there are historical records in the parish of Chuquiribamba that indicate that the earliest processions to the city of Loja date back to February 12, 1720. In these manuscripts, it can be read that the sacred statue was taken to the city of Loja to pray a novena for the victims of water-related epidemics and plagues that occurred at that time (Ortega & Barros, 2011). Over the years, two important festivals were inaugurated: the festivals of August 15 and September 8. The oldest festival is the one of September 8, which has been celebrated annually for more than 200 years (Riofrío, s.f). According to historical records, in 1829, the inhabitants from the city of Loja asked General Simón Bolívar to move the festival to Loja. This petition was accepted, and Bolívar, on July 28 of the same year, issued the decree that grants the privilege for holding the festival along with the pertinent duty exemption. This event, which used to take place in the parish of El Cisne, would be moved to the city of Loja and held every year from August 1 to September 12 in order to celebrate the faith in Our Lady of El Cisne (Loaiza & Eguiguren, 1928).

In the 20th century, the Canonical Coronation of the Virgin of El Cisne was carried out in the year 1930. This event attracted millions of pilgrims who have faith in the Virgin Mary. In 1891, the pilgrimage in honour of the Virgin from El Cisne to the city of Loja was something that local newspapers started to report. After the traditional procession celebrated on August 15 every year in El Cisne, the departure of the statue begins on August 18. On that day, it arrives in the parish of San Pedro, and the next day it is taken to Catamayo. On August 20, the statue of the Virgin arrives in the city of Loja every year (El Labaro, 1891).

During the pilgrimage of the Virgin of El Cisne, the different places along this route have the opportunity to temporarily accommodate the statue of the Virgin. This route is divided into three stages and the trip is approximately 70 km long. The first stage comprises the section from the parish of El Cisne to the parish of San Pedro de la Bendita (22 km long). Here, the pilgrims stay overnight in this parish on August 17. The second stage starts on August 18, and it is the section from the parish of San Pedro de la Bendita to the city of Catamayo (12 km long), where the statue of the Virgin is accommodated until August 20. The last part of the pilgrimage is the route from Catamayo to the city of Loja (36 km long), which starts on August 20. Finally, the statue of the Virgin stays in Loja until November 1. At this point, it is important to remark that the favours done by the Virgin of El Cisne to her devotees are countless, so the number of people who worship the Virgin has greatly increased over the 197 years of these traditional pilgrimages.

12.4 Role of young people and women in the development of religious tourism

In the parish of El Cisne, the research project called “Rural tourism as a development axis in the parish of El Cisne, in the county of Loja, province of Loja: Designing a model based on gender and inclusion” was conducted. The funding was provided by the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL, 2019). The objective of this project was to analyze the
current situation of the parish of El Cisne, and, based on this, propose a management model for developing a type of tourism that encompasses the different types of tourism that have been currently established in this zone. For instance, religious tourism. In this way, the activities related to tourism can be done anytime during the year and not only on specific days.

In this respect, rural tourism has been proposed to improve development. The first stage of this project tried to analyze the current situation of the parish and the activities related to tourism, integrating the aspects of gender, inclusion, and sustainability. Basically, this first stage is the basis for the objective of the research presented in this chapter. One of the first findings of this project was that the current development of tourism in this parish is based on religious tourism that revolves around the devotion to the Virgin of El Cisne with the significant participation of young people and women.

The method used for this study was based on descriptive and quantitative research. For collecting data, we used a questionnaire and for selecting the sample we took the families from the parish of El Cisne as the population to be studied. It is important to mention that this project replicates research that was previously conducted in another part of Ecuador (Martínez-Fernández et al., 2018) with similar characteristics. The purpose of replicating this research was to obtain results that contribute to the sustainable development of tourism, especially in rural areas.

The instrument used was based on the study by Sánchez-Fernández (2018), who applied a questionnaire divided into three sections:

1. Current situation of the families living in the parish
2. Perception of the inhabitants about the development of the tourist activity in the parish
3. Role of the administrators regarding tourist, environmental, and inclusion activities

The answers to the questionnaire were part of the data analyzed in this chapter in order to determine the role of the young people and women in the development of religious tourism in the parish of El Cisne. The instrument was applied in the parish of El Cisne with prior planning based on the distribution of the population in the center of the parish and its neighbourhoods. The collection of information was part of the research project conducted by the professors from the section of Hotel Management and Tourism of the Tourism programme at UTPL (Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja, 2019).

The sample-size calculation allowed us to administer 161 questionnaires, which were mostly responded to by the heads of the households. Other questionnaires were responded to by persons of legal age present in the house, considering that, in Ecuador, the legal age is 18. Likewise, since most of the activities in the parish of El Cisne are done on weekends, we believed it was more convenient to administer the questionnaire on weekdays, specifically Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Once the data was collected, we analyzed the most relevant results in order to determine the role of young people and women in the development of religious tourism in the parish of El Cisne.

Initially, it is necessary to consider the gender of the respondents. This factor has been researched in many studies with the purpose of observing how women are being integrated into tourism development, especially in rural areas. For example, Galán and Fuller (2015) explored rural tourism, gender, and development in farmer and Indigenous communities in southern Peru. They attempted to demonstrate that tourist potential can be used as a strategy to improve gender equality and the empowerment of women regarding tourist activities in these zones. Similarly, Flores-Ruiz, Puliño-Fernández, and Sánchez-Rivero (2015) studied
the role of women in the development of rural tourism in specific cases in Andalucía. Similarly, Rodríguez and Vizcarra (2015) researched community-based tourism and gender and analyzed the participation of women in the community-based tourism project at El Rosario in Michoacán, Mexico. They explain how women distribute the benefits of their participation in that project. Finally, some research has been done in Ecuador as well. Lugo-Morin and Torres-Cuapa (2015) explored development, work, and gender in the rural area of the Yaguara Cocha Lake, emphasizing the role of women who live in rural areas. They believe that the role of women has a strategic importance for the development of the area, especially in terms of tourism.

In the case of the present study conducted in El Cisne, the results from the questionnaires show that the female gender had the higher percentage of the questionnaires (61%) in comparison with the male gender (39%). This is shown in Figure 12.1.

Another relevant aspect in this chapter is young people. In this regard, the United Nations (UNESCO, 2015) defines young people as the population group aged between 15 and 24 years. At this point, it is necessary to point out the important role of young people in the development of tourism and how some studies have researched this theme. For instance, Sánchez and Casal (2017) analyzed how international cooperation can positively contribute to social empowerment, which can become an appropriate tool for the social inclusion and employability of young people in contexts of risk in Morocco. Likewise, the work by Ramírez et al. (2016), carried out in the parish of Tachina in the province of Esmeraldas, Ecuador, analyzed empowerment as a factor for sustainable rural development. They demonstrate that, even in rural areas that lack significant investment in infrastructure, there are a number of employment and business opportunities that can benefit young people. On the other hand, Abrigo Córdova (2016), who conducted a study titled “Identification of needs to propose tourism development in the community of Tuncarta from the district of Saraguro in the province of Loja, Ecuador”, mentions the importance of young people in rural areas as key actors in the development of tourist activity. This study indicates that it is necessary to constantly train young people and, if it is possible, begin this training at an early age (e.g., in secondary education).

In this context, this research conducted in El Cisne includes the following age ranges of participants. This is displayed in Table 12.2.

As can be observed in Table 12.2, the highest percentage of respondents was between the ages of 31 and 40 (23%). If we combine the age ranges of the participants and add the percentages of the ranges younger than 20 and 21–30, we have a figure of 23%, which is similar to the one obtained for the age range 31–40. Then, the accumulated percentage is 46%. It can therefore be seen that almost half of the sample consists of people between the ages of 20 and 40 years. Finally, the mean age of the participants was 44 years, and, according to the Land Management and Development Plan of El Cisne (PDOT, 2015), the population pyramid by
Estefanía Sánchez-Cevallos et al.

The age ranges indicate that young people and children are prevalent in the population. Therefore, we can claim that the population of the parish of El Cisne is young. This, according to previous studies on this theme, could have a positive effect on the development of tourist activities.

Another important factor is knowing the level of education of the participants based on the age ranges. This information is shown in Table 12.3.

### Table 12.2 Age ranges of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age ranges</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Younger than 20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21–30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–40</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41–50</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51–60</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and older</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Table made by the authors, 2019 from the data obtained with the help of Questionnaires, 2018.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age range</th>
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<th>Elementary school</th>
<th>Secondary school</th>
<th>Higher education</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Younger than 20</td>
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<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>21–30</td>
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<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>31–40</td>
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<td>30.2</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>41–50</td>
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<td>11.1</td>
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<td>20.6</td>
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<td>51–60</td>
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<td>3.2</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60 and older</td>
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<td>3.2</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>52.4</td>
<td>14.3</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<th>Elementary school</th>
<th>Secondary school</th>
<th>Higher education</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>5.1</td>
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<td>24.5</td>
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<td>4.1</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>18.4</td>
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<td>21.4</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60 and older</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>46.9</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Age range</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Elementary school</th>
<th>Secondary school</th>
<th>Higher education</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Younger than 20</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21–30</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>17.4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31–40</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41–50</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51–60</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60 and older</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Table made by the authors, 2019 data collected with the help of Questionnaires, 2018.*
Young people and women in “El Cisne”

Table 12.4 Visitors per year to the parish of El Cisne

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of visitors/year</th>
<th>Annual growth (2.65%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>293,249</td>
<td>7,570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>301,020</td>
<td>7,771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>308,997</td>
<td>7,977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>317,186</td>
<td>8,188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>325,591</td>
<td>8,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>334,219</td>
<td>8,628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>343,076</td>
<td>8,857</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Table made by the authors, 2019, PDOT El Cisne, (2015).

As presented in Table 12.3, the level of education that prevails is secondary education with a total of 63 people (44.1%). This is followed by people who were enrolled in elementary school (39.1%) and higher education (10.6%). There is also a small percentage who have not received any education (6.2%). Similarly, it can be observed that the female gender has a higher percentage at the primary education level with 46.9%, followed by the secondary education level with 38.8%.

According to the PDOT of El Cisne, there are six educational establishments in this parish that impart elementary and secondary education. In addition, they have a training center and music academies administrated by the Universidad Nacional de Loja, and also a handicraft center in charge of the Diocese. Moreover, this parish is near the city of Loja (approximately one and a half hours by car). Loja is the capital of the province and has a significant number of schools and three universities. All these factors have captured the interest of young people from El Cisne in academic education, which is seen as an opportunity to contribute to the development of their parish.

Undoubtedly, religious tourism has been essential in the development of the parish of El Cisne. According to the GAD Parroquial de El Cisne (2015), the annual increase of visitors to the parish is 2.65% as shown in Table 12.4.

Based on the aforementioned information, there are indicators of tourism development in the parish. The visitors who come to the parish to do activities related to religious tourism are motivated by their devotion to the Virgin of El Cisne, which means, as previously mentioned, that these practices are an essential aspect in their lives. An indicator to gauge the role of young people in the development of religious tourism in the parish of El Cisne is the identification of the participants’ age ranges. It is also important to know about their activities, jobs, entrepreneurship, businesses, and commitment to tourist activities of the parish. Table 12.5 indicates these aspects.

Table 12.5 indicates that the most common activity of the participants by age range is the one defined as “Restoration services workers and traders”. In this respect, it is necessary to remark that the highest percentage of respondents that do this activity is within the age range of 20–40 years, so they can be considered the working-age population. It is also observed in Table 12.3 that the presence of women in these activities is significant, since 39.8% of them perform activities related to services and restoration. Likewise, this activity, due to its features, is directly and indirectly related to tourism. This claim can be supported by information from the PDOT of the parish of El Cisne (2015) that mentions a population census carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC, 2010). This information shows that 82.13% of the total population of the parish are of
### Table 12.5: Current main activities of the inhabitants of the parish of El Cisne by gender and age range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Younger than 20</th>
<th>21–30</th>
<th>31–40</th>
<th>41–50</th>
<th>51–60</th>
<th>60 and older</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger than 20</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21–30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41–50</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51–60</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and older</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger than 20</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21–30</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–40</td>
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<td>2.0</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>22.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>41–50</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>51–60</td>
<td>5.1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and older</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>17.3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>39.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Table made by the authors, 2019 with the help of data collected through Questionnaires, 2018.
Young people and women in “El Cisne”

working age. That is to say, these results are related to the general tendencies of the population of this parish.

The next question in the questionnaire asked the participants if they are business owners. The results by gender and age range in Table 12.6 indicate that 65.8% of the participants own a business, a small business, or a commercial venture. In the case of women, 70.4% of them are business owners. According to the PDOT of El Cisne (2015), the distribution of the EAP by activity is the following: agriculture and skilled labour (48.64%), service and sales workers (11.98%), elemental workers (11.13%), and undeclared workers (10.7%). In this context, it can be noticed that an important portion of the population, especially young people (32.2%) and, among them, women (36.8%), contribute to the development of the parish of El Cisne in different ways through their own businesses or commercial ventures.

Table 12.7 displays the results with respect to the participants that own a business, small business, or commercial venture in order to know how many of them are entirely dedicated to tourist activities.

As seen in Table 12.7, of all the participants who own a business, 47.2% of them say that these businesses are related to tourism. Of this, 23% corresponds to participants between the ages of 20 and 40 years and 51% to women. These figures demonstrate the importance of the presence of young people and women in the development of tourist activities in the parish of El Cisne, especially those concerning religious tourism. The results of the quantitative approach could be verified through on-site visits and direct observation.

---

**Table 12.6 Businessmen, micro-entrepreneurs or entrepreneurs by gender and age range**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Younger than 20</td>
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<td>3.2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21–30</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31–40</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>41–50</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51–60</td>
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<td>60 and older</td>
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<td>9.5</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Younger than 20</td>
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<td>3.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21–30</td>
<td>19.4</td>
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<td>13.3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
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<td>51–60</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60 and older</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>17.3</td>
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<td>70.4</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Younger than 20</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
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<td>21–30</td>
<td>13.0</td>
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<td>15.5</td>
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<td>23.0</td>
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<td>41–50</td>
<td>11.8</td>
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<td>10.6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
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<td>34.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Table made by the authors, 2019 data taken with the help of Questionnaires, 2018.
The percentages in the “Not applicable” column represent the people who responded that they do not own a business, small business, or commercial venture. Thus far, we have analyzed indicators that reflect aspects concerning young people and women from the parish of El Cisne based on the data collected. From now on, we will analyze aspects regarding the perceptions of the participants about tourist activities and government administration for effective development of those activities.

Table 12.8 shows the support from the residents of the parish of El Cisne for tourist activities, which is evidenced by 94.4% of participants who totally agree with the statement that tourism is beneficial for the parish. The most representative percentages, based on the age ranges, correspond to young people (41.5%), and, in the case of women, their support is more significant than that of the men (96.9%). The results indicate that, young people and women believe that tourism is a beneficial activity for the development of the parish. Thus, it can be observed that residents, especially young people and women, are really supportive of tourist activities and see them as an important contribution to development. Moreover, tourist activities have been carried out for a long time, and the people from the parish believe that such activities can be maintained and improved over time. In this way, the benefits for the residents of the parish of El Cisne can continue.

Table 12.9 displays the results related to the perceptions of the inhabitants as to the role of the local government in the development of tourist activities in the parish of El Cisne.
Table 12.8 Tourism is beneficial for the parish where you live

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Totally disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Undecided (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Totally agree (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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Source: Table made by the authors, 2019 with the help of data collected through Questionnaires, 2018.
Table 12.9 The government provides equal opportunities for the residents of your parish

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<th>Age range</th>
<th>Totally disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Undecided (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Totally agree (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
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Source: Table made by the authors, 2019 data collected with the help of Questionnaires, 2018.
In your parish, local authorities are concerned about fostering professional training and development of their interest groups. The table below summarizes the responses of young people and women in "El Cisne" on this issue, categorized by gender and age group. The data was collected through questionnaires in 2018.

<table>
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<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Totally disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Undecided (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Totally agree (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
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</table>

Source: Table made by the authors, 2019 with the help of data collected through questionnaires, 2018.
The following tables show the results regarding the perception of residents with the role of local government towards the development of tourist activities in the El Cisne parish. In this respect, the participants, especially young people and women, express total or partial disagreement. In the case of young people, 40.9% of them express disagreement (ages between 20 and 40 years), and in the case of women, 87.7% (from the total). From this point of view, it can be seen that the local government does not take adequate measures. Consequently, there is a bias in perceptions and residents feel that there are not equal opportunities for the population.

Table 12.10 indicates the results regarding whether local authorities are concerned about fostering professional training and development of their interest groups. It can be seen that most of the participants (49.1%) totally disagree with the statement. This total disagreement is also present in young people (age between 20 and 40 years: 28.5%) and women (49%). These results reflect, once again, the unsuccessful government administration perceived by the residents of the parish, especially in matters of improving the quality of life and the opportunities for development. Based on the data analyzed, we can agree on some points about the results obtained.

First of all, the presence of young people and women in the parish of El Cisne is important. Their involvement in the development of businesses, small businesses, and commercial ventures is substantial, which means relevant percentages in terms of activities purely related to tourism. Furthermore, from the perspective of young inhabitants and the female gender, tourism is an appropriate strategy to develop this area. This situation builds their trust, and they consider tourism a positive factor that contributes to the development of their parish.

As for the opinion of residents about the administration of the local government with respect to aspects that could improve religious tourism in the parish, most of the participants agree on an ineffective administration. They think that what has been done so far is not enough to achieve development in the parish. Only a few people find the administration is satisfactory. For this reason, it is necessary to emphasize this aspect so the residents change their views of the local administration. Finally, the PDOT of El Cisne (2015) points out that the annual increase of tourists in the parish is 2.65% with an estimate of 343,076 visitors for the year 2019, which is motivating in terms of the development of the parish. In addition, religious tourism is the main potential of this zone.

References


Young people and women in “El Cisne”


Riofrío, F. (s.f). La Advocación de Nuestra Señora del Cisne. Origen y progreso, Loja.


