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Verónica Mora-Jácome, Christian Viñán-Merecí, Alex-Paúl Ludeña-Reyes
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LOCAL CULTURE, SOCIETY AND RESOURCES AS PRODUCTS FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AT “EL CISNE” PARISH

Verónica Mora-Jácome, Christian Viñán-Merecí, and Alex-Paúl Ludeña-Reyes

7.1 Introduction

Culture is based on society since human beings play a fundamental role in the development of communities by means of creativity, historical memory and other elements that make a destination unique. UNESCO claims that culture is a set of distinctive, spiritual, material, and affective features that characterizes a society or social group, defines their identity, and differentiates them from others.

According to Molano (2007), culture is something that is alive and formed by elements that are passed down from generation to generation as well as by external influences and local ingenuities. Consequently, the role of culture is mainly social and considers the value of a person – essential aspects for personal and collective development.

Clearly, since culture is a fundamental part of the progress of society, it goes hand in hand with fostering local development. We can consider that development appears as a response to the process of improvement of any nation. In Ecuador, the basis for this improvement is the Organic Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomy and Decentralization Organic Code of Territorial Organization (Código Orgánico de Organización Territorial, Autonomía y Descentralización [COOTAD]), which transfers functions to local governments with the purpose of controlling state resources and creating administration policies in each area.

According to Casalis (2009), local development involves a complex process and is the result of a local collective effort that considers an integral perspective of development and includes social, political, environmental, cultural, and productive dimensions. The importance of local development has to do with defining the territorial vocation with which the population feels identified. This perspective will allow for the improvement of quality of life, the creation of employment opportunities, and the active participation of vulnerable groups.

Therefore, we can say that culture plays an outstanding role in the development of communities since it is a feature of societies. Currently, culture allows the emergence of new types of industries, such as the creative industry or orange industry, which, according to UNESCO (2009), are defined as:
Cultural and creative industries consist of sectors of organized activity whose main objective is the production or reproduction, distribution or commercialization of goods, services and activities of a cultural, artistic or heritage-related nature. These activities create new growth opportunities for communities, emphasizing personal qualities and talents, and fostering economic and social development.

In fact, the opportunity that the development of creative industries provides in different cities also attracts tourists who value these types of activities. These tourists are interested in the features that identify communities or social groups, as well as in the knowledge of new lifestyles, customs, and traditions that differentiate one place from another. This situation will result in an activity for the destinations known as cultural tourism, which has become an alternative for competitiveness and creation of employment opportunities in these areas. In the case of the present study, the parish of El Cisne has shown strengths that can be linked to the scheme of creative cities.

Nevertheless, there is also another type of tourism that incorporates a cultural approach called community tourism. This concept is mentioned for the first time by Murphy (1985). Its importance is based on the impact of tourism on local communities, in which it is important to consider the tourists who visit the community as well as the local society. The purpose is to minimize the negative impact that can be produced in an attempt to enhance the positive cultural, social, physical, or economic benefits.

In this respect, the objective of this research is to study the current situation of the parish of El Cisne, based on inhabitants' perception of tourist activities and resources. The local culture and society are strong factors in this study when analyzing the consequences of tourism as a basis for sustainable development at El Cisne. As for the method, we have used a combination of secondary and descriptive research designs. For the secondary research, a literature review was conducted in order to have a diagnostic of the state of tourism and to identify the criteria for integration and sustainability that can be undertaken by the host communities. For the descriptive study, we used a sampling method based on the number of inhabitants.

### 7.2 Frame of reference

Tourism is considered a local economic driver since it is an activity that involves the active participation of communities, values natural and cultural resources, and reveals the lifestyles of the area.

In Ecuador, several types of tourism have been implemented, making use of a variety of natural and cultural resources and attractions of the country. Due to factors such as a diverse climate, a meridian location, biodiversity, Indigenous communities, and patrimonial cities, Ecuador has positioned itself as the country of the four worlds.

These characteristics allow the introduction of several alternatives which are contrary to traditional tourism with the premise of the development of sustainable tourism. For the data analysis of the present study conducted in the parish of El Cisne, which is involved in religious tourism, we have considered the possibilities of development of rural tourism, community tourism, and cultural tourism. These aspects will be analyzed below.

### 7.3 Cultural tourism

The Organization of American States (OAS), in its document “La cultura y el turismo como medios de desarrollo socioeconómico” (2006) (“Culture and tourism as means for
socioeconomic development”) explains that culture is the general context in which tourism is developing. This activity establishes contact with the receiving culture. This contact increases as the heritage, customs, and activities of rural and urban communities are accepted as a resource for the deployment of tourism-related activities.

On this basis, we can mention that one of the new forms of tourism that can be developed in the area is cultural tourism since it encompasses the elements of both tourism and culture. This type contributes not only to economic development but also to social integration and the approach among peoples. Additionally, there is a convergence of cultural and tourism-related policies that consider values and respect for the resources (UNESCO, 2018).

All of these elements are consolidated as attractions that motivate traveling because many tourists want to learn, discover, experience, and consume cultural attractions and/or products (whether material or non-material) in a tourist destination (Comité de Turismo y Competitividad de la OMT, 2017).

In the third UNWTO/UNESCO World Conference, held in late 2018, the discussion was focussed on the potential of cultural tourism to help cities become more sustainable and creative environments and destinations. The essential part of this type of tourism is the contact between the visitor and the host community, relying on the natural and cultural resources of the zone. This situation allows for a cultural exchange that promotes encounters between tourists and the community.

According to the information from the portal of tourism in Ecuador related to the statistics of the year 2017, approximately 59% of tourists who visited the country were interested in culture. They came motivated to be involved mainly in cultural activities. They average stay for these visitors was seven nights, with an estimate expense of over $1,000. This highlights an interesting market segment that represents more than half of the tourists who visit the country.

Based on the aforementioned aspects, we can consider that one type of tourism that can be adjusted to be further developed in the area is cultural tourism. This will foster collaboration between the public and private sector in order to generate synergies and national and international projection. Likewise, cultural tourism will allow us to value the cultural resources and manifestations of the area in order to revitalize tourism.

7.4 Rural tourism

According to the definition of the Comité de Turismo y Competitividad de la OMT (2017) (Committee on Tourism and Competitiveness of the UNWTO), the activities of rural tourism are carried out in areas with low population density, landscape, and land management where agriculture, forestry, social structures, and traditional lifestyles still prevail (p. 12). Based on this concept, the aim is to enhance rural tourism in this important area of the country as a complement to the current implementation of religious tourism.

For many countries around the world, tourism is a source of revenue that has improved their GDP and created important opportunities for employment. Mateos (2012) points out that the tourism sector is one of the strongest pillars of globalization. Additionally, it is an important factor in the improvement of the international economy, and it is an activity that has allowed many countries to overcome economic crises. Due to the increase of this activity worldwide, there are new types of demanding consumers who look for new experiences, activities, knowledge, and cultural perspectives. This situation brings about innovation in the destinations in a way that allows for specialization in the development of new alternatives for entertainment in which tourists can experience new activities.
Another type of tourism adapted to an area is rural tourism. For some authors, the name of rural tourism is given when it is carried out in a specific geographic environment (Ivars, 2000). It is worth mentioning that rural tourism is related to the aim of the present study since we are analyzing zones that are far away from cities and metropolitan areas. Rural tourism respects natural and historical heritage as well as the rural culture and society in which the residents offer different options for lodging with a perspective of high quality of the destination (Fournreau, 1998; Sánchez & Vargas, 2015). On the other hand, this type of alternative tourism can be developed based on the fostering of three interrelated aspects. The first is the current trends of demand in tourism; the second is the tourism-related policies created by local governments; and, finally, we have the importance given to tourism in the policies of rural development (Ivars Baidal, 2016).

Certainly, rural tourism has a great impact on the countries that carry out this activity due to the environment in which it occurs. According to Europeas (1993), rural tourism must analyze the resources that are available, whether natural or related to cultural heritage, rural housing, popular traditions, agricultural zones, and local products. The purpose is to value these resources through tourism and tourism-related brands that express the local identity and meet the visitors’ needs concerning lodging, food, entertainment, and other services. All of this is aimed at local sustainable development within destinations that understand the needs of modern visitors. Consequently, local development strategies meet these needs by incorporating products and services that contribute to enhancing the tourism industry and create employment opportunities.

In this respect, Martínez and Murias (2005) explain that, in Europe, the first experiences of rural tourism began in the 1960s, when rooms were rented in private homes. All these years, Europe has been working on this type of tourism as an addition to urban and “sun-and-beach” tourism. Similarly, Martínez and Murias (2005) mention that, currently, countries such as France, Germany, Austria, the United Kingdom, and others have launched a diverse and well-conceived offering of rural tourism due to their traditional work in this field. This offering has allowed the destinations to improve based on the experiences that tourists want to enjoy when it comes to rural tourism.

On the other hand, Ecuador is a destination in which community tourism has been carried out for several years, while rural tourism is a new and incipient concept. This situation is evident in research and literature that indicate a lack of development of rural tourism. It is also necessary to consider that community and rural tourism are two different types of tourism in terms of concept, operation, and sustainability.

7.5 Community tourism

At present, this typology of tourism has generated important references, methodologies, models, success stories and other notes. Maldonado (2005) presents a community tourism in which he proposes methodological guidelines for analyzing experiences of tourism activities with the community. In other words, he proposes a knowledge of the relation between theory and practice for the development of community tourism. On the other hand, community tourism allows for an anthropological analysis of the Andean community in relation to tourism activities (Ruiz, Hernández, Coca, Cantero, & Del Campo, 2008). It is important to consider that community tourism has already been started in places such as Asia, Oceania, and Africa, where it has contributed to the development of these destinations through the appropriate use of their potential.
Community tourism is another form of alternative tourism that has its basis in rural communities, in which experiential activities between the tourists and the local population are carried out. To refer to community tourism, we present three fundamental aspects of its development. The first one is the socioeconomic development of the destination; the second aspect is the management of cultural appreciation; and, finally, the last aspect is the improvement of quality of life of people who are part of the community involved in this type of tourism.

In Ecuador, community tourism is an opportunity for the development of communities because this type of tourism is supported by the local administration and enhances participation in the community organization, in which several families or the whole community participates. Thus, the potential of these areas in terms of culture, heritage and natural resources is harnessed by these communities with the purpose of complementing their activities for the socioeconomic development of their territory (Agüera, 2013).

The Federación Plurinacional de Turismo Comunitario del Ecuador (FEPTC, 2019) (Plurinational Federation of Community Tourism of Ecuador) claims that activities related to community tourism in Ecuador appeared suddenly. These activities began in the 20th century, approximately in the 1980s, with a direct relation to ecotourism as well as the cultural and multiethnic identity of the country, which has 25 Indigenous peoples and 14 Indigenous nationalities. In this way, since the year 2000, community tourism has been officially acknowledged, and, in 2002, the Plurinational Federation of Community Tourism of Ecuador was created as a leading organization of community tourism in the country. The Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador recognizes this organization as an authority in the regulation and management of community tourism through the creation of regulations for Ecuador’s 130 communities.

Of course, this type of tourism must foster local development, eradicate poverty, and lead to the political consolidation of the organizations. These communities must create their own models to manage the territories and resources available based on the three axes of sustainability.

Finally, all this background will be useful as an example for other areas that want to bring about a structural change for the local community. Thus, due to the location and organization of the parish of El Cisne, this is a destination in which this type of tourism can be implemented. There will be new experiences and novelties for tourists, and, as a result, poverty and social marginalization will be eradicated. This situation will promote endogenous development and improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of this parish.

7.6 Perception of participants about tourism-related activities

In this section, we will discuss the results obtained in the research conducted in the parish under study. In this work, we analyzed the perceptions of the inhabitants with respect to the tourism-related activities that occur in El Cisne, which is one of the rural parishes of the district of Loja. This parish has had an extraordinary annual increase of visitors due to the fact that the statute of the Virgin of El Cisne is here. This is the main reason why thousands of devotees are attracted to this place.

To conduct this research work, apart from doing on-site visits, we also collected information by means of questionnaires administered to locals who have lived for at least one year in the area and are involved in tourism. The objective was to know their perception of tourism in this parish. This study was conducted in December 2018.
The data sheet for this research work was aimed at collecting information from the residents involved in tourism-related activities. There were 1,628 inhabitants, according to projections by INEC (2010) as of 2018, including household heads or people who are household heads and can provide the information required. For this purpose, we divided the number of inhabitants by four (the average family size) to estimate the number of families in the parish of El Cisne in this case? With a confidence level of 95%, an accuracy of 6%, and a probability of occurrence of 50%, we obtained a sample of 161 families to be surveyed. These calculations were applied with a finite-sample distribution, using a standard structured questionnaire (Table 7.1).

Initially, the socio-demographic profile was analyzed, determining the level of education of the residents, which was mainly secondary education (44.1%). Most of the participants were female (60.9%) and were residents who were born in the parish (80.7%); the rest had been living for approximately one year in the area because of their jobs. As for the main activity, the highest percentage was restoration services workers and traders (39.1%), and the predominant age range of the participants was 31 to 40 years old (23%). Regarding tourism-related activities, the residents indicate that they totally agreed (94.4%) with the statements that tourism is beneficial for the parish and that the number of tourists who visit the parish should be increased. Similarly, participants totally agreed with the contribution of tourism to the development of the parish (91.3%). In addition, when the residents were asked if they think that they would obtain benefits from these activities, they expressed total agreement with this statement (82.6%). The participants also believed that if a type of tourism that includes the whole parish is implemented, it would create opportunities for entertainment and recreation (67.7%); they also regarded tourism as a way to preserve the historical and anthropological value of the parish (68.3%). Finally, residents thought that tourism would foster culture and arts (74.5%).

In conclusion, the perception of the residents regarding tourism-related activities, mainly of a religious nature, was very positive.

Based on the willingness of the inhabitants to be involved in tourism-related activities, we can analyze the resources on which the parish relies. These resources are considered elements that contribute to a better experience for visitors to the parish and will be characterized below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Percentages (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
<td>Secondary education 44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female 60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>Born in the parish 80.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main activity</td>
<td>Restoration services workers and traders 39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism-related activity</td>
<td>Tourism is beneficial 94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase of visitors 91.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benefits of this activity 82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creation of opportunities for entertainment and recreation 67.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preservation of historical and anthropological value 68.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fostering culture and arts 74.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Questionnaires applied to residents (2018), Table made by the technical team of the project.
7.7 Characterization of the parish of El Cisne

The parish of El Cisne, which is the subject of study of this chapter, is one of the 13 rural parishes of the district of Loja. It was created in the year 1986 and is 70 km from the city of Loja. According to the website of the local government of Loja (2019), El Cisne is constituted of the following neighbourhoods: Ambocas, Chaquiruña, Agua del Milagro, Huasir, La Nona, La Concha, Millubo and Santa Teresita.

The story goes that, in 1594, the Virgin Mary was seen for the first time in the parish. A Peruvian devotee was walking towards El Cisne to keep a promise that he made to the Virgin Mary and to thank her for healing him from a terminal illness. Later, he fainted from thirst and fatigue, and, when he begged the Virgin to help him get to the sanctuary, he came across a spring of fresh water. After, the community, driven by their faith, began the construction of the basilica of El Cisne.

As for the inhabitants, it was determined that most of them form family groups that are descendants of the Paltas, and they are considered the guardians and worshippers of the sacred statue of the Virgin Mary (Municipio de Loja, 2018). The population depends economically on agriculture and livestock as primary activities. In addition, trade and religious activities also contribute to the economy. The main festivals are held on May 30 to celebrate the declaration of El Cisne as a parish and on August 15 and September 8 to honour the Virgin of El Cisne. Undoubtedly, the major attraction of this parish is the neo-gothic-style basilica in which the sacred statue of the Virgin of El Cisne is kept. This basilica is visited by many pilgrims from the provinces of Loja and Azuay, from northern Peru, as well as other places. Thus, according to a report by the Observatorio de Turismo de la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (Tourism Observatory of the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja), in high seasons there could be up to 5,000 visitors per day, and in low seasons there could be up to 150 visitors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Name of the attraction</th>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Subtype</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Basilica of Our Lady of El Cisne</td>
<td>El Cisne</td>
<td>Cultural manifestation</td>
<td>Architectural</td>
<td>Historical/vernacular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>House of the pilgrim</td>
<td>El Cisne</td>
<td>Cultural manifestation</td>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>Historical museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Museum of Our Lady of El Cisne</td>
<td>El Cisne</td>
<td>Cultural manifestation</td>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>Religious museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Procession of the Virgin of El Cisne</td>
<td>El Cisne</td>
<td>Cultural manifestation</td>
<td>Ethnographic</td>
<td>Isolated groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Clock tower</td>
<td>El Cisne</td>
<td>Cultural manifestation</td>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>Civil architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Plaques of the miracles</td>
<td>El Cisne</td>
<td>Cultural manifestation</td>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>Private collections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Water of the miracles</td>
<td>Huasir</td>
<td>Natural site</td>
<td>Groundwater</td>
<td>Mineral waters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Monument to El Cisne</td>
<td>El Cisne</td>
<td>Cultural manifestation</td>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>Civil architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Potuchuro mountain</td>
<td>El Cisne</td>
<td>Natural site</td>
<td>Mountains</td>
<td>Mountain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GAD Parroquial El Cisne (2019), GAD Cantonal Loja (2019) and on-site visits (2019), Table made by the technical team of the project.
7.8 Tourism-related activity

The information about the tourist attractions of the parish of El Cisne has been retrieved from the official sources of the Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado de la Parroquia El Cisne (GAD) (the local government of the parish of El Cisne), and the GAD Cantonal de Loja (the government of the district of Loja).

Certainly, based on the information collected by official governing bodies and on the data gathered by means of technical visits, we have identified and classified the main attractions present in the zone under study.

Table 7.2 indicates that, in the parish of El Cisne, 87.5% of the attractions are cultural and 12.5% are natural. There is a stronger emphasis on cultural attractions due to the religious events devoted to the Virgin of El Cisne.

Image 7.1–7.1.4 Basilica of Our Lady of El Cisne

Source: [Photos by the technical team of the project] (El Cisne, 2018). Photo archives of the project. Parish of El Cisne.
Below, we will briefly describe the attractions identified during the on-site visits to this parish.

There are several stories about the construction of the basilica, but, in the year 1934, Reverend Father Ricardo Fernandez had the foundations and columns of the first story completed. This work was continued by the Oblate Fathers, who had the building finished.

**Image 7.2** House of the Pilgrim  

Below, we will briefly describe the attractions identified during the on-site visits to this parish.

There are several stories about the construction of the basilica, but, in the year 1934, Reverend Father Ricardo Fernandez had the foundations and columns of the first story completed. This work was continued by the Oblate Fathers, who had the building finished.

**Image 7.3** Museum of Our Lady of El Cisne  
Image 7.4 & 7.4.1  Procession of the Virgin of El Cisne

Source: [Photos by the technical team of the project] (El Cisne, 2018). Photo archives of the project. Parish of El Cisne.
Image 7.5 & 7.5.1  Clock tower

Source: [Photos by the technical team of the project] (El Cisne, 2018). Photo archives of the project. Parish of El Cisne.
The basilica has a neo-gothic style and the current building has been restructured four times because the number of visitors was increasing, and the building was not big enough. Four years after the Canonical Coronation of the Virgin of El Cisne, which was carried out on 8 September 1930, the construction of the sanctuary began by the initiative and commitment of the Diocese of Loja in order to have a place to worship the sacred statue of the Virgin of El Cisne. The basilica consists of three large naves in form of a cross, with a total area of 1,800 m². At the level of the choir and with a view to the central nave, a gallery of 3 m in width was built on each side.

The House of the Pilgrim is a building that accommodates pilgrims by offering rooms for meetings and lodging at a low cost to those who want to rest quietly in this abode of spirituality.

This is a large building that has basic services such as electricity, water, and bathrooms. It is located near the basilica and has a large parking space.

This museum is located in a large underground premise of the basilica and exhibits art works and treasures that are a testimony to the love and worship of the statue of the Virgin of El Cisne by the inhabitants of Loja and neighbouring provinces.

The museum also exhibits artistic treasures, memorial plaques of all sizes, vows, crowns, miracles (small sculptures of metal that represent the object of the miracle obtained), beaded pyxes, sacred cups, and awards that have been given to the Virgin by various political, military and official authorities, as well as traditional clothing that the statue of the Virgin has worn. This museum can be found in the main altarpiece of the third church built in El Cisne.

This procession began in July 1829 when Simon Bolivar issued a decree that established the fair of Loja and the procession of the Virgin of El Cisne. During this event, devotees travel from the basilica in El Cisne to the cathedral in the city of Loja.

The route of the procession is 75 km long and is divided into three stages. The first stage begins in El Cisne and ends in the parish of San Pedro de la Bendita. The next stage, which starts on 17 August, is the route from San Pedro de la Bendita to the city of Catamayo. Finally, the third stage is the trip that starts in Catamayo and finishes in the city of Loja on 20 August every year.

This clock tower is located next to the basilica and was built by the inhabitants of the parish. There is a set of bells inside that consists of a big bell; two medium-sized bells that...
Image 7.7 & 7.7.1  Water of the miracles

Source: [Photos by the technical team of the Project] (El Cisne, 2018). Photo archives of the project. Parish of El Cisne.
toll the hours; eight small bells that peal for calling to ceremonies; and, finally, the main bell that is used to announce situations of emergency or catastrophes. This set of bells is operated by means of an electronic system.

Currently, activities related to abseiling – descending a vertical surface – are being carried out here. This tower meets the conditions for this type of activity.

These plaques are located at the base of the clock tower and are memories of the miracles that devotees have received from the Virgin of El Cisne. All these plaques have been placed by the priests of the parish and are appealing to the visitors. These objects reflect the strong faith of the devotees in the Virgin of El Cisne.

A few minutes from El Cisne is the Huasir neighbourhood, where we can find a place called “Agua de los Milagros” (Water of the Miracles). According to the story, a Peruvian devotee who walked towards El Cisne to fulfill a promise he made to “La Churonita” and thanked him for having cured him of a terminal illness, falls in the place passed out by thirst and fatigue, and when pleading with the miraculous Virgin who helps him to reach the Sanctuary discovers a spring of water.

This miracle was quickly known, and thousands of devotees began to flock to this place to drink the water and take it home. It is believed that this holy water cures the sick, heals wounds, and blesses people.

In view of these events, in 1930, when the Canonical Coronation of the Virgin of El Cisne took place, Most Reverend José María Rodríguez Alvarado had a font built with lime mortar and brick, 2 m in height and 1 m in width. In this way, the devotees could quench their thirst and receive blessings at this place.

Moreover, a replica of the statue of the Virgin of El Cisne was placed on an urn near the font. In the upper part, we can read the following inscription on a metal plaque: “Agua...
Milagrosa de Nuestra Señora de El Cisne. – agosto 1800 – inauguración y bendición de esta piscina, noviembre de 1930” (Miraculous water of Our Lady of El Cisne – August 1800 – Inauguration and blessing ceremony of this font, November 1930).

This monument is located at the entrance to the parish of El Cisne. It is a meeting point for pilgrims and people from the community who want to travel from the parish to other places. It is also considered the starting point for some parades, such as the proclamation of festivals and the civic-military parade to celebrate the declaration of El Cisne as a parish.

The Potuchuro is an attraction in the category of natural sites, located in the parish of El Cisne. The name of this mountain comes from two Quechua words, ‘poto’, meaning bottomless, and ‘churo’, meaning small. The Potochuro mountain is the subject of a variety of ancestral stories. We can find sown fields of corn and beans, and sometimes wheat, down the side of the mountain. Additionally, there is a cross on the upper part of this mountain, and, from this vantage point, we can have a full view of the parish of El Cisne and a partial view of Catamayo. There is also a crater here that leads many people to believe that the Potochuro could have been a small volcano.

Certainly, the parish of El Cisne has great potential for tourism, considering its location and resources. The tourism opportunities for this zone can be increased without overlooking religious tourism. Other types of tourism carried out in rural zones could be also implemented here.

In conclusion, the relation between residents and tourism must be understood as a fact or fundamental to involving and benefiting the community through tourism-related activities.

Another fundamental aspect is the concept of the present study, which is based on cultural tourism. Then, an analysis of rural and community tourism is performed in this parish characterized by religious tourism.

On the other hand, the perception of the inhabitants is very positive regarding tourism. They think that religious tourism is a strong point of this parish. The tourism offering could be diversified by means of a type of tourism that complements visitors’ experiences and efficiently distributes the wealth derived from this activity, considering a sustainable use of the resources of the destination.

Image 7.9 The Potuchuro mountain
Finally, the attractions of the parish justify a diversification of the offering that will enhance the appropriate use of resources and the unique experiences for visitors based on religious tourism. Moreover, all of this can be complemented with the pilgrimage held once a year and can be consolidated as a tourism resource in which culture and the local society are the primary axes for the development of tourism-related activities in the sector.

References


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