



WPI

Promoting Rural Parishes

Cuenca, Ecuador

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Capturing Rural Customs Cuenca, Ecuador

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Abstract

The rural parishes of Cuenca, Ecuador, have historically struggled integrating into modern agricultural markets. In the recent past, *Cultivando el Futuro* has been working closely with these rural parishes to provide seeds and livestock, as well as participating in cultural events. Our team worked with *Cultivando el Futuro* to investigate the unique cultural practices of these parishes and promote knowledge about these places to the public via an online database. We conclude this report with recommendations for *Cultivando el Futuro* on how they can continue to build the database and promote the unique nature of these communities for the benefit of both the visitors and the community members.

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Executive Summary

Cuenca, Ecuador, is home to 21 *parroquias*, or parishes. Each of these parishes are religiously based as most of them are centered around a main church where many of the cultural festivities take place. These parishes are located at the outskirts of Cuenca, and they are not as modern as the city. Most of the people in these communities make a living by selling locally cultivated products such as dairy products, raising livestock, and selling crops. These communities are home to numerous small family-owned businesses that struggle to gain notoriety due to the lack of business infrastructure that the parishes possess.

Our sponsors, a non-profit organization called *Cultivando el Futuro*, which means “Cultivating the Future”, aims to assist these communities by providing seeds and livestock while placing importance on cultural history. The goal of Cultivando el Futuro is to improve the quality of life for people in the rural communities, hoping to boost small businesses and bring more attention to them from outside visitors, as they are woven with tradition that has laid the foundation for modern day Cuenca.

The main problem that the parishes of Cuenca face today is the lack of attention that they are receiving from people who live outside of these communities. Many of the small, family-owned businesses that operate within the parishes do not have the resources or knowledge as to how they may gain more attraction.

In collaboration with Cultivando el Futuro, our team used investigative methods to learn about and record information from these communities with the goal of creating a database that could be adapted into a public website that is accessible to populations outside of these parishes.

Rural Community Projects in Cuenca

To accomplish the goal of this project, we developed three objectives. Our first goal was to understand the cultural practices of the four different parishes: Sayausi, Paccha, Sinincay, and Victoria del Portete. Our main sponsor, Marisol Peñaloza, has very good relations with many of the parishes and facilitated the process of introducing our team to key informants within these communities. This allowed our team to gain access to these communities which greatly improved our ability to record the stories and intricacies of daily life within the parishes. Information was extracted utilizing interview questions as well as user experience evaluations. The interviews were recorded and then translated to extract usable data which helped to build our database. User

experience evaluations were completed by team members at each of the locations we visited to record alternative, more logistical tourism data that would be compiled into our database as well.

Our second objective was to understand who is interested in visiting the parishes of Cuenca. Since this objective pertains to populations outside of those that live in the parishes themselves, we could not answer this question by staying within these rural communities. Our team, along with our sponsors, created a survey to be presented to the people of Cuenca. This survey prompted our sample population of Cuenca to answer questions regarding demographics, interests/knowledge regarding parishes, and where they are most likely to find travel information. After receiving 37 responses to our survey, it became clear that most people who knew little to nothing about parishes would be interested in learning more about them. This signified that there is a willingness from people outside of the parishes to learn more about these communities, proving the importance of creating an informational resource that can be reached by the people of Cuenca.

Our third objective was to understand the best platform or platforms to reach the populations that wished to learn more about these parishes. This was accomplished using the same survey that we used to achieve our second objective. Of the people that answered that they would be willing to learn more about the parishes of Cuenca, we asked where they most frequently look for information regarding activities or travel destinations in Cuenca. Using this information, our team was able to determine that the best platform to make parish information available was an online website. Due to the data that we collected; we began transferring our database onto a website-making tool called Squarespace with the intention of providing a template as to how parish information may be publicized in the future.

Our Deliverable

The main goal of our project, in collaboration with Cultivando el Futuro, was to find an effective way to share the small, family-owned businesses and the rich cultural tradition of the parishes with the population that is willing to learn about them for the benefit of both the communities and the visitors. We found that the most effective way to reach the population that

wishes to learn more about the parishes of Cuenca is through an online resource outside of social media. We began creating our deliverable on Squarespace as it provided a versatile way to create our database. Not only does the database on Squarespace translate easily to what an appealing website may look like, but it is also a very user-friendly program. Since we did not have enough time to record data on all 21 parishes, Squarespace allows for our sponsors to continue the work that we laid the foundation for by continuing to add more information on other parishes. Since Squarespace itself is a tool to create websites, Cultivando el Futuro can either continue to develop the database we gave them into a website or transfer this information to another online platform.

Recommendations

Given the work that we have done with Cultivando el Futuro and the parishes surrounding Cuenca, our group recommends that Cultivando el Futuro:

- Continue to use and improve the interview questions as well as the user experience evaluation topics to further collect structured data regarding the small businesses and traditions of the parishes surrounding Cuenca.
- Continue iterating upon the database that we created until it becomes a website that is user friendly and informative to the public.
- Share this website on as many online platforms as possible, making sure that it is available at the click of a google search.
- Encourage locals to set up infrastructure which makes natural attractions more accessible to visitors.

Provided that Cultivando el Futuro continues to put an incredible amount of effort into helping these communities, our team feels that these recommendations will improve the livelihood of these parishes by making the information about them more accessible and attracting more visitors to them through community tourism.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Culture affects every aspect of human societies. Culture dictates how people act, how certain conclusions are drawn, and how certain actions are performed. From speech to writing to food, culture is a major aspect of life. This even includes agriculture. Thousands of years have passed to generate the culture we know today. However, due to factors like economic troubles and emigration, these cultural traditions are disappearing. In Cuenca, Ecuador, cultural agriculture is still alive but dwindling.

Humans have overcome change throughout history, making us one of the most adaptable species. Societies have been overthrown then built back up, climate changes, wars occur, and many other travesties are thrown at us, but the strong always survive to provide for the next generation. In Cuenca, Ecuador, we see an amazing example of resilience. Amid change, rural farming communities continue to practice their traditions even though the world in which these traditions were formed no longer exists. Cities draw rural populations away from their homes, harming the health of these communities.

One of the best answers to the degradation of these traditional, rural *parroquias*, which directly translates to “parish” or rural community based around a church, is to promote more attraction by sharing their stories. The parishes are parishes that have their own small community. Our team has been working with our sponsors Marisol Peñaloza and Cultivando El Futuro and advisors to implement a plan to help these rural communities through community tourism. We have three main objectives in doing so. Our first objective was to understand the agricultural practices of four parishes and their significance to cultural heritage. To do this, we utilized interviews and participant observation to gain a full comprehension and appreciation of the community. Our second objective was to identify the different groups of people that would potentially visit the parishes. The methods conducted to discover our target audience were surveys and interviews, which allowed the group to gain more information about potential visitors. The final objective of our research included a plan to determine the most efficient platform to promote the parishes. In today's world there are many mediums to receive information and the most popular is subject to change. Our group conducted surveys to acknowledge the different types of mediums people use to acquire information.

Chapter 2: Background

We begin this chapter by describing the threats that impact farming to give an understanding about how important it is to maintain the traditions of the local farmers. We then discuss how communities can incorporate tourism to support their financial status. Finally, we provide information about our sponsor Marisol Peñaloza and the organization Cultivando El Futuro.

2.1 The Threat to Small Household Farming in Ecuador

Pressure within the small farming communities of Ecuador come from policy changes that came about in the 1980's. Due to the devaluation of currency in Ecuador, inflation and other economic factors put pressure on the Ecuadorian economy. To fix this, agricultural policies were made to open the agricultural market through the removal of tariffs and trade barriers (Bebbington, 1993). This opened the agricultural market to become much more competitive, making it harder for smaller farms to be able to compete. As a result, smaller Ecuadorian farmers had to increase their crop production and decrease the price of their crop to remain competitive within the market (Bebbington, 1993). This put an immense amount of economic pressure on small producers. Around the same time that small Ecuadorian farms were feeling this pressure, Ecuador began to experience a period of increased emigration among males (Jokisch, 1997). With the exodus of men from many of these small household producers to other countries in search of job opportunities to provide a better living for their families, this left the small household producers with even less hands to help them produce crops. This left communities even worse off than they were before.

Not only did the policy changes and market pressure cause people to migrate away from local farms, but so does the growth of technology and the popularity among young people to flock to the nearest metropolitan city. Rural farming communities in South America, Ecuador especially, are seeing the desire for young people to stay diminishing significantly. Rural youths in today's world have fewer opportunities for accessing decent employment, high-quality education and are at a higher risk of poverty than those that live in more urbanized areas (Cazzuffi & Fernández, 2018). The move to urban areas is seen as a way for these young people

to cope with the lack of opportunity that they are presented with. Nearly all the migrants that are from Ecuador are migrating internally, meaning that they are simply moving to another part of Ecuador as opposed to leaving the country. Along with this, Ecuador citizens between the ages of 15 and 24 are seeing the biggest growth in urban areas (Cazzuffi & Fernández, 2018). Those that make the switch to a more urban lifestyle will have a better chance of securing a job, accessing credit so they can build themselves financially, and a better education (Cazzuffi & Fernández, 2018). It is no secret why the people of these rural communities find it opportunistic to leave their farms behind and look toward a brighter, more financially free way of life. While those that leave may be creating a more modern life for themselves, how does this affect the communities that they leave behind?

As young people leave their rural communities behind, the community suffers in more ways than one. The first way that we are seeing the fall of these communities is through the lack of labor available once a portion of its working population leaves (Dodds, 2018). The food security of small household farmers is directly linked to the size of the household or the number of available workers that a family has under its roof (Cordero-Ahiman, 2020). The children of a family, once they are old enough to contribute, are a significant piece of the way that farming is managed. When a sufficient amount of labor is available, traditional farming practices can be performed, however, when there is not enough, the leaders of the household must make a decision on how they are going to continue producing crops. If families do not want to decrease their crop yield, what ends up happening in a lot of circumstances is that they change their methods. When people move out of these communities, they often send money and resources back to their families as they do not want to abandon them completely (Caulfield, Bounio, Fonte, & Kessler, 2019). When the families receive this money, they use it to buy things that will help them yield crops. This results in the increased use of fertilizers and machinery that they are not completely trained to use (Caulfield, Bounio, Fonte, & Kessler, 2019)). The result of these newer practices is soil degradation. The study performed on the Kitchwa community in the rural highlands of the Andes showed a clear trend that as the available labor decreased, the quality of the soil decreased in just about every area that was investigated (Caulfield, Bounio, Fonte, & Kessler, 2019)). With these available family workers moving out, not only are they putting a halt to the practice of traditional customs, but they are also weakening the natural resources of the community as well and risking the food security that the family poses.

2.2 Community Tourism

Rural communities are often home to some of the most beautiful landscapes that the world has to offer due to their lack of industrialization and their traditional ways of producing crops. Unfortunately, the term rural is often a synonym for impoverished as poverty tends to be more concentrated in rural areas. According to the World Bank, 38% of the rural population is poor whereas only 18% of the urban population falls below the poverty line in Ecuador (The World Bank, 2018). These communities often have something to offer that most communities in urban settings do not. Rural communities or “parishes” as they are called in Cuenca, have the opportunity to profit from their beautiful land and traditions as there is a global market for community tourism.

One method that rural communities around the world have used to introduce another form of income into their community is the idea of community tourism (Simpson, 2008). Community tourism is when a community decides to open their doors to the public and use their traditions as a tourist attraction (Simpson, 2008). The natural beauty, elaborate traditions, and tasty local food are all things that rural communities in the highland of the Andes already have to offer through their way of life. While it is not the easiest thing to pull off, tourism can provide a community, with financial resources that they otherwise would not have.

Community tourism is a very interesting market because it is dependent on the heritage and natural beauty of a community. Heritage can be defined by anything that someone wished to conserve or collect to pass down to future generations (Chhabra, 2010). Within the context of tourism, heritage has become a commodity that is used to satisfy the needs and desires of tourists. Tourists that are intrigued by heritage or community-based tourism often are motivated by nostalgia, social distinction, and authenticity (Chhabra, 2010). The history of a location is often a very important aspect of community-based tourism as the past can be sold as a “slice of nostalgia” (Chhabra, 2010). When done in an effective manner, it allows the tourists to feel like they are experiencing things from a different time period, giving them that feeling of nostalgia that they often chase. Nostalgia is very well complemented by authenticity in reeled tourists into a given location (Chhabra, 2010). Most of the time, visitors want to know what it was actually like to experience the destination, thus why authenticity is important (Chhabra, 2010). Another

aspect of community-based tourism that is helpful in attracting visitors is the Gazinta Philosophy. The Gazinta Philosophy is one that emphasizes the importance of time and space management (Chhabra, 2010). When a location has multiple things to do in one area, it is said to attract more visitors than those that only have one or two (Chhabra, 2010). Of course, there are exceptions to this ideology, however most of the time this holds true.

While community tourism sounds ideal in theory, it is not always beneficial. Some of the drawbacks to community tourism include pollution, lack of community voice, and a change in the way these people have been living for hundreds of years (Dodds, 2018). If the implementation of community tourism is not done properly it can have very poor implications for the community. The introduction of outside visitors to a beautiful rural community can lead to pollution quickly if it is not managed properly. Oftentimes, outsiders do not have the same respect for the environment that the locals do, which can cause pollution problems rapidly (Simpson, 2008). Not only is this an issue, but a lack of community representation in the decision-making process can be detrimental to the work being done for the community. Ultimately, the goal of community tourism is to improve the financial state of the community while teaching outside visitors the importance of preservation and diversity of culture (Dodds et al, 2018). If decision makers are greedy and see the project simply to make money for themselves, this is when problems arise (Gunter, 2021). The community can quickly turn into one that shifts its values to accommodate a wider range of people as opposed to adhering to the core values that this community had in the first place. Suddenly, the community can turn into another tourism spot similar to others without preserving the community itself.

If promoted in an effective manner, community tourism can be a great help a community. Done properly, it can provide an environmentally friendly, local source of income for the community while teaching the public the importance of preserving communities like these around the globe. The income that the community receives can be supplemented with the crops they sell on their farms, allowing them to have multiple sources of income in their own backyard. Some tools that have been studied to improve the success of a community-based tourism project include participatory planning and capacity building to ensure that tourism can be managed, collaboration with facilitating links to the market to ensure financial viability, establishing environmental goals, government funding or sponsorship, and most importantly the community participation in the decision-making process to ensure that the community values are being

upheld (Dodds et al, 2018). If these standards can be met, an authentic community experience can be built for the visitors to see while providing great benefit to the community members.

2.3 Cultivando el Futuro

The rural councilor of the Cuenca Canton, Marisol Peñaloza, through international cooperation efforts in coordination with rural parish governments and the rural collective has taken on a magnitude of projects with the desire of benefitting rural Cuenca. One of her past works includes a proposed project of productive development, training and economic reactivation of families, organizations, and rural women. To accomplish the goal the project traverses agroecology and rights, gender, and intercultural approaches. Marisol Peñaloza is well respected throughout Cuenca and her efforts to keep the rural communities intact will be remembered by the citizens. The project of Cultivando El Futuro began in June of 2020 and has worked with many volunteers to further advance the rural areas of Cuenca. The project works along-side with the parishes of Baños, Sayausi, Turi, Paccha, El Valle, Victoria del Portete and Cumbe, with the intention of expanding to other parishes in Cuenca. The map provided below represents where each parish is in Canton Cuenca.

Figure 1: Map of the Parroquias Surrounding Cuenca



From Revista Cuenca Ilustre 2008

The project has aimed to raise a diagnostic baseline for possible beneficiaries for the project. Cultivando El Futuro mission is to strengthen farming skills by promoting food sovereignty through training on agroecology, and crop maintenance. The problem the parishes are facing today arises from the historically weakened communities that have been left to face harsh economic consequences.

The goal of our is to investigate ways to the preserve the rich traditions and alleviate some of the economic stress on these communities by leading the attention back to them through tourism. Cultivando El Futuro has begun to address the problem by promoting agroecology, home crops by delivering seedlings, and small animal rice tracts to families. Cultivando El Futuro has also promoting the parishes via online resources.

2.4 Summary

In this chapter, we researched the history, issues, and potential solutions to how struggling communities outside of Cuenca can be rejuvenated. The rich tradition has never lacked in these communities, and they have so much beauty to offer to the world, but they do not always have the necessary resources to do so. Our goal was to investigate ways to document the tourism potential and the beauty that the communities have to offer while benefitting both the community and the visitors.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The goal of this project was to help Cultivando El Futuro to document cultural practices in local parishes that will promote community tourism. To achieve our project goal, we developed three objectives:

1. Understand the cultural practices of four different parishes.
2. Identify the potential visitors interested in community tourism.
3. Determine the best platform to promote the *huecas*.

This chapter describes the firsthand approach that we took towards obtaining information from the communities and achieving our three project goals. A gantt chart of our project timeline can be found in *Appendix A*.

3.1 Understand the cultural practices of four different parishes

Our first objective was to learn and understand the traditional cultural practices in the parishes of Sinincay, Paccha, Victoria Del Portete and Sayausi. We wanted to understand local resources related to tourism. This allowed us to gather information and learn about the different communities.

Employing the user experience at these different locations was to produce objective, systematic and comprehensive evidence that we can then use to survey potential visitors of these parishes (Deng, King, & Bauer, 2002). In a study done to evaluate the attractiveness of national parks in British Columbia, Canada, the parks were evaluated using these five categories: tourism resources, tourist facilities, accessibility, local communities, and peripheral attractions (Deng, King, & Bauer, 2002). This approach seeks to achieve an improved equilibrium between potential tourist interest and destination attributes viewed from an ecological and tourism perspective (Deng, King, & Bauer, 2002). Even though the study talked about in this article is about national parks, this method was still effective in evaluating smaller scale locations as many of the same attributes attract visitors. To evaluate the different locations in each of the five

categories, we answered a set of established questions. At each location, we answered questions in the following categories which you can find in Appendix B:

1. Tourism resources
2. Tourist facilities
3. Accessibility
4. Local communities
5. Peripheral attractions
6. Other comments/ observations

When we went to different parishes, we interviewed two *cholitas* and six *huecas* in total. Our sponsor, Marisol, helped us to identify key community informants as she has worked with these communities several times and has a good sense of how these communities operate. Given the knowledge of our key informants, we formulated questions to provoke specific and unique answers from our informants (Appendix C). This information helped us to compile a database where we could store this information.

An interview allowed us to collect useful information about the history and processes of daily life on the parishes, but the success of tourism depends on more than just research of the parishes. These questions provided data with consistency from location to location, making our survey questions in the next method much easier to create. Once these questions were answered and the data was collected, it was then formulated into a series of questions that helped us to determine which values or characteristics of the parishes attract visitors most.

3.2 Identify potential visitors interested in community tourism

Our second objective is to identify potential visitors. By learning this we will be able to create promotional materials that the primary audience would want to see and would interest them.

To determine who our project will be geared towards; we conducted a survey to several people online via Google Forms. Surveys are a good way to gather large amounts of data from

many individuals. A survey, as explained by the University of Wisconsin-Madison in their “Survey Fundamentals” presentation, “A survey is often the best way to get information and feedback to use in planning and program improvement” (Thayer- Hart, 2008). Survey questions should be informative, easy to answer, and clear. They should also provide any necessary background that is needed but not force the participant to only one answer. The questions are also able to be open-ended or multiple choice, allowing for different data types to be collected but requiring varying methods of analysis.

For this survey, the participants consisted of normal pedestrians in major tourist locations or highly populated areas. Our questions, shown in appendix D, will consist of multiple-choice questions pertaining to these categories:

- Tourist or resident
- Knowledge of rural *huecas*
- Interest in going/learning of locations
- Knowledge of how to get to locations

These categories were designed to uncover the group of people that are most likely to visit the *huecas* we worked with. The answer was shown through the sorting of groups, then seeing what percentage would want to visit and learn about the parishes we are working with. This knowledge allowed us to better understand how to promote the *huecas* by giving us a target audience.

We utilized short informal interviews to try and gain more information about the topics that interest certain demographics within the category or parishes. Our intention with these interviews was to gather more data points to help our analysis once both the surveys and interviews were conducted. These interviews were targeted towards people in different parks around the city, conducted in person. The in-person aspect of these interviews helped us to collect information that we may not have otherwise gathered through multiple choice surveys as was mentioned prior. Our interview questions for the citizens or visitors of Cuenca can be found under Appendix E. Once the data from interviews was collected, we had to code all the data. Most of the data could be categorized the same way as the data that was obtained through the survey, however data that does not fall under those categories were coded in another manner.

3.3 Determine the best platform to promote the parishes

Our final objective was to find the best mediums for the promotion of the rural huecas. Determining the best platforms to promote the parishes allows our sponsors, Cultivando El Futuro, to gain a better understanding of how and where they should put promotional materials to maximize the amount of notoriety that rural communities in Cuenca receive.

For our group to find the best medium to promote the rural huecas, we conducted a survey online via Google Forms. This survey was conducted at the same time as the survey mentioned above as the individuals that were polled helped us gather the best data and allowed us to see the spread of mediums, shown in appendix D.

After our survey above was conducted we asked the participant what medium they use to find different activities to do around Cuenca. This was an open-ended question to allow several online services to emerge that our group may not have thought or known about. As the surveys were conducted at the same time, we were able to see what internet services they use and see what group they fall in. This allowed us to see if there were trends in the groups and if there were any web services that a said group tends to gravitate towards. This allowed us to sort through the data faster and recognize which data was useful and which was not.

We utilized interviews to gather data on what the best platform or platforms are to promote the communities that we worked with. We chose to include in person interviews in this method because we were unsure as to whether we would get enough data points. This also ensured diversity within our data as we were able to collect more data points in different locations around the city. To collect these in person interviews, we went to different parks located around Cuenca. These parks included Parque Calderón and Parque de la Madre. Once the data was collected from these interviews, we were able to compare them to each other and to the surveys that were administered online.

Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter, we discuss our project findings. We organize this chapter by restating our project objectives, describing our findings and how they contribute to our project goal.

4.1 Cultural practices of different parishes

Our results from our first objective are presented in this section. We found that the four parishes we visited, each had their own unique cultural practices. *Table 1* displays the general information about each of the parishes. The four parishes all have their own specialties and tourist attractions which makes them distinctive. *Appendix B* goes into more detail about each of the parishes studied and what they have to offer.

Table 1: General Parish Information

Parish Information (From User Evaluation)				
Parish Name	Paccha	Sayausi	Sinincay	Victoria Del Portete
Local Specialty	Bread, Honey, and Pottery	Trout	Shingles	Milk/ Dairy Products
Peripheral Tourist Attraction	Lookouts	Cajas National Park	Land Conservation containing a Waterfall	Hike to Waterfall
Distance from Fútbol Stadium in Cuenca	12.4 km	28.5 km	11.9 km	23.6 km
Number of Huecas Studied	3	1	1	1

The most well-equipped parish to host visitors is Sayausi. Sayausi is home to one of the largest and well-known huecas out of all the parishes that we visited. Below Figure 2 showcases one of Sayausi's huecas "*Mi Tierra*". Our group found that this hueca has the ability to attract a large amount of visitors due to the spacious indoor seating as well as the variety of outdoor seating available. This hueca is very unique compared to others and it is most appealing during the night. With more publicity, we believe that this would be one of the first places that tourists would want to visit.

Figure 2: Hueca of "Mi Tierra"



Our second finding is that the producers of the huecas learned the traditions from their past generations or they were self-taught. We interviewed key informants from four different parishes and the data we gathered came from six huecas (Table 2).

Table 2: General Hueca Information

Hueca Information						
Owner's Name	Doña Rosalivia	Teresa Mental	N/A	Norma Morales & Sandra Morales	Doña Marisol Reinoso	Doña Aurora
Hueca Name	Pan de Doña Rosalivia	Cisne Pottery	Azu Miel	Mi Tierra	Asociación Luchando para el Futuro	El Rincon del Sabor "Doña Aurora"
Parish Located In	Paccha	Paccha	Paccha	Sayausi	Sinincay	Victoria Del Portete
Primary Product Produced	Bread	Pottery	Honey	Restaurant Food	Restaurant Food & Wine	Restaurant Food
Who the Producer Learned From	Parents	Parents	Self-Taught	Self-Taught	Self-Taught	Parents
Years of Experience	50+ years	45-50 years	~3 years	~3 years	5+ years	~5 years

Doña Rosalivia the bakery (Figure 3) and Cisne Pottery *hueca* (Figure 4) located in Paccha learned the traditions from their parents while Azu Miel (Figure 5) the honey producer was self-taught. In this specific instance there was a direct correlation with years of experience since Doña Rosalivia and Teresa Mental had 40+ years of experience while Azu Miel who was self-taught only had about 3 years.

Figure 5: Bread from Doña Rosalivia’s Bakery



Figure 4: Cisne Pottery Hueca



Figure 3: Group photo at Azu Miel



The huecas visited in Sayausi, Sinincay, and Victoria Del Portete were all family-owned restaurants. Mi Tierra from Sayausi and Doña Marisol Reinoso from Sinincay taught themselves from how to make the traditional meals (Figure 6). Doña Aurora who owns El Rincon del Sabor restaurant from Victoria Del Portete learned from her parents (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Doña Marisol Reinoso



Figure 6: Doña Aurora



Data was collected from the *cholitas* of two different parishes: Paccha and Sayausi. The two parishes shared a common pride as the cholita of each of their Parishes because they represented the working woman of each parish. Belen Esperalda, the cholita from Paccha (Figure 8), and Leslie, the cholita from Sayausi (Figure 9) expressed that their parishes were known for their traditional gastronomy methods, specifically for their cultural Cuy (guinea pig) dishes. When interviewed, Leslie stated that the people of Sayausi are “very united” and are commonly “very happy to be apart of Sayausi” (Leslie, personal communication, February 13, 2022). Belen described the people of Paccha to be “people of great faith” as well as “humble and generous” (B. Esperalda, personal communication, February 3, 2022). Family recipes of both communities have been passed down through generations meanwhile huecas in their parishes can produce the local ingredients for their products in house. These practices have allowed the parishes to hold a traditional culture over long periods of time.

Figure 8: Belen Esperalda the Cholita of Paccha



Figure 9: Leslie the Cholita of Sayausi



4.2 Potential visitors interested in community tourism

The information gathered from the surveys and interviews allowed us to identify potential visitors of the parishes. We found that 94.6 percent of the people would consider visiting the parishes. From *Figure 10* we learned that most individuals would like to learn more about these parishes for various reasons, like to learn about their culture, their gastronomy, or even to just finish going to each location. The 5.4 percent reported that they would not want to learn more, that being that these individuals already knew every location. This data helped us identify a group that would be most likely to visit these parishes. Our poll primarily was answered by Ecuadorian adult women, shown in

Figure 10: Visitor interest chart

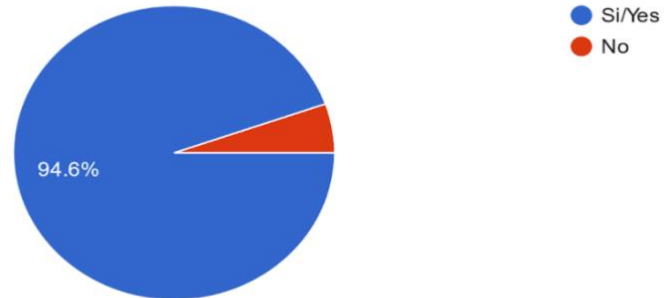
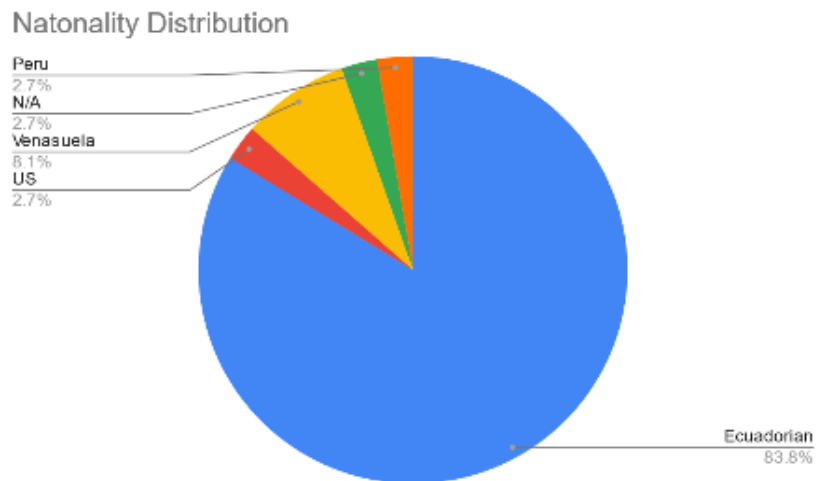


Figure 11: Nationality distribution chart



Figures 11, 12, and 13. This group could be individuals of any nationality, gender, or age that do not already know every parish. The main limitation of this data is that there were a small number of responses to the online and in-person poll that could cause the results to be biased to one group.

Figure 13: Age distribution

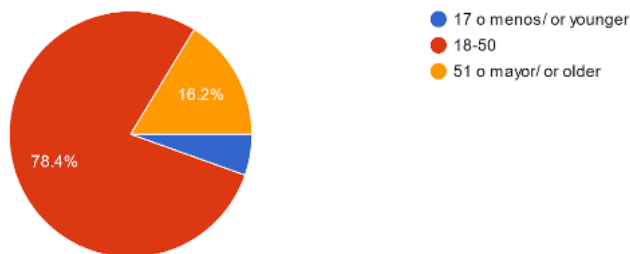
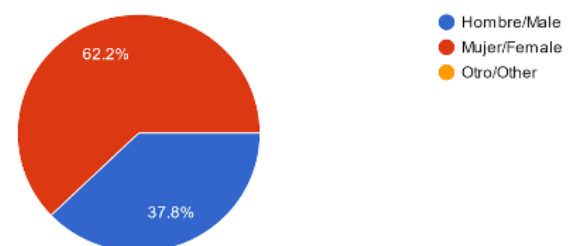


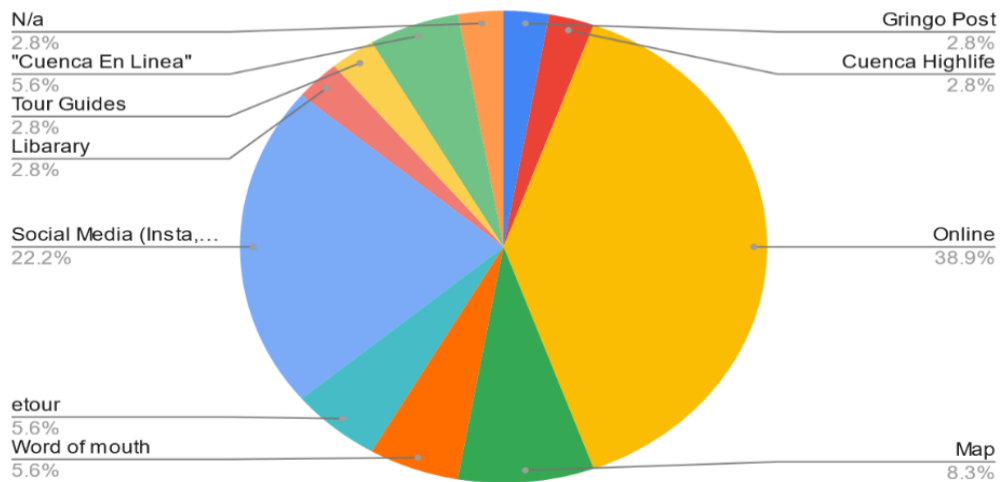
Figure 12: Gender distribution



4.3 Best platform to promote the parishes

Our third objective was to determine the best platform to promote the huecas. We did this through surveys. *Figure 14* shows the distribution of activity platforms that our respondents use to find activities surrounding Cuenca. The largest section labeled “online” is a culmination of all the responses which were non-specific online websites such as “google” or “online”.

Figure 14: Distribution of activity platforms



In our surveys and in-person interviews we asked respondents where they would find information for activities to do in Cuenca. From *Figure 14* this graph we can determine that most activities are found online, not including specific sites or social media. Just after the general internet is any social media, including sites like Facebook and Instagram. This is not surprising as, shown in *Figure 12*, most of the respondents are primarily adults from 18-50, who would be more versed in finding activities online compared to other resources. From this information, our group determined that it would be best for our sponsors to create a website as they already have social media. The main limitation of this data is that there were a small number of responses to the online and in-person poll that could cause the results to be biased to one group’s preferences.

In the next chapter we describe our deliverable for our sponsor based on the results we found. After reviewing our results our group made the decision to create an online database. We then discuss our conclusion, using an online database our sponsors can later convert the work to a website that can be shared with the public. Finally, our group offers recommendations for Cultivando El Futuro.

Chapter 5: Deliverable and Recommendations

Our team found that the various parishes we studied all had rich traditions that create an interesting and unique way of life. Between gastronomy, legends, beautiful natural landscapes, and traditions passed down for generations, we conclude that there is an abundance of information available for visitors. We found that people who know about these parishes would be inclined to learn more about them people who are from other areas and are would like to learn more about the parishes. It is reasonable to assume that fewer locals would want to know more about the parishes as they already may have an understanding of what these places entail. When presented to a visitor of Ecuador or someone who is not as integrated with the different cultures of Cuenca, it is reasonable to assume that they would like to know more about the varieties of cultures that Cuenca has to offer.

Our Deliverable: An Online Database

We found that the best place to promote the parishes and huecas that we studied is through an online resource. Since nearly half of the respondents answered that they would look for places to visit via an online resource, we chose to create our database of information for our sponsors using the online application Squarespace. We found that this would be a simple and easy tool to compile all the information that we obtained throughout our project.

Squarespace proved to be a very effective tool to create our online database. The goal in using Squarespace was to be able to give Cultivando el Futuro a compiled and organized database that contained the various traditions, legends, and daily work of the people we interviewed within the different parishes we visited. As shown in *Figure 15*, we chose to set our database up in the style of a website that contains an about page which lays out the goals

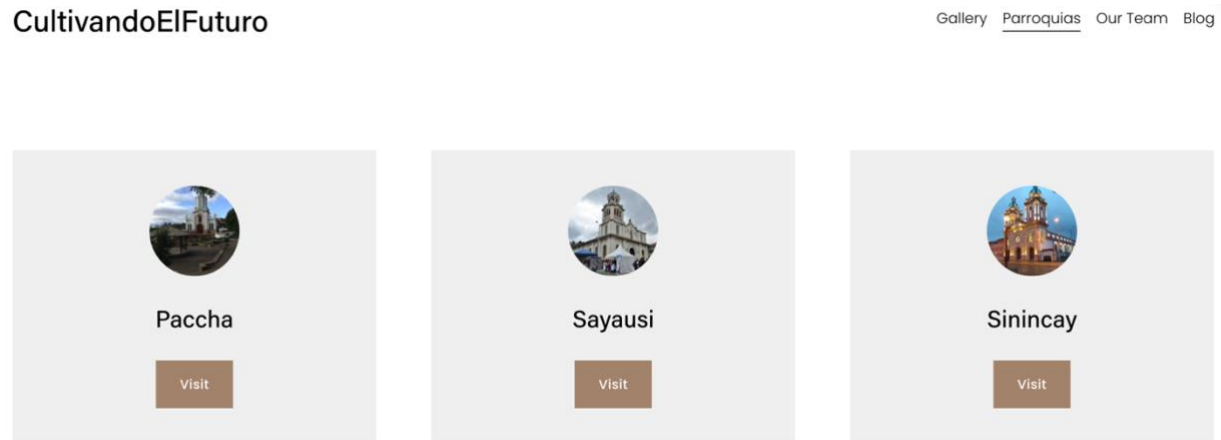
Figure 15: Home page of our database



of the organization, a photo gallery, and individual pages about different parishes.

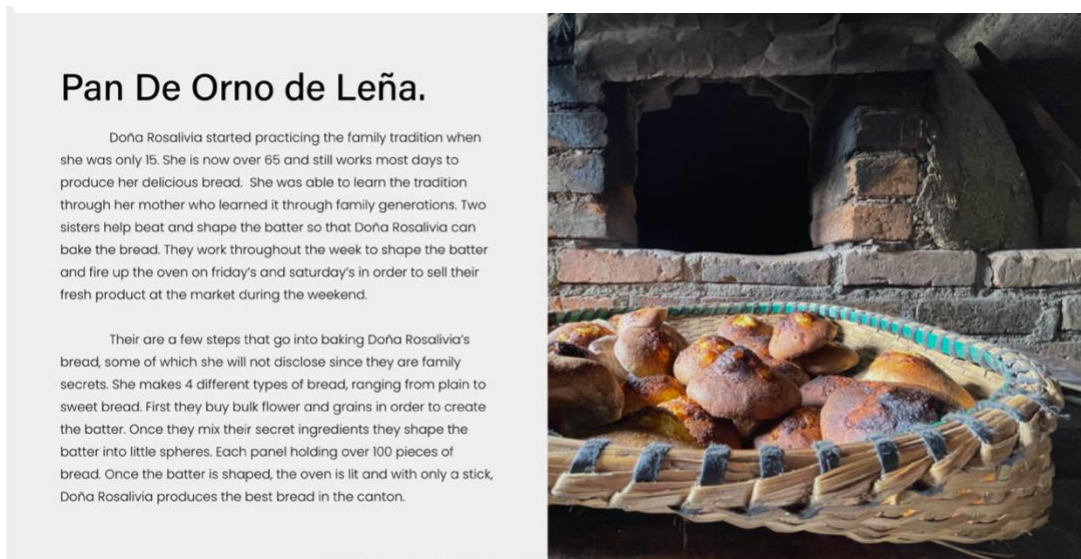
We designed our database in a way that allows our sponsors to simply click on the parish that they wish to edit (Figure 16). Once the parish button is clicked, our sponsors will be brought to a page specific to that parish, where they can insert information, pictures and videos as they see fit .

Figure 16: *Parroquia* button page in our database



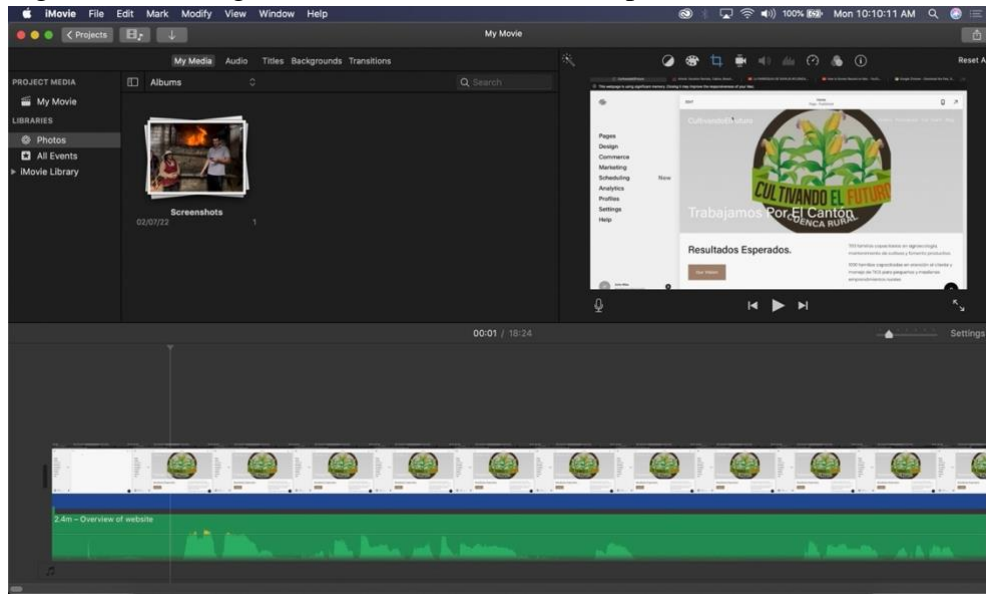
We organized the parishes pages by providing a general parish description as well as describing different attractions the parishes have to offer (Figure 17). This ensures that all the data is organized by parish, which will help when sorting and compiling information.

Figure 17: Hueca description under "Paccha" Parroquia page



We concluded that it would be beneficial to organize this database similar to a website to give our sponsors a good idea as to how they may want to present this information to the public in a visually appealing manner. Not only is Squarespace useful in this aspect, but it is also a very user-friendly tool that our sponsors will be able to edit and add data as they see fit. Our project does not end with us leaving Ecuador as there is still work to be done to create an online resource to help people learn about rural parishes in Ecuador. We created a tutorial video using iMovie to teach our sponsors how to use Squarespace and we encourage them to reach out to us with any questions they may have (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Making of the tutorial video for our sponsors



To encourage the continued success of this project, we recommend our sponsors to:

1. Collect structured data regarding the small businesses and traditions of the parishes surrounding Cuenca.
2. Develop an online resource that can be made available to the public. We suggest either continuing to use Squarespace to create this online resource or using another online tool that our sponsors feel comfortable using.
3. Share this website on as many online platforms as possible, making sure that it is available at the click of a google search.
4. Encourage locals to set up infrastructure which makes natural attractions more accessible to visitors.

Our team is very optimistic that Cultivando el Futuro will continue to work extremely hard at improving the livelihood of the people within these parishes. With the structure of our database and the foundation of data that we have provided, Cultivando el Futuro now can advocate for and share information regarding all the rural communities in Cuenca. This increases the impact that Cultivando el Futuro possesses with regards to helping parishes. Not only can Cultivando el Futuro help communities directly by providing them with agricultural resources, but they can also increase the number of people that know about these communities, bringing them potential visitors to visit these communities and buy their products. This will help to increase the financial status of these communities for years to come. We understand the devotion that Cultivando el Futuro has towards improving the livelihood of these communities and we hope that our database will be utilized to its fullest potential.

Reflection on the Investigative process

One of the first things we learned about the rural communities is that the people are very welcoming, however they are rather shy when it comes to dealing with outsiders.

Another challenge that our group faced with investigating different parishes was finding appropriate questions to ask to our key informants. While certain members of our group are proficient in Spanish, different parts of the world communicate differently, especially in rural locations.

With the time we were allotted in Cuenca, our team was able to collect enough data on the four parishes we set out to study. Given that there are 21 parishes in Cuenca, we knew that we would not be able to collect enough data about all of them. Our team found that providing a foundation for this database would prove to be very valuable as there will be other students from other countries to come to Cuenca and continue the work on building our database.

Although there were several challenges that our team faced, we also recognized several factors that allowed our project to be successful. Where our team found the most success was through the collaboration of our team with community members. We understood that our team was going into the homes and businesses of people that we had never met before. For this we were very grateful, and we found that as we showed respect towards the community, the community members were more willing to share their stories with us. The more that we seemed

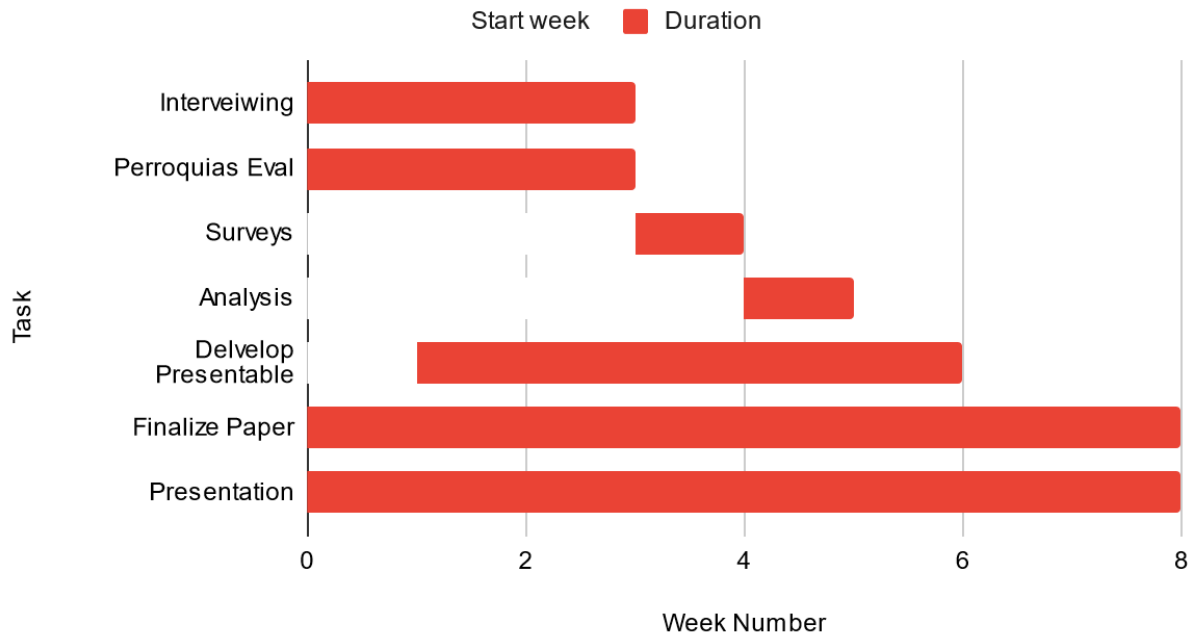
to be interested in the lives of people within these communities, the more they were willing to share with us. We would not have been able to tell the stories of these places without the cooperation of community members. Not only was the collaboration of community members important but working with our sponsors to establish better interview questions and survey questions was monumental in our group's success. Once our team realized that we did not possess enough local knowledge about Cuenca and the surrounding parishes, we turned to them for help regarding our survey and interview questions. With the revisions brought about by our sponsors, we were able to obtain more focused data helping us to reach meaningful conclusions to benefit the parishes.

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Appendix A

Cultivando Gantt Chart



Appendix B

Some important characteristics of Sayausi include:

- “Mi Tierra”, a hueca, is in Sayausi
 - It has both indoor and outdoor (with a view) seating
 - The food is inexpensive and representative of the local culture
 - It has well-furnished bathrooms
 - It hosts attractive social media pages (Instagram, Tik Tok, and Facebook)

Not only was Sayausi home to the most promising hueca, but it also is home to the Cajas National Park. While the Cajas National Park is the birthplace of local tradition, it is often visited for its natural beauty. The Cajas National Park is one of the most visited locations in all of Ecuador, bringing positive attraction to the parroquia.

Paccha was also a very promising parroquia relating to the tourism resources that they had available. To begin, Paccha was home to three of the different huecas that we studied. The three huecas were Azu Miel, Doña Rosalivia Panaderia, and a local pottery house.

Some important characteristics of Paccha include:

- “Azu Miel”, a local hueca located in Paccha
 - seemed to be the most established of the three in Paccha
 - produces fresh, locally produced honey
 - Has nicely designed business cards that contain a WhatsApp, an alternate phone number and the hueca location
 - Directions on how on to arrive were unclear however they mainly sell their product elsewhere
- “Doña Rosalivia Panaderia”, a local hueca located in Paccha
 - No advertisement other than a sign attached to the hueca
 - No public facilities, the hueca is a part of the house in which Doña Rosalivia lives
 - Brick oven where the bread is made is visible from the front steps of the property
 - Sells inexpensive, fresh local bread
- Local Pottery House located in Paccha
 - Little to no tourism resources
 - The hueca was structured more as a workshop than a store
 - Contained no advertisements or social media
 - No public facilities and the destination were not easy to reach
 - Products are sold in the center on Cuenca on weekends
 - Contained rich cultural knowledge
 - Local vista points looking over Cuenca

These three huecas uncovered the rich tradition that Paccha has to offer to its visitors. This parroquia was home to the most huecas out of any that we studied during this time, making it the densest in terms of the Gazinta Philosophy which was defined in section 2.2. Although the individual places are not as well equipped to host visitors as Sayausi may be, the fact that there are multiple tourist destinations will encourage more people to visit Sayausi.

Sinincay was the third parroquia that we evaluated to link tourism to local culture. Sinincay is a parroquia that is home to rich religious history and tradition. We evaluated one of the huecas in the central area of Sinincay that was located right in front of the church.

Some important characteristics of Sinincay include:

- A very historically religious parroquia as detailed by the massive cross and church located in the parish center
- “Hueca de Vino”, a hueca located in Sinincay
 - Sells traditional Cuenca meals consisting of chicken, rice, potatoes, as well as locally produced wine
 - Heavily involved in the religious culture of Sinincay
 - The hueca makes sure to open every Sunday after mass or during any cultural event in the parroquia
 - Hueca is easy to locate in the center of the parish
 - Contains no social media or advertising to promote the hueca other than a sign attached to the building

Sinincay also contains a local conservation land which features a waterfall. This is another non cultural peripheral attraction that may draw more visitors to this parroquia. Sinincay is a very interesting parroquia to visit, however the hueca itself is not heavily visitor friendly as it does not have much space or resources.

The fourth parroquia that we investigated utilizing the user experience evaluation method was Victoria del Portete. In Victoria, our main area of focus was a hueca called “Doña Aurora”, a family owned hueca that sells traditional dishes of Cuenca.

Some important characteristics of Sinincay include:

- “Doña Aurora”, a hueca located in Victoria del Portete
 - Sells inexpensive Cuy (roasted Guinea Pig) and roasted chicken dishes
 - Visitors can watch the slow roast process as a rotisserie is visible on the front of the hueca
 - No advertising other than a sign posted outside of the hueca
 - No public restroom however there was a small sink in the back of the hueca to rinse hands off before eating
 - Directions on how to arrive were clear as it was on the main road in the parroquia

Along with this hueca, Victoria del Portete had other tourist resources to offer. A local bakery is right next to the hueca, which sells fresh produce for visitors to get a taste of local bread products. Along with the hueca and the local bakery, Victoria is also home to a wonderful hike that leads to a waterfall. With the help of local knowledge, visitors would be able to reach this hike with a waterfall. This is a moderately easy hike; however, it isn’t exactly easy to find.

The user experience evaluation was a non-invasive way of obtaining information that is very helpful in establishing the tourism boundaries that a parroquia may face when trying to present their culture to visitors.

Appendix C

Tourism Resources:

- Does this location have social media accounts to promote tourism?
 - List all social media sources used
 - Are the social media pages appealing?
- How expensive is the food or what this hueca is selling?

Tourist Facilities:

- Is there a public restroom?
- Are there any local shops around that I can buy souvenirs or local food from?

Accessibility:

- Were the directions clear on how to arrive?
- How long does it take to travel here from Cuenca?

Local Communities:

- Did this place/experience provide interesting new knowledge about the tradition/ culture?
- Does the food come from local communities?
- Do you get to see how traditional dishes are prepared or made?

Peripheral Attractions:

- What other attractions may bring a visitor to this area?
 - How many of them are there?
 - Would you visit these peripheral attractions?

Other comments/ observations:

Appendix D

Our Interviews were conducted face to face wherever the interviewee's feel comfortable. Before we began, we informed the person being interviewed that they do not have to answer all the questions if they do not feel inclined and it is completely voluntary. The team asked the interviewee for permission to audio record the interview. During the interview a notetaker was writing down the information as well to ensure we obtained key points. The interviews lasted five to ten minutes on average. We created a interview questions for both the producer of the item in that community (whether it be bread, milk, cheese etc.) and for the Cholitas (Women cultural representative of a community). The two sets of interview questions are below:

Interview Questions for Producers of Items in the Community

(English)

Work history/work life:

When did you start working in the hueca?

Who did you learn from?

Who helps you?

When do you start work every day? What's your daily work schedule?

What is the process of creating your product from start to finish? What is special about your bread/process?

Where do you sell/commercialize your product? AKA how can people find you?

(Spanish)

Primero, como se llama este lugar donde realizas tu producto?

Cuantos años tienes?

Estas casada? Tienes hijos?

¿Te dedicas a alguna otra actividad además de hacer el producto?

¿Cuándo empezaste trabajando en esta hueca?

¿Quién te enseñó el tradición de laborar el producto?

¿Quién te ayuda con el laboración del su producto?

¿Cuándo empezas con el proceso de laborar el producto todos los días? ¿Cuál es tu horario diario?

¿Cuáles son los pasos para eleborar el producto?

¿Qué es especial de tu producto?

¿Dónde vendes tu producto?

Interview questions for the Cholitas

(English)

- Are there any legend stories that have been passed down about this parroquia?
- Are there traditional recipes that are specific to this parroquia?
- What makes the parroquia different from others?
- Are there specific reasons as to why people come to visit this parroquia?
- What does this way of life mean to you?
- Are there practices that are considered traditional and only performed in a specific way?
- How important are the farming methods that you use?
- What do you think this parroquia means to the community?
- Do you have any interest in modernizing your practices, why or why not?

(Spanish)

Antes de preguntarles

- ¿Cuéntanos alguna leyenda de tu parroquia? Si no hay, cuéntanos tu leyenda favorita?
- ¿Hay alguna receta tradicional específica de esta parroquia?
- ¿Qué diferencia a la parroquia de las demás?
- ¿Hay razones específicas por las que la gente viene a visitar esta parroquia?
- ¿Qué cree que significa esta parroquia para la comunidad?
- ¿por que te gusta este lugar para vivir?
- ¿Cuántos años tiene esta hueca?
- ¿Qué prácticas gastronómicas realizan en su parroquia?
- ¿Cuándo aprendiste esta práctica y de quién la aprendiste?
- En esta hueca trabajan familiares o contratadas?
- Cultivan los productos que usas o compras?
- ¿Qué importancia tienen los métodos de cultivo que utiliza?
- ¿Tiene algún interés en modernizar sus prácticas, por qué sí o por qué no?
- ¿Qué significa tu traje típico?
- ¿Cuál es el proceso de elección para la cholita pacchense?
- ¿Cómo representas la mujer pacchense (rural) a su parroquia?
- ¿Qué conoces de tu parroquia?
- ¿Qué destaca tu parroquia de las más?
- ¿Cómo es la gente de tu parroquia?

Consent Script

We are conducting research to learn more about the parroquias, and we are interested in your experiences.

The purpose of the research is to learn about your practices and traditions. Your participation will involve one informal interview

that will last between 45 minutes and an hour. Your participation has no known risks. Please know that we will do everything we can to protect your privacy. Your identity or personal information will not be disclosed in any publication that may result from the study. Notes that are taken during the interview and will be stored in a secure location.

Would it be all right if we audio record the interview? Saying no to audio recording will have no effect on the interview.

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Appendix E

Parroquias Rurales de Cuenca

Esta encuesta tiene como objetivo ayudarnos a obtener más información sobre lo que el público sabe y le interesa sobre las parroquias Rurales de Cuenca. El Proyecto Cultivando El Futuro da gracias por su tiempo.

Encuesta se cierra el 18 de Febrero, 2022.

This survey is intended to help us understand more information about what the public knows and is interested in regarding the parroquias of Cuenca. Cultivando El Futuro would like to thank you for your time.

The Survey will close on the 18th of February, 2022.

¿Que es tu nacionalidad? What is your nationality? *

Short answer text
.....

¿ Vives en Cuenca? Are you a resident of Cuenca?

- si
- No

¿Vives en Cuenca? Are you a resident of Cuenca?

- si
- No

¿Cuántos años tienes? How old are you? *

- 17 o menos/ or younger
- 18-50
- 51 o mayor/ or older

Que es tu genero? what is your gender? * ⋮

- Hombre/Male
- Mujer/Female
- Otro/Other

¿En donde encuentras información para conocer diferentes lugares/actividades en cuenca? *
Where do you find information about activities or locations to visit in Cuenca?

Short answer text
.....

¿Conoces las parroquias rurales? (21 parroquias) Do you know any of the rural parroquias? *

- Si/Yes
- No

¿Que parroquias conoces? If yes, Which ones do you know?

- Molleturo
- Chaucha
- Sayausi
- Chiquintad
- Checa
- San Joaquin
- Baños
- Sinincay
- Octavio Cordero Palacios
- Sidcay
- Llacao
- Ricaurte
- Paccha
- Nulti
- Turi
- El Valle
- Santa Ana
- Tarqui
- Victoria del Portete
- Cumbe
- Quingeo

¿Te gustaria conocer las parroquias rurales de Cuenca? ¿Y porque? Would you like to know the rural parroquias or Cuenca? Why or why not?

Long answer text
.....

¿Conoces algunos lugares gastronomicos o turisticos en las parroquias rurales? Do you know tourist or gastonomic locations in the rural parroquias? *

Si/Yes

No

¿Que comida tipica conoces? What kind of tradicional plates/food do you know?

Long answer text
.....

...

¿Has escuchado de las Huecas Rurales del canton? Have you heard about the rural huecas in canton Cuenca? *

Si/Yes

No

Si tu respuesta es si : ¿En donde escuchaste de estas huecas? If yes, where did you hear about these huecas?

Short answer text
.....

¿Te gustaria conocer mas sobre las parroquias rurales, su cultura, gastronomia, y tradicion? *

Would you like to know more about the rural parroquias, their culture, gastronomy, and traditions?

Si/Yes

No



Si quieres conocer mas de la ruralidad, sequinos en Facebook: If you would like to know more about rural Cuenca and its parroquias, please follow us on facebook:

<https://m.facebook.com/Cultivando-el-futuro-100749645053934/>

For more information about the research and your rights as a participant please contact us through the contacts below.

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