

Revaluation of the Artisanal Work of Wool Weaving and Cultural Tourism in the Municipality of Chiconcuac, as a Tool for Community Development

Daniela Sánchez Pérez¹, Susana Esquivel Ríos²

Autonomous University of the State of Mexico, UAEM Valle de Teotihuacán University Center, Cerrada Nezahualcōyotl S/N, Sto. Domingo Aztacameca, State of Mexico
 Email: sandanny97[at]gmail.com
 Email: sesquivelr[at]uaemex.mx

Abstract: *The purpose of this research was to analyze the loss of interest of the Chiconcuac community in making clothing with looms and needles. This article aims to put in context the origins of the municipality and the wool crafts in Chiconcuac, as well as its production procedure. Likewise, strategies are drawn up to attract the attention of the young people of Chiconcuac so that they become interested again in learning the production of artisanal weaving, as well as intensifying the arrival of tourism to promote trade and prevent the disappearance of said craftsmanship, all of this to give revaluation and rescue the artisanal work of wool weaving in Chiconcuac.*

Keywords: craft work, community development, cultural revaluation, cultural heritage, crafts

1. Introduction

Chiconcuac, located in the northeast of the State of Mexico, is one of the municipalities that stands out for using the weaving technique when producing garments made with wool.

This artisanal technique is of great importance since thanks to it the municipality has been recognized nationally.

In this research, the problems that exist in the municipality were previously analyzed, which indicate that, the most important, is the loss of interest of the local community in the making of clothing with looms or needles.

Since the 1960s, the inhabitants of Chiconcuac have depended economically on the sale of woven wool garments. The residents of the community declare that the technique has been a family inheritance and thanks to this they have dedicated themselves to making these garments.

Currently its main economic activity is the manufacture and sale of clothing ranging from sports to formal, which has largely caused the disappearance of the aforementioned wool products.

In the words of a member of the wool artisans of Chiconcuac: "I am concerned about the lack of interest of the new generations in continuing with the tradition and that this art will disappear completely" (Ezequiel, 2017).

2. Problem Statement

The main problem in the municipality of Chiconcuac is the loss of interest in wool weaving on looms or needles, which has caused the previous disappearance of this craft;

Therefore, it is important to be able to reincorporate this craft, since it has an important history and gives it a sense of belonging for both the municipality and the State of Mexico. The problem arises from the difficult marketing of artisanal fabric, since, due to its dedicated production, the clothing usually has high prices, without leaving behind the effort and customization that each of the artisans implements in each of their garments.

This article aims to put in context the origins of the municipality and the wool crafts in Chiconcuac, as well as its production procedure. Likewise, strategies will be proposed that attract the attention of the young people of Chiconcuac to reimplement the learning of artisanal weaving production; Likewise, strategies will be developed to address the interest of national and international tourism in order to intensify trade and prevent the disappearance of these crafts, all of this to revalue and rescue the artisanal work of wool weaving in Chiconcuac.

"We have a treasure that we cannot forget. The rugs and clothes are impregnated with all your essence, once you see them finished you feel all the love you gave them" (Valencia, 2017), mentions Diana Valencia, resident and artisan of Chiconcuac.

3. Methodology

The methodological proposal of this research was guided by a hypothetical deductive approach in relation to the revaluation of the artisanal work of the wool weaving of Chiconcuac through cultural tourism strategies, with the objective of verifying whether tourism is an instrument of preservation, conservation and dissemination of this cultural asset, as well as community development for the inhabitants of the municipality

In the first instance, the area of analysis was delimited for the investigation of the revaluation of the artisanal work of wool weaving and community development through cultural tourism strategies, taking the municipality of Chiconcuac, State of Mexico, as a specific case.

In this sense, the second instance of the research was the development of a documentary study on previous investigations of the geographical, historical and socioeconomic contextualization of the municipality of Chiconcuac, taking as references magazines, books, scientific articles, reports, websites, as well as as official pages of government agencies.

Finally, the problem was addressed through participant observation, which allowed the community's direct perception of tourist activity, without the researcher directly interfering in the development of the phenomenon to be analyzed.

4. Geographic and historical context of the municipality of Chiconcuac

Chiconcuac is a semi-urban municipality belonging to the State of Mexico. It is located in the Metropolitan Zone of the Valley of Mexico, whose name comes from the Nahuatl language Chicome, "seven", coatl, "snake", and co "en", which means "in seven snakes".

It has a territorial area of 6.94 square kilometers, which is equivalent to 0.03% of the state territory (Institute of Geographic Information and Research, 2013).



Image 1: Map of Chiconcuac in the State of Mexico (General Directorate of Civil Protection of the State of Mexico / H. Chiconcuac City Council, 2013)

The first to occupy the territory of Chiconcuac were the large proboscideans or megafauna. On March 13, 1980, in the place called Calxiacatl in the San Pedro neighborhood, the remains of a mammoth were found whose age was estimated at 10,000 years. Although the Teotihuacanos had already settled near this place, the history of the region dates back to the arrival of the Chichimecas led by Xolotl, origin of the reigning family of the Tezcoco, and later of the Acolhua, coming from the west; who, being related to the Toltecs, formed the Toltec-Chichimeca lineage from which the inhabitants of the municipality of Chiconcuac descend (Rosario, 1997).

Autonomy and sovereignty have always been present in the Chiconcuacenses; Despite the arguments that they were so poor that they could not sustain the expenses of a municipality, a group of citizens began the procedures to separate from Chiautla to form an independent municipality, achieving that the Congress of the State of Mexico issued decree number 89, by which, "The town of Chiconcuac, in the District of Texcoco, is established as a municipality," given in Toluca on October 14, 1868 and signed on October 17 of the same year.

Life in the nascent municipality was not easy at first. With barely 1.6 km² of land area, there was little land to cultivate, so many had to work as day laborers on nearby farms and complete their day with the trade of weaving wool.

Although agriculture and lanillero work were poorly paid and scarce, in 1877 the construction of the first municipal public work began, a small portal (roof) in the central square to protect merchants, origin of the famous Tianguis de Chiconcuac, which was inaugurated in 1886 (Rosario, 1997).

5. Wool weaving as an element of cultural identity in the municipality of Chiconcuac.

In Chiconcuac weaving has been done since time immemorial. In pre-Hispanic times, blankets and mats were woven. With the Spanish invasion, the great sensitivity that already existed in the weavers was taken advantage of by Fray Pedro de Gante, who is said to have spread the use of cards, the wheel and the pedal loom in this area. to wool fabric (Rosario, 1997).

It was in this town where the wool trade and weaving activity began, since the old market portal that was located in front of the atrium of the parish of San Miguel Arcángel is where these products were sold.



Image 2: Needle-woven wool rugs (Delgado, 1942)

Chiconcuac's fame has become international, mainly due to the crafts of wool weaving, considered part of the municipality's economic and cultural heritage.

Many wool blankets woven on rustic wooden looms and sweaters woven with needles or hooks are found in various parts of the world, since the great sensitivity of the artisans of this place allows them to capture endless drawings and

colors in their work. Another contribution of the craftsmanship of this place are the hand-woven wool carpets and tapestries which have received awards from European institutions, including the University of Madrid in Spain (Rosario, 1997).

It is noted that some personalities such as Pedro Infante, Diego Rivera and Marilyn Monroe visited Chiconcuac for its famous wool rugs and sweaters (Rosario, 1997).

However, the inhabitants modified their work activity because wool products were no longer profitable, due to the time invested in them and their difficult sale at the market price. The rugs can range between one thousand and seven thousand pesos, the cost increases with the difficulty of the weave. The price of the sweaters ranges between seven hundred and two thousand five hundred pesos.



Image 3: Sweater designs made from wool
Own elaboration. (Sanchez, 2022)

6. The process of making artisanal fabric in Chiconcuac

In the words of the artisan Juventino López, “craft learning is transmitted from parents to children, at home we have school, I have three children and all three know how to knit” (López, 2017).

To make a piece of wool like a sarape, artisans carry out a manufacturing process that goes from preparing the wool to making the garment. The raw materials they work with are acquired in the neighboring municipalities of Tianguistenco, mainly from areas where there are sheep such as Ocoyoacac, Ocuilan and Xalatlaco.

Subsequently, the weavers wash the wool and prepare it for spinning on the spinning wheel, then they roll it into balls that can be made of natural wool or colors obtained by dyeing the material. Juventino said that previously the spinning wheel was an exclusive activity for women.



Image 4: Handmade fabric with needle technique
Own elaboration. (Sanchez, 2022)

To make garments and fabrics, so-called looms are used. The loom is a machine used for weaving, although its characteristics are much broader. It can be made of metal or wood, and threads called warps are placed in parallel.

In order to use them, it is necessary to place weights on both sides so that they are well tense. Once tensioned, a special mechanism is used that will cause them to be lifted in groups or individually to be able to weave.

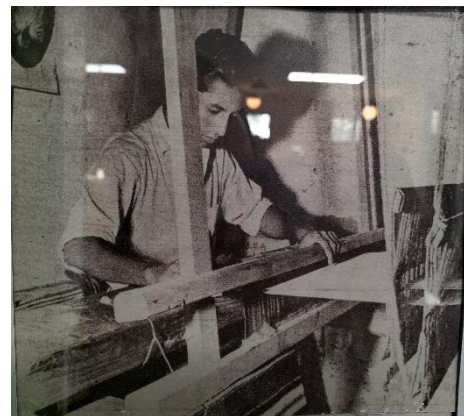


Image 4: Traditional pedal loom
RevistaMañana, 1957

The time it takes to make a coat depends on the difficulty of the design and ranges from a week to 30 days, not counting the preparation of the wool. The more drawings it has, the more elaborate it is (Notimex, 2017).

7. Cultural tourism as an instrument for the preservation of wool crafts in Chiconcuac

Currently, the municipality of Chiconcuac depends economically on the production and sale of clothing, highlighting the “Gran Tianguis de Indumentaria de Chiconcuac” in which clothing is sold from sports clothing to the most elaborate and gala ones. Commercial activity in the municipality dates back to the 1960s as residents depended on the manufacture and sale of woollen garments; The technique was transmitted from generation to generation and has great cultural and economic importance for Chiconcuac (Rosario, 1997).

It should be noted that the current situation of the crafts in Chiconcuac has reached the point of being in danger of disappearing since, as mentioned above, the weaving technique was transmitted from generation to generation, which has caused new generations of young people to lose The interest in ceasing to be such a profitable economic activity compared to the making of clothing from other materials, which is why there are very few artisans who dedicate themselves to this trade and the majority are already of legal age.



Image 5: Wool coat
Own elaboration. (Sanchez, 2022)

The artisans of the municipality fear that this activity will come to an end and they will not be able to continue sharing their knowledge and their fabrics, which has led them to attract the attention of tourists who come to Chiconcuac to be able to market their garments and give them away again. that revaluation of this activity that for many years was what gave recognition to the municipality.

However, support has been requested from the auxiliary authorities of the municipality, which has helped them participate in different important fairs, in which the “International Horse Fair, Texcoco” stands out, which is one of the most important cultural fairs. . from the country. This fair also has a variable date, since it takes place during Holy Week, approximately in March and April. It began as the “San Antonio Regional Fair” and the first one that took place was on June 13, 1945. This fair changed its venue several times and in 1975 for the first time it was called “Horse Fair.” The activities they usually offer are: equestrian program with exhibition of various breeds of horses, highlighting the Aztec breed, livestock exhibition, bullfights, palenque with the presentation of renowned singers, town theater, boxing, wrestling, casino, among others.(Pulido-Acuña, Rodolfo, 1998).

The artisans who participate in this fair have the purpose of being exhibitors and marketing their garments, in addition to providing information about the activities that can be carried out in the municipality of Chiconcuac.

This is why cultural tourism in Chiconcuac can become a very important tool with which we can revalue both the crafts and the temples, traditions and gastronomy that the municipality has.

In this sense, cultural tourism is defined as a tourist trip motivated by knowing, understanding and enjoying the set of distinctive features and elements, spiritual and material, intellectual and emotional, that characterize a society or social group of a specific destination. (SECTUR, 2015)

Based on the development of cultural tourism in the municipality of Chiconcuac, several tourism strategies have been carried out for the dissemination and preservation of wool fabric, which have had the initiative of the artisans and in conjunction with the auxiliary authorities that the municipality has had. of Chiconcuac and have been able to be carried out.

An important strategy has been the inauguration of the first “Chiconcuac Fair Expo”; which took place on September 28, 2016 under the regime of President Ing. Rigoberto Flores Sánchez, in commemoration of the Chiconcuac Patron Fair, one of the most important festivities of the municipality. However, a craft pavilion was integrated with the purpose of making the municipality's crafts and gastronomy known to visitors who attended the patron fair.



Image 6: Handmade wool sweater
Own elaboration. (Sanchez, 2022)

Under the 2021-2024 municipal administration, in 2022, in coordination with the Tourism Directorate and working together with the municipality's artisans, strategies were executed with which the municipality's crafts were disseminated, in addition to being able to monitor participation of artisans at fairs, which were held in different places in the region.

An example of this is the launch of the campaign that bears the name “Chiconcuac, municipality that dresses the world” which had the purpose of making the municipality known, both in the gastronomic, cultural and economic aspects.

Likewise, more than 30 artisans have been accredited together with the Institute for Research and Promotion of Crafts of the State of Mexico (IIFAEM), with the purpose of granting identification to producers that distinguishes them as artisans from the State of Mexico.

These activities ended with the creation of the “Artisan Pavilion 2022”, which continues to have the same purpose, with the participation of artisans from the municipality and from different places in the region and the State of Mexico, also highlighting guests from other places, such as Oaxaca and Taxco.

8. Conclusions

Chiconcuac has been a municipality recognized worldwide for its crafts, which years ago made its inhabitants economically dependent on wool weaving. As time went by, the inhabitants were forced to change manufacturing techniques, thus achieving what is today the famous “Clothing Market”, leaving behind the techniques and importance of wool weaving.

With these strategies that have been worked on, favorable results have been obtained since with the craft pavilions that were held at festivities and fairs in other municipalities, it was possible to integrate the artisans as a group and be able to share experiences and techniques among them. of weaving, it was possible to keep the people of the community interested in this weaving activity.

Without leaving behind the fact that thanks to exhibitions and social networks, the culture, traditions and crafts of the municipality of Chiconcuac have continued to spread.

However, it is expected that, with the craft of wool weaving, the municipality will obtain greater tourist recognition and at the same time preserve and disseminate part of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage that it possesses, so that the local population can feel proud. . and aware of the potential of their traditions, and on the other hand, awaken interest on the part of tourism so that they live a unique experience during their visit and thus know that in Chiconcuac we not only weave with our hands, but we also weave with our heart.

References

- [1] Delgado, A. d. (1942).
- [2] General Directorate of Civil Protection of the State of Mexico / H. Chiconcuac City Council. (2013). Chiconcuac Risk Atlas. Chiconcuac: Government of the State of Mexico.
- [3] Institute of Geographic Information and Research, E. y. (2013). Basic Statistics of the Educational Sector. Mexico state .
- [4] Lopez, J. (2017). State of Mexico, Chiconcuac.
- [5] Notimex. (2017, July 09). Retrieved from <https://www.notimex.mx/es/noticia/97305>
- [6] Pulido-Acuña, Rodolfo. (1998). Municipal Monograph of Texcoco. Texcoco: Government of the State of Mexico.
- [7] Mañana Magazine. (July). 1957.
- [8] Rosario, VM (1997). Chiconcuac Municipal Monograph. Toluca Mexico.
- [9] Sanchez, D. (2022). Mexico .
- [10] Sanchez, D. (2022). Mexico state.
- [11] SECTUR. (2015, May 14). Retrieved from SECTUR: <https://www.sectur.gob.mx/hashtag/2015/05/14/turism>

o-cultural/#:~:text=Los%20turistas%20con%20inter%C3%A9s%20especial,los%20that%20count%20the%20pa%C3%ADs. [12] Valencia, D. (2017). Mexico state.

Author Profile



Daniela Sánchez Pérez is a student who graduated from the UAEM Tourism program at Centro Universitario Valle de Teotihuacán, class 2016-2020.



Susana Esquivel Ríos has a degree in Tourism with a specialty in Tourism Teaching since 2007. In 2012 she obtained the Master's degree in Tourism Studies, both degrees obtained by the Faculty of Tourism and Gastronomy of the Autonomous University of the State of Mexico. She has a Doctor in Education from the Tzompanco Institute since 2022.