

**Tourist Route of Mazahua Crafts in the municipalities of Donato Guerra and Valle de Bravo, State of Mexico, Mexico, 2021-2023**

**Ruta Turística de las Artesanías Mazahuas en los municipios de Donato Guerra y Valle de Bravo, Estado de México, México, 2021-2023**

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## Abstract

The project is carried out with the participation of a student (thesis student) belonging to the Mazahua Ethnicity, from the town of San Antonio de La Laguna, municipality of Donato Guerra, State of Mexico, Mexico; which is currently marketing it. The Tourist Route is marked from the entrance to the communities of San Antonio de La Laguna and San Simón de la Laguna, both with a significant participation of the ethnic group (INEGI, 2021); until reaching the municipality of Valle de Bravo, where crafts are sold in three predominant points: Plaza Mazahua, Valle de Bravo Crafts Market and La Estrella Crafts Market. The predominant activities in the towns of San Antonio de La Laguna and San Simón de La Laguna are: agriculture and livestock (on a smaller scale), and the production of crafts; The main problem is that crafts do not have a market considered sufficient payment; The route aims to attract a market to the aforementioned locations; Therefore, the objective of the project is to design and trace a Mazahua Crafts Route, in the municipalities of Donato Guerra and Valle de Bravo, State of Mexico, Mexico; with the purpose of promoting the cultural wealth of the ethnic group, generating new expectations and socio-economic resources. The methodology that has been used is mixed: quantitative (surveys and statistical data); qualitative (data generated in “focus group”); descriptive (the key elements of the project are described); in addition to possessing a socio-critical/reflexive critical paradigm (the individual constructs his reality, and from there transforms it as a reflective critical creative subject). The results reflect the viability and profitability of the project (Market study and financial study among others). The project begins to be put into practice, the elements that needed to be evaluated have passed the test, the Mazahua Ethnicity needs to place their products (handicrafts) on the market, at prices that are profitable for them. The academic value is significant, the project provides information about the tourist elements implicit in the Mazahua Ethnicity, and the practical implications will generate an economic benefit.

## Participation, Ethnic, Municipalities, Reflexive, Viability

### Resumen

El proyecto se lleva a cabo con la participación de una estudiante (tesista) perteneciente a la Etnia mazahua, de la localidad de San Antonio de La Laguna, municipio de Donato Guerra, Estado de México, México; la cual se encuentra actualmente comercializando la misma. La ruta turística se marca a partir de la entrada a las comunidades de San Antonio de La Laguna y San Simón de la Laguna, ambas con una participación significativa de la etnia (INEGI, 2021); hasta llegar al municipio de Valle de Bravo, donde se comercializan las artesanías en tres puntos predominantes: Plaza Mazahua, Mercado de Artesanías de Valle de Bravo y Mercado de Artesanías La Estrella. Las actividades predominantes en las localidades de San Antonio de La Laguna y San Simón de La Laguna son: agricultura y ganadería (a menor escala), y la elaboración de artesanías; el problema principal es que las artesanías no cuentan con un mercado considerado en pago suficiente; la ruta pretende atraer mercado a las localidades mencionadas; por lo que el objetivo del proyecto es diseñar y trazar una ruta de las Artesanías mazahuas, en los municipios de Donato Guerra y Valle de Bravo, Estado de México, México; con la finalidad de fomentar la riqueza cultural de la etnia, generando nuevas expectativas y recursos socio-económicos. La metodología que se ha utilizado es mixta: cuantitativa (encuestas y datos estadísticos); cualitativa (datos generados en *focus group*); descriptiva (se describen los elementos actores del proyecto); además de poseer un paradigma sociocrítico/crítico reflexivo (el individuo construye su realidad, y desde ella la transforma como sujeto creativo crítico reflexivo). Los resultados reflejan la viabilidad y rentabilidad del proyecto (Estudio de mercado y estudio financiero entre otros). El proyecto se inicia para llevarse a la práctica, los elementos que se necesitaban evaluar han pasado la prueba, la Etnia mazahua necesita colocar sus productos (artesanías) en el mercado, en precios que les resulten rentables. El valor académico es significativo, el proyecto aporta información acerca de los elementos turísticos implícitos en la Etnia mazahua, y las implicaciones prácticas generarán una derrama económica.

## Artesanías mazahuas, Ruta turística, Donato Guerra, Valle de Bravo, Estado de México

## Introduction

Mexico stands out as a nation with a wide cultural and social diversity, evidencing a multiplicity of customs, traditions and beliefs that arise from the presence of diverse ethnic groups. This cultural richness contributes to the country's unique identity. When examining the State from a social and cultural perspective, specific characteristics can be identified that define similarities and differences with the surrounding regions. Throughout history, human beings have preserved, transformed and even adopted these particularities as an integral part of their identity (Alonso Martínez and García Téllez, 2020).

The Mexican Republic is a country rich in culture, its 32 States that comprise its present characteristic cultural richness, reiteratively dissimilar from one another, but in the end belonging to the same geographical space.

"The importance of ethnic identity lies in the fact that it is a way of being, seeing and acting creating a close relationship between its territory and the use of its resources as a means of subsistence for a sustainable development model" (Núñez González, 2017).

The characteristic identity of the Mazahua ethnic group in the municipality of Donato Guerra, settled mainly in the towns of San Antonio de La Laguna and San Simón de La Laguna, is marked, and they create a correlation between their community and the use of the resources of their region for its development. An ethnic group that definitely defends its distinctive elements (especially women).

Donato Guerra is a municipality in the State of Mexico, characterized by an important Mazahua population, where in recent years some tourism and ecotourism activities have been implemented; groups were formed, mainly artisan and commercial, and the production of local products has increased, among which handicrafts are the most important, mostly by women's groups (Torres Limas, Cruz Jiménez and Castillo Nechar, 2022).

Mazahua women are the protagonists of the elaboration of local handicraft products in the municipality of Donato Guerra; they are the drivers of the domestic economy of the region, the problem lies in the fact that the product of their efforts is not fairly remunerated; their handicrafts are acquired in the market at lower prices.

The research project is carried out with the support of a thesis student of the Bachelor's Degree in Tourism of the Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Valle de Bravo (TESVB); since in these municipalities there is a great variety of handicrafts, and the possible economic impact that they would have within these municipalities would be important. According to INEGI (2021), in the localities of San Antonio de la Laguna and San Simón de la Laguna, there are substantial settlements of the Mazahua ethnic group; these two localities boast the development of their community based on agriculture and cattle raising on a low scale, and the elaboration of handicrafts typical of their culture; The Mazahua ethnic group is usually located in rural areas, and their economy is based on agriculture; they cultivate using the rain-fed irrigation system that is common, and rudimentary artificial irrigation systems, since they do not have an important economy that provides sophisticated irrigation systems.

For their own consumption and for sale to the public, they grow beans, corn, squash, chili peppers, sunflower flowers, some vegetables and fruit trees. It is important to mention that they are also artisans, since they make tablecloths, napkins, purses, purses, Mazahua costumes, headbands, and various products made from ocoxal (waste from some varieties of pine), among others.

All these products are offered in neighboring communities, so that they can buy in turn, products of the basic basket; it could be mentioned that, in the month of August of each year for eleven years, the famous "Regional Fair of the Mushroom" has been carried out, where local handicraft products are offered. The main objective of the project is to elaborate and outline a tourist route for Mazahua handicrafts in the municipalities of Donato Guerra and Valle de Bravo, State of Mexico, Mexico, in order to promote their cultural richness, generating new expectations and socioeconomic resources.

It is important to mention that in order to achieve the main objective, the secondary objectives must be fulfilled. To achieve the strategy, the following tactics must be followed: to carry out the mapping of the tourist route with the Global Positioning System (GPS), in such a way that the important points in the route are covered. Promote the development of handicrafts in the tourism sector of these municipalities. Another objective is to conduct a market survey to determine whether the project is feasible and profitable in some Mexican states.

Conduct a market survey to know close impressions of the market segment among others in Valle de Bravo. The main problem is the commercialization of Mazahua handicrafts through a tourist route in the municipalities of Donato Guerra and Valle de Bravo, State of Mexico, Mexico; to achieve the commercialization of their local product, generate fair income and employment for local communities, decreasing social, cultural and ecological impacts in the locality.

A theoretical framework is presented with a contextualization of the research project that is appropriate to it. The implementation of the Mazahua Handicrafts Route is intended to contribute to the social welfare of the region, which is the main task of the research project presented. The hypothesis of the project is focused on knowing if it is really feasible and profitable to put this route into practice, if it will help to improve the economic flow of the region.

The strategy used in the project includes quantitative approaches, which include market research and surveys; qualitative approaches, with focus groups; and descriptive approaches, where the facts and elements of the project are detailed. This approach is based on a reflective sociocritical/critical paradigm, where the individual constructs his or her perception of reality and transforms it as an active and creative agent.

## **Methodology**

The methodology that the project implements is quantitative (a market research and a market survey are carried out), qualitative (focus groups are carried out), and descriptive (the facts and elements representing the project are described); which has a reflective sociocritical/critical paradigm (the subject constructs his reality from his perspective, and transforms it as an active and creative subject).

The thesis student of the Bachelor's Degree in Tourism of the Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Valle de Bravo (TESVB); carries out a first reconnaissance on the route that should be implemented in the tourist route in the municipalities of Donato Guerra and Valle de Bravo. Quantitative research was carried out through a market research and a market survey, to know the perspectives of the market segment according to the tourist route; the results obtained were positive, it is revealed that the project is profitable and feasible. The market research is carried out through Google forms, by Google drive, with a previously determined market segmentation; with a sample size calculated in a specific way; with a minimum margin of error and a significant level of confidence. Also a market survey in Valle de Bravo as a general and representative universe. The methodology is quantitative due to the use of surveys, but it is not only this information gathering instrument, but there are others to be implemented such as: leading questionnaire, observation and interview.

For the collection of information, the market research methodology of Miguel Santasmases Mestre (2011) is followed.

The research plan comprises a set of activities that start with the identification of the problem to be investigated, go through the definition, classification and measurement of the variables and their expression in a form or questionnaire, and end with the analysis of the data and interpretation of the results. Specifically, it includes the following stages:

1. Identification of the problem to be investigated.
2. Definition of the research objectives.
3. Determination of the type of research design.
4. Specification of the study hypotheses.
5. Definition, classification and measurement of the study variables.
6. Selection of the sources of information.
7. Design of the questionnaire or form for data collection.

8. Design and selection of the sample (if applicable).
9. Data collection and processing.
10. Data analysis and interpretation of the results.
11. Preparation of the research report (Santesmases Mestre, 2011).

The methodology of Santesmases Mestre (2011) provided the guidelines to carry out the market research of the project, as well as the market survey, which will give the guideline to know if the project is feasible and profitable.

The qualitative methodology essentially constituted the focus groups carried out with the people involved in the development of the tourist route.

The descriptive methodology allowed the development of the tourist route, since it describes the layout of the route (with coordinates). Subsequently, the data is fed into Google Earth for route marking at satellite level, which results in a link to visualize the route and a QR code. A first route layout was carried out, and then an adjustment was made to it.

A Social Media 5.0 is carried out to promote the route at reduced costs, with the generation of a "free" content marketing, through digital applications (Apps) and digital platforms, which according to the market segment are suitable.

Impact of the project on the community. The generation of economic benefits for Mazahua artisans in the towns of San Simón de La Laguna and San Antonio de La Laguna, in the municipality of Donato Guerra, and Valle de Bravo downtown area, with the implementation of the tourist route of Mazahua handicrafts.

## Results

The research project has been accepted in the Department of Science and Technology Research of the TESVB; with registration code INVES0521-17. It has main results, secondary results and results to be performed; and everything is registered in a Thesis, based on a schedule of activities starting on September 1, 2021 and ending on August 31, 2023.

The main results are the following:

1. Marking and mapping of the tourist route of the Mazahua handicrafts with Global Positioning System (GPS) and Google Earth (satellite mapping).
2. Market survey through Google forms by Google drive, for some states of the Mexican Republic as a market segment.
3. Market survey in the municipality of Valle de Bravo, State of Mexico.
4. Design of Social Media 5.0 about the tourist route, to promote it at affordable prices (traditional advertising is expensive compared to digital advertising), to the specific market segment.
5. Design of a catalog of handicrafts of the Mazahua ethnic group from the town of San Antonio de La Laguna, San Simón de La Laguna and the municipality of Valle de Bravo, central zone.
6. Training to local people, about the management of the tourist route, by specialized personnel.
7. Tour the tourist route to carry out adjustments within the route, if so determined.
8. Simulation of tourist route.
9. Focus group meetings.

The results mentioned above are the main ones, but there are others:

1. Current regulations for commercialization of the route of the Mazahua handicrafts.
2. Search for investors interested in contributing capital to the tourist route.
3. Application of questionnaires to the locality involved in the route of the route, to know the impressions in this respect.
4. Identify problems and solutions about the tourist route, for its implementation and commercialization.
5. Adjustments in the layout of the tourist route.

6. Visits to places where a tourist route similar to that of the research project is being carried out for benchmarking purposes.
7. Design of a catalog of tourist attractions that are adjacent to the tourist route, to encourage the affluence of tourism in the same one.
8. Financial plan of the tourist route, for profitability purposes.
9. Marking and layout of the tourist route with the Global Positioning System (GPS) and Google Earth (satellite mapping) (see Image 1. Layout of the Mazahua Handicrafts Route, in the municipalities of Donato Guerra and Valle de Bravo, State of Mexico, Mexico).
10. Conduct a market survey through Google forms by Google drive, for some States of the Mexican Republic as a market segment.

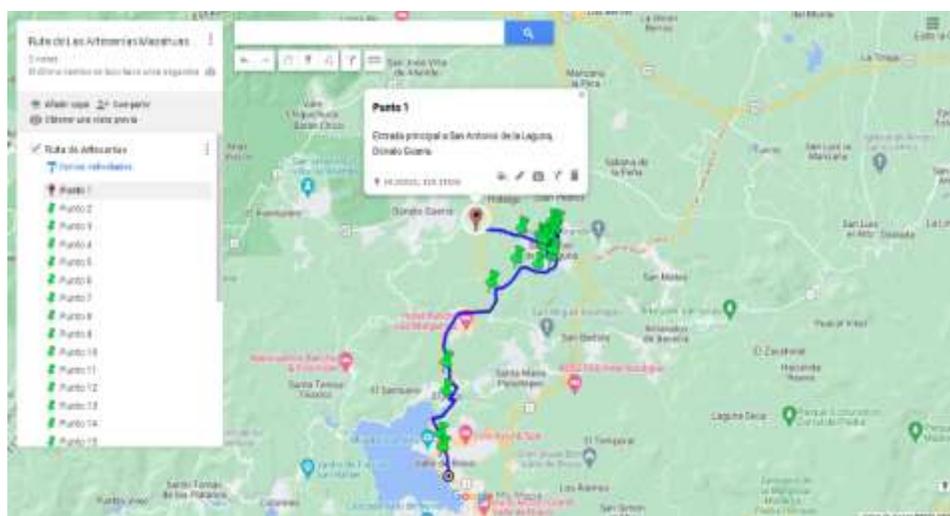
The main results developed are as follows:

**Target market.** In the first instance, the municipality of Valle de Bravo, State of Mexico for local market survey purposes (Market Survey); and the real target market, some States of the Mexican Republic.

**Market segmentation.** Men and women between the ages of 22 and 55, socioeconomic level C-, D+, D according to AMAI (Mexican Association of Market and Opinion Intelligence Agencies) (AMAI.org, 2020; AMAI.org, 2022), no schooling, no nationality, who wish to take a tourist route and wish to experience convivial tourism (rural tourism approach).

**Sample size.** It is based on the principle of equiprobability, which means that all individuals in the selected sample will have the same probability of being chosen. This assures us that the sample drawn will be representative. We will calculate the sample size, knowing the size of the unsegmented population, since we have statistical data provided by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) 2021.

**Figure 1** Route of the Mazahua Handicrafts Route, in the municipalities of Donato Guerra and Valle de Bravo, State of Mexico, Mexico



*Source of Reference: Google Maps*

### **Market survey States of the Mexican Republic.**

Calculation of the sample size for the market segment, when the size of the segmented population is not known, or the size of the unsegmented population is known. In the intercensal survey 2020, conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, 2021), 126 million 014 thousand 024 inhabitants were counted in the Mexican Republic (INEGI.org.mx, 2021), but the size of the target market population is not known. With a margin of error of 4%. No knowledge of the size of the population. Confidence level of 95%. Sample size: 601 surveys.

Results of the surveys applied in the market research:

It is worth mentioning that the first two questions is to delimit the market segment, people who do not belong to the market segment, the system is programmed so that it does not advance.

1. Sex of respondent.

Male: 50.8%

Female: 49.2%.

2. Resident of Valle de Bravo, Donato Guerra or outside these municipalities.

No: 39.9%

Yes: 60.1%.

3. Age ranges.

5-21 years: 40%

22-60 years: 55.4%

61-75 years and older: 4.6%.

4. Price willing to pay for the tourist route service.

From \$500.00 to \$1,000.00: 81.1%

More than \$1,000.00: 13%

Less than \$500.00: 5.9%.

5. Types of handicrafts you would like to know and buy along the tourist route.

Ceramics, wood, vegetable fibers: 61.4%

Marble, stone, glass: 26.6; metal, leather: 11%

Embroidery and textiles: 1%.

6. Preferred time of day to visit the tourist route.

Morning: 55.9%

Midday: 31.6%

Afternoon: 12.5%.

7. Activities to be carried out along the tourist route.

Handicraft workshop of loom, painted fabrics and embroidery: 45.5%

Exhibition of the elaboration of handicrafts: 22.3%

Creation of handicrafts by tourists: 32.2%.

8. Time they would like to invest in the tour of the tourist route.

1-2 hours: 33.9%

2-4 hours: 46.1%

More than 4 hours: 20%.

9. Type of tourist route.

Car: 29%

Walking: 50.5%

Horseback: 20.5%.

10. Would you like the tour guide to explain the origin of each craft?

Yes: 89.8%

No: 10.2%.

11. Have you heard about the handicrafts of Valle de Bravo and Donato Guerra, made by Mazahua artisans?

Yes: 63.5%

No: 36.5%.

12. Would you like to go on the Mazahua Crafts Route of Donato Guerra and Valle de Bravo?

Yes: 74.2%

No: 10%

Maybe: 15.8%.

13. To conduct a market survey in the municipality of Valle de Bravo, State of Mexico, Mexico.

Market survey in the municipality of Valle de Bravo. Calculation of the sample size for the market segment, when the size of the segmented population is not known, or the size of the unsegmented population is known. In the intercensal survey 2020, conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography, 61,590 inhabitants were counted in the municipality of Valle de Bravo, but the segmented population size is not known. With a confidence level of 95%; margin of error of 10%. Sample size is: 97 surveys.

14. Age ranges.

15-21 years: 24%

22-60: 72%

61-75: 4%

15. Do you know what a Mazahua Handicrafts Tourist Route is?

Yes: 31%

No: 55%

Maybe: 14%.

16. Do you consider that if the tourist route is implemented within the municipalities of Donato Guerra and Valle de Bravo, the community would benefit from it?

Yes: 95%

No: 5%.

17. Do you consider that the increase in the number of tourists due to the implementation of the tourist route will affect the way of life in the municipalities?

Yes: 44%

No: 56%.

18. Do you consider that the implementation of the tourist route within the mentioned municipalities is important?

Yes: 96%

No: 4%.

19. What benefits do you consider for the municipalities with the implementation of the tourist route?

Job creation: 37%

Income: 19%

Economic: 20%

Attracting more tourists: 24%.

20. Would you like to participate in the development of the tourist route?

Yes: 81%

No: 19%.

21. Activities that you propose to make the tourist route attractive to tourists.

Workshops: 57%

Exhibitions: 35%

Galleries: 8%.

22. When the tourist route is implemented, would you be interested in acquiring one of the handicrafts offered along the route?

Yes: 92%

No: 8%.

10. Do you know the elaboration process of Mazahua handicrafts?

Yes: 51%

No: 49%.

Social Media 5.0 about the Tourist Route of Mazahua Handicrafts, as a tourist element of the municipality of Donato Guerra and Valle de Bravo, State of Mexico, Mexico.

"Advertising is that activity that uses a series of creative techniques to design persuasive and identifiable communications, transmitted through different media" (Fisher, 2017). "The different media"; it is considered that this could be the dilemma: traditional media or digital media; traditional media (television, radio, printed magazines, newspapers, journals, flyers, leaflets, leaflets, banners, non-digitized billboards) or digital media or Social Media 5.0 (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Tik Tok).

Traditional advertising is that which has been used until the irruption of the internet and new technologies in our lives. That is, we are talking about a time or stage that would cover from 1920 to 1990 (date in which it is considered that the internet caused a revolution worldwide, and in all known sectors approximately), this traditional advertising persists, because today it is still used by many companies or organizations to advertise in: advertisements for mass media, posters in public spaces, merchandising, mailing or commercial mail at home, attendance at fairs and events) (Cabello, 2019). Traditional advertising is in clear decline, in clear disuse; even though it has not completely disappeared from the marketing jargon, it has some significant disadvantages compared to digital advertising, but the most important one is considered: "the cost". The cost of digital advertising is lower than the cost of traditional advertising, and this is one of the points of its boom, the other of course, is the emergence of new generations focused on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Other elements can also be pointed out:

With a wide penetration of the use of cell phones (67%) and the use of social networks (54%), an infinite number of opportunities open up for brands to be able to surprise consumers wherever they are, react at the same instant that customers make their complaints and even be able to adapt their offers in a personalized way according to the profile, location and social links that each one of them has. Connection speeds and the number of connections have an intimate relationship with the economic development of countries (Zuccherino, 2018).

Digital advertising or better known as: social media 5.0 (digital marketing campaign); is the tool in vogue par excellence, since it has significant advantages over traditional advertising. Currently, as mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the indiscriminate use of mobile devices due to the easy access to them (cell phones, tablets); and the excessive use of social networks worldwide (due to lower costs in communication plans); have caused a surge in everything related to the digital field; here is where traditional advertising "loses" the battle against digital advertising.

The elements that have been mentioned give the guideline to determine without fear of error, that traditional advertising has its days numbered, since the technological era of information opens its way without reticence of any kind, giving room only to digital advertising. Times are changing, and so is the way of advertising.

A social media 5.0 or digital marketing campaign should be carried out to advertise the Mazahua Handicrafts Tourist Route. According to the market segment, the social media should contain digital platforms: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter.

## Conclusions

The research project has not yet concluded, the market surveys delimited that it is feasible and profitable; the layout and delay of the tourist route has been carried out; as well as a Social Media 5.0 for promotion and sales; a catalog of Mazahua Handicrafts of San Antonio de La Laguna and San Simon de La Laguna has also been carried out; as well as a catalog of tourist attractions inherent to the route; a financial study has been carried out, which has resulted with positive numbers; a new financial study with adjustments is still required.

The thesis has implemented the Mazahua Handicrafts Tourist Route in the municipalities of Donato Guerra and Valle de Bravo, State of Mexico, Mexico. The focus of the project in the socio-critical/critical reflective paradigm, leads the individual to be a key factor in the real transformation of their environment to improve the quality of life conditions of this and the region.

In recent years, tourism routes have tried to innovate in terms of tourism products, which has led to greater demand from the demand for diversification of supply. Therefore, it is necessary to give added value to the products in order to achieve a better positioning of the tourist destinations. Internationally, cultural tourism has shown a growing demand, since this activity provides great development benefits to local communities, since it appears as an economic alternative, favoring new income, which is developed through its enhancement.

In the research, national and international experiences were studied, from this, it was possible to confirm that the cultural tourist routes allow energizing different sectors of the economy, also showing the potentialities and resources with which a given area has, in this case the municipalities offer cultural wealth, also allowing the use of these.

- The market study indicates that there is a high degree of acceptance by the market segment, it is intended that the route can be carried out, it is feasible, profitable and marketable.
- Those involved in the project consider that it is an option that will increase the social wellbeing of the region.
- That there are sources of financing for the route to be implemented, by the Ministry of Tourism in the city of Toluca de Lerdo.
- That the Financial Plan determined that the project is profitable.

From this study, it can be affirmed that there is a close relationship between tourism and local development from the interpretation and enhancement of the state, the need for diversification of the tourist offer by visitors is a requirement towards a greater tourist approach to the territory, this is how the search and enhancement of potentially tourist resources are part of the activity of interpretation and enhancement from a local development approach.

This being the essence of the research, a local study was made to the Mazahua ethnic group, as well as to the inhabitants of the municipality of Valle de Bravo and an analysis of the potentialities of the territory they occupy, being able to determine that it has great cultural resources of a high level of exploitation. In addition, data collection instruments were applied to the inhabitants who have a direct relationship with the study area, obtaining as a response the ratification of the need to design a route that shows and revives the cultural richness of the Mazahua communities for the promotion and local development of both municipalities.

The cultural heritage and its interpretation highlights the relationships within a state, thus, knowing and interpreting the autochthonous and indigenous heritage becomes a way to recover the collective identity, reinforcing the social cohesion of the inhabitants. This is one of the keys to the success of local development.

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