



## La importancia del idioma inglés en el diseño de la experiencia turística inclusiva "Alfombras de Guano"

*The importance of the English language in the design of the inclusive tourist experience "Alfombras de Guano"*

- <sup>1</sup> Silvia Patricia Montufar Guevara  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0464-3068>  
Chimborazo Polytechnic School, Riobamba, Ecuador  
[silvia.montufar@esepoch.edu.ec](mailto:silvia.montufar@esepoch.edu.ec)
- <sup>2</sup> Boris Alexis Fiallos Zaruma  <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5797-2942>  
Chimborazo Polytechnic School, Riobamba, Ecuador  
[boris.fiallos@esepoch.edu.ec](mailto:boris.fiallos@esepoch.edu.ec)
- <sup>3</sup> Catalina Margarita Verdugo Bernal <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4117-749X>  
Chimborazo Polytechnic School, Riobamba, Ecuador  
[catalina.verdugo@esepoch.edu.ec](mailto:catalina.verdugo@esepoch.edu.ec)
- <sup>4</sup> Cristina Paola Chamorro Ortega <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9728-6839>  
Chimborazo Polytechnic School, Riobamba, Ecuador  
[cristina.chamorro@esepoch.edu.ec](mailto:cristina.chamorro@esepoch.edu.ec)



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**Palabras claves:**

turismo cultural,  
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Ecuador.

**Keywords:**

cultural tourism,  
sensory

**Resumen**

**Introducción:** El diseño de la experiencia en Guano Pueblo Mágico tiene como propósito revitalizar el patrimonio cultural y textil de la localidad, generando oportunidades económicas para la comunidad, además de motivar el fortalecimiento de la identidad cultural de la población local. **Objetivos:** la problemática principal que enfrenta Guano se manifiesta en escasa presencia de productos turísticos técnicamente estructurados. Actualmente, solo existen dos experiencias turísticas basadas en el patrimonio cultural inmaterial, que aún no han logrado un posicionamiento significativo en el mercado, debido a que la promoción se centra en la presentación de atractivos, sin un enfoque claro en los productos turísticos, lo que limita el interés de los visitantes. **Metodología:** la metodología empleada corresponde a un proceso de investigación etnográfica, cualitativa, y no exploratorio, que contó con la participación de los portadores de la técnica artesanal tradicional de las Alfombras anudadas de Guano que aún se dedican a la producción de este tipo de alfombras. **Resultados:** los resultados clave del proyecto incluyen la identificación y documentación del patrimonio cultural inmaterial para una adecuada interpretación turística, la creación de un producto turístico inclusivo y sostenible en idioma inglés y español, que incorpora actividades prácticas y vivenciales enfocadas en la transmisión del conocimiento y valor simbólico e histórico de la técnica artesanal tradicional empleada para la elaboración de las Alfombras anudada de Guano. **Conclusiones:** la experiencia turística brinda la oportunidad para involucrar a personas con discapacidad, con el objetivo de generar una participación más activa y significativa, lo que a su vez se busca traducir en una mayor satisfacción y lealtad hacia el destino, así como fortalecer el uso social del PCI y la promoción de una de las técnicas artesanales locales más reconocidas en el territorio nacional. **Área de estudio general:** turismo e inglés. **Área de estudio específica:** turismo creativo e inglés. **Tipo de estudio:** caso de estudio, no exploratorio y cualitativo.

**Abstract**

**Introduction:** The design of the experience in Guano Pueblo Mágico aims to revitalize the cultural and textile heritage of the

accessibility,  
Guano Carpets,  
magical town,  
Guano, Ecuador.

town, generating economic opportunities for the community, in addition to motivating the strengthening of the cultural identity of the local population. Objectives: the main problem faced by Guano is manifested in the limited presence of technically structured tourism products. Currently, there are only two tourist experiences based on intangible cultural heritage, which have not yet achieved a significant positioning in the market, because the promotion focuses on the presentation of attractions, without a clear focus on tourist products, which limits the interest of visitors. Methodology: the methodology used corresponds to an ethnographic, qualitative, and non-exploratory research process, which included the participation of the bearers of the traditional artisan technique of Guano Knotted Carpets who are still dedicated to the production of this type of carpets. Results: Key results of the project include the identification and documentation of intangible cultural heritage for adequate tourism interpretation, the creation of an inclusive and sustainable tourism product in English and Spanish, which incorporates practical and experiential activities focused on the transmission of knowledge and symbolic and historical value of the traditional artisanal technique used to make the Guano knotted carpets. Conclusions: the tourist experience provides the opportunity to involve people with disabilities, with the aim of generating a more active and significant participation, which in turn seeks to translate into greater satisfaction and loyalty towards the destination, as well as strengthening the use PCI and the promotion of one of the most recognized local craft techniques in the national territory. General study area: tourism and English. Specific area of study: creative tourism and English. Type of study: case study, non-exploratory and qualitative.

## Introduction

In 2024, Ecuador began the process of re-accreditation of its territories declared as Magical Towns, with the aim of improving tourism competitiveness and positioning the country as an attractive destination in Latin America. This process has included the incorporation of accessibility criteria that allow all visitors to enjoy the cultural and heritage wealth of each territory. In the cultural aspect, this process focuses on the

management of Intangible Cultural Heritage (PCI), taking as a crucial axis the preservation of local identity and traditions, which run the risk of remaining in the collective memory of the territories due to globalization and technological development that modifies traditional practices (Molina et al., 2021; Muñoz, 2019; Parraga-Toral et al., 2021).

Guano, declared a Magical Town, with 90% of its buildings registered as heritage real estate within its tourist polygon, presents a significant potential for the development of inclusive tourist experiences. This study focuses on the design of activities that involve the five senses, allowing a deeper interaction with the intangible cultural heritage of the city. Among these experiences, the Knotted Carpets of Guano stand out, which combine practical and experiential activities, promoting the transmission of knowledge and the symbolic value of local traditions. This modification in the format of the experiences is due to the fact that, according to Richards (2001), New trends in experiences seek to ensure that tourists stop being spectators and become producers of the experience.

This is why this new approach is not only focused on increasing visitor satisfaction and loyalty, but also on strengthening the social use of the town's intangible cultural heritage (Wasela, 2023). The proposal is based on the premise that cultural tourism, being accessible, can enrich interactions between tourists and local communities, promoting a deeper understanding of cultural identities (Van, 2024). This inclusive approach is especially relevant for people with disabilities, who often face barriers that limit their participation in cultural experiences (Ferst et al., 2020). By integrating sensory accessibility criteria, we seek to ensure that all visitors, regardless of their abilities, can enjoy the demonstrations. cultural and actively participate in the proposed activities (Camilla, 2009; Cunha & Gonçalves, 2023; Kane et al., 2020).

The implementation of tourism experiences that involve the five senses not only allows people with disabilities to interact with cultural heritage in a meaningful way (Refaat & Ibrahim, 2017), but also fosters an environment of inclusion and respect, as well as strengthening the sense of community and belonging among tourists and local inhabitants (Khudaverdiieva, 2023).

### **Methodology**

The methodology used in the present study corresponds to an ethnographic, qualitative, and non-exploratory research process, which included the participation of the bearers of the traditional artisan technique of knotted Guano Carpets that are still dedicated to the production of this type of carpets. The collection of information was carried out through the review of documentary sources and participatory workshops that used ethnographic techniques to obtain the greatest possible information detail.

In this way, the process was articulated in three moments. The first corresponds to the identification of cultural resources and tourist attractions, for which a review of secondary sources was carried out, including the Cultural Heritage Information System of Ecuador (SIPCE) National Institute of Cultural Heritage (2023), to identify the cultural manifestations registered in said database and that are linked to the weaving technique of the Guano Carpet. In relation to the tourist attractions, the systematization of the attractions was carried out hierarchical and the activities that can be carried out within them within the intervention polygon.

In the second stage, the concept of the experience was determined and the technical itinerary of the experience was set, detailing the difficulty, character, style and duration of the activities to be carried out. Finally, in the third stage, the activities were designed for the preparation of the scripts in Spanish and English as an instrument to facilitate the cultural encounter with the tourists.

## Results

The main results achieved are detailed, which contributed to the articulation of the identity of the product through the use of the cultural identity of the territory, as well as the integration of various technical criteria that ensure the quality and accessibility of the offer through the proposed tourist experience.

### *Cultural identity of Guano magical town*

In Ecuador there are a total of 21 magical towns that are distributed as follows: 4 in the coastal region, 13 in the mountains region, 3 in the Amazon region and 1 in the island region. Within the mountains region, in the center of the country, there is Guano Pueblo Mágico, in the province of Chimborazo, which obtained its declaration on September 25, 2020. The declaration covers an area of 16 blocks from the urban center of the cantonal capital of Guano (figure 1).



**Figure1**

*Location and tourist area of Guano Magical Town*



**Fountain:**Decentralized Autonomous Municipal Government of Guano Canton (2020)

The territory stands out for its national recognition as the Artisanal Capital of Ecuador, due to the fact that a series of artisanal production practices are carried out within the space, such as clothing and leather work, tanning, textile garment production, production of products in cabuya or totora and the production of knotted carpets. In relation to this last cultural manifestation, it is necessary to specify that it is characterized by being a cultural manifestation certified as Intangible Cultural Heritage by the National Institute of Cultural Heritage of Ecuador.

Guano is a geographical territory with a land area of only 473 km<sup>2</sup>. Being such a small space, it stands out for presenting a high concentration of cultural manifestations linked to the field of traditional artisan techniques, which is why it is identified as a potential space for the generation of tourist experiences that can highlight the cultural resources of the area.

The tourist experiences designed for this space focused on enhancing cultural resources as a competitiveness mechanism for the space, because according to the Travel and Tourism Development Index (World Economic Forum, 2024), the cultural resources component reaches a score of 2.11/7; this low rating recognizes that Ecuador has not valued the cultural resources it possesses.

In addition, sensory accessibility criteria are integrated focused on providing recreational alternatives to tourists with functional diversity, for which it is taken into consideration that the interaction mechanisms are in Spanish and English, with the objective of achieving an adequate transmission of knowledge even with foreign tourists.

With all the details above, it is possible to articulate the heritage value of the territory and the mechanisms of sensory accessibility to design a tourist experience that allows achieving a unique and unrepeatable experience, because the format of the tourist product takes on various characteristics of inclusion and accessibility, through a multisensory approach, meaning that it can be consumed beyond a visual experience, by including the auditory, tactile and olfactory/gustatory senses, along with vision.

The experience took into account the principles of Universal Design by ensuring that information is perceptible to all users, regardless of their sensory capabilities. This involves presenting information through various sensory channels to accommodate different perceptual strategies, as well as making the information available in various languages.

#### *Technical design of the tourist experience*

The technical design of the experience details the objectives that are intended to be achieved after its consumption, in addition to specifying the accessibility criteria that were taken into consideration so that it can be considered an accessible tourist product.

#### *Objectives of the experience*

- Generate visiting spaces that allow visitors with functional diversity to interact with the emblematic artisan techniques of the magical town
- Integrate the senses (touch and smell) so that participants can experience the process of making the Knotted Carpet in an immersive way.
- Raise awareness among participants about the importance of sensory accessibility in tourism, as a market differentiation strategy.
- Strengthen the internationalization of the tourism space by providing a communication mechanism in a foreign language such as English.

#### *Accessibility criteria*

Sensory accessibility has been achieved through the following criteria:

#### *Visual and auditory accessibility*

Audio guides have been created describing the surroundings, tourist attractions and cultural events in both English and Spanish. The texts present clear schematic features that provide additional information to the audio explanations.

**Figure 2**

*Audioguide of the Guano Carpets*

*Magical Town in Spanish*

**Figure 3**

*Audioguide of the Guano Carpets*

*Magical Town in English*



Figures 2 and 3 are an example of the digital catalogue that visitors or tourists access after consuming the experience, because, in the last part of the experience, a souvenir is delivered that corresponds to a miniature carpet, on it there is a label with a QR code that displays the catalogue with complementary information about the Guano Carpet, in addition to location data of the workshops and artisans.

*Touch Accessibility*

Textured surfaces were developed in relation to the moments of the carpet making process within the workshop. The tourist can see the carpet mounted on the loom, then before the shearing process and finally with the final finish. Interpretation spaces with tactile elements, in this space the tools used in the process of assembling the looms and in the manufacturing process are presented so that the technique can be contextualized in a better way. Also, the accesses to the workshop were adapted to facilitate the orientation and mobility of the visitor, no structural modifications have been made because it is a heritage home.

*Cognitive Accessibility*

The information was selected to be as precise as possible and to maintain a clear structure with the aim of being able to incorporate people with cognitive disabilities into the experience. In addition, the experience can be adjusted in time, allowing for various options to be offered depending on how the visiting group is structured, so that people can choose the duration and difficulty of the experience according to their needs.



*Staff Training*

In this last component, the training process has been carried out with the private tourism operation staff, promoting care and guidance for people with different sensory disabilities, but it is an element that still needs to be worked on with the staff working in tourist attractions.

*Activities and services*

The main activities carried out in the experience are detailed below in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Activities and services linked to the etourist experience*

General activity	Sub-activities
1. Visit to the carpet workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Workshop tour with detailed verbal descriptions of the looms and tools used in the weaving process</li> <li>– Opportunity to touch the materials and tools used so that visitors can identify relief and textures</li> </ul>
2. Presentation of the designs used in the making of the Guano Carpet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Chronological presentation of the designs and trends that have been reflected in the carpets</li> <li>– Recreation of a design for understanding the technique</li> </ul>
3. Guano Carpet Making Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Chronological presentation of the looms, dimensions and types of carpets that can be made</li> <li>– Guided participation in the insertion of the mine and the generation of knots with sheep's wool</li> <li>– Use of assistive tools and utensils to facilitate the handling of lead and wool</li> <li>– Verbal descriptions of each step of the brewing process</li> </ul>
4. Souvenir delivery with reengineering in the marketing process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Delivery of miniature carpets in traditional newspaper bags, sharing the context of the cultural value of the wrapping</li> <li>– Verbal descriptions of the carpet design and complementary data on the social dynamics in the workshop</li> </ul>

*Resources and equipment*

The workshops have preserved their original structure, preserving the subfloors and walls made of cabuya mats to preserve acoustics. Lighting elements have only been added to facilitate visibility of the space. The only modification made is the cleaning of the corridors and the access to the workshop. In addition, an area was organized in the workshop that presents the tools, utensils and equipment required for the production of the carpets.

**Table 2**

*Accessibility criteria in the eTourist experience of the Chola de Guano*

Activities	Sensory accessibility		
	Touch	Hearing	Smell
Historical introduction to the carpet making process	You can touch the carpet that has different reliefs and you can appreciate the restoration carried out on the carpet.	A carpet that has undergone a restoration process is presented, which allows us to understand the value of the artisan technique.	N/A
Visit to the carpet workshop	Manipulation of materials and tools used, in the case of materials, textures can be identified between natural and industrial materials	Detailed presentation of each loom and tools of the manufacturing process, complementary cards are used to facilitate year identification.	Distinguishing between materials by smell
Presentation of the designs used in theMaking the Guano Carpet	You can feel the material on which the designs used in the production are printed and you can differentiate between them.	N/A	N/A
Guano Carpet Making Workshop	It is a transversal process in which all the senses are incorporated from the recreation of the elaboration process. In this process, a work space has been generated in which all the inputs are available to generate a carpet.		
Souvenir delivery	The reliefs and textures of a carpet with a final finish can be appreciated.	N/A	N/A

One of the weaknesses identified in the process is the marketing strategies, since to date there is only one tour operator available for the experience, with the main market being student groups.

**Conclusions**

- In conclusion, this project seeks to position Guano as an authentic and sustainable tourist destination, preserving its cultural identity and generating opportunities for the community. Through the creation of artisanal tourist experiences, it is expected to attract visitors interested in living a memorable and enriching experience, thus contributing to the socioeconomic development of the canton and the strengthening of its cultural heritage. It is recommended to establish a strategic approach that encourages the creation of attractive tourist experiences, improves

the promotion of existing products and guarantees the quality of the services offered.

- Furthermore, the great contribution that the English language provides in its versatility to share information with locals and foreigners is clearly evident, allowing them to enjoy the interpretation of the cultural resources of Guano regardless of their origin, since English is known as the universal language of science.
- Finally, it is clear that the English language and tourism are two fields of action that represent a favorable duo for the inclusion of all types of audiences and facilitate the interpretation and understanding of the resource and universal access to tourist information.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in relation to the submitted article.

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