

## **Chuchita: From museum room to social networks**

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As humanity evolved over the millennia, ways of relating with others, entertaining, and of course, educating have been continually changing. As Mariño (2008) states, “As a consequence of globalization, many organizations, including museums, have started the transformation of their structures and processes to make them more efficient. The incorporation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has played an important role in these transformations and has generated multiple benefits in many sectors of our society”.

Chuchita: From museum room to social networks. It is a Marketing and Cultural dissemination project on Facebook headed by Casa del Mendrugo Museum, which focuses on reaching new audiences through the Internet.

The project arose from the discovery of a pre-Hispanic burial site during the restoration work of La Casa del Mendrugo in the Historic Center of the city of Puebla, Mexico. Chuchita is the name given by the archaeologists to the female skeleton found on the site, and now on exhibition at the museum.

This Facebook profile presents Chuchita as an elderly animated character with indigenous features, an image based on a forensic facial approximation of her skull. The profile’s main objective is to make visible the newest museum in town and, of course, to re-evaluate and recover a sense of proximity and belonging to pre-Hispanic and Mexican culture, and it has been a great success, with more than 40 000 followers on Facebook in just 4 years with a minimal investment.

Via Internet, the profile presents the museum, the story of city of Puebla, and of Mexico, in a highly user-friendly manner. It also provides, among other features, valuable information about the cultural, the natural, the tangible and the intangible heritage of the country: indigenous language and toponymy; oral tradition, including sayings, phrases and humour; popular culture, such as practices and customs, traditions and celebrations; as well as archaeological zones and historical monuments.

### **How did our story begin? Let’s go to Mexico...**

La Casa del Mendrugo is located in a large historic building in the downtown district of Puebla, once part of Saint Jerome Jesuit College, the first Jesuit College in Puebla, Mexico; was named, according to historians, after the “Mendrugos” (pieces of bread or alms) that the Jesuits received from the parishioners for their support. By the end of the 20th century, its existence as a neighborhood icon ended when it was abandoned and fell into ruins.

Thanks to the vision and commitment of a local philanthropist and entrepreneur, Ramón Lozano, in 2008, the restoration of the house was begun. Today, it is a cultural center comprising a restaurant, a jazz club, a bar, a cafeteria, and of course, a museum. All in one place!

In the process, a pre-Hispanic burial site was found. Based on research carried out by a team of archaeologists from the Institute of Anthropological Research (IIA) of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), headed by Dr. Carlos Serrano, the antique burial site was dated back to three thousands five hundred years ago, Spanish never met it. According to research findings, she was a woman, “as Shakira says: Hips don’t lie” who

passed away around her 50s, having reached an age well beyond the expected life span of that era.

The archaeological and historical importance of this discovery rests in its status as the first archaeological site located within the UNESCO World Heritage Zone of the Historic Center of the city of Puebla, Mexico, to provide evidence that a pre-Hispanic population had established itself there centuries ago. The discovery clearly shows that, rather than having been founded in the 16<sup>th</sup> century on uninhabited land, as is commonly believed, the area was, in fact, an inhabited community long before the arrival of the Europeans.

It should be noted that the funeral offerings found buried with the female body are strongly influenced by the Olmec culture, also called the "mother" culture of Mesoamerica, and consist of various objects of clay, jade, magnetite, obsidian and even seashells, indicating that the woman, during her lifetime, was a very important personage in the community, maybe a priestess or leader. She has been baptized by archaeologists as "María de Jesús" in honour of the Jesuits, and is affectionately known as Chuchita, the oldest inhabitant of Puebla. In Mexico, If your name is Jesus, we use to call you "Chucho" as a nickname; María de Jesús so.. Chucha, Chuchita.

In 2013, with the goal of exhibiting the artifacts of the site with dignity, it was decided to open a new museum on the first floor of the building. It was resolved that, besides naming her, Chuchita should have a face to show to the visitors. Of course, Our wishe was to bring Chuchita to life...

The Physical Anthropologist Team of the National School of Anthropology and History (ENAH), headed by Arql. Oswaldo Camarillo, was asked to create a facial approximation of Chuchita from the osseous remains of the skull. This finally materialized in the form of an elderly animated pre-Hispanic character with indigenous features and corresponding traditional clothing. The character was created by the design team in 2015, directed by G. D. Víctor Duran, and now she is the image of the museum, she is not just a mascot, she is our lovely grandmother. The conduit for communication with the local community audience.



### What is next?

Based on a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) of the museum, Social Networking was identified as a main area of opportunity and therefore the best way to publicize the discovery of the pre-Hispanic burial site of Chuchita. Since many people spend more than three hours a day on Facebook,

this is the social network that was chosen for the project.

Therefore, based on the assumption that our public, the public of the museum, is already on social networks, the team at Casa del Mendrugo Museum decided to create the Facebook profile of Chuchita as an innovative way to present and reinterpret the pre-Hispanic burial exhibition room.

This profile is a pioneering initiative in our country, since museums usually have an institutional Facebook profile, but not their exhibitions or collections. However, this is how a museum object, "Chuchita", presents itself and our museum's activities and collections.

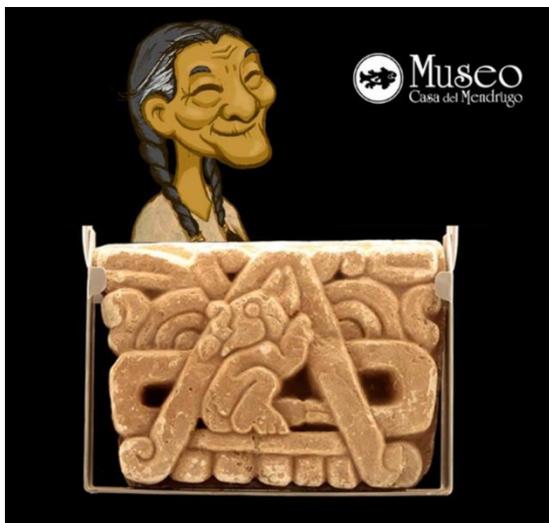
One of the objectives of this creative project at the museum is to generate a place in cyberspace, on the free platform that Facebook provides, where clearly and easily, playful interactive learning can inspire the interest of the museum visitors in our historical, cultural and national identity. Specifically, those who have Internet access can revalue the history and traditions of the country, while at the same time using the social network as a vehicle to encourage reflection and dialogue.

Other objectives are to strengthen the dissemination of historical memory and Mexican cultural identity, and promote communication between the museum and the cybernauts, thereby initiating an introduction to issues of history, culture and identity through testimonial and historical data on pre-Hispanic daily life and the main customs and traditions.

The Facebook profile of this animated character has been featured in many venues, including the commemoration of the most important historical events of the country, promotional material of the museum, the item of the week of the museum,

At the same time, the Chuchita character revives and revalues Mexico's pre-Hispanic roots and identity, recalling customs, traditions, oral traditions, food, drinks, and indigenous attire. The profile is a testimonial and documentary record of the history of the city, highlighting its evolution.

Thanks to this free platform, the audience can interact directly with Chuchita on her Facebook profile by leaving comments on her wall or by writing messages in the "inbox". The museum has found, through Chuchita, a unique and personal means of interacting with the audience and responding to questions, concerns and interests from its followers. For example:



-Chuchita, Can you help me with my homework?

-Chuchita, How do you say "Water" in nahuatl (a prehispanic language).

Or

-Chuchita, Can you, please give me more information about this object of your exhibit?

**Where is the clue?**

This is not about I am Chuchita: I am the leader, and I am going to show you my objects, the objects of the museum collection, a bit on Facebook. This is about I am Chuchita: I am equal as you, I also love Mexico, I also love the same food, the same places, the same historical monuments as you.

Notably, the Facebook profile of the museum's animated character not only creates its own information but also shares material from other Facebook profiles: Government agencies, Universities, Museums, Specialized magazines and publications by groups or communities on Facebook.

### It will worth the effort?

The Facebook profile of the oldest inhabitant of Puebla represents a great advance in the integration of museums onto Social Networks for the promotion of culture, education and social participation in Mexico.

The influx of the visitors to the museum has increased considerably thanks to the Facebook profile of this charismatic character as well as the participation of the museum in various cultural activities of the city, such as festivals, conferences and free events that are announced on the platform.

In Puebla City, Chuchita holds second place with nearly 40,000 followers in the ranking of Facebook museum profiles, just below the profile of the Amparo Museum, a museum more than 25 years old, and above other museums such as the new International Baroque Museum and the National Museum of Railways, among others.



From the statistics of the Facebook platform, data of the followers are obtained and studied.

- Sex: 64% are women and the remaining 36% are men
- Age: 35% are between mature adults 35 and 44 years old, 29% are young adults between 25 and 34 years old, 17% between 45 and 54 years old and the remaining 19% are children and older adults
- Origins: 96% live in Mexico, 2% in the United States and 2% in the rest of the world.

As a new strategy to increase the number of comments per publication, in order to promote curiosity, dialogue and even debate on historical issues among followers, videos with topics of global interest for new generations have been incorporated. Finally, as an area of opportunity, it has been proposed that the profile broach current issues such as the importance of the role of women through history and the rights of minorities.

The story of Chuchita can also be seen on an online exhibition and a virtual tour, thanks to the Google Arts & Culture platform. Followers can also interact through the Twitter and YouTube profiles of Chuchita. We can also find Chuchita in the BEST PRACTICE 7 edition, A tool to improve museum education internationally by ICOM CECA Committee for Education and Cultural Action 2018.

Sometimes Chuchita needs a little help, so we use the Google Ads with a minimum investment of 1 US dollar a day.

**How is behind Chuchita?**

Mothers, Fathers, Teachers, Students, Investigators, Childrens, Dauthers, Brothers, Ingeniers, Antropologis... A big Family.