

Analysis of the marketing strategies of crafts made by indigenous women in the municipality of Nacajuca: challenges and opportunities for their inclusion in national and international markets

Análisis de las Estrategias de Comercialización de Artesanías elaboradas por mujeres Indígenas en el municipio de Nacajuca: retos y oportunidades para su inclusión en mercados nacionales e internacionales

Arias-Rodríguez, Catalina ^a, Suárez-Vidal, Laura Elena ^b, Thompson-Hernández, Elsy Leticia ^c and Santiago-Pérez, Maximiliano ^d

^a ROR Villahermosa Institute of Technology • IUQ-3911-2023 • ID 0009-0005-5268-5421 • IT22A913

^b ROR Villahermosa Institute of Technology • NAX-7171-2025 • ID 0009-0003-0008-3563 • IT18E992

^c ROR Villahermosa Institute of Technology • NAX-6754-2025 • ID 0009-0008-4477-213X • IT19F065

^d ROR Villahermosa Institute of Technology • NAX-7641-2025 • ID 0009-0000-7055-4381 • IT17A208

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*✉ catalina.arias@villahermosa.tecnm.mx

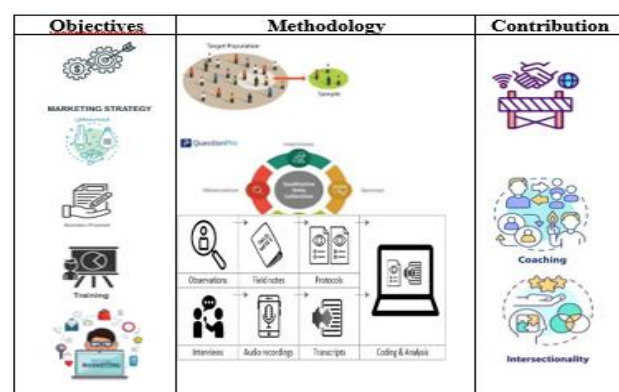


Abstract

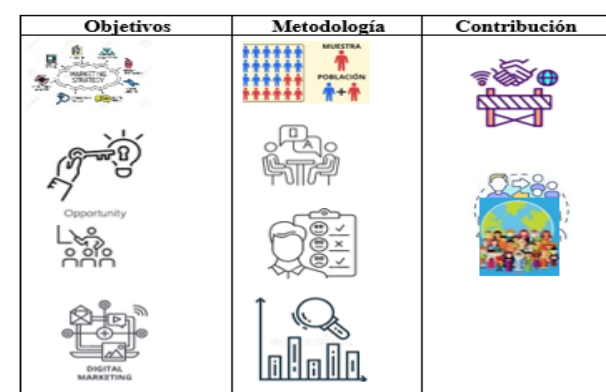
This study analyzes the marketing strategies of crafts made by indigenous women in Nacajuca, Tabasco, Mexico, and examines the challenges and opportunities for their inclusion in national and international markets. Despite the artisans' rich cultural heritage, they face significant barriers, such as limited marketing training and restricted access to sales platforms, which hinders their economic growth. The research approach is mixed, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data from 20 women artisans active in the production and trade of crafts. Opportunities are identified to improve their situation, such as training in digital strategies, participation in trade fairs and the creation of a collective brand. Implementing these strategies could increase the visibility of your products and contribute to the economic sustainability of your ventures, offering a path to inclusion and recognition in a broader and more diverse market.

Resumen

Este estudio analiza las estrategias de comercialización de artesanías elaboradas por mujeres indígenas en Nacajuca, Tabasco, México, y examina los retos y oportunidades para su inclusión en mercados nacionales e internacionales. A pesar de la rica herencia cultural de las artesanas, enfrentan barreras significativas, como la limitada capacitación en marketing y el acceso restringido a plataformas de venta, lo que dificulta su crecimiento económico. El enfoque de investigación es mixto, combinando métodos cuantitativos y cualitativos para recolectar datos de 20 mujeres artesanas activas en la elaboración y comercio de las artesanías. Se identifican oportunidades para mejorar su situación, tales como la capacitación en estrategias digitales, la participación en ferias comerciales y la creación de una marca colectiva. Implementar estas estrategias podría incrementar la visibilidad de sus productos y contribuir a la sostenibilidad económica de sus emprendimientos, ofreciendo un camino hacia la inclusión y el reconocimiento en un mercado más amplio y diverso.



Crafts, Indigenous, Marketing



Artesanía, Indígenas, Comercialización

Area: Development of strategic leading-edge technologies and open innovation for social transformation

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Introduction

This study focuses on the marketing strategies of handicrafts made by indigenous women in Nacajuca, Tabasco, Mexico, a topic of growing relevance in the current context of economic inclusion and cultural preservation. These craftswomen, bearers of a rich cultural heritage, transform ancestral traditions into products that not only represent their identity, but are also an important source of income for their families and communities. Despite the intrinsic value of their work, indigenous women face numerous challenges that limit their access to wider markets, both nationally and internationally.

One of the distinctive features of this study is its mixed methodological approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. This approach is considered valuable because it provides statistically significant data on marketing trends, while offering an in-depth analysis of the personal experiences and perceptions of craftswomen. The combination of both methods provides a holistic view that overcomes the limitations of one-dimensional techniques, which often fail to capture the complexity of the phenomenon in question.

The main problem addressed in this paper is the difficulty faced by craftswomen in Nacajuca in accessing more effective and competitive marketing platforms. The central hypothesis argues that by implementing digital marketing training strategies and creating support networks, these women can improve their visibility in the market and thus increase their sales opportunities and economic sustainability.

This article will be structured in several sections starting with an analysis of the cultural and economic context in which these craftswomen operate, followed by a detailed description of the methodology used for data collection, including surveys and interviews. Subsequently, the results obtained will be presented, reflecting both the current challenges and the opportunities that indigenous women can take advantage of. Finally, concrete proposals that could be implemented to strengthen their inclusion in the market, thus contributing to their economic development and the preservation of their cultural heritage, will be discussed.

Through this analysis, we hope not only to make visible the challenges faced by the women artisans of Nacajuca, but also to propose concrete paths towards a more equitable and sustainable future for them and their communities.

In this context, this project aims to carry out a detailed analysis of the current commercial practices of the indigenous women of Nacajuca. Through this analysis, it aims to identify the factors that limit their access to wider markets, while proposing specific strategies that will improve market competitiveness.

Development

Theoretical framework

Cultural identity

Culture is no longer defined only as the body of works and knowledge generated by a society, nor is it reduced to access to cultural goods. Rather, it represents a way of life that involves the education system, the media, cultural industries and the right to information. Ruiz, [2006].

Cultural identity is a complex phenomenon that implies a sense of belonging to a social group and is manifested through cultural expressions. Santos, et,al, [2024], states that identity is forged from multiple elements, such as language, social relations, ceremonies, beliefs, rituals, collective behaviours and value systems. Moreover, its historical character is evidence of the evolution of these cultural manifestations over time. UNESCO, for its part, has designated these manifestations as intangible cultural heritage.

Crafts and Cultural Heritage

Santos, et al, [2024] point out that the cultural identity of a locality is influenced by socio-economic and cultural aspects. Among these factors, the revaluation of craft production plays a fundamental role.

Craft production not only represents a source of income, but also promotes socio-cultural and economic values. Artisans play a key role in the economic, social and cultural development of the community.

The appreciation of handicrafts is closely linked to cultural identity, contributing to their preservation as part of the local heritage. Its economic, aesthetic and functional importance strengthens the inhabitants' sense of belonging to their craft traditions. In addition, knowledge of traditional techniques and participation in their preservation further strengthen the cultural identity of the community. There is a significant relationship between craft values and the appreciation of cultural identity, where crafts become a representative symbol that attracts both national and international visitors interested in their cultural richness. Preserving and valuing traditional craft practices is essential to strengthening local identity and cultural diversity. These activities also foster community collaboration, promoting greater rootedness and recognition of their cultural heritage.

Definition and types of craft production

According to Bustos, [2009]. Craft production produces objects by transforming basic natural raw materials, through non-industrial production processes involving simple machines and tools with a predominance of physical and mental labour, can be classified into several types or approaches:

Process approach
 Repetitive process
 Product approach
 Large-scale customisation

Likewise, with regard to handicraft production and synthesising what we have seen so far, we can say that according to the degree of human intervention, it is a manual process or at most semi-automatic [in some circumstances]; depending on the nature of the process, it can be of integration, disintegration or modification, depending on the handicraft product being produced; according to the continuity of the process, we would be in the presence of a process approach [intermittent].

Craft workshops

In the context of an industrial enterprise, regardless of its size, a specialised sector is set up for the manufacture of products, called a production department or area. Similarly, in the field of handicrafts, the 'family workshop' is identified as an environment dedicated to the manufacture of these pieces.

This workshop is composed of a group of individuals [artisans], most of whom belong to the same family environment. In addition to playing a role in the economic sphere, the family workshop operates as a space that encompasses both the social and the cultural, facilitating the transmission of traditional knowledge in the field. [Aguilar and Acle, 2024, p. 7].

The indigenous economy in local development.

Indigenous communities often face discrimination and economic and social marginalisation. This can result in a lack of access to basic services, infrastructure and development opportunities, which negatively affects their ability to engage in economic activities [Juc, et al., 2024].

Barriers or difficulties faced by artisans

Saligan, et al, [2017]: They describe the difficulties faced by artisans.

Discrimination by occupation, ethnicity and gender.

Poverty affecting the majority of Mexican artisan producers.

Lack of support from government institutions to continue doing their work.

Low remuneration for their products made and distributed within the tourist market.

Little social recognition. Many difficulties, as already underlined, are due to various structural conditions in our society.

Another series of problems are:

- The economic precariousness of the producers. - The marketing of products.
- Intermediation.
- Low prices.
- Social stigma.

Social entrepreneurship:

Pereza de Aparicio et al.,[2024], develop a strategic model that explores innovation within the context of social entrepreneurship.

In their research, they highlight the importance of integrating innovation as a key element for the sustainability of social initiatives. According to them, social entrepreneurs need to adopt innovative approaches not only in the creation of products and services, but also in their business models and in the way they address social challenges. This approach enables social organisations to adapt and respond effectively to changing community needs, creating a more meaningful and lasting impact. Through their work, Weerawardena and Mort provide valuable insights into how innovation can be the driver of change in the social entrepreneurship sector, incentivising development that is aligned with both economic and social goals.

Digital Marketing and Social Media:

According to Chávez y Bonilla Vásquez [2017]. The use of these digital tools not only allows artisans to showcase their products, but also to tell the stories behind them, adding emotional and cultural value. Social media offers the possibility to share engaging images, videos of creative processes and customer testimonials, fostering a sense of community and support around their work. In addition, paid ads on social media can be targeted to specific market segments, optimising promotional efforts.

General Objective:

To analyse the marketing strategies used by indigenous women in the municipality of Nacajuca for the production and sale of handicrafts, in order to identify the challenges and opportunities they face in their inclusion and positioning in national and international markets, proposing solutions that strengthen their access to new distribution channels and promote the sustainability of their ventures.

Methodology

Research approach

This study will adopt a mixed approach, According to Sampieri, et al, [2014] the quantitative approach focuses on the measurement and analysis of data through statistical tools, while the qualitative approach seeks to understand complex phenomena through the interpretation and in-depth analysis of experiences, emotions and behaviours.

In order to comprehensively address the marketing strategies used by indigenous women in Nacajuca. The quantitative approach will allow us to measure the prevalence of certain commercial patterns, while the qualitative approach will provide a deeper analysis of the perceptions, experiences and contexts of the craftswomen.

Research design

This research is descriptive and exploratory, as it seeks to analyse the marketing strategies, challenges and opportunities faced by indigenous women and possible solutions. Through data collection, the aim is to generate proposals that can improve their inclusion and positioning in the markets. Aguilar and Acle, [2023].

Population and sample

According to Sampieri, et al, [2014], the population refers to the complete group of individuals or elements that meet certain criteria, while the sample is a subset of that population that is selected to represent its characteristics.

In relation to the project, the population is composed of indigenous women from the municipality of Nacajuca, Tabasco, specifically those involved in the production and commercialisation of handicrafts.

The total population is composed of 20 women artisans who actively participate in the production and marketing of handicrafts in the municipality of Nacajuca, Tabasco.

Random sampling was applied due to time and resource constraints, 50% of the population was selected as a representative sample.

Methods of data collection

According to Sampieri, et al, [2014], in qualitative and quantitative studies, structured surveys are used to obtain brief and quantifiable data, while semi-structured interviews allow for a deeper exploration of the experiences and perceptions of the participants.

Structured surveys: Shorter surveys were administered to the 10 selected artisans, keeping key questions on marketing strategies, barriers, opportunities and the use of distribution channels.

Semi-structured interviews: In addition to the surveys, interviews were conducted with a selection of 5 artisans to obtain more detailed and qualitative information about their personal experiences.

The objective of these surveys is to gather information about the marketing strategies used by indigenous women in the municipality of Nacajuca, Tabasco, in the production and sale of handicrafts. Through this tool, we seek to identify the main challenges and opportunities faced by craftswomen in their inclusion and positioning in local, national and international markets.

The answers obtained will allow us to propose effective solutions to strengthen access to new distribution channels and promote the sustainability of their handicraft enterprises.

[Juc, et al, 2024]. The data collection will be of great value for the design of strategies to support the growth and expansion of women artisans' initiatives in Nacajuca.

This survey consists of 5 sections and a total of 12 questions distributed in the following topics:

Demographic Information: Questions on age, years of experience and marketing medium.

Marketing Strategies: Questions related to marketing techniques and strategies used to promote the products.

Marketing Barriers: Questions that identify the difficulties faced by the artisans in trying to market their products.

Opportunities and Sustainability: Questions about opportunities for long-term growth and sustainability of their businesses.

Projections and Future: Questions focused on future vision and interest in expanding their markets. P. 22, 29-45

Ethical and logistical considerations

Despite the small sample size, consideration was given to the confidentiality of the artisans' responses, their informed consent to participate in the research, and ensuring that the data collected was used in an ethical and respectful manner.

Results Obtained

Results of the Survey and Interviews on Marketing Strategies of Indigenous Artisans in Nacajuca, Tabasco.

Demographic information

The survey was administered to 20 craftswomen from the municipality of Nacajuca, Tabasco, aged between 25 and 58 years old. The majority of the participants [75%] are between 30 and 45 years old, which indicates that women with more experience in craft production are the ones who lead these businesses. In relation to their trajectory in handicraft production, 80% of the respondents have been working in this field for more than 5 years, while 20% have been working for less than 5 years, which reflects a generational continuity in handicraft practice.

Marketing strategies

Unlike in other markets where digitalisation has become relevant, craftswomen in Nacajuca do not sell on social media or e-commerce platforms. Instead, they have developed a marketing model based on temporary premises within their own homes, from where they sell directly to customers.

The main sales methods identified in the survey were:

Selling from their homes: 90% of the craftswomen indicated that they market their products in spaces set up within their own homes, which allows them to reduce operating costs, although it limits their reach to customers visiting the community.

Local fairs and markets: 40% of the respondents mentioned that they participate in municipal and regional fairs, where they have the opportunity to increase their sales and make their products known.

Frequent customer orders: 35% of the craftswomen rely on orders from local customers, who already know their products and place orders regularly.

Intermediaries or resellers: 20% indicated that they market through third parties, who are responsible for selling their products in other municipalities or states.

Barriers to Marketing

The craftswomen of Nacajuca face multiple challenges in their commercialisation.

Lack of access to wider distribution channels: 70% of the respondents expressed that their main constraint is the lack of access to markets outside their community. By relying on home-based sales and sporadic fairs, their customer reach is reduced.

Financial constraints to invest in improving their businesses: 65% indicated that they do not have the resources to improve the infrastructure of their selling spaces or expand their production.

Lack of marketing strategies: 60% acknowledged that they have not implemented promotional strategies to attract new customers.

Difficulties in distribution and logistics: 50% mentioned that transport and distribution of their products to other markets is a challenge, as they do not have accessible or cheap shipping channels.

Dependence on local customers and festive seasons: 45%. indicated that their sales are unstable and depend on specific dates, such as local festivities or traditional celebrations.

Other limitations of the artisans in Nacajuca are their academic level, as they are generally people who have only finished primary school and have no knowledge of how to use technological tools.

Opportunities and Alternatives for Growth: Despite the challenges, the artisans identify opportunities to improve the marketing of their products.

Implementation of better selling spaces: 70% consider that improving their points of sale in their homes or creating a community space for product display could attract more customers.

Increased participation in national and international fairs: 60% expressed interest in attending trade events outside the region, provided they have logistical and financial support.

Training in sales and marketing strategies: 55% expressed that they would like to receive training in marketing and management to improve their income.

Access to funding or institutional support: 50% of the craftswomen believe that with the support of government programmes or organisations they could expand their production and improve their working conditions.

The results obtained show that the craftswomen of Nacajuca have developed a marketing system based on direct sales from their homes, which has allowed them to maintain their economic activity, although with limitations in terms of scope and growth.

Despite this, there is great interest in expanding their markets, improving their marketing strategies and receiving training in key areas.

In order to strengthen their competitiveness and sustainability, it is necessary to design strategies that allow them to access new markets without compromising their cultural and artisanal identity. The implementation of support programmes, marketing training and access to trade fairs could represent a key step in the consolidation and growth of their businesses.

Current Marketing Strategies

Indigenous women in Nacajuca mainly use traditional marketing channels, such as local markets and craft fairs, to sell their products. Selling through intermediaries is common, which limits their profit margins and their direct contact with the final customer. However, they have also started to explore online platforms, although the use of these tools is limited due to lack of training in digital technologies.

Marketing Challenges

The main challenges identified in the commercialisation process are:

Limited access to national and international markets: craftswomen rely heavily on local markets and, although they participate in fairs, their reach is limited.

Lack of training in marketing and digital commerce: Many craftswomen lack knowledge on how to use online platforms to promote and sell their products.

Dependence on intermediaries: Marketing through intermediaries reduces direct profits and limits control over the sales process.

Logistical difficulties: Limited access to international shipping services and lack of adequate infrastructure hinder expansion into international markets.

Marketing Opportunities

Several opportunities were identified to improve the marketing of handicrafts:

E-commerce: Social networks, Mercado Libre and other online shops offer a direct channel to the consumer, which would allow artisans to reduce dependence on intermediaries and increase their profits.

International fairs and cultural events: Participating in international events where indigenous crafts are valued can be an excellent opportunity to expand the market.

Partnerships with fair trade brands: Partnering with brands that promote fair trade and sustainable development could open doors to wider markets.

Digital marketing: Creating a social media marketing strategy [Instagram, Facebook, etc.] would help increase the visibility of the handicrafts, connecting with global consumers interested in authentic and sustainable products.

Website: Creation of a website, where they can promote the different types of handicrafts they make.

Proposed Solutions

E-commerce and digital marketing training: It is recommended to offer workshops and training programmes for craftswomen in the use of online sales platforms, social media management and digital marketing techniques.

Development of a local sales platform: Create an exclusive online platform for Nacajuca artisans, where they can offer their products directly to consumers without intermediaries.

Strengthening distribution networks: Establish agreements with logistics and distribution companies to facilitate the shipment of products to international markets.

Regional brand promotion: Develop a branding strategy for Nacajuca's handicrafts, highlighting the authenticity and cultural value of products made by indigenous women.

Fostering strategic alliances: Seek partnerships with fair trade organisations and companies that are willing to promote handicrafts globally.

Indigenous women in the municipality of Nacajuca face significant challenges in marketing their handicrafts, especially in terms of access to national and international markets and lack of training in digital tools. However, the opportunities to overcome these obstacles are significant, especially through the adoption of e-commerce, participation in international fairs and the strengthening of distribution networks. Implementing appropriate strategies to address these challenges will not only increase the visibility of their products, but will also contribute to the long-term economic sustainability of their ventures.

Recommendations

Implement training programmes on digital tools for women artisans.

Facilitate access to e-commerce platforms and secure payment methods.

Strengthen cooperation networks with governmental and private entities to improve logistical infrastructure.

Promote the creation of a collective brand that identifies and values Nacajuca's handicrafts.

This project provides a solid basis for the improvement of marketing strategies for handicrafts made by indigenous women of Nacajuca, opening new possibilities for their inclusion in wider and sustainable markets.

Conclusion

The research on the marketing strategies of indigenous women's handicrafts in Nacajuca, Tabasco, highlights the rich cultural heritage of these women and the significant potential they possess to contribute to the economic development of their communities. However, the value of their products faces significant challenges that limit their access to wider markets. A detailed analysis of their business practices reveals the need to implement specific measures that not only address existing barriers, but also enhance opportunities for growth.

A multidimensional approach to support these craftswomen is considered essential. Training in digital marketing and e-commerce is crucial; it would not only provide them with the necessary tools to promote and sell their products effectively, but also allow them to have more direct control over their income. In addition, the promotion of regional fairs and the creation of an exclusive sales platform for their products can be key strategies to improve both the visibility of their crafts and their connection with consumers interested in authentic products. Likewise, promoting a collective brand that highlights the uniqueness of Nacajuca's handicrafts can be a vital step towards their recognition in national and international markets. Such initiatives would not only help improve the competitiveness of their products, but also strengthen cultural identity and community cohesion.

The road to economic sustainability for women artisans in Nacajuca is paved with innovation, collaboration and empowerment. Recognising and valuing their work contributes not only to their individual well-being, but also to the enrichment of the cultural and economic diversity of society as a whole. Investing in their future is ultimately investing in a cultural legacy that deserves to be preserved and celebrated.

Declarations

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest in relation to their work. There are no financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced this research.

Author's contributions

Arias-Rodríguez, Catalina: I contribute to the project idea and the research development process.

Suárez-Vida, Laura Elena: Contributed with research, development and data analysis.

Thompson-Hernández, Elsy Leticia: Contributor to the revision and editing of the manuscript.

Santiago-Pérez Maximiliano: Contributed to research method and data analysis.

Availability of data and materials obtained in this research:

The information and resources used in the development of this study can be made available by the corresponding author upon duly substantiated and justified request.

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Abbreviations

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

WEB: Global network of Internet sites.

Annexes

Survey for the Analysis of Crafts Marketing Strategies

Objective of the survey: To collect information on marketing strategies used by indigenous women in the municipality of Nacajuca, in order to identify challenges and opportunities in their access to local, national and international markets.

Section 1: Demographic Information

1.- Age: What is your age?

- 25-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-58

2.- Years of Experience: How many years have you worked in handicraft making?

- Less than 1 year.
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- More of 10 years

3.- Means of Marketing: What is the main means you use to market your products?

- Home sales.
- Local fairs and markets.
- Intermediaries
- Online platforms

Section 2: Marketing Strategies

4.- Marketing Techniques: What techniques do you use to promote your products? [Select all that apply]

- Social media advertising
- Local fairs
- Word of mouth
- Others: _____

5.- Promotions: Do you run any promotions to attract customers?

- Yes
- No
- - If you answered "Yes", please describe:

Section 3: Barriers to Commercialisation

6.- Difficulties: What are the main difficulties you face in marketing your products? [Please select all that apply]

- Lack of marketing training
- Dependence on intermediaries
- Economic difficulties
- Others: _____

7.- Use of intermediaries: How often do you use intermediaries to sell your handicrafts??

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

Section 4: Opportunities and Sustainability

8.- Growth Opportunities: What opportunities do you see for your business? [Please select all that apply].

- Improving retail space
- Participation in national/international fairs
- Sales training
- others: _____

9.- Training: Would you like to receive training in marketing and management strategies?

- Yes
- No

Section 5: Projections and Future

10.- Future Vision: What is your vision for the future of your handicraft business?

- - Open response: _____

11.- Interest in Expansion: Are you interested in expanding your market nationally or internationally?

- Yes
- No

12.- Tools Needed: What tools do you think you would need to achieve this expansion?

- - Open response: _____

Ethical Considerations

Participation is voluntary and the confidentiality of responses is guaranteed. Informed consent will be requested from each participant.

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