

Strategies of Mexican Cultural Industry for Regional Development of Northern Jalisco: The Case of *Huichol* Handcrafts

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Abstract

Cultural industries have taken a very important role in the preservation of culture and national identity, so that the momentum of these is a factor to consider as part of the country's economic growth. In addition to the craft as part of the culture industry plays a key role in modern economies. The present study aims to analyze the importance of craft production in the northern state of Jalisco to be promoted for the purpose of regional attraction, for cultural, economic and social. This work will be announced strategic alternatives that both the State and other institutions can implement to promote regional development by implementing projects involving the promotion of culture and crafts of the northern region of Jalisco.

Keywords: Handicrafts, regional development, cultural industries

JEL: D20, L30, Q10, R11, R13, R23, Z1, Z11

Resumen

Las industrias culturales han tomado un papel muy importante en la preservación de la cultura e identidad nacional, por lo que el impulso de las mismas es un factor a considerar como parte del crecimiento económico de los países. Además de que la actividad artesanal como parte de la industria cultural juega un papel clave dentro las economías modernas. El presente estudio tiene como objetivo analizar la importancia de la producción artesanal en la zona norte del estado de Jalisco al ser promovida con fines de atractivo turístico regional, con fines culturales, económicos y sociales. En este trabajo se darán a conocer alternativas estratégicas que tanto el Estado como otras instituciones pueden implementar para impulsar el desarrollo regional, mediante la implementación de proyectos que involucren la promoción cultural y artesana de la región norte de Jalisco.

Palabras clave: Artesanías, desarrollo regional, industrias culturales

1. Introduction

Mexico is a multicultural country with a large and rich enough in terms of archaeological, historical and artistic background. It has a significant number of cultures in its society, although they do not live between each other and among them, they try to co-exist keeping their differences.

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Besides the fact that each one of these different cultures has their own customs, traditions and ideas, also has a different and characteristic way to express them.

One of the key features that distinguishes one culture from another in Mexico, can be seen in handicraft production, which varies from alebrijes and work of black mud in Oaxaca, Puebla's Talavera, the beautiful and traditional shawls of San Luis Potosi and *Huichol* art from the states of Nayarit, Jalisco and Northern parts of Zacatecas, among other crafts.

The craftsmanship, as part of the cultural industries, has become an important factor to consider in modern economies. It not only contribute to the economic growth of the country, creating jobs and income for thousands of families, but also help transmit and maintain the cultural roots and identity of nations, and is a factor for a tourist who likes to appreciate the popular expressions of art in various materials (Rivera Cruz, Alberti Manzanares, Vazquez Garcia and Mendoza Ontiveros, 2008). Therefore, the *Huichol* handicrafts made in the North of the State of Jalisco comprising tables or *nierikas*, figures covered with beads and yarn woven crosses, among other objects, is renowned for its beauty and symbolism contained, and is a form of artistic expression that reflects the feelings and beliefs of the people who call themselves *Wixárika*.

In this vein we can formulate the following question, does the marketing momentum and *Huichol* handicrafts in the northern Jalisco can contribute to regional economic development?

The objectives of this exploratory analytical article is to review conceptual concerning cultural industries and crafts, study the economic impact of cultural industries and crafts, and analyze the importance of craft production in the Northern region of the state of Jalisco to be promoted to regional attraction for cultural, economic and social purposes.

2. Theoretical Background and Literature Review

Today globalization is present in most of the areas of daily life. This increasing globalization has tended to erode the sovereignty of nation states, especially in the economic field, but also in the cultural (Pescador, 2008). The relentless growth and advancement of technologies and the media have made the world seem smaller and smaller, and this seems to be standardizing on a single model. In this vein, many countries began to reflect related part of the globalized world to greater growth, but also rescue the importance of maintaining their national identity, that is, to preserve what differentiates one another, what makes them unique, rescuing their culture, their traditions, their roots.

A consequence of this awareness made by countries, it begins to rescue the national culture, yet it begins to give an industrial character to the production of the same, so the mid-forties, used the term cultural industry, to explain a change in the process of transmission of culture, which refers to the power of radio, film and television nascent (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1949). Moreover Cultural Industries are defined as a combination of creation, production and commercialization of contents which are intangible and at the same time are cultural in nature, considering that are protected by copyright and may take the form of goods or services (Piedras, 1994). The culture industry comprises usually the publishing, media, visual, photographic, cinematographic production, craft and design.

There is a cultural industry when cultural goods and services are produced, reproduced, preserved and disseminated as industrial and commercial criteria, i.e. serial and implementing strategies economic (UNESCO, 1995, 2011). UNESCO's action is essentially to build local capacity and access to emerging global markets through new partnerships, expert assistance, training, combating piracy and effort of international solidarity in all its forms.

Meanwhile, Zallo (1988) refers to the cultural industries as the set of industries that produce and distribute goods with symbolic content, conceived thanks to a job where creativity and imagination involved, organized by a capital that is valued and intended a consumer market for ideological and social production.

Classification of cultural industries according to Observatorio de Cultura y Economía (2011) is given in nine groups, which include:

1. Performing arts: Music, dance, puppetry, circus and opera,
2. Audiovisual: Film, TV and radio.
3. Creative services: architecture, advertising, services and culture,
4. Interactive Media: digital content, software, video games, animation,
5. Design: interior, graphic, fashion and jewelry;
6. Literature and publications: books, press and other publications;
7. Visual arts: painting, sculpture, photography and antiques;
8. Cultural heritage: Museums, libraries, archaeological sites; and
9. Traditional Knowledge: festivals, crafts.

Cultural industries have taken a big boom, both internationally and nationally. According to international studies developed by the United Nations (UN) in 1998 about the economic contributions derived from the cultural industry in Mexico, 1.5 million people made a living from cultural promotion, representing a contribution to the gross domestic product of 6.7% at that time (Alba, 2008). In Europe for example cultural industries generate 4.5% of European GDP, plus it is valued at 1.8 billion Euros that the European Union (EU) intended to fund cultural projects in the period 2014-2020 (Santander, 2012).

According to UNESCO (2004) on the scope of craft production as part of the cultural industries, some industrialized countries attach great importance to handicrafts; an example of this is found in Italy, which in 2001 was estimated 24% of companies were handmade. Besides, the export of handicrafts accounted for 17% of GDP. In Colombia the production of handicrafts produced about 400 million dollars and that exports of these items totaled \$ 40 million. Mexico, meanwhile, according to the Fondo Nacional del Arte (FONART), had 2.8 million full-time artisans, and besides more than 4 million part-time, making a total of 6.8 million artisans operating in our country with an average income 320 pesos per month.

In Mexico, for example, a trust to promote handicraft production, is given from the State that recognizes the great potential that the craft had as economic salvation, and that its work was extended to all places where crafts are produced, intervene where the production, financing, and in a considerable marketing thereof (Novelo, 1976). The craftsman, as he is known today, has its origins in European societies, which were developed as part of the company that specialized in different skills in order to produce both everyday items like luxury for the rest of society. Moreover in our country craft guilds existed in New Spain, who were rigidly ordered, in addition to the workshops of artisans were exploited by the Spanish, obtaining skilled Indian labor for free.

Novelo (1993) refers to was in the seventeenth century when traders had already engaged in handicraft production fund in cities, while indigenous artisans only limited to local or regional trade. Over time the interest in the objects produced by the Indians was rising, for what happened to be working the Autonomous Department of Indian Affairs (Departamento Autónomo de Asuntos Indígenas), and later the National Indigenous Institute (Instituto Nacional Indigenista) in 1948.

About the definition of craft is what is proposed by UNESCO (1995, 2001) "Artisanal products are those produced by artisans, either completely by hand or with hand tools or even mechanical means, as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most important component of the finished product" (...). Note that UNESCO is the only international organization with a global vision of the social, economic and cultural roles of crafts in society. As has been developing projects related to the momentum scale, in order to prove to the authorities of different nations, states and localities the priority it deserves in craft development programs.

Novelo (1993) refers to the term craft as a peculiar way in which man has used the instruments of labor to produce something, usually a commodity, an object of consumption, and that has been linked with other men, also of peculiar forms both in production and in distribution and changes in those assets. Meanwhile Pasteur (2004) mentions that traditional crafts are goods made for domestic consumption and / or ritual objects being carriers of a historical, cultural, or aesthetic utility and meet socially recognized function, performed by the craftsman, individually or collectively, through simple techniques.

The wide variety of criteria that can be used to define the crafts relates to normally it is spoken of them as a result of a process, and not as the process itself, (Novelo, 1976). It is considered important to explain the process of handicrafts production, since one of the criteria for defining the concept involves manual work in developing the product. In this vein, crafts made by the *Huichol*, one of the four indigenous groups living in the region known as the Gran Nayar, in the Sierra Madre Occidental, is one of the most representative of Mexico, for its beauty and colorful in addition to its symbols and designs dating back centuries.

The main handicrafts made by the *Huichol*, are tables of yarn, which are characterized by psychedelic designs that arise from hallucinations of artisans to consume peyote, masks and figures covered with glass beads, beads, representing deities and sacred animals. There are also woven yarn crosses, representing the cosmos with five courses, four corners, the four cardinal points, and the center. It also can be found hand embroidered backpacks, earrings, necklaces, rings, bracelets, etc., made of beads, while not constitute ritual objects are part of the *Huichol* handicrafts. This craft can be used as attractive and give rise to cultural tourism in the north of Jalisco, besides that it can take out its marketing, to contribute to the regional economy and primarily to the family economy.

3. Commercialization of Craftsmanship, Industry-Based View and Resources and Capabilities

Speaking of competitiveness is to talk of an approach from the point of view of competitive advantage. According to Porter (1985), to create advantage is necessary to perceive new forms of competition, and to take risks and make investments to implement them. Thus, the competitive advantage arises from the way companies organize and perform discrete activities, as companies create value for their buyers through the implementation of these activities (Porter, 1985).

The competitive advantage that Porter (1985) refers may be reflected in three key areas, cost leadership, differentiation and focus. Cost leadership focuses on low costs and low prices to attract more customers, so on this factor is important to consider that the *Huichol* artisans have the power to set prices for their crafts, which in turn, as they can be set as the low-cost producers and become leaders in this field. The differentiation is based on the delivery of products so that consumers find valuable and different.

The *Huichol* art forms reflect their religious feelings, which depict objects in a variety of objects, clothing designs, in building their temples and musical instruments, etc., which makes *Huichol* handicrafts readily distinguishable from other unique crafts, whether made in the same Northern Jalisco or the rest of the country.

Finally, the approach that meets the needs of a particular segment or niche market, which is important to consider because depending on to whom is going to be directed and targeted the craft product, it must be taken into account class elements, aesthetics and traditionalism (Novelo, 1993).

According to Peng (2006), the strategies of a company must be based on pre-planned actions and emerging activities that are not previously planned. However the design of these strategies must be determined by a review of strengths (S) and weaknesses (W), as well as opportunities (O) and threats (A) in the environment in which they operate.

Thus institutions like the National Fund for the Promotion of Handicrafts (Fondo Nacional para el Fomento de las Artesanías, FONART), the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, CDI), the National Council for Culture and the Arts (Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, CONACULTA), which are institutions dedicated to handicraft and cultural promotion in Mexico, with objectives to promote the craft, thus contributing to the family income of the artisans, through its human, social and economic. These are the ones to do this kind of strategic analysis to support the *Huichol* artisan.

Marketing strategies *Huichol* handicrafts should be conducted by the institutions already mentioned, besides the city and state authorities need to participate actively in this task as they are these institutions and government who have the knowledge and means to help the *Huichol* to position their products in the market. It is very important to take this into account as the *Huichol* tribe has no knowledge in areas such as organization, management, promotion, marketing, sales, etc., and because of this it is difficult for the *Huichols* to navigate the business world.

Using basic tools of strategy, it is easy to notice that the *Huichol* handicrafts to be one of a kind business have great strengths because of its uniqueness and originality. However, at the same time, they have major weaknesses in the sense that it is not given the promotion needed to enable people to meet and know in full the *Huichol* handicrafts, not only as a commodity but also as part of an ancient culture that has retained its identity despite constants and great changes that occur around it.

Moreover, the combination of unfavorable climatic and geographic factors in the region are the ones that limit to develop a true production potential, both in agriculture and in the livestock, etc. It is for these reasons that there is a need to seek alternative strategies for regional development. Among these strategies is clear that they can promote the commercialization of *Huichol* crafts, besides they can be used for purposes of attraction, to thereby promote cultural tourism in the northern part of the state of Jalisco, boost employment and improve living standards of the people.

One of the great opportunities of the northern region of Jalisco is that it is part of the route or path *Wixárika* North Zone, a project sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism of Jalisco (Secretaría de Turismo de Jalisco, Setujal) since 2008, to promote tourism and empower regional trade.

The route takes several days to be covered, but it is worth it and immerses it in their culture and the attractiveness of the environment.

This strategic analysis concerning *Huichol* handicrafts and northern Jalisco realize the great potential of the area as a tourist attraction and cultural concerns of the cultural richness offered by the *Huichol* tribe with creating crafts. Companies to enter the market begin to develop in an environment of competition and rivalry, so it should be considered competitors as a threat; it is considered the bargaining power of both suppliers and buyers and potential threats of substitute's product in the market (Porter, 1985). For example, the intensity of rivalry among competitors in the field of traditional marketing of handicrafts, is presented at the time of making *Huichol* handicrafts compete with other crafts of the region and to make it to compete with itself, because, to be competitors of equal size, the artisans have a vigorously fighting among themselves to place their products on the market.

Moreover, the threat of potential entry is present only among the artisans themselves and among people who know the *Huichol* community does such crafts and decide to enter this market to make marketing. It is equally necessary to consider the threat of substitutes *Huichol* handicrafts, but when viewing the traditional diversity of the region shows that the *Huichol* handicrafts is unique in its kind, so that it cannot be replaced a piece made by *Huichol* with one that does not contain the same aesthetic characteristics, quality and symbolic meaning that these crafts have. Concerning the bargaining power of suppliers would be considered at a time when they can potentiate *Huichol* handicrafts in the market, and they decided to raise prices of the materials from which handicrafts are made, as the beads, the yarn, the wax, etc.

Finally we consider the bargaining power of buyers because they are a key factor when establishing market prices of crafts, since many times the craftsman with the intent to sell and the customer to buy, begin a process of "bargaining" to reach a monetary settlement for craftsmanship, often acquiring it below its original price.

In another vein, a leader on strategy perspective suggests that differences in the performance of a firm are caused primarily by the difference in the resources and capabilities of the company. This is a strategy based on resources and capabilities (Penrose, 1959). Based on this theory, *Huichol* crafts production has countless intangible resources and capabilities. Firstly, because it has symbolic meaning besides reflecting *Huichol* religious sentiments of the people, making them difficult economic valuation, and secondly the traditional knowledge of *Huichol* artisans, which is a resource and unquantifiable capacity since given this knowledge that is transmitted generationally results in creating crafts.

No doubt this traditional knowledge adds value to the *Huichol* handicrafts, guiding it into a competitive advantage in the market. Furthermore, if added to this value is the uniqueness, rarity and difficult imitation of this craft, this competitive advantage significantly potentiates.

4. Proposals to Implement Strategies

It can be exercising leadership in marketing *Huichol* handicrafts, promoting plans to expand development opportunities focused especially to the growth of tourism in the region. Undoubtedly, this is where the involvement of state and local governments will become increasingly important, as well as institutions such as FONART, CDI, CONACULTA, the Directorate General of Popular Culture, etc. contributing to the region's artisans get that momentum that is needed.

According to Vargas (2012) the design and implementation of programs of cultural heritage and tourism should promote, preserve and enhance community cultures, folklore, art, artifacts, etc. As for the distribution and marketing of handicrafts in the region is important to highlight the potential of the route *Wixárika* to place and distribute the crafts in the market, this can be achieved by:

- Promotion of cultural tourism programs in the region, where it should notice the richness about cultural heritage and artistic concerns.
- Placing strategic sales points along the route *Wixárika*.
- Analyze the feasibility of outlets that are workshop and store at a time, so that in this way the customer can realize the process that takes place in the realization of the crafts and secondly to consume.
- Locate hotels and restaurants along the route *Wixárika* and book a space to exhibit handicrafts, so they are out of sight of visitors to the region and encourage purchase.
- Set stores dedicated solely to handicrafts.
- Take advantage of holiday periods, when the population of urban areas has the opportunity to explore the region, and conduct cultural festivals.

- Organizing handcraft fairs on weekends, exposing the craft to the population and encourage consumption. Moreover the strategies that can be followed at the state and national support of the aforementioned institutions and the State Government include:
- Promote activities related to advertising media, with reports and / or publications about the production and trade of handicrafts.
- Invite *Huichol* artisans of the regional and national handicrafts fairs.
- Invite the artisans to cultural promotion events.
- Reserve spaces, once a month for example in tourist destinations like Puerto Vallarta or Guadalajara, for *Huichol* artisans to exhibit their handicrafts to tourists and people in general, in order to raise awareness of their culture and bring their products to market in a direct channel, without intermediaries, so that the gains are actually with them.
- Organize expo-crafts and invite *Huichol* artisans to showcase their products.
- Seek partnerships with retail chains to showcase and sell *Huichol* handicrafts.
- Reserve a space at the airport in Guadalajara, to expose the *Huichol* crafts tourism both domestically and abroad.

Importantly, the proposed strategies are focused primarily on the allocation of spaces at different strategic points in the regional and state for *Huichol* crafts exhibition and thus encourage their commercialization. The aim is to present options that give opportunity to *Huichol* artisans to leave and disclose part of their culture and their roots expressed in their crafts. It should be mentioned that it is not proposed industrialization of the *Huichol* handicrafts since lost cultural value so.

5. Conclusions and Comments

In the analysis made throughout the article is seen how the cultural industries have taken a very important role in the preservation of culture and national identity. Besides that the momentum of these is a factor to consider as part of economic growth countries. Returning to the question posed at the beginning of the article, marketing momentum and *Huichol* handicrafts in the northern state of Jalisco can contribute to regional economic development? The answer to this question based on the perspective that gave us the analysis of craft production as regional economic factor is that it is an alternative, since the craft is an activity that employs many domestic groups within the community. Besides it can be seen as an alternative route for community development.

Moreover, the rural municipalities of the northern region of Jalisco state to be part of the route *Wixárika* have characteristics suitable to generate cultural tourism activities, which similarly, this tourism can contribute to the creation of new jobs, and certainly to some economic improvement of the population. And also it would give local artisans, positive benefits as it is a means by which to make known to their crafts and culture.

Undoubtedly, to achieve all this promotion and development requires the participation of local and state governments, as well as institutions dedicated to the support of indigenous peoples, contributing to the promotion of regional development programs that include crafts production and culture of the region as one of the main attractions. And that because these institutions are the means in which *Huichol* artisans can rely to sell their crafts, avoiding the involvement of intermediaries, it is extremely important their active participation.

Strategies proposed in the article are intended for purposes of regional tourism promotion, where artisanal exposure plays an important role, since given this promotion, is how you can raise awareness of the cultural richness with which account the northern region of the state of Jalisco. Moreover it is not intended to impose these strategies to the *Huichol* community of Jalisco. There are alternative distribution channels that *Huichol* artisans can use to promote their culture, their traditions, their ideas, their worldview and handicrafts that are so much characterized.

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