

A Panorama of Craft Products in Albania

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Abstract: *The aim of this empirical study is to give the latest panorama of artisan products sector in Albania through analysis of interest groups focusing on the marketing strategies of these products. Different from the previous studies, this time the sample is very large (133). So the panorama of this sector is clearer.*

The hypothesis of this study are;

- 1. Relatively few efforts to promote sector development*
- 2. Application of old methods of marketing on craft products, non-recognition of its basic concepts and application of successful marketing strategies*

Research methodology of data collection is divided in two phases;

- a. In the first phase to establish a general view of industry or handicraft products sector.*
- b. In the second phase of in-depth study on various aspects of this sector mainly related to the marketing and use of intellectual property as an element of marketing strategies.*

The study begins with an extensive search of secondary data related directly or indirectly with artisan products industry.

Key words: *Marketing, Craft, Albania*

I. INTRODUCTION

In order to achieve better results to see the situation of artisanal products sector in Albania, forms of marketing and their application in the industry, took drafting this article hoping to raise awareness of the goods coming from the intensive development of this sector as part of cultural and ecological tourism and to offer recommendations and potential solutions for many problems that exist in this field.

Our modest effort can be translated into these research objectives:

- Description of current situation of craft products sector
- Description of situation recognition and application of contemporary forms of marketing such products;
- Identification of existing problems in the sector and finding better solutions
- Reporting their findings based on research findings to improve the functioning of the industry through marketing and modern forms of approximation to international standards using elements of intellectual property in this sector.

Results were supported by previous hypotheses:

- Relatively few efforts to promote the development of handicraft products sector
- Application of obsolete marketing methods obsolete, non-recognition of its core concepts or applying successful marketing strategies

From the search resulted series of findings on the basis of which are drawn conclusions and made recommendations, presented in this article.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Being a field that is rarely studied before, and collection of data was quite difficult, collection of data passed in two stages: In the first phase created a general view of industry or handicraft products sector, while the second phase was studied in depth on different aspects of this sector mainly related to the marketing. The study started with a quest to expand the secondary data both inside and outside the country that directly or indirectly related to the craft industry products. The study of literature, conducted mainly through major search engines on the Internet, included some microstudies taken around the markets and handicraft industry; publication of various studies related to this area, newspaper articles, annual reports, craft associations, studies in countries the wider region and published on the Internet, etc. Primary data was collected mainly through a questionnaire prepared in advance that was completed through individual interviews conducted at points of sale of handicraft products, souvenirs shops and contact artisans or small craft undertakings. It is also realized a number of in-depth interviews with masters of the craft works, worker specializing in preservation and promotion of Albanian cultural heritage which could be introduced and a good portion of the products of genuine craft and non-leading organizations aimed at promoting the development of this sector.

II. THE SELECTION OF SAMPLE

From the specifics of the study of a specific sector of the industry as it is the crafts and products of selected samples was thought to be not a probability sample, but to be a judged sample. For in-depth interviews that were conducted were selected experts in the field of craftsmanship and master of these works.

To see the problem of marketing of these products, the challenges faced every day, knowledge about intellectual property concepts and their application was selected a sample of shops trading in these products that were mostly small businesses classified as souvenir shops and artistic products and some other stores retail trading in these categories of products. 133 interviews were conducted by completing a questionnaire prepared in advance, but were completed and open discussion, which was withdrawn opinion about key issues of interest and problems of concern.

III. RESULTS OF THE STUDY AND THEIR ANALYSIS

Results of the study of the interviewed sample showed that most traders and artisans and craft souvenirs are over the age of 40. Their education varies with a large percentage with higher school education, but also those with higher education constitute a significant part. Few artisans who have elementary education and they are mostly aged over 50, which have inherited the art of making craft products from their predecessors and make a living with them.

- It seems clear that establishing a business producing and selling handicraft products is made possible in most cases after 2000. Until 90' most master workers were "Artistic Enterprise". With the development of legal infrastructure and increase investment opportunities they revived their private businesses.

- The random legal form of these artisans is 'natural' and rarely these are organized into a limited liability company and not seen a further development of activity in the partnership or "joint venture". This shows that the craft sector has not yet received a proper form of business and has failed to develop a legal organization with all relevant rights and obligations. In most cases the activity is a family heritage being presented in the form of family business, as a result of family members being employed. In addition the average number of employees varies between two and three workers. Rarely face an enhanced activity on more workers. It should be noted that in the number of employers are included also the retailers aides and not only master artisan.

- With the migration of the population over the past decade the capital city of Albania, Tirana has become the center of the presentation of craft products. It should be emphasized that most of the dealers are supplied by such cities, but lately it is being felt the impact of imported products from abroad (mainly neighboring Greece) to craft souvenirs.

- With no less significance and it is problematic to say that the occupation of craft products from the Chinese market is dominating the albanian market. Feature of these imported products is the low cost of purchase and the many colors that represent a beautiful view of "lying". We emphasize "lying" because apparently are quite beautiful colored eye-catching but not genuine products of inherited folk crafts of our country. It is because of this reason that albanian artisans feel quite threatened by imported goods "craft" but which in itself are manufactured in a factory. Although 45% of respondents have commented that do not feel threatened by mime strength of these products is growing by huge steps taking the market by products of genuine mastery and the legacy of the Albanian people. In most cases we are dealing with a talent inherited generation after generation, talent that is not adapted to the evolution of time and preferences of potential consumers of these products.

- Usually these products are intended for local residents and for tourists. But a product can not be sold itself. Notions such as marketing and promotion of craft products, market research, trade marketing, protection of copyright, intellectual property creation. Even though these words may be recognized by artisans as part of the vocabulary of the Albanian language, in most cases they remain just words. Promotion of handicraft products not used by the majority of respondents and that small part of the 12% who used in most cases meant a spot in a press advertisement or other media.

- A very important phenomenon was that the artisans or traders of these products had no knowledge of existing or potential customers. This is because market research when applied meant the requests made by the consumers. No form of correct market research is applied.

- Intellectual property, a concept not known to this part of the respondents but that includes a percentage and a general phenomenon for this sector. Since the artisans do not have knowledge about forms of protection of their exclusive products, their development for the Albanian economy is still far from reality. Non-recognition of protection of copyright, and the absence of a mark "Made in Albania" for products destined for export, is a fact that deprives the progress of these talents.

- An important place on the progress of this sector must take the state to support programs or creating the appropriate legal infrastructure. About 91% of respondents had even minimal information about the implication of the state in this sector. Recent albanian government effort to help the artisans is the creation of a special law, but that is still in a draft stage.

- It is very important to note that artisanal products are still not treated properly. The value of handmade products abroad is considered quite large and financially compared with Albanian products. 64% of the group say that the prices applied for craft products are quite low and the report quality / price is not satisfactory, so that high quality craft products lost value because of lower prices (61%).

Which is the future of these products?

About 55% of respondents are not confident about the future of their activity even though a large percentage of them (94%) want to expand activities in the years ahead. Challenges and problems highlighted during the interview had to do with protecting their products and greater support from Albanian government.

IV. Results of the survey

Question 1

Age of respondents

Age	Frequency
Under 30 years old	4
From 31 years up to 40 years old	8
Over 40 years old	121
Total	133

It is noted that most of the respondents are between 31 and 40 years old.

Question 2

Education of respondent

Education	Frequency
8 years old	4
High school	119
University	10
Total	133

Most of the artisans or craft souvenirs traders have a high school education. Not small is the percentage of those with university.

Question 3

Legal form of business where artistic craft products are traded.

Legal form	Frequency
Physic person	132
Ltd	1
Partnership	0
Total	133

In most cases, artisans or craft sales activities are organized as physic persons.

Question 4

The time of the opening activity.

Start time of handicraftsman activity	Frequency
Before '90	7
1990 – 2000	11
After 2000	115
Total	133

Is the period after 2000 that has made possible the evolution and establishment of production activity and sales of handicraft products.

Question 5

The origin of the craft products traded.

Types of products traded	Frequency
Produced in Albania	129
Produced abroad	1
Both	3
Total	133

Question 6

Reasons of trading of craft products.

Reason	Frequency
Market with high profit	130
Products with high demand	1
Others *	2
Total	133

Crafts products are a particularity of every nation. This especially makes them very attractive. The fact that the craft sector is a high profitable market is one of the reasons for the creation of manufacturing activity and selling them.

Question 7

Forms of finding craft products

Channels	Frequency
Directly from the manufacturer	123
From wholesalers to retails	5
From other intermediary	5
Total	133

About 70% of craft products dealers have established direct links with their manufacturers. The distribution channel from wholesalers manufacturer then to retail manufacturer and to the final customer has not yet taken final form.

Question 8

The price of craft products is considered low, high or average?

Price	Frequency
Low	121
Average	11
High	1
Total	133

Question 9

Do you need publicity for your craft products?

Need for publicity	Frequency
Yes	128
No	5
Total	133

Have you ever applied to your business promotion forms of craft products?

Promotion	Frequency
Yes	4
No	129
Total	133

Have you ever done market research?

Market Research	Frequency
Yes	1
No	132
Total	133

Although most of the artisans or traders of these products think that promotion is essential folk crafts, 88% of them do not apply it. A fact to be noted is not the implementation of 'market research' (97% of respondents), which is quite necessary to determine customer preferences and possible identification of potential clients or keeping it current.

Question 10

How many employees do you have in your activity?

Employed	Frequency
Family Business (working family members)	5
1 to 2	120
3 to 4	8
More	0
Total	33

Craft parlour are seen as a family business where is reflected the legacy of this talent from generation to generation. However, in most cases (61%) average number of employees is 1-2 persons.

Question 11

Who are the target customers of craft products?

Category of target customer	Frequency
Local residents	1
Foreigners - tourists	1
Both categories	131
Total	133

94% intended to attract their own clients, which comprises both local residents and tourists.

Question 12

Do you feel threatened by imported products emulation?

Imitated products	Frequency
Yes	118
No	15
Total	33

Flux of imitative products in Albanian markets has negatively impacted Albanian craft sector.

Question 13

How do you think the future of this business?

The future	Frequency
Better	13
Worse	1
Threatened	1
No idea	118
Total	133

Question 14

Challenges and problems that face in this business?

Challenges and Problems	Frequency
No fair competition / Mock out	4
Lack of support from the Government	3
No response	126
Total	133

The last question of questionnaire aimed at identifying the challenges and problems faced by artisans or any member of the craft sector. Most of the respondents have not given a response.

However the rest identified two of main problems but not only for the sector such as lack of support from Albanian Government in creating an infrastructure and inability to be protect against multiple imitation and from unfair competition.

V. CONCLUSIONS

1. It is very dery difficult for craft products to move to the final consumer or buyer, because craft products sector does not have a complete distribution channel.
2. There isn't a system of integrated marketing communications to support crafts and souvenirs sector to reach the final buyers, both international and domestic.
3. All manufacturers of craft products and souvenirs, as well as all department sales of these products, face a lack of management, communication, financial, design and marketing and research capabilities.
4. There is no law to protect and regulate the artisanal sector, the production and sales of these products.
5. There are not correct local politics in support of this sector. But recently are created several important initiatives undertaken by several Albanian cities and regions in relation to the promotion of the artisanal sector.
6. Prices: In most cases, consumers of these products and especially tourists require either a small souvenir minimum prices to get as memory or something of value many times higher, but with high quality.
9. There is a lack of investment, particularly in the manufacturing sector of the artisans in terms of techniques and new technologies, as well as tools and equipment they use. There are still used tools that were used during the previous regime.

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