



Analysis of the marketing mix of souvenir products with special reference to wood crafts in and around Kaziarnaga National Park

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Abstract

Souvenir products play a significant role in linking tourism with local culture, heritage, and livelihood generation. Among such products, wood crafts have emerged as popular souvenirs in contemporary tourist markets due to their eco-friendly nature, cultural symbolism, and artistic craftsmanship. Traditionally produced on a small scale for domestic use, these products have gradually transformed into commercially viable souvenir items, especially in destinations with strong cultural and natural appeal. The region surrounding Kaziranga National Park, a globally renowned tourism destination, offers a favorable environment for the growth of such indigenous crafts. Despite these advantages, bamboo crafts from Assam have not yet achieved a strong position in the organized tourism souvenir market. This study aims to analyze the marketing mix of souvenir products with special reference to wood crafts in and around Kaziranga National Park. The paper focuses on examining the prospects and challenges of wooden handicrafts as tourism souvenirs through the elements of product, price, place, and promotion. A field survey was conducted among craftsmen selected using the snowball sampling method. The study evaluates the sustainability and continuity of crafts production, changes and innovations in product design over time, and the scope for viable solutions to the constraints faced by craftsmen.

Keywords: Products, price, place, promotion, souvenir

Introduction

Souvenirs are tangible items acquired by tourists as reminders of the places they visit and the experiences they accumulate during their journeys. Such items form an integral part of the tourism experience, as travelers often carry them back as symbolic representations of their trips. The desire to preserve memories of meaningful experiences encourages tourists to purchase souvenirs either for personal keepsakes or as gifts for friends and family members at home. Across the globe, a wide variety of items—including handicrafts, postcards, artworks, clothing accessories, ornaments, toys, food products, wildlife-based articles, and leather goods—are commonly sold as souvenirs at tourist destinations. Among these, handicrafts hold a special place due to their ability to reflect the cultural identity, traditions, and creative expressions of host communities. Crafts function as cultural messengers, representing the heritage, skills, and way of life of a particular region or social group. As souvenir items, handicrafts not only facilitate cultural exchange between tourists and local communities but also contribute significantly to regional economic development by generating employment and supporting traditional livelihoods. In Assam, craft production constitutes an important occupational activity among rural populations. Many households engage in various forms of craftsmanship—particularly wooden crafts—often as a supplementary source of income alongside agriculture. While certain traditional crafts are confined to specific communities, bamboo craftsmanship is practiced widely across the state, transcending caste and community boundaries. Assam possesses abundant bamboo resources, much of which remains underutilized despite their immense productive potential (Dutta, 2012) ^[2]. However, bamboo artisans face numerous challenges related to raw material availability, production processes, market access, and

pricing. In an increasingly globalized economy, the long-term viability of traditional crafts has become uncertain, compelling craftsmen to struggle for both economic survival and the preservation of their cultural heritage. Despite their skill and knowledge, external market forces continue to pose serious threats to the sustainability of Assam's rich craft traditions.

Review of Literature

Tourism is defined by the Tourism Society of England as the short-term movement of people to places outside their usual residence and work, along with activities undertaken during the visit. Purchasing souvenirs is one such activity. Although spending on souvenirs is relatively small, they serve as memory symbols. Souvenirs are not always small or unique items. Teseng *et al.* (2009) ^[5] examined souvenirs as a key factor in promoting sustainable rural tourism in Taiwan. The study noted that tourists are attracted not only by local landscapes and cultural activities but also by distinctive local products. The authors identified various souvenir types and factors influencing purchase decisions, highlighting aesthetics as a major contributor to tourist satisfaction. Assam holds a distinguished position in India for its long-standing tradition of artistic craftsmanship. Most of the crafts produced in the state rely on locally sourced raw materials and are shaped by the expertise of traditional artisans. These skills, passed down through generations, continue to support the livelihoods of rural communities. Colourful masks, wooden artifacts, cane and bamboo products, and fibre-based crafts reflect the creativity and aesthetic sensibility of Assam's craftsmen. Kalita (2025) ^[3] reveal that tourism acts as a major source of income and employment in tourism-related occupations. Thus the process of livelihood creation needs clear understanding from a holistic perspective. The 4Ps framework given by McCarthy (1960) ^[4] is used for analyzing the scenario.

Objectives

1. To study the marketing mix of souvenir products with special reference to wooden crafts in and around Kaziarnaga National Park

Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through non probabilistic snowball sampling procedure. A structured schedule was designed and data are collected through interviewing 50 craftsmen's engaged in wooden handicrafts production scattered in an around Kaziranga National Park. The analysis and findings are limited to the geographical areas of the study.

Analysis

Demographic Profile of the respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents provide an important background for understanding the findings of the study. The gender-wise distribution indicates that all the respondents (100 per cent) were male, while no female participation was recorded.

Age-wise classification reveals that a majority of the respondents (70 per cent) fall within the age group of 30–40 years, indicating that craft is largely practiced by individuals in their economically active and productive years. The age groups of 20–30 years, 40–50 years, and 50 years and above each account for 10 per cent of the respondents. This distribution suggests moderate participation of younger and older age groups, highlighting the need to encourage greater involvement of youth to ensure continuity of the craft.

With regard to income levels, none of the respondents reported monthly earnings below ₹20,000, indicating a basic level of financial stability among the craftsmen. The highest proportion of respondents (40 per cent) falls in the income group of ₹35,000 and above, followed by 30 per cent each in the income ranges of ₹20,000–35,000. This income pattern suggests that wood craft, when effectively practiced and marketed, has the potential to provide a viable source of livelihood. However, the variation in income levels also points towards disparities in access to markets, scale of production, and marketing efficiency among the craftsmen.

Products

The range of wooden handicraft items produced by the craftsmen reflects both creativity and market orientation. Among the various products, wooden rhinoceros figures constitute the most prominent item, symbolizing the wildlife identity of the region. These products are crafted in multiple sizes, ranging from small three-inch models to large pieces measuring up to two feet, and are generally finished in black and brown shades to enhance their aesthetic appeal and durability. In addition to rhinoceros figures, the craftsmen produce a variety of other wooden artifacts such as birds, elephants, tortoises, deer faces, and decorative wall hangings, which are inspired by local fauna and natural surroundings.

Apart from decorative items, the craftsmen also manufacture functional utility products including key ring holders and pen stands. These items cater to the everyday needs of tourists while simultaneously serving as souvenir objects. The diversity in product range indicates the craftsmen's ability to combine artistic expression with utility value, thereby increasing the marketability of wooden

handicrafts. Such products not only reflect the cultural and environmental identity of the region but also possess significant potential for value addition through improved design, finishing, and marketing strategies.

Price

With respect to the pricing of wooden handicraft products, the study reveals that craftsmen predominantly follow a cost-plus pricing method. This approach is considered convenient and easy to apply, particularly in the absence of formal accounting practices. Under this method, craftsmen calculate the total cost of production by combining fixed and variable costs and then add a profit margin, most commonly around 20 per cent, to arrive at the final selling price of the products.

However, the process of accurate cost allocation poses a major challenge. Raw materials are generally purchased in bulk, making it difficult for craftsmen to trace the exact quantity of material used for individual products or specific product categories. Similar difficulties are observed in allocating overhead costs such as electricity expenses and labour payments, which are often shared across multiple production activities. As a result, precise cost appropriation for each product becomes problematic.

Another important issue identified during the field survey is the neglect of certain implicit costs. Most craftsmen do not account for the imputed value of their own labour or that of family members involved in production and marketing activities. This omission leads to an underestimation of actual production costs. Despite variations in product size, complexity, and time involved, the majority of respondents reported maintaining a uniform profit margin of approximately 20 per cent across all product categories. This practice indicates limited price differentiation and suggests the need for improved cost accounting and pricing strategies to ensure fair valuation and long-term sustainability of wooden handicraft enterprises.

Place

The study identified multiple distribution channels through which handicraft products are marketed by the craftsmen in the study area. The most prominent channel involves direct sales to wholesalers or outside merchants. In this channel, traders place orders either through personal visits or telephonic communication and procure the products in bulk. The role of the craftsmen in this channel is largely limited to production, with minimal involvement in marketing activities beyond the transfer of finished goods.

Another important channel consists of direct retail sales to tourists and visitors from the production units themselves. Many craftsmen operate small retail outlets attached to their workshops, enabling them to sell products in small quantities directly to end consumers. This channel allows craftsmen to interact with buyers and capture the tourism-driven demand at the local level.

Institutional buyers also constitute a significant segment of the market, particularly for decorative items and souvenir products. These buyers often place bulk orders, providing a relatively stable demand for the craftsmen's products. Participation in fairs and exhibitions organized at regional and local levels was reported by only a limited number of respondents. Most craftsmen expressed reluctance to engage in such events due to the additional costs involved, including participation fees, transportation expenses, and logistical challenges.

Overall, sales through factory outlets and direct transactions with wholesalers and institutional buyers account for a substantial share of total sales. The preference for these channels reflects the craftsmen's inclination towards low-risk and cost-effective distribution mechanisms, even though such reliance may limit market exposure and opportunities for expansion in organized and wider tourism markets.

Promotion

The findings of the study reveal that promotional activities undertaken by the craftsmen are minimal in nature. Most craftsmen rely primarily on product display at roadside stalls located along highways, which naturally attract tourists and visitors passing through the region. Beyond such passive forms of promotion, no structured or systematic marketing or promotional strategies were observed during the field survey.

A limited number of younger craftsmen reported using digital platforms such as Facebook and Instagram for showcasing products, communicating with customers, and receiving orders. However, the overall use of social media and digital marketing tools remains sporadic and informal. There were no significant efforts related to branding, advertising, sales promotion, or participation in organized promotional campaigns.

While enquiring about the lack of promotional initiatives, the craftsmen indicated that their scale of production is relatively small and largely demand-driven. Due to the limited volume of output, they perceive marketing activities as non-essential, as most of the products are sold without difficulty through existing channels. This perception reduces the perceived need for investment in promotional activities.

Conclusion

The present study highlights the important role of wooden handicrafts as tourism souvenirs in and around Kaziranga National Park and their potential contribution to local livelihood generation. The findings clearly indicate that souvenir crafts are closely linked with the cultural identity, natural environment, and tourism appeal of the region. Products such as wooden rhinoceros figures and other wildlife-inspired artifacts effectively reflect the symbolic image of Kaziranga and therefore possess strong market relevance in the tourism context. An analysis of the marketing mix reveals both strengths and limitations in the existing system. From the product perspective, craftsmen demonstrate considerable creativity and skill by producing a diverse range of decorative and utility items. The combination of aesthetic value and functional use enhances the attractiveness of these products as souvenirs. However, there is scope for further innovation in design, finishing, packaging, and standardization to meet the changing preferences of tourists and to increase perceived value. In terms of pricing, the widespread use of cost-plus pricing reflects simplicity and convenience but also exposes significant weaknesses. Inadequate cost allocation, neglect of implicit costs such as family labour, and uniform profit margins across product categories result in underpricing and reduced profitability. These issues highlight the need for basic cost accounting awareness and training among craftsmen to ensure fair pricing and long-term sustainability. The place element of the marketing mix is dominated by direct sales through factory outlets, wholesalers, and

institutional buyers. While this approach ensures assured sales with minimal marketing effort, limited participation in fairs, exhibitions, and organized retail platforms restricts market expansion and brand visibility. Similarly, promotional activities remain largely informal and passive, relying on roadside display and occasional use of social media by younger craftsmen. The absence of systematic promotion limits the reach of these crafts in the broader tourism souvenir market. Overall, the study concludes that wooden handicrafts around Kaziranga National Park have strong potential as sustainable tourism souvenirs. However, realizing this potential requires coordinated efforts in improving product development, rational pricing practices, diversified distribution channels, and strategic promotion.

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