

Crafts market with identity in Atlahuilco, Veracruz, Mexico

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study explores the production and commercialization of clay handicrafts in the Indigenous community of Vista Hermosa, Atlahuilco, Veracruz, Mexico, where women artisans preserve ancestral techniques as a means of cultural expression and income generation. Despite their skills, they face challenges such as low earnings, limited market access, and unfair competition.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study aimed to design culturally grounded marketing strategies to enhance both economic and cultural sustainability. A two-stage participatory methodology was used: (1) identifying cultural identity elements through workshops, brainstorming, and SWOT analysis; and (2) developing marketing strategies based on cost and competition analyses. The findings revealed a strong link between nature, culture, and identity, as artisans draw inspiration from local fauna, flora, and Nahua traditions.

Results: The SWOT analysis identified key strengths (creativity, ancestral knowledge), weaknesses (organizational gaps), opportunities (expansion into local and digital markets), and threats (intermediaries and industrial alternatives).

Findings/Conclusions: Based on this analysis, strategies were developed using the 4 Ps of marketing: product (infusing identity elements), price (establishing a fair 100% profit margin), place (expanding distribution channels), and promotion (creating a collective brand and bilingual labeling). The study concludes that embedding cultural identity into marketing strategies enhances the dignity of artisanal work, improves income, and strengthens community cohesion. Identity-based crafts, when supported by community organization, training, and fair trade, can serve as powerful drivers of local development.

Keywords: Rural art, Identity elements, Market strategy, Indigenous women.

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INTRODUCTION

Mexico possesses a vast cultural diversity, reflected in 11 linguistic families and 68 ethnic groups. Its heritage is evident in artistic and cultural expressions such as crafts and gastronomy (Paz, 2015). In the state of Veracruz, this richness results from the mestizaje between Indigenous peoples such as the Totonacs, Nahuas, Otomíes, Tepehuas, and



Huastecos and groups from other regions, including Spaniards, Italians, and Africans (Cajal, 2023). This cultural and ethnic diversity is not only a historical legacy but also a source of creativity and resilience, expressed through crafts, ritual practices, and traditions that strengthen community identity.

The importance of handicrafts in Mexico goes beyond the economic realm; they represent a living cultural heritage that has endured modernization and globalization processes. According to estimates by the National Fund for the Promotion of Handicrafts (FONART, 2023), more than 12 million people are directly or indirectly involved in artisanal production, making this activity a cultural and economic pillar for Indigenous and rural communities. Likewise, UNESCO (2025) recognizes handicrafts as part of the intangible cultural heritage, as they are expressions that strengthen identity, social cohesion, and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge.

Cultural identity also plays a central role in the marketing of tourism products, as it is reflected in language, social relations, lifestyles, and traditions all of which are expressions of cultural heritage (Molano, 2007). In this regard, FONART (2023) defines handicrafts as an artistic expression rooted in community cultural identity, created through manual processes passed down from generation to generation, and directly linked to intangible cultural heritage. Today, the production of handicrafts is considered part of the so-called creative industries, due to the growing appreciation of objects with symbolic meaning and their potential to generate local economic development.

In the realm of public policy, the new National Development Plan (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2025) aligns with the principles of moral economy, substantive equality, and women's rights. Among the proposed actions are the recognition of Indigenous peoples, the promotion of productive activities, and the strengthening of cultural industries with an emphasis on protecting copyright and community intellectual property. These policies are consistent with international efforts by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and the ILO (International Labour Organization), both of which have highlighted the need to ensure that artisanal production takes place under conditions of equity and fair trade.

In this context, the community of Vista Hermosa, in Atlahuilco, Veracruz, maintains a deep-rooted tradition of clay handicraft production as part of its cultural heritage. However, it ranks fifth in the state in terms of marginalization (CONEVAL, 2020). Despite this, the community is rich in natural resources and scenic landscapes, making it a site with significant potential for artisanal and tourism development. The production and sale of native handicrafts are primarily carried out by Indigenous women, who contribute to household income while strengthening their identity and self-esteem. In this regard, the preservation and revaluation of handicrafts emerge as key strategies for local economic development and cultural continuity.

International experiences, such as that of the Kichwa community in Ecuador, show that strengthening commercial networks and social capital can position artisanal products even in international markets (Maldonado, 2015). These lessons reveal that the competitiveness of handicrafts is not limited to the product itself but also depends on organizational capacity, strategic alliances, and integration into contemporary market dynamics.

This study aimed to explore alternative market strategies for value added, culturally rooted handicrafts produced by the Indigenous community of Vista Hermosa, Atlahuilco, Veracruz, and to strengthen existing networks. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to the broader debate on the relationship between cultural identity and the economy, offering a case study that highlights both the challenges and opportunities faced by artisanal communities in contemporary Mexico.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research site and population

The study was conducted in the community of Vista Hermosa, located in the municipality of Atlahuilco, Veracruz, within the rugged topography of the Sierra de Zongolica, part of the Altas Montañas Region. Its geographic coordinates are 18.72° N and -97.12° W, and its high-altitude setting shapes both agricultural production and the daily activities of its residents. The community lies approximately 24 km south of Isla, one of the nearest populous localities, and about 131 km from Xalapa, the state capital. It forms part of a territory inhabited by Nahuatl Indigenous communities and borders municipalities such as Tlilapan, San Andrés Tenejapan, Tequila, Los Reyes, Xoxocotla, Soledad Atzompa, and Huiloapan de Cuauhtémoc (see Figure 1). This geographic location is essential for understanding the community's limited market access, as well as its potential connections to regional tourism corridors.

Vista Hermosa has a very high marginalization index, at 48.3% (CONAPO, 2020). According to the Population and Housing Census (INEGI, 2020), the community has 594 inhabitants, all of whom identify as Indigenous, with 87.37% speaking the Nahuatl language. This reflects a strong sense of cultural and linguistic cohesion. In this context, handicraft production is not only an economic activity but also a means of cultural preservation and intergenerational knowledge transmission.

The study group consisted of ten women artisans (see Figure 2) who balance domestic responsibilities with the crafting of clay items. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, as they met specific criteria: experience in the craft, generational continuity, and

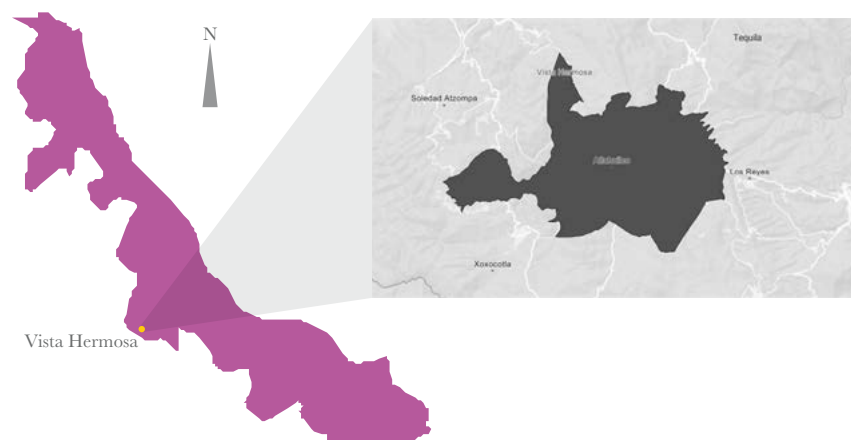


Figure 1. Community of Vista Hermosa, Atlahuilco, Veracruz, Mexico.

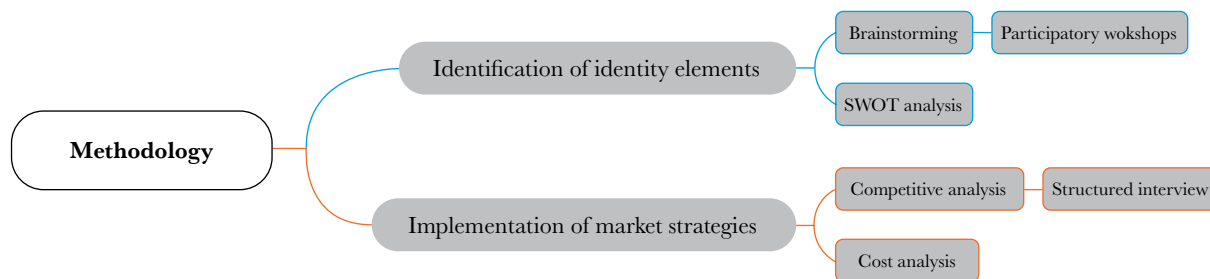


Figure 2. Conceptual Map of the Applied Methodology. Source: Author's own elaboration.

active participation in the household economy. Their knowledge is primarily transmitted orally and through hands-on learning across generations, ensuring the authenticity of techniques. The most common products include pots, vessels, and flowerpots, originally intended for domestic use or bartering with residents of neighboring communities. Today, these handicrafts are sold at local fairs, reflecting a shift from traditional utility to market value.

The study was structured in two methodological stages (see Figure 2), each using social research techniques adapted to the cultural context and involving the artisans as active knowledge holders.

Stage 1. Identification of identity elements

Between September and December 2017, three participatory workshops were held in Atlahuilco with the group of women artisans. These workshops were designed using a participatory action research approach, which allowed for the integration of their perceptions, knowledge, and experiences as key components of the analysis.

Two main techniques were applied: (1) *Brainstorming*, used to collect community perceptions (Geilfus, 2009), which guided discussion without limiting participants' creativity, allowing for the emergence of spontaneous categories related to cultural symbols, family traditions, and the meanings attributed to clay (García-Albarado *et al.*, 2018); and (2) *SWOT analysis* (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), used as a comprehensive diagnostic tool (Thompson *et al.*, 2012). The SWOT analysis not only helped identify internal and external factors influencing handicraft production but also made visible the women's organizational capacities and the threat posed by competition with industrialized products.

These participatory activities enabled the identification of cultural values, traditions, and symbols associated with artisanal production, which were later incorporated as identity elements in the design of market strategies. The active involvement of the artisans ensured that the findings reflected their perspectives rather than solely the researcher's interpretation.

Stage 2. Design of market strategies

From April to June 2018, a competition analysis was conducted during a collaboration residency at the Indigenous Development Coordination Center (CCDI) in Zongolica. This



Figure 3. Group of Women Artisans from the Community of Vista Hermosa, Atlahuilco, Veracruz.

stage included structured interviews with key producers and artisans, using a pre-defined questionnaire to standardize information and ensure comparability (Díaz *et al.*, 2013).

The analysis was complemented by a production cost study aimed at determining fair market prices (Mendoza, 2025). Fixed and variable costs were assessed, including inputs (raw materials), transportation, and indirect expenses, as well as the time invested in crafting each piece. Two pricing models were applied:

Classic Formula:

$$\text{Selling price} = (\text{Unit Cost}) \times (1 + \text{Profit Margin \%})$$

Where: PV =Selling Price; CV =Production Cost; Mgn =Minimum Profit Margin Percentage.

García's Model (2016), Adapted for Handicrafts

$$\text{Wholesale Price} = \text{Cost of Materials} + \text{Labor Hours} + \text{Expenses} + \text{Expected Profit}$$

$$\text{Final Artisan Price} = \text{Wholesale Price} \times 2$$

Where: PM = Wholesale Price; PFA = Final Artisan Price; CM = Cost of Materials; T = Labor Hours; G = Expenses; B = Expected Profit.

This second model incorporates the symbolic and cultural value of handicrafts, acknowledging that manual, non-mechanized labor cannot be evaluated using the same margins as industrial products. By including the cultural dimension in price calculation, the model aims not only to enhance profitability but also to dignify the artisanal craft and ensure its sustainability.

Ethical considerations and limitations

The research was conducted with a commitment to respecting the identity and autonomy of the community. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were fully briefed on the study's objectives, scope, and intended use of the results. Confidentiality was ensured, and audiovisual records and field notes were securely stored. Sensitive information related to designs or techniques considered part of the community's cultural heritage was not disclosed.

Among the study's limitations are the small sample size, characteristic of a case study, and the potential for social desirability bias in participants' responses. Nevertheless, triangulation of methods including workshops, interviews, and direct observation enhanced internal validity and allowed for consistent findings that may be transferable to similar contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study identified various identity elements that served as the foundation for proposing marketing strategies aimed at the commercialization of handicrafts in Vista Hermosa, Atlahuilco, Veracruz. The combination of participatory workshops, SWOT analysis, and interviews with producers from the Zongolica region enabled the formulation of strategies tailored to the sociocultural and economic conditions of the group of women artisans.

Identity elements

The participatory workshops revealed a strong presence of natural elements compared to cultural ones. The artisans repeatedly expressed their desire to represent the local environment through figures inspired by the region's flora, fauna, and landscapes, confirming the deep connection between Indigenous worldviews, nature, and artisanal production. This emphasis on nature does not imply the absence of cultural elements, but rather reflects a symbolic hierarchy in which the immediate environment is the primary source of inspiration.

Among the natural elements mentioned were the armadillo, rabbit, skunk, raccoon, squirrel, owl, temazate (a native deer), and coyote, as well as waterfalls, caves, and the Pico de Orizaba. The inclusion of local fruits such as pears, apples, peaches, capulín, and wild blackberries illustrates how the territory's food resources also become identity symbols. As for cultural elements, highlights included the patron saint festival, the Moros y Cristianos dances, traditional clothing, and rituals such as the Xochitlalli all of which are expressions of social cohesion and the continuity of Nahuatl tradition (see Table 1).

Beyond collective elements, the handcrafted pieces reflect personal styles that lend uniqueness to the work. For example, one participant specializes in clay animals, another creates self-portraits evoking daily life, and another focuses on figures of *nopales*. These individual expressions do not fragment collective identity; rather, they enrich it by diversifying the cultural meanings embedded in the crafts. This balance between community tradition and individual creativity emerges as a potential value added feature within the artisanal market.

Table 1. Identity Elements of the community of Vista Hermosa, Atlahuilco, Veracruz.

Natural elements	Cultural elements
Wild fauna	
Armadillo (<i>Dasypodidae</i>)	Churches
Rabbit (<i>Sylvilagus cunicularius</i>)	<i>Moros y Cristianos</i> dances
Skunk (<i>Mephitidae</i>)	Patron saint festival
Raccoon (<i>Procyon</i>)	Traditional clothing
Squirrel (<i>Sciurus</i>)	<i>Xochitalli</i> ritual
Snake (<i>Suborder Serpentes</i>)	
Owl (<i>Strigiformes</i>)	
Temazate (<i>Mazama</i>)	
Coyote (<i>Canis latrans</i>)	
Landscape	
Waterfalls	
Caves	
Pico de Orizaba	
Fruits	
Pears	
Apples	
Peaches	
<i>Capulín</i>	
Wild blackberry	

Source: Author's own elaboration based on participatory workshops (2018).

SWOT analysis

The group identified its main strengths as ancestral knowledge, creativity, community collaboration, and enthusiasm. Opportunities included job creation, design innovation, and access to target markets. Weaknesses highlighted were the lack of teamwork, limited production capacity, and the dual workload (home craft). Threats included unfair competition, marble scarcity, intermediary exploitation (*coyotaje*), and lack of government support (see Table 2).

This participatory exercise allowed the artisans to analyze their context in a structured manner and collaboratively identify potential solutions. The comparison of internal and external factors (see Table 3) highlighted the need to strengthen internal organization through clearly defined roles and to seize opportunities for commercialization at fairs and local markets. Simultaneously, it underscored the importance of formulating strategies to counter threats such as intermediaries and low-cost industrial products.

A key finding is that the lack of internal organization was recognized as a central weakness, but also as an area in which the artisans expressed willingness to improve. This opens the door to collective management training processes, which could enhance both efficiency and productivity.

Table 2. SWOT Matrix of the artisan group in Atlahuilco, Veracruz.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Internal analysis	Entrepreneurial women	Lack of organization in teamwork
	Communication among team members	Diversity of tasks (home–work balance)
	Ancestral experience	Limited production capacity
	Community collaboration	Difficulty in gathering materials
	Talent and creativity	
	Natural and cultural wealth	
	Hardworking	
	Availability of materials	
	Enthusiasm	
	Personal development	
	Artisanal uniqueness	
	Opportunities	Threats
	Denomination of origin	Climatic conditions
	Connections with INPI	Competition (similar and alternative products)
	Commercialization / target market	Paternalism
External analysis	Job creation in the community	Marble scarcity
	Development of new designs	Unfulfilled political and INPI promises
	Exploration of new materials	Intermediary exploitation (coyotaje)
	Sales at fairs	Lack of awareness in government departments
	History and tradition	Poor or deteriorated road infrastructure

Source: Author’s own elaboration based on participatory workshops (2018).

Table 3. SWOT confrontation Matrix.

Strengths	Strengths
Communication among team members	Lack of organization in teamwork
Hardworking	
Enthusiasm	
Opportunities	Threats
Commercialization / target market	Competition (similar and alternative products)
Sales at fairs	Marble scarcity and rising costs

Source: Author’s own elaboration based on SWOT matrix analysis.

Market strategies

Based on the SWOT analysis and competition review in Zongolica, marketing strategies were proposed using the 4 P’s framework:

- **Product:** The inclusion of identity elements in product design was recommended to increase symbolic value and reinforce cultural authenticity. Identity functions not only as decoration but also as a narrative accompanying the product.

- **Price:** Production cost analysis supported a 100% profit margin, acknowledging the cultural value of artisanal labor. This pricing model was presented as a way to dignify the craft, in contrast to intermediary pricing practices that often undervalue it.
- **Place:** A diversification of sales channels was proposed, emphasizing local fairs, partnerships with artisan shops, launching a digital sales platform, and exploring nearby tourism routes as spaces for direct marketing.
- **Promotion:** The creation of a collective brand was suggested, along with bilingual labeling (Nahuatl-Spanish), cultural explanations, and the use of social media to broaden outreach and highlight the identity dimension of the handicrafts offered.

Pricing example

To illustrate the process of fair pricing, costs and profit margins were calculated for two products from the artisan catalog: clay pots or jars (ollas or cántaros) and clay turtles.

For the pots, assuming a weekly production of 10 pieces projected over one month, the unit cost was estimated at MXN \$57.61 per piece. With a 100% profit margin, the suggested selling price was MXN \$115.22, representing a potential annual income of over MXN \$55,000 (see Tables 4-5).

The cost was established based on weekly production (10 pieces), projected for a month, and adjusted for a 6.31% inflation rate in 2018 (see Table 4).

Cost analysis and fair pricing

A detailed record of production costs including materials, labor, and time enabled the estimation of a unit cost of MXN \$57.61 per piece (1 kg clay pots or jars). With a 100% profit margin, the suggested selling price was MXN \$115.22 (see Table 5).

In the case of the clay turtle, with a weekly production of 20 pieces, the estimated unit cost was MXN \$32.77 and the suggested selling price was MXN \$65.53. Under this pricing model, projected annual income exceeds MXN \$62,000, with gradual increases expected due to inflation and wage adjustments (see Tables 6-7).

A detailed record of inputs, labor, and production time allowed for the estimation of a unit cost of MXN \$32.77 per piece (clay turtle). With a 100% profit margin, the suggested selling price was MXN \$65.53, projected over five years considering inflation and wage

Table 4. Direct cost of producing clay pots or jars.

Item	Quantity	Unit of Measure	Unit Price (MXN)	Monthly Total (MXN)
Clay	70	kg	\$3.75	\$262.50
Marble	70	kg	\$3.00	\$210.00
Water	10	L	\$1.66	\$16.60
Firewood	4	Bundle	\$12.00	\$48.00
Labor	20	Workday	\$88.36	\$1,767.20
Total				\$2,304.30

Table 5. Final selling price of clay pots or jars.

Year	Unit production cost (MXN)	Public selling price (MXN)	Minimum expected profit (%)	Annual sales (MXN)
1	\$ 57.61	\$ 115.22	100	\$ 55,303.20
2	\$ 60.18	\$ 120.36	100	\$ 57,770.68
3	\$ 62.87	\$ 125.74	100	\$ 60,354.00
4	\$ 65.69	\$ 131.37	100	\$ 63,058.91
5	\$ 68.64	\$ 137.27	100	\$ 65,891.46

increases (see Table 7). These calculations acknowledge the cultural and symbolic value of artisanal labor, setting it apart from the pricing standards applied to industrial products.

This analysis demonstrates the economic viability of artisan production and highlights the importance of incorporating cultural value into price setting. Recognizing the symbolism and tradition embedded in identity-based crafts prevents direct comparison with conventional products and reinforces their perception as cultural goods rather than mere commodities.

Synthesis of findings

Altogether, the identification of identity elements, SWOT analysis, market competition study, and cost estimation supported the design of market strategies tailored to the conditions and aspirations of the artisan group in Vista Hermosa. These findings provide a comprehensive view of their strengths and limitations, as well as the opportunities and challenges they face in marketing their crafts. Beyond the numbers, the results show that

Table 6. Estimated production cost of a clay turtle.

Item	Quantity	Unit of Measure	Unit Price (MXN)	Monthly Total (MXN)
Clay	80	kg	\$3.75	\$300.00
Marble	80	kg	\$3.00	\$240.00
Water	20	L	\$1.66	\$33.20
Firewood	4	Rolls	\$12.00	\$48.00
Labor	20	Workday	\$100.00	\$2,000.00
Total				\$2,621.20

Table 7. Final selling price projection for clay turtle.

Year	Unit Production Cost (MXN)	Public Selling Price (MXN)	Minimum Expected Profit (%)	Annual Sales (MXN)
1	\$32.77	\$65.53	100%	\$62,908.80
2	\$34.23	\$68.46	100%	\$65,721.55
3	\$35.76	\$71.53	100%	\$68,666.66
4	\$37.37	\$74.74	100%	\$71,750.74
5	\$39.05	\$78.10	100%	\$74,980.71

cultural rootedness forms the foundation for differentiation and competitiveness, while collective action and innovation remain the main challenges to long-term sustainability.

The group of women artisans from Vista Hermosa, Atlahuilco, Veracruz, demonstrates remarkable artistic skill in expressing their cultural identity through pottery. According to the differentiation manual between crafts and handicrafts (FONART, 2023), their pieces are classified as crafts, which reinforces the legitimacy of their work and builds trust in the quality of their products. This recognition has not only enabled better pricing for their pieces but also acknowledged the added cultural value they bring especially in works that depict scenes of daily life, local fauna, or flora. Cultural identity understood as the collective expression of language, social relationships, ways of life, and traditions (Molano, 2007) was reflected in each artistic creation, becoming a key differentiator from conventional, industrialized products or identity-less handicrafts. From an anthropological perspective, Clifford (1992) argues that culture is a web of shared meanings transmitted through symbols and material objects. In this view, crafts are not mere commodities but carriers of collective meaning, preserving the memory and worldview of Indigenous peoples. Similarly, Hall (1996) suggests that cultural identity is not a fixed essence but a dynamic process in constant construction. This helps explain how crafts adapt to new markets without losing their roots. This perspective is essential in analyzing the case of Vista Hermosa, where pottery remains deeply rooted in Nahua tradition while evolving to meet contemporary demands.

The findings of this research confirm what Rivera and Alberti (2008) assert: the cultural value of crafts is directly linked to their economic value. In Vista Hermosa, the recovery of identity elements fostered the creation of pieces with greater symbolic meaning, thereby strengthening perceptions of authenticity in the marketplace.

This relationship is also evident in international cases. In Argentina, the Chané artisans have increased the value of their wooden masks by refining carving and painting techniques inspired by local fauna (Benedetti, 2012). In Chile, the Folil Araucanía Cooperative established a successful marketing model through a dedicated store and e-commerce platform, revitalizing and promoting Mapuche culture while strengthening household economies (Abarca and Hunnesus, 2024). These experiences demonstrate that embedding cultural identity into design combined with collective organization can significantly enhance artisanal competitiveness. Each Indigenous community expresses its cultural identity through both tangible and intangible heritage, including landscapes, crafts, ritual practices, and traditional knowledge (Martín, 2003). However, much of this heritage is at risk due to globalization, which tends to homogenize cultural expressions. In this context, García (1990) introduces the concept of “hybrid cultures” to explain how cultural products in Latin America emerge from the interaction between tradition and modernity. From this perspective, crafts offer a space of negotiation between the local and the global, between community logic and market demands.

In Mexico, examples such as the Oaxaca craft market and the artisanal corridor of Metepec in the State of Mexico indicate that designations of origin and collective trademarks are effective tools for ensuring recognition and added value for artisanal goods. However, studies have also documented the risk that these benefits become concentrated among

intermediaries or a small number of producers, thereby reproducing social inequalities (Ramos, 2004). In this regard, the case of Vista Hermosa in Atlahuilco highlights the need to strengthen organizational and management capacities to ensure that the value generated by artisan production remains within the community rather than being diluted through intermediary chains.

The findings, supported by the identification of cultural and natural elements (García-Albarado *et al.*, 2018), competition analysis, and production cost study, enabled the proposal of strategies aimed at improving design and establishing fair pricing for the artisans. A clear example is the 1 kg clay pots: before the analysis, the selling price was approximately MXN \$50 per piece, but the actual cost calculation allowed for an estimated value of MXN \$115, representing a significant increase in household income. This aligns with García (2016), who argues that crafts should be valued differently from industrial or conventional products, taking into account their symbolic character and the manual labor involved. The concept of fair pricing, associated with solidarity trade, thus becomes a mechanism not only for profitability but also for cultural dignity.

The research opened new possibilities for the artisans of Vista Hermosa to defend the value of their folk art, recognize the importance of fair pricing, and understand the dynamics of local competition. Through this process, they were able to imbue each handcrafted piece with a cultural differentiator, increasing both its symbolic and monetary value. Furthermore, the study proposed advancing a marketing plan structured around its classic phases (Nuño, 2023), with an emphasis on two Ps: promotion and place, where the most significant gaps were identified. The development of a collective brand, the use of bilingual labels, and the exploration of new marketing channels represent decisive steps toward building a sustainable market for culturally embedded crafts from Vista Hermosa. The product is redefined by incorporating identity elements; the price accounts for both materials and symbolic value (Mendoza, 2025); place includes various sales channels, including digital platforms; and promotion focuses on communicating the cultural dimension of the crafts through both traditional and digital media (Mendoza *et al.*, 2016).

However, it is also important to highlight the challenges. Cultural globalization has led to the proliferation of low-cost “artisan-style” products that unfairly compete with community-based craft production. In addition, the absence of effective and sustained public policies fosters dependence on intermediaries or “coyotaje,” and leaves artisans vulnerable to the low prices imposed during purchase negotiations. In this regard, authors such as Zorrilla (2019) and Vargas (2021) emphasize the urgency of recognizing the collective intellectual property of communities to prevent the illicit appropriation of traditional designs and to ensure equitable distribution of benefits.

This discussion also aligns with ongoing debates about the role of identity-based crafts in rural and community tourism. According to UNESCO (2023), artisanal products should not be viewed merely as souvenirs, but as expressions of living cultural heritage that strengthen identity and social cohesion. In regions like the Sierra de Zongolica in Veracruz where there is significant scenic and cultural richness the connection between crafts and sustainable tourism offers a strategic opportunity to diversify income and highlight cultural

heritage, as long as it is developed with active community participation and grounded in principles of respect and equity.

Together, these findings demonstrate that integrating cultural identity with market strategies is an effective path to enhancing the economic viability of crafts, promoting the empowerment of Indigenous women, and preserving cultural heritage. Furthermore, the study confirms that identity-based crafts, when collectively managed, can contribute to community development and sustainable rural tourism, while also facing the challenge of adapting to contemporary dynamics without losing authenticity. The case of Vista Hermosa provides evidence that the articulation of tradition and innovation is possible, and that identity-rich crafts not only carry symbolic value but also hold real potential as drivers of local development.

CONCLUSIONS

This research confirmed that cultural identity is the key differentiating factor in artisanal production. The natural and cultural symbols of Vista Hermosa, embedded in clay pieces, strengthen community belonging and increase symbolic value, offering authenticity compared to industrial products. The results showed that incorporating identity elements such as fauna, flora, and ritual traditions transforms each handcrafted piece into a medium for transmitting cultural memory and fostering social cohesion, reaffirming the role of folk art as living heritage. The SWOT analysis and participatory methodology enabled the identification of strengths like creativity and ancestral knowledge, as well as weaknesses related to organizational structure and production capacity. This diagnosis facilitated the design of strategies to enhance internal capacity and diversify designs. The implementation of a fair pricing model, based on real production costs and symbolic value, proved economically viable by doubling potential income for artisans. It established clear parameters for valuing and equitably marketing artisanal work. Market strategies based on the 4 Ps (product, price, place, and promotion) offer a replicable framework for other communities, highlighting the creation of a collective brand, use of bilingual labels, and diversification of both physical and digital sales channels. It is concluded that the integration of cultural identity, community organization, and market strategies constitutes an effective model for strengthening the local economy, empowering Indigenous women, and preserving cultural heritage paving a sustainable path for artisanal development in the Sierra de Zongolica, Veracruz.

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