Craft Fairs: A Unique Way to Promote Cultural Tourism

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ABSTRACT

PURPOSE
Promotion of cultural tourism through craft fairs indicates towards unconventional promotion technique with which to achieve significant effects which is not possible with "traditional" marketing campaigns in case of rural crafts. This article aims to give an overview of the craft fairs and discuss suitability of this marketing approach for promoting cultural tourism.

DESIGN/METHODOLOGY/APPROACH
The research presented is an exploratory and empirical study based on data collected from the visitors of Surajkund Craft Fair with the help of structured questionnaires for visitors. Sample size of visitors was 500 but only 360 respondents responded seriously.

FINDINGS
It is argued, that unconventional promotion techniques are less popular and effective in comparison to mass media. The study reveals that unconventional techniques like organizing craft fairs are very effective for attracting consumers to buy products like rural crafts and to make that place very popular among visitors and to promote cultural tourism. Furthermore, for marketing rural crafts which require more demonstration and personal contact and to popularize those places which don't have any historical buildings and religious fame, these fairs must be more frequently organized at different places. There is a need of popularizing these fairs to attract more visitors from different places also.

ORIGINALITY/VALUE
This is an empirical study related to the question how craft fairs are helpful in promoting cultural tourism through popularizing rural crafts and traditional rural culture in urban market. This paper shows the effective use of unconventional marketing technique for the promotion of cultural tourism. This is relevant for the rural entrepreneurs, policy makers and visitors. By discussing the ways of promotion and results of using this technique, this paper provides alternative thinking to entrepreneurs for making their product popular in urban markets and to government to promote cultural tourism.

I) INTRODUCTION
The craft fairs of India play an important role in attracting tourists to the country to showcase the rich Indian culture. These fairs reflect the different aspects of the life of people of the country. The craft fair is the important one amongst the other fairs organized in India to promote the concept of 'mini-India'. Culture is that ingredient which makes a country different from others. As India is a land of festivals and fairs, they play a key role in marketing India, as a popular destination for tourists. These fairs attract visitors through their cultural events to encourage the sustainable and regionally balanced growth of the country. In the recent trends in India, consumers want to stay at urban destinations looking for the taste of rural culture. These cultural tourists have a higher level of education and spend more per day than others. That is why they are important for the country. Fairs and cultural events are an important element in the promotion of cultural tourism. They offer the tourist additional reasons to visit a place over and above the regular cultural product offered. These fairs offer a unique experience to visitors and help in attracting repeat visitors.

On the other side these are efficient ways for craftsmen to showcase their products to different markets and for visitors to interact directly with craftsmen and to get familiar with the culture of India at one place. Crafts persons are interested in participating in these fairs because it provides advantages of meeting specific target audience, personal and direct communication, the opportunity to know consumers, competitors and to meet new business partners. At these one or two weeks long fairs, skilled artists from all over the country display the rich crafts tradition of India in the typical rural setting and bring alive the age-old living crafts tradition. Organizing craft fairs is a non conventional promotion technique unlike other methods of promotion to promote cultural tourism. It is the useful way that makes destinations very popular and prominent on the map of world which attracts visitors from all over the world. Advertising through other media like direct mail, ads on television are expensive and relatively untargeted. These fairs are used to showcase the products, crafts and culture of rural India which are rarely sold on retail shops. This platform attracts visitors of different groups including women who are the major buyers in these fairs. These fairs can be used for mass marketing for promoting destinations so that people from India and foreign countries could buy rare original Indian crafts and have knowledge of Indian food and culture. Cultural activities (folk songs, folk dances and other activities) are being used to attract visitors specially youth from India and abroad. Therefore these are important tool in cultural exchange of the different countries and encourage cultural tourism.

II) Literature Review
Among the various factors influencing tourists to visit an overseas country is that of promotion/marketing activity by tourism operators and government tourist commissions in the destination country (Dwyer, Forsyth,
1992). Communication about destination in tourism is must and it should be consumer oriented. Kreck, 1972 made an attempt to use this behavioral basis in describing a possible total communication framework for the use of a medium for mass distribution in the area of tourism promotion. Earlier traditional marketing techniques like advertising have been used to promote the products but now other media are also in practice. Costs, market fragmentation, and new media channels that let customers bypass advertisements seem to be in league against the old ways of marketing. Relying on mass media campaigns to build strong brands may be a thing of the past (Aaker, Joachimsthaler, 1997). Moreover, companies should try to adopt new methods for promotion. Cultural and social trends can be used to improve communications with the customers (M. Smith, Reynolds, 2008). Even religion can play a significant role in influencing social and consumer behavior (Fam, Waller, B. Erdogan, 2004). Similarly, pervasive environments are important for improving tourism contents communication and have positive influence on the tourists' destination choice (Pantano, Servidio, 2011).

III) Important Terms

Some important terms which will be used in study are explained below.

**Cultural Tourism**-Stebbins (1996) writes, “Cultural tourism is a genre of special interest tourism based on the search for and participation in new and deep cultural experiences, whether aesthetic, intellectual, emotional, or psychological”

IV) Objectives

The study was conducted to meet the following objectives.

- To find out the reasons why visitors visit the craft fairs.
- To identify the role of different activities in the fair in promoting cultural tourism.

V) Scope of the study

The study was conducted in Surajkund. Surajkund lies in the Faridabad district just 8 kms away from the South Delhi, India. The fair is hosted by the Surajkund Fair authority every year from 1st to 15th February. Colorful Festivity is open to visitors from 9.30 every morning to 7.00 p.m. evening. Folk painters, metal workers, stone and wood carvers, tie dye crafts persons, embroidiers, lace makers, textiles printers, carpet and loom weavers, producers of silk fabrics, jewelers and sculptors- execute and display their skills in this fair.

VI) Methodology

The study is based on empirical data collected from Surajkund Crafts fair at Surajkund, Faridabad, India. The information was being collected through structured questionnaire from the visitors. Sample size of visitors was 500 but only 360 respondents responded seriously. The questionnaires were thoroughly screened to check for errors in the responses. Questionnaires with a lot of erroneous responses were discarded. All the responses were then coded. After that the data was tabulated in MS Excel. The data analysis was carried out using statistical software SPSS Version 14. Point Likert scale was used to know the responses of the respondents with the help of a structured questionnaire. The responses were measured in terms of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The following techniques have been used

- Histograms and bar charts.
- Testing of Hypothesis – Chi Square and Proportion Test.

VII) Research Question

The study attempts to answer the above question by analyzing the activities organized and the nature of product offered in the craft fairs.

VIII) Hypothesis

1. H0: There is no particular reason why visitors visit craft fair.
   H1: visitors visit craft fair for various reasons.
2. H0: Visitors don’t visit fair to buy rural crafts which are symbol of Indian culture.
   H1: visitors visit fair for buying exceptional rural crafts.
3. H0: There is no role of activities organized in the fair in cultural promotion.
   H1: Cultural Tourism can be promoted through activities organized.

IX) Research Finding

The data shows the majority of visitors go for entertainment and shopping that indicates the visitors’ interest in folk dances, folk songs local food and crafts. There is a clear indication that Fairs of such kind help people to understand and appreciate rural culture and craft.

**Null hypothesis that People do not visit for any particular reason is rejected and we infer that people do have various particular reasons for visiting the fair. Visitors majorly visit fair for cultural programs.**
2. Purchase of exceptional rural crafts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purchase of crafts from fair</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Routine items</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Crafts</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surajkund Craft Fair is known for:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafts</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A majority of the respondents (82%) visit the fair to purchase some exceptional items like rural crafts which are not sold in market. They are attracted towards the craft items; which are handmade and belong to rural areas of different parts of the country. They buy it because they reflect Indian culture. Only 18% respondents purchase routine products but those also belong to rural parts reflecting local art. In this way, these fairs help in promoting rural Indian culture also. Mostly respondents visit this fair for crafts (68%), 19% respondents visit for getting experience. Only 13% respondents think these fairs are similar to other markets.

Null hypothesis that visitors don’t visit fair for buying exceptional rural crafts is rejected and we infer that visitors wait for these fairs to be organized for buying the exceptional items which are the symbol of Indian culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Sample = 360</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>NAND</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food from different part of country is the important attraction of fair</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk dance attracts the crowd.</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk dance should be part of the fair.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign visitors also visit this fair.</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors visit to buy exclusive and rare things from different part of country.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fair has food stalls of different states which is the main attraction of fair. Visitors visit, shop and enjoy the local food of different states specially the theme state. That is how, they are able to know the different dishes prepared in the other part of the country. But as is seen above, while people enjoy the food, it is not the main reason for visiting the fair. Almost one third of the sample disagree that the food is the important attraction for visiting. Folk songs and dances are the glimpses of culture of any state and country. In this fair, folk dances attract the crowd especially young visitors. They participate and enjoy them fully. 60% of the respondents strongly agree to the statement that folk dances should be the part of the fair. 32% of the respondents also agree to the same. This shows folk dances are liked by everyone and are the source of cultural exchange.

The above results support the opinion that organizing such fairs attracts visitors not only from India but from abroad also. The activities organized in these fairs like food, cultural events and sale of rural crafts promote cultural tourism.

The study reveals some interesting findings which are summarized as under:
- These fairs are gaining recognition for promoting cultural tourism.
- These fairs create awareness about the culture of different states and India among visitors of all age groups specially youngsters.
- These fairs help the rural craftsmen to show their traditional art and to mark their presence in the urban market.
- The craft persons participate not only to sell the product but for the promotion of rural crafts and culture also.
- Visitors visit the fairs for various reasons like getting cultural experience, food and shopping the exceptional rural crafts which play a major role in cultural tourism.
- The visitors visit the fair to buy exclusive and rare products at reasonable price.
- These fairs help to attract Indian as well as foreign visitors to the destination.

X) Implications
• Culture promotion is the main objective of these fairs and authorities can use this promotion technique to promote cultural tourism in India.

XI) Suggestions

Some suggestions on the basis of study are quoted here.
• The participation in these fair require regress groundwork. That means choosing appropriate quality products, presenting them correctly by using appropriate packaging and providing adequate promotional material.
• These fairs should be organized at different places in the country so that visitors could visit those places in India. This will help to promote culture tourism in the different parts of the country.
• These fairs should be organized more frequently to establish a smooth link between the rural crafts persons and urban consumers. It will generate double benefit in terms of more profit to participants and more availability of crafts to urban consumers.
• More promotional efforts are required to promote these fairs. More coverage by audio-visual media at national level is required because this is the media of masses. That will attract visitors as well as crafts persons.
• Trade support institutions can do much to organize and coordinate these types of fairs.
• More facilities are required for the crafts persons.
• Priority should be given to hygiene and quality in providing space to food stalls.

However, it is important to understand the long term objective of organizing these crafts fairs. It should not be merely participation for displaying and disposing of stock but a communication technique to give a view about the culture of the country. It is clear that participation in fairs can have enormous benefits for craftsmen as well as for the authorities by promoting their destination for showcasing the culture. These fairs really reflect the whole India at one place which is the main attraction for the Indian and foreign visitors.

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