



TEXTILE SOUVENIRS FROM SERBIA AS A TOURISM TREND

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ABSTRACT: *In this paper, the author examines the presentation of textile souvenirs from Serbia as an important and emerging trend in tourism, with the intention of highlighting the aesthetic and cultural value of these items. These souvenirs attract significant attention from visitors who travel with the aim of learning about and experiencing the cultural diversity of other regions. The focus of the research is on textile souvenirs that are frequently found at various tourist destinations, such as fairs, festivals, restaurants, hotels, and other venues that attract both domestic and international tourists. The author provides a brief overview of the main types of textile souvenirs produced in Serbia, paying particular attention to their traditional and artisanal characteristics. Additionally, the paper touches on notable tourism-related events in the region where these souvenirs are prominently featured. Through the use of economic indicators, the paper explores the integration of textile souvenirs within the broader framework of the marketing mix. In economic and marketing theory, the four primary components of the marketing mix are product, price, promotion, and place (often referred to as the "4Ps"). In the context of tourism, three additional components are frequently added: people, process (of service delivery), and physical evidence/environment. Together, these seven elements form what is known as the "7Ps" of the extended marketing mix, which is particularly relevant for service-based industries such as tourism. The concept of benchmarking in tourism is also addressed, with a comparative analysis of successful examples of souvenir marketing and sales in Serbia and neighboring countries. This comparative approach provides insight into best practices and effective strategies for enhancing the visibility and economic potential of textile souvenirs within the tourism sector. Furthermore, emphasizes the importance of preserving traditional customs and intangible cultural heritage through the use of authentic Serbian motifs and symbols in the design of tourist souvenirs. This not only supports local craftsmanship but also strengthens cultural identity and differentiation in a competitive global tourism market. The empirical part of the paper is based on survey research conducted among adult respondents. The study investigates their perceptions and attitudes regarding textile tourist souvenirs, the relationship between souvenirs and traditional textile crafts, and the perceived connection between these souvenirs and the elements of the marketing mix. The ultimate goal is to explore how textile souvenirs can contribute to the overall profitability and sustainability of tourism in Serbia.*

Keywords: *textile, souvenirs, tourism, marketing mix.*



TEKSTILNI SUVENIRI IZ SRBIJE KAO TURISTIČKI TREND

APSTRAKT: U ovom radu autor se bavi predstavljanjem tekstilnih suvenira iz Srbije kao značajnog turističkog trenda u nameri da prikaže lepotu ovih predmeta koji privlače dužnu pažnju posetilaca koji putuju radi sticanja saznanja o različitosti kultura na drugim područjima. Akcenat u radu je na tekstilnim suvenirima koje se često pojavljuju na turističkim destinacijama tj. odredištima, sajmovima, festivalima, restoranima, hotelima... Autor ukratko opisuje vrste tekstilnih suvenira koje se izrađuju u Srbiji, osvrće se na turističke skupove u ovom regionu. Kroz ekonomske pokazatelje prikazuje prožimanje tekstilnih suvenira kroz elemente marketing miksa. U ekonomiji se primenjuju četiri elementa marketing miksa i to: proizvod, cena, promocija i prodaja koji se često nazivaju i „4P“. U turizmu se pored ovih elemenata primenjuju još tri: ljudi, procesi pružanja usluga i očuvanje okoline i često se svi zajedno nazivaju „7P“ elementi marketing miksa. Benčmarking u turizmu predstavljen je kroz upoređivanje dobrih primera prodaje suvenira u Srbiji i okolnim zemljama. Takođe, autor se zalaže za očuvanje starih običaja kroz predstavljanje raznih motiva iz Srbije na turističkim suvenirima. Anketno istraživanje predstavljeno u radu sprovedeno je ispitivanjem punoletnih osoba. Sagledani su njihovi stavovi o pojmu tekstilnih turističkih suvenira; povezanosti suvenira sa tekstilnim zanatima; stavovi o korelaciji između turističkih suvenira posmatrani kroz elemente marketing miksa u cilju povećanja profita od turizma.

Ključne reči: tekstil, suveniri, turizam, marketnig miks.

1. INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this work was a comprehensive research of the concept, origin and application of textile souvenirs and its connection with the development of tourism in Serbia, as well as identifying the limiting factors of its development and formulating recommendations for potential policy holders of tourism development. In this paper, the author deals with the presentation of the history of the creation of souvenirs and textile souvenirs, as well as the economic relationship between them, viewed through the seven elements of the marketing mix in tourism. The author examines the ways of making textile souvenirs, the need for souvenirs and their distribution. It also advocates for the preservation of old handicrafts and small workshops as a significant tourist potential. Trends in tourism are constantly changing, especially fashion. Fast fashion is based on the constant creation of new styles based on them and sold at very low prices. It is based on cheap products.

The aim of the work is to point out the possibility of providing efforts to the development of tourism through constant innovation of the textile process in terms of making small but necessary products that tourists are happy to buy as a memory of their stay in another place or as a sign of the attention they pay by giving them to friends and relatives. The author



starts from the initial hypothesis of whether there is a correlation, i.e. interdependence between textile souvenirs and the development of tourism in Serbia. For this purpose, a statistical survey was carried out using the method of surveying one hundred random respondents on three important questions. The paper will also show several photos of tourist souvenirs that depict the large offer of these products in all touristic places in Serbia and in many smaller localities that have the pretension of becoming such.

2. SOUVENIRS AND TOURISM

The word *souvenir* originates from French, derived from the verb *se souvenir*, meaning “to remember.” In its original sense, a souvenir is something that serves as a reminder—of a place, an experience, or a person. More broadly, it refers to a keepsake or memory. The Latin root *subvenire*—meaning “to come to mind” or “to assist”—also reflects this concept of evoking remembrance. The term has been adopted into many languages, including Serbian, with little alteration. Today, it generally refers to an item brought back from a trip or meaningful location, serving as a memento of that experience. Souvenirs are popular among tourists who purchase or receive them as gifts to commemorate a journey or a special moment. These objects often evoke memories of the trip itself, the person who gave the gift, or a significant experience during travel. Souvenirs are typically small and portable, making them easy to pack and carry. They are closely tied to specific tourist destinations and often depict local landmarks, cultural symbols, or traditional motifs. While their material value may be modest, they often carry deep sentimental significance—especially when given by friends or loved ones. The tradition of collecting souvenirs dates back to ancient times. In early civilizations such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, and those in Central and South America, as well as Ancient Greece and Rome, people would bring back sacred items or symbolic figures from pilgrimages and visits to temples. In Ancient Egypt, visitors to the pyramids would often take small pieces of stone as keepsakes. In Greece and Rome, souvenirs included items bearing the images of gods, heroes, or notable monuments. During the Middle Ages, souvenirs were primarily religious in nature. Pilgrims returning from holy sites often carried relics, crosses, or medallions believed to possess spiritual power, which they kept as protective charms. With the onset of maritime trade and global exploration in the modern era, souvenirs began to include exotic items such as feathers, spices, seashells, silk, and textiles brought from distant lands. In the 20th century, the rise of mass tourism transformed souvenirs into widely available commercial products—postcards, magnets, T-shirts, miniature replicas of famous landmarks, and more. Today, souvenirs are found everywhere—from museum gift shops and airports to local markets and online platforms. The production and exchange of souvenirs have fostered intercultural connections, contributing to globalization, economic growth, and career opportunities in creative and tourism-related industries. Understanding the cultural relevance and global role of souvenirs highlights the importance of adaptability and cultural awareness in tourism. These qualities are essential for developing global competence and advancing careers in an increasingly interconnected world.



3. TEXTILE SOUVENIRS

Textile souvenirs come in a variety of forms, functions, and styles, yet they all share a common feature: they represent a fusion of art, craftsmanship, and local tradition. Their diversity is influenced by geography, culture, and methods of production. Textile souvenirs are particularly popular due to their portability, practicality, and cultural significance. These are fabric-based items sold as keepsakes from travels or cultural events, often featuring local motifs, symbolic patterns, embroidery, or traditional designs. They range from wearable items such as T-shirts and blouses bearing the name of a city, region, or country, to handcrafted garments adorned with ethnic embroidery or folk patterns. Textile souvenirs may also include lace tablecloths, handbags, shopping totes, wallets, and traditional footwear like *opanci*. These products are typically created in an ethnic style, reflecting regional traditions and designs, and are intended for everyday use. Other forms of textile souvenirs include fabric dolls and children's toys, towels, kitchen cloths, scarves, and caps featuring local symbols, national flags, names of tourist destinations, or traditional ornaments. They can be found at almost every tourist destination. What makes these souvenirs particularly valuable is their role in preserving and transmitting tradition through patterns, colors, and techniques. Many are handmade, supporting local artisans and connecting past and present by merging cultural heritage with contemporary design. These diverse textile items are more than just memorabilia—they act as cultural ambassadors, telling the story of a people, their values, and artistic heritage. Many of the techniques used in producing textile souvenirs are rooted in ancient customs. Embroidery has for centuries been used to decorate clothing, towels, and table linens. Rug weaving, such as the renowned *Pirot kilim*, is passed down through generations and is recognized as part of UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage. Specific colors and patterns often indicate the region, social status, or even marital status of the person wearing the garment. By purchasing and using these souvenirs, tourists and locals alike contribute to the preservation of traditional crafts that might otherwise disappear. Textile souvenirs frequently incorporate elements of folk art—such as symmetrical patterns, stylized animals, plants, geometric shapes, and scenes from folklore. Creating these items requires skill, patience, and creativity. In modern practice, designers often collaborate with local artisans to blend traditional techniques with contemporary aesthetics, resulting in objects that are functional, visually appealing, and culturally meaningful. These textile creations can be used in everyday life, but also stand as artistic expressions. For tourists, they serve as a tangible connection to the places they've visited and a way to honor and promote local culture. When paired with modern fashion, textile souvenirs can even become a part of one's personal identity. *Figure 1 shows traditional Serbian folk attire photographed on the Bridge of Love, located in Vrnjačka Banja, one of Serbia's most well-known tourist destinations.*



Figure 1: Serbian Folk Costume

One of the most well-known textile souvenirs from Serbia is the Pirot kilim, which serves as both a tourist and textile symbol of the country. It is handmade using a knot-free weaving technique and is recognizable by its geometric patterns and vibrant colors. Each pattern carries symbolic meaning, often related to fertility, protection of the home, or nature. These kilims are used as floor coverings, wall decorations, or in smaller formats as decorative souvenirs. Serbia has a rich tradition of textile craftsmanship and handmade art, passed down through generations over the centuries. Textile souvenirs from Serbia are authentic, handcrafted items that reflect the nation's cultural heritage, folk customs, and distinctive national symbols.



Figure 2: Pirot Kilim

Textile souvenirs represent a unique blend of art, craftsmanship, and local tradition. In Serbia, they are not only popular tourist items but also important cultural artifacts that carry the legacy of centuries-old textile traditions. Each region in Serbia boasts distinctive embroidery patterns, weaving techniques, and color schemes, reflecting the diverse cultural landscape of the country. One of the most iconic textile souvenirs is the Pirot

kilim, a handwoven rug known for its vibrant colors and geometric motifs. Each pattern on the kilim holds symbolic meaning, often connected to fertility, protection, or nature. The Pirot kilim is recognized both as a tourist symbol and as an authentic expression of Serbian textile craftsmanship. Traditional embroidery plays a crucial role in Serbian textile heritage. Regions such as eastern Serbia, around Negotin, and southern Serbia, near Leskovac, are renowned for their distinctive floral and geometric embroidery used on garments and household textiles. These traditional motifs continue to inspire contemporary designs, bridging the gap between past and present. Additionally, handmade lace, such as the famous Pirot lace and lace from other regions, exemplifies the skill and artistry passed down through generations. Lace is widely used to adorn clothing and household items and has become a sought-after souvenir symbolizing elegance and craftsmanship. Serbian folk costumes also influence the design of textile souvenirs. Items such as vests, traditional footwear called *opanci*, scarves, and belts are frequently reproduced as souvenirs or integrated into ethnic fashion collections. These items serve as ambassadors of Serbian culture, enabling both tourists and locals to engage with and appreciate the country's rich heritage.



Figure 3: Lace embroidery on traditional folk costume from Šumadija

In addition to traditional folk costumes, the Pirot kilim, embroidery, and lace, textile products that vividly represent the country or region where they are made are also very popular among tourists in Serbia. These are often items used to carry light belongings that can be worn daily and everywhere, such as decorative handbags and backpacks. They form part of the wardrobe that tourists purchase as an expression of their enjoyment of their stay in that place, but also as a way to display personal achievement through visiting various tourist destinations. Such items serve as a symbol of status and travel bragging rights, especially in areas where travel is less common. Figure 4 shows textile souvenirs – decorative textile handbags.

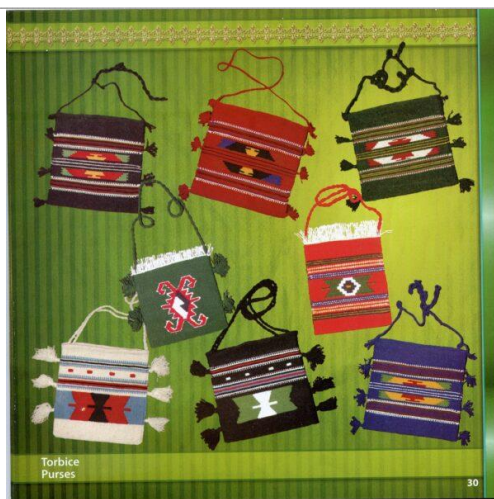


Figure 4: Textile handbags.

The term **benchmark** or **best practice** is commonly used in economics and management. Essentially, it represents a comparison of a social or natural category with the best in the same class. This involves observing certain textile souvenirs at tourism events and applying successful experiences with the aim of strengthening tourism potential, increasing visitor numbers, and consequently boosting tourism revenue. The following images show details of textile souvenirs from Serbia and neighboring countries.



Figure 5: Textile souvenirs in a souvenir shop in Kopaonik



Figure 6: Textile souvenirs at the Surva 2025 festival in Pernik, Bulgaria



Figure 7: Textile souvenirs at the square in Timișoara, Romania



Figure 8: Tourist attraction in Edirne, Turkey. Sale of textile souvenirs at the market



4. TEXTILE SOUVENIRS THROUGH THE PRISM OF THE 7P MARKETING MIX ELEMENTS

With the growth of tourism and globalization, textile souvenirs have experienced significant transformations in both their design and the methods of production and distribution. Contemporary trends present new challenges but also create opportunities to preserve tradition and foster creativity. Modern technologies enable fast and cost-effective mass production of textile souvenirs, including printed T-shirts, bags, and other tourist-themed items. However, mass production often compromises authenticity and quality. Conversely, handmade textile souvenirs remain symbols of superior quality, uniqueness, and cultural significance. Their production requires considerable time, effort, and craftsmanship, which justifies their higher price and increases their appeal among connoisseurs and enthusiasts of traditional crafts. Many countries, Serbia included, have established initiatives and programs to support artisans and masters of traditional textile techniques. Tourism organizations frequently promote handmade souvenirs as integral components of a destination's cultural identity. The marketing mix concept, particularly the 7P model, is essential in service sectors like tourism. It comprises seven fundamental elements necessary for effective product positioning and market penetration: Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence. Evaluating textile souvenirs through the lens of these elements provides valuable insights into how these authentic products can be successfully marketed while safeguarding their cultural heritage. Textile souvenirs represent products that blend tradition, art, and cultural identity. Their authenticity, craftsmanship quality, and symbolic motifs make them particularly appealing to consumers. Whether it is handwoven kilims, embroidered folk costumes, or contemporary fashion items inspired by traditional designs, these products must meet both aesthetic and emotional expectations of buyers seeking to bring home a tangible piece of culture. Pricing depends on the complexity of production, materials used, and level of authenticity. Handmade items typically command a premium due to the skill and time invested, whereas mass-produced souvenirs tend to be more affordable. Setting the right price is crucial to balance competitiveness with sustainable production practices. The place of sale plays a pivotal role in the accessibility and visibility of textile souvenirs. Ideal venues include tourist hotspots, specialty souvenir shops, fairs, ethnographic villages, and online platforms. Presence in locations frequented by tourists significantly enhances sales potential. Promotion encompasses all activities aimed at informing and motivating prospective customers. For textile souvenirs, effective promotion involves storytelling about the origin, symbolism, and traditional craftsmanship behind the products. This can be achieved through social media, tourist guides, craft fairs, and cultural events. Demonstrations of the production process and involvement of artisans in promotional activities further reinforce product authenticity. People are the cornerstone of successful sales — artisans crafting the souvenirs, sales personnel, and tourist guides who narrate the products' stories. Their expertise, enthusiasm, and engagement profoundly impact customer experience and elevate the perceived value of the souvenirs. The production and distribution process encompasses traditional techniques, quality assurance, and

presentation strategies. A transparent, well-managed process ensures authenticity and quality, fostering consumer trust. Physical evidence refers to packaging, labeling that provides origin and authenticity information, and the aesthetic appeal of the point of sale. Attractive, culturally resonant packaging, certificates, and authenticity seals enhance consumer confidence and emphasize the souvenirs' cultural significance. By harmonizing these elements of the marketing mix, producers and retailers can effectively position textile souvenirs in the market, preserving cultural heritage while promoting sustainable craftsmanship. Implementing the 7P marketing mix framework offers a comprehensive approach for positioning textile souvenirs, optimizing their market presence, and maximizing their appeal and value to consumers.

5. STATISTICAL RESEARCH

The primary method for data collection in this study was a survey questionnaire. During the questionnaire design, special attention was paid to the clarity and comprehensibility of the questions for a broad audience. A total of 100 respondents participated and answered the questions. Regarding the sampling method, a random sample was used in the research. The following tables and charts present the results and provide an interpretation of the survey findings.

In response to the question, "Do you travel frequently?" 73% of respondents answered YES, while 27% answered NO. Chart 1 illustrates the distribution of answers to this question in relative terms.

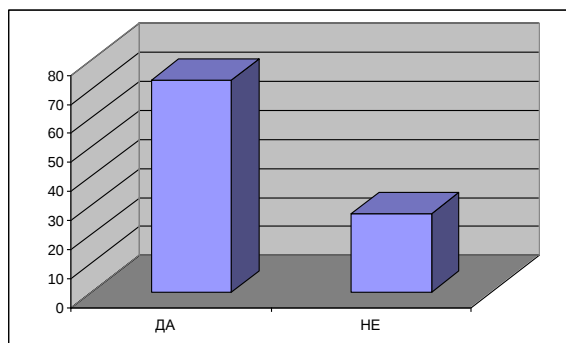


Chart 1: Response to the question: Do you travel frequently?

To the next question, "Do you buy textile souvenirs?" 55% of respondents answered YES, while 45% answered NO. Chart 2 shows the distribution of responses to this question in relative values.

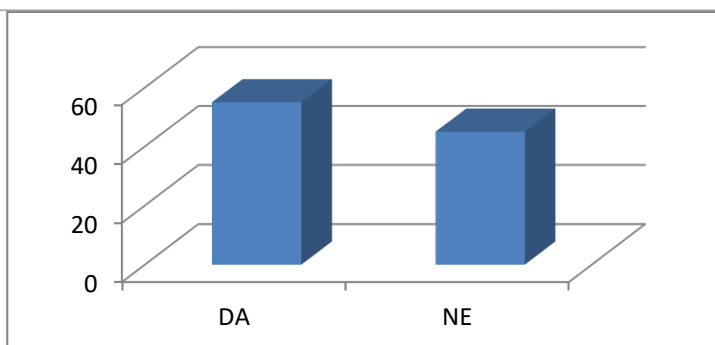


Chart 2: Response to the question: Do you buy textile souvenirs?

To the question, "Do you believe that textile souvenirs play a significant role in the development of tourism in Serbia?" only 12% of respondents answered NO, while 88% answered YES. Chart 3 presents the distribution of responses to this question in relative terms.

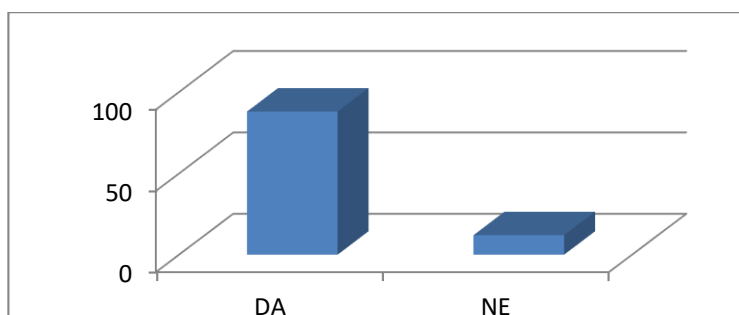


Chart 3: Response to the question: Do you believe that textile souvenirs play a significant role in the development of tourism in Serbia?

6. CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this study was to address the hypothesis: "Is there a correlation between textile souvenirs and tourism development in Serbia?" Based on the data collected through the survey and a thorough review of relevant literature, it can be confidently stated that a strong connection exists between these two phenomena. Notably, 88% of respondents affirmed the significance of textile souvenirs in tourism development. Furthermore, approximately half of the participants reported that they frequently purchase textile souvenirs. Serbia boasts a rich tradition of producing textile clothing and decorative items, which serve as important tourist attractions and are highly sought after by visitors as mementos of their travels. Particularly noteworthy are the Serbian national costumes and the Pirot kilim, which is inscribed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list. This positive trend and the preservation of these cultural treasures should be effectively harnessed. One strategic approach to this end is to enhance the visibility of textile



souvenirs through increased participation in tourist events, festivals, and trade fairs. It is important to emphasize that organizing such events yields considerable economic and tourism benefits. Frequent exposure, combined with the presentation of textile souvenirs and cultural craftsmanship, along with effective marketing strategies employing the seven fundamental elements of the marketing mix, contributes to greater tourist influx and increased revenue generation within the tourism sector.

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