

The Market Value of Chinese Root Carving Art: A Study of Cross-Border E-Commerce in ASEAN

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Chinese root carving art, a traditional craftsmanship form, carries profound cultural significance and high artistic value. In the era of globalization and technological advancement, the market for Chinese root carving art has expanded significantly, particularly with the rise of cross-border e-commerce. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) presents an intriguing market for such art due to its diverse cultural landscape and growing interest in traditional crafts. This editorial examines the market value of Chinese root carving art in ASEAN countries, focusing on how cross-border e-commerce can facilitate its international dissemination and commercialization. By analyzing the unique appeal of root carving, the cultural context of ASEAN, and the advantages and challenges of cross-border e-commerce, this editorial aims to provide insights and strategies for promoting the internationalization of Chinese root carving art.

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Chinese root carving art, a unique form of sculpture, is created by artisans who carve tree roots and trunks into intricate and lifelike forms, showcasing high levels of skill and creativity (Wu and Wu 2021). Each piece of root carving is distinct, owing to the natural patterns and textures of the wood, making it a valuable collector's item. Root carving art is not only significant in its aesthetic value but also deeply engrained in Chinese culture, reflecting the country's traditions and philosophies. As globalization and e-commerce continue to grow, traditional art forms like Chinese root carving are finding new pathways for international distribution. Cross-border e-commerce platforms, which facilitate international trade and cultural exchange, offer unique opportunities for Chinese root carving art to reach broader audiences, particularly in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region. ASEAN's diverse cultural background and the rising demand for unique, handcrafted goods create a promising market for Chinese root carving art. This editorial explores how Chinese root carving art can utilize cross-border e-commerce to penetrate the ASEAN market, examining its market potential and identifying key challenges.

The Market Value of Chinese Root Carving Art

Chinese root carving art is characterized by its use of natural materials such as tree roots and trunks, transformed into detailed sculptures through skillful carving and polishing. The raw materials used in these artworks contribute to the uniqueness of each piece, as no two pieces can be exactly the same due to the natural variations in wood grain

and structure. These works often carry symbolic meanings, drawing from traditional Chinese philosophy, folklore, and nature, which adds to their appeal in the art market. The distinctiveness of Chinese root carving art, with its emphasis on craftsmanship and organic materials, has made it increasingly attractive to international collectors and art lovers (Zhao and Bao 2022). The cultural richness and storytelling aspect embedded in each piece enhance its value, making it a sought-after item for both decorative and investment purposes. The more common type of Chinese root carving artwork that have been sold on mainstream e-commerce platforms is shown in Fig. 1.



Fig. 1. Chinese root carving artwork

With increasing disposable incomes and growing awareness of cultural heritage, Southeast Asia has seen a rise in demand for art and high-quality craftwork. Countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia have witnessed a burgeoning interest in traditional art forms. As more consumers in ASEAN turn to collectibles and artisanal products, the market for root carving art is gaining traction. Root carving is especially appealing to those seeking unique, handcrafted items for interior decoration and artistic expression. The trend toward more personalized, culturally significant decor options has opened a market for these distinctive, high-quality pieces in ASEAN nations. As a result, the potential for root carving to capture a significant share of the growing art market in Southeast Asia is substantial.

The ASEAN Market: An In-Depth Analysis

ASEAN countries possess rich and diverse cultural traditions, with varied influences from indigenous beliefs, colonial histories, and religious practices. These countries share an appreciation for traditional craftsmanship and indigenous art, making them receptive to art forms that reflect cultural identity and craftsmanship (Alleyne *et al.*

2020). Root carving, deeply rooted in Chinese traditions, carries a unique cultural narrative that resonates with ASEAN consumers, who value cultural expression and authenticity in art. Countries like Thailand and Vietnam have long-standing traditions of appreciating intricate handicrafts and fine art, creating fertile ground for the introduction of root carving art. Given ASEAN's multicultural fabric, there is an increasing openness to diverse artistic expressions, including those from neighboring regions, making the market for root carving both promising and dynamic.

The rise of a burgeoning middle class and increased economic prosperity in ASEAN has led to a growing demand for luxury and culturally significant products. As consumers become more affluent, they seek out premium, artisanal products that reflect sophistication and personal taste. Moreover, younger generations in ASEAN countries are increasingly inclined toward unique, personalized items, with art pieces such as root carvings appealing to their desire for individuality. E-commerce has played a critical role in these shifts, with more consumers purchasing high-value goods, including art, online. The convenience and accessibility of online shopping have fostered a favorable environment for the sale of art through cross-border e-commerce platforms, enabling root carving art to reach wider audiences across ASEAN.

The Impact of Cross-Border E-Commerce on Root Carving Art

Cross-border e-commerce offers numerous benefits for the global distribution of root carving art. First, it eliminates geographical barriers, allowing artisans to sell their work internationally and gain access to a larger pool of potential buyers. E-commerce platforms such as Alibaba, Etsy, and others enable root carving artworks to be showcased to consumers who might otherwise have no access to such products, broadening the market reach significantly.

Second, these platforms offer secure payment gateways and international shipping solutions, facilitating safe and efficient transactions between sellers and buyers across borders. This ease of transaction encourages buyers from ASEAN nations to purchase root carvings, knowing that they will receive quality products with reliable shipping and customer service.

While cross-border e-commerce offers great opportunities, it also presents several challenges. Cultural differences, for instance, may hinder the appreciation of root carving art in certain ASEAN countries. The cultural aesthetics and themes embedded in Chinese root carving may not always align with the tastes or expectations of Southeast Asian consumers. Therefore, adapting the marketing and product offerings to cater to local preferences is crucial for success.

Additionally, pricing strategies must be carefully considered. The cost of production, shipping, and platform fees need to be balanced against the local market's spending power. To achieve optimal pricing, sellers must consider not only production and distribution costs but also regional economic conditions and art market trends in each ASEAN country.

Strategic Recommendations

To succeed in ASEAN markets, root carving art must undergo a process of cultural adaptation. Collaboration with local artists or cultural institutions can help to create pieces that resonate with local consumers' cultural values and artistic preferences. Furthermore,

understanding and respecting the religious and symbolic aspects of art in ASEAN countries will allow artisans to craft works that are better suited to local tastes.

Effective brand building is essential for success in e-commerce. Root carving art can be marketed through high-quality product images, detailed descriptions, and online exhibitions that highlight the craftsmanship and cultural significance of each piece. Additionally, leveraging social media platforms and influencers within ASEAN markets can significantly increase visibility and consumer awareness. In the trend of rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology, brand promotion can also rely more on AI interactive strategy, which will deepen consumers' image perception of the product (Luo *et al.* 2024).

E-commerce platforms must ensure reliable after-sales service and logistics capabilities to enhance customer experience and satisfaction. Partnering with trusted logistics providers ensures that root carvings are safely transported and delivered. Additionally, offering customer support in local languages and providing clear information on returns, exchanges, and warranties will foster trust among ASEAN consumers.

Conclusion

Root carving art, as an embodiment of Chinese cultural heritage, holds considerable market value in Southeast Asia. With the rise of cross-border e-commerce, this art form has unprecedented opportunities to expand its presence in ASEAN markets. However, to fully capitalize on this potential, root carving art must be adapted to local cultures and consumer preferences. Effective branding, strategic marketing, and robust logistical and customer service infrastructure will be key to the successful internationalization of root carving art. As cross-border e-commerce continues to evolve, the global reach of this art form is set to expand, offering new opportunities for cultural exchange and commercial success.

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