

How folk art and internet technology come together to help tackle the adverse social effects of COVID-19 in Peru

Going digital is no easy path for Peruvian artisans. Embracing technology, and reinventing themselves is important to satisfy new global market needs.

WOODBIDGE, VA, UNITED STATES, June 22, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Peru's very rich cultural heritage -one of the oldest civilizations with more than 5,000 years of history- and the creativity, long-standing traditional artistry, and high-quality craftsmanship of its artisans, have made Peruvian handicrafts widely admired for their beauty and uniqueness.



Arturo Ramos family traditional hand painted wooden boxes

Peruvian handicrafts are often produced by master artisans and their families, based on the traditional techniques which are passed from generation to generation. These handicrafts are sold in handicrafts markets, cultural sites, and specialized stores, mainly at the domestic level and international markets. The coronavirus pandemic changed all that as demand through the conventional trade channels plummeted or disappeared, affecting hundreds of artisan families.

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"They have given me the opportunity to present my work in a modern way, including a certificate card for customers who purchase my pieces & we are working together on new designs, too." says -"

Edgar Mamani

In such a bleak context, the new needs of the market and the digital trade channel are providing [Peruvian artisans](#) with a bright and innovative means of marketing and selling their handicrafts in the global arena.

Take Arturo Ramos's case, a master artisan of retablos, the colorful wooden boxes with representations of religious motives, festivities, or everyday life scenes, typical from Ayacucho, in the southeastern Andes of

Peru, from where Master Ramos is from. Retablos are real pieces of art, the result of hundreds of years cultivating this popular artistic expression, a tradition so fervently preserved by Ramos: "I hope to motivate more people to take up this art form, and I want them to appreciate what we offer with our retablos," he says. COVID-19 drastically changed the course of his business. Using the colorful dioramas seen on his retablos, he turned his creativity to create high-quality hand-painted dual-layer face masks. His product has proved to be a new fashion sensation. His clientele is falling in love with his latest creations, helping many families who work with him to produce these face masks. Over the last year, he sold more than 20,000 units. He joined [Peru Gift Shop](#), an e-commerce endeavor through which he can conveniently sell his products in the United States, and his face masks quickly became one of the best sellers through the number-one online retailer Amazon.

The electronic trade channel also opened new sales opportunities for mompreneur Katy Mejía. She and her father have dedicated their lives to designing and creating high-quality accessories made of leather mixed with alpaca and hand-woven textiles. All of these are inspired by the vibrant colors of her hometown: [Cusco](#). She employs four families, and a total of 30 people depend on her business. Through her designs, she has been able to share traditions connecting the world with the rich and colorful history of Cusco. "We saw a decrease of 60% in our sales compared to 2019 days. We were forced to



Katy Mejia designs leather handbags and accessories with traditional Peruvian textiles



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move our business to become completely digital and develop strategic partnerships to continue our sales. Peru Gift Shop has given us the opportunity to see our products selling well in the United States & Canada through several powerful online shopping platforms", says Mejía.

Five hours away from the city of Cusco, in Sicuani, is artisan Edgar Mamani who, with the support of 15 families, produces alpaca plush toys. The COVID restrictions and several roads strike severely affected his sales. Little by little, his business is recuperating. He has partnered with Peru Gift Shop, and his alpaca plush toys have been very well accepted, receiving wholesale orders from Maine, Maryland, and New York. "They have given me the opportunity to present my work in a modern way, including a birth certificate card for customers who purchase my pieces and we are working together on new designs, too.", says Mamani.

Going digital is no easy path for Peruvian artisans, but the opportunity, and challenge, exist to embrace technology, enter new marketing channels and reinvent themselves to satisfy new market needs. And that is the way to go. Throughout 2020, over 18 artisans and designers joined Peru Gift Shop, initiating a new era of marketing and selling their precious products. Nowadays over 20 artisans have joined Peru Gift Shop. This initiative is sponsored by the Trade Commission of Peru in Houston and the Embassy of Peru in Washington DC. For more information about the work of these artisans, please visit www.perugiftshop.com

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