

MARKETING CHALLENGES IN INDIAN TRADITIONAL HANDICRAFTS AND AESTHETIC VALUE

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ABSTRACT

The handicrafts sector is important for the Indian economy as it is one of the largest employments generators and accounts for a significant share in the country's exports. The state and regional clusters contribute significantly to handicrafts export. The Indian handicrafts industry is fragmented, with more than seven million regional artisans and more than 67,000 exporters/export houses promoting regional art and craftsmanship in the domestic and global markets. Handicrafts is one of the key export segments of Indian trade faced with several problems such as unorganized marketing and inadequate market information; inadequate support mechanism for product development; power interruptions and other infrastructural deficiencies inadequacy of raw material at appropriate prices; lack of mechanism for dispersal of technology or enhancing productivity; final finishing and lack of investment for fulfilling international requirements and a general poor image of the country as a supplier of quality goods with consistency.

KEYWORDS: Handicrafts, Export, Technology, Deficiencies, Requirement and Development

INTRODUCTION

Despite fast-paced technological and social evolution, crafts continue to be deeply embedded in the Indian way of life. Unlike in the West, where crafts are luxury art forms, in India they serve as a primary livelihood for many, especially in rural communities. Handicrafts, made by skilled artisans, embody both individual creativity and centuries of cultural tradition. From simple clay items to intricately designed jewelry, these crafts serve various functions—from religious rituals to decorative purposes—and carry emotional and historical significance.

Crafts in India fall into three broad categories:

There are three main classifications of crafts:

- ☐ Folk Crafts
- ☐ Religious us crafts
- ☐ Commercial crafts

Bihar Folk Embroidery:

People for their personal use, or for a limited client base create folkcrafts. Folk embroideries done by the village women folk of India are a good example. There are craftsmen who are specialized in creating textiles or jewellery which meet the criteria set up by a particular group of people, usually a particular caste or community. They have their own distinctive designs and styles

Bronze lamp used for worship:

Religious crafts are developed around religious centers and themes. These craft items are connected with religious institutions and relevant ceremonies. Various religious places in India are specialized in particular craft items. For example, Varanasi and Kanchipuram in Tamandu specialize in weaving clothes for religious ceremonies, particularly silk materials. Similarly, Puri in Odisha, which is a big pilgrim center, is connected with crafts like Pat Charita- a painting on cloth and wood and stone carvings. Specialized craftsmen of a particular group who are specialized in a particular skill and who can completely master the craft do commercial crafts. They even have sub groups, which work for particular groups, and their tools and techniques may vary. The Weavers, the Dyers, the Printers, the Goldsmiths and the Carpenters are some of the commercial craftsmen.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Being a recent move, there have been various researches on different aspects of the initiative ranging from the economical to social and ethical dimensions. Some of these researches retrieved through internet searches have been reviewed here.

Subrahmanyabala (2019) in his study made an important point that the focus of every nation especially India must be the collaboration of ancient art with the modern technology and strengthening of financial infrastructure support in order to make the Small and medium industry grow internationally. This leads in generating employment for the nation with that it would be a tough competition to the international market and improve the national income. Further author says even though the small and medium industry suffered due to globalization but this industry has potential to provide numerous benefits to local as well as to foreign market in terms of growth of units, employment, output and exports.

Shetty (2019) in his study has mentioned that it has become easier for the consumers to buy their handicraft items especially gift items and for manufacturers or artisans to reach out to the consumers where the modern facilities like virtual shops and business to business buying is possible. This modern technology has created business directories in order to meet the demand of the consumers and outline presences of handicrafts. Further states that if such technology reaches to every manufacture the middlemen will not exploit any of the artisans. Government of India need to indulge them in this for stopping unfair trade practices.

Arindam (2020) also is in opinion that the sector of handicraft has potential of economic improvement without any effect on sustainability. He further identified that handicraft will play pivot role in strengthening the cultural identity, heritage preservation which contributes to the overall development of the national economy with that author states that handicraft sector provides opportunities for entrepreneurs, creates jobs for workers, brings foreign currency to the domestic country through promoting exports and creates demand for the artisans. Sudha, V. and Krishnaveni, M. (2012). SMEs in India: Importance and Contribution. Lack of market awareness is the main obstacle for any village enterprises to put up their products in urban markets.

Handicrafts Exports from India:

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EXPORTS AND INDUSTRY STRUCTURE

India's handicrafts sector is labor-intensive and widespread, employing millions including women and underprivileged communities. It operates primarily as a cottage industry and lacks centralized organization. Though contributing significantly to exports, challenges like lack of market intelligence, poor infrastructure, and unorganized operations prevent full realization of potential. Craft pockets need institutional support to compete globally, particularly with countries like China and Thailand.

India's handicraft exports were valued at US\$ 3.8 billion in 2018-19, with key markets including the US, UK, UAE, and Germany. Categories like woodware, embroidered textiles, and imitation jewelry top export charts. The Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH), under the Ministry of Textiles, plays a central role in marketing and promotion efforts.

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MARKETING MIX IN HANDICRAFTS

Handicrafts have an expanding market in developed countries. Market research into crafts is negligible, if not non-existent. New trends and designs, new integral ways to feel the pulse of the market need to be determined and disseminated. Marketing touches everyone's life. Marketing involves a large number of activities, including marketing research, product development, distribution, pricing, advertising, and personal selling, sales promotion, packaging and branding. Marketing combines several activities designed to sense, serve and satisfy consumer needs while meeting the goals of the organization. Handicraft units, which are mostly run by individuals with sole proprietary form of organization can't afford to have separate and well-organized marketing system. The artisan cum-proprietor of the unit looks after all the functions with the help of family members. The role of market research and exploration with appropriate marketing strategies assumes critical importance. An import data analysis of handicrafts and giftware in potential countries will help determine the size and character of different craft markets across the globe. The important marketing aspects are discussed under the heads of Product, Price, Place, Promotion.

Product: A product is a set of tangible and intangible attributes, including packaging, color, price, manufactures prestige, retailers prestige, and manufacturer and retailer's services, which the buyer may accept as offering want satisfaction.

Pricing: Price is a measure of what one must exchange in order to obtain a desired good or service. Price is the monetary expression value and is the focal point of the entire exchange

process. Historically, prices have been set by buyers and sellers negotiating with each other. Sellers would ask for a higher price than they expected to pay. Through bargaining they would arrive at an acceptance price. Setting one price for all buyers is relatively modern idea.

Place: Distribution is concerned with the activities involved in transferring goods from producers to final buyers and users. It includes the physical activities, such as transporting, storing goods and the legal, promotional activities for transferring ownership. The artisans depend mostly upon master craftsmen, dealers and co-operative societies for disposal of their finished products.

Promotion:

Corporate houses and multi-national companies may be urged and facilitated to adopt and encourage crafts for the gifts they distribute. An important segment of market that needs to be systematically promoted is for corporate houses with customized logos for giveaways by them for corporate clients.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Various schemes aim to uplift the sector:

- **Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana** – Encourages artisan mobilization, skill and design enhancement.
- **Marketing Support Scheme** – Promotes craft visibility through events and financial assistance.
- **Design & Technology Upgradation** – Focuses on modernization via training and expert partnerships.
- **Export Promotion Scheme** – Aids in design innovation, marketing, and artisan welfare.
- **Research and Development Scheme** – Gathers feedback and data to improve production and working conditions.
- **Bima Yojana** – Provides life insurance to registered artisans.
- **Training Projects** – Enhance skills and ensure transmission of traditional expertise.

Despite these, implementation is often poor due to a lack of accurate artisan databases and grassroots awareness.

TYPES AND CURRENT STATUS

India, with its vast linguistic and cultural diversity, offers a wide array of craft forms:

- **Textile Crafts:** Embroidery, block printing, batik, kalamkari
- **Metal and Jewelry:** Brassware, silver ornaments, and stone-set pieces
- **Woodwork:** From carved toys to ornate furniture
- **Stonework:** Intricately carved decorative pieces
- **Glass and Ceramics:** Blown-glass and handcrafted ceramic items

Crafts are either **functional** (everyday use) or **decorative** (aesthetic appeal), and span both rural and urban markets.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Low production cost
- Unique designs and traditions
- Flexibility for small-batch orders

Weaknesses

- Inconsistent quality
- Limited marketing strategies
- Poor infrastructure and delayed deliveries

Opportunities

- Increased interest from global consumers
- E-commerce and direct marketing potential
- Demand from retail chains abroad

Threats

- Superior quality and R&D by competitors
- Better export support from rival countries
- Stringent international trade standards

CONCLUSION

The Indian handicrafts industry has a strong socio-economic foundation but suffers from fragmentation, underutilization of government schemes, and low global competitiveness. Despite being a sector rich in tradition and employment potential, it struggles with limited awareness, poor organization, and infrastructural bottlenecks. With appropriate reforms, better promotional strategies, and technology integration, Indian handicrafts can emerge as a global leader in artisan goods.

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