

Languishing Crafts of the North – An Analytical Study

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Abstract

Traditional knowledge, skill sets, artistic expression, and economic worth are just some of the ways in which the local community contributes to a destination's craft. Produce with a mechanized contribution may not qualify as craft due to the inability to tell artisans apart. Handmade goods are more costly than mass-produced ones, but they are also one-of-a-kind because of the little differences between each one. Donations of locally manufactured souvenirs, such as bamboo, cane, and wood crafts; handloom and loom textiles; paintings; destination-themed embroidered T-shirts; pulp and paper craft; jewelry; antiques; and so on are always welcome. Because of its sentimental importance, many visitors choose to bring home a few souvenirs from their trips.

Keywords: Collective, destination, traditional knowledge, Skillset, quality of mass produced, jewellery, antiques.

Introduction

The handicraft industry is particularly important to the country's economy since it provides both domestically needed jobs and foreign currency via exports. Employment in the handicrafts industry is estimated to have expanded from 52.92 lakhs in 1997–98 to 58.41 lakhs in 2001–02 as a result of the 9th Five Year Plan. Women make up 47.1% of the workforce in this field, and they are overrepresented among the SC/ST (37.11%) and minority (23.89%) populations. The State Government is primarily responsible for the growth and promotion of handicrafts since they are a subject of the State. In addition, the central government's Office of the Development Authority (Handicrafts) has been advancing the handicrafts industry via a number of development programs.

Using the zero-based budgeting method, this department was able to reduce the number of programs it ran from 34 during the 9th Plan to only 8 during the 10th Plan. Seven of the eight proposed new generic schemes for the 10th Plan have so far been approved for implementation: the Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana; the Design and Technical Upgrading Scheme; the Export Promotion Scheme; the Marketing Support and Services Scheme; the Research and Development Scheme; the Training and Extension Scheme; and the Financial Assistance to State Handicrafts Development Corporations/State Apex Societies Scheme. The 7 plans are outlined briefly below:

The scheme's focus is on empowering artisans via their involvement in a project-based, integrated strategy for the development of handicrafts over the long term. The AHVY package of aid may be broken down into the following parts:

Mobilization of Artisans

A. Invasions of Technology

- Help with Educating Educators
- Help in developing new designs and improving existing technologies
- Aid in acquiring and disseminating state-of-the-art machinery, devices, etc.
- The recording, maintenance, and resuscitation of dying arts and practices.

B. Interventions in Marketing

- Promotional Occasions
- Infrastructure for advertising
- Media attention
- Services Advertising

a) Financial intervention

b) Money Margin

Design and Technology Up-gradation: The goals of the Design & Technology upgradation scheme include improving the knowledge and abilities of artisans, creating new designs and prototypes, providing better and more modern tools to those who work in the field, reviving endangered trades to protect cultural heritage, and preserving traditional art and crafts with high aesthetic value. The plan's many moving parts have been broken down into the following categories: Institutional design funding support.

Export of Handicrafts : With a growth of 18.77% in rupee terms and 15.81% in dollar terms, handicraft exports, including those of Hand Knotted carpets, were Rs.10933.67 billion (2249.56 US \$ Million) in 2002–03. During 2003-2004, the target amount of exports is Rs.11604 crore. Exports of zari and zari products increased by 18.97%, art metal ware by 23.10%, wood wares by 18.40%, and embroidered as well as crocheted goods by 28.25% in 2002–03. The export of handicrafts, which includes carpets, increased by 16.75% in rupee terms & 25.35% in dollar terms from the 2003-04 fiscal year to the 2002-03 fiscal year. In the 2003–2004 fiscal year, handicraft exports were Rs.12765.18 crore.

Important Projects/Initiatives

UNDP PROJECT

- a) Carpet project: The project's overarching goal is to increase exports and thereby employment and revenue in the handknotted carpet sector via the development of value-added design and the enhancement of technology and post-weaving processes, such as the use of vegetable dyes in carpet manufacture. A total of Rs 990.86 lakh would be spent on the project, with the Government of India putting up Rs 485.00 lakh. Starting in December 1999, Bamboo Lantern was expected to wrap up in November 2003. The overall cost of the project in the 2003–04 fiscal year is Rs.87.22 lakh, of which Rs.77.22 lakh comes from the Government of India.

The progress achieved in the UNDP carpet project being implemented through different agencies is as under:

- In order to spread knowledge of and enthusiasm for these innovations in the carpet industry, the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi created looms, hand tools, washing and drying plants, embossing machines, snipping and moisture measuring devices, and ran a training and awareness program for the workers in the field. To far, over 500 weavers have participated in training - cum-awareness workshops, and this number is expected to grow. CEPC has begun distributing 500 looms and 1,000 tool sets to weavers throughout all carpet belts at reduced costs.
- The Indian University of Carpet Technology in Bhadohi now boasts a CAD system, as well as color matching and testing apparatuses. The IICT has also begun a training program for designers in the use of computer-aided design (CAD) software in the creation of carpet patterns, as well as a training program for weavers in the use of modern technology for weaving, cleaning, etc. The design needs of industry have also begun to be met by IICT. Almost 110 weavers, designers, and trainers have been educated thus far.

b) Cane & Bamboo: The 1999–2000 UNDP Cane and or Bamboo Project is well into its implementation phase. Building local capacities of craftsmen and entrepreneurs is a primary goal of this project, therefore it will give inputs in the areas of product creation via design, technological up-grading, marketing assistance, and adopting a cluster development strategy.

Moradabad: With an eye toward international standards, Moradabad is home to the Metal Handicrafts Service Centre (MHSC), which provides post-production finishing services for the metal artwares industry. MHSC is governed by a Governing Council made up of delegates from the governments of India and Uttar Pradesh, as well as representatives from the trade and craft communities.

Special Package For Jammu& Kashmir

A Special Package of Help was announced for the State of Jammu & Kashmir during the visit of the then Prime Minister in May 2002. The textile and handicrafts industry stands to contribute more than Rs.70 crore to that Package. With an anticipated cost of Rs.60.95 crore, the 10th Plan saw the preparation of trackable Action Plans for the handicrafts industry as part of the Package's rollout. The strategy has three main components: Promotion of the handicrafts industry in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly carpet, via an integrated development package, promotion of other handicrafts by an integrated development package, and strengthening of supporting infrastructure for promotion of the handicrafts sector.

Work shed for Handicraft Artisans

Objective: The Scheme is mainly concerned with social good. Worksheds of a minimum size of 30 square meters may be built under this plan in both rural and urban settings. A maximum of Rs. 20,000 and Rs. 22,000 in financial aid is set aside for those living in rural and urban regions, respectively.

This paper discusses the challenges faced by the craft business. The population studied includes the primary stakeholders of host community, the tourism intermediaries, the tourists, and the policy makers, the traders of handicrafts, handloom products, accommodation, food, leisure, tour operations, taxi and transporters of the destinations. All of these are primarily or secondarily connected with the sale of handicrafts at a particular destination.

Value chain analysis (Porter, 1985) of the craft business of the CBT villages indicated handicraft & handloom workshop (operations), parcel service for handicraft/souvenir (outbound logistics) and documentation on authenticity & sales (marketing & sales) as primary activities. Souvenir business contributed direct as well as induced economic benefits. From the discussions with regional tour operators, it is observed that tourists prefer sending the souvenirs to their friends & relatives through parcel/courier services. Since the cost of postal delivery of parcels in India is comparatively cheaper and convenient, having an efficient postal delivery of parcel service of post offices may reduce the landed cost of souvenir items for the tourist. The host community perceives that the postal services of Post office is available, but not near to the village. Descriptive statistics revealed that among those households engaged in craft business, 63 per cent were in the business for about two years and about 20% sampled households were having Souvenir & Craft shop as their alternate livelihood.

Most of the artisan men and women engaged with handloom/loin-loom activities are producing handicraft & handloom souvenirs for domestic consumption. At times, they take demand during festivals and for tourist & tour group arrival. The guides, local tour operators, the home stay operators and the souvenir shops help intra-village distribution of handloom & handicraft for tourists. Handloom products are not equally liked by the tourists. The Handloom products as souvenir, is preferred from the destination village whereas the preferences of similar handloom produce of nearby locations remains negative.

North East India's natural biodiversity, unspoiled landscapes, and cultural mosaics reflecting various tribes & villages have a significant impact on the region's tourist industry. Because of its practicality as a memento, craft has high levels of demand from visiting tourists. The income of communities dependent on tourism is bolstered greatly by the sales of handmade goods. Tribes, distribution networks, and sometimes village retail establishments share in the economic benefits of artisan sales. To sell the craft of the destination villages, however, there are a number of complex aspects that need to be recognized. This study sheds light on the opportunities available to souvenir vendors, the hurdles encountered by souvenir/craft vendors, and the need of knowing one's audience while shopping for trinkets.

Conclusion

Retail promotion of handloom and handicraft distribution business is negatively impacted due to little availability of the display and sale in prominent places. The artisan workshop lacks the required documentation such as signage, name of the craftperson, name and origin of the implements, loom name, name of the motif, pictorial display of production stages, and features related to geographical indications. Since the demand for souvenir item is not related to origin city of the tourist, a common promotional campaign may not give satisfactory results. Moreover, even with large number of tourist arrival in the peak season, the souvenir business may not pick up.

The host community should discourage price sensitive tourists, young back packers, picnickers and visitors coming for day trips to the village. Authenticity, place of origin, certification of quality and Geographical Indications are the major issues faced by the souvenir suppliers and merchandisers in the destination.

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