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MARKETING OF HANDICRAFTS IN SIKKIM

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ABSTRACT

In India, handicraft industry is a major source of income for rural communities employing over million artisans including a large number of women and people belonging to the weaker sections of the society. Handicrafts are an important productive sector and export commodity for many countries and in some countries constitutes a significant part of the export economy. The growth of domestic and international markets for home accessory products and an increased interest in global goods have opened up new-market opportunities for artisans. The beauty and charm of crafts has always been a source of attraction to many Indian and foreign tourists. However, observers of the handicrafts sector predict that the escalating number of small businesses turning to handicraft production is unlikely to decline significantly in the future. The artisan community faced a number of problems and need intervention to improve their quality of life. The present study finds out the marketing of the handicrafts products in Sikkim. The findings of the study show that the problems faced by the producers for marketing of their products in the area. The role of the government in promoting the crafts and protecting the artists will also be discussed before concluding the paper.

KEYWORDS: Handicraft, Marketing, Problems, Prospects.

1. INTRODUCTION

Handicrafts are unique expressions of a particular culture or community through local craftsmanship and materials. With increased globalization, however, products are becoming more and more commoditized and artisans find their products competing with goods from all over the world. It is no longer possible to look at traditional artisan communities and their products in isolation from global market trends and competition (Dash 2011). The Indian handicrafts industry is highly labour intensive cottage based industry and decentralized, being



spread all over the country in rural and semi urban areas. Numerous artisans are engaged in crafts work on full time and part-time basis. India is one of the important suppliers of handicrafts to the world market. The industry provides employment to over of artisans who include a large number of women and people belonging to the weaker sections of the society in rural and semi urban areas. The handicrafts sector plays a significant and important role in the country's economy. It generates substantial foreign exchange for the country, while preserving its cultural heritage. Presently, handicrafts contribute substantially to employment generation, support GDP and exports. According to UNESCO, handicrafts represent 20% of the rural activities of developing countries, contributing to at least 3% of their GDP. While the major markets for traditional crafts are the developed countries, the developing countries contribute to the largest share of the low end market segment of the crafts. The Handicraft sector has, however, suffered due to its being unorganized, with the additional constraints of lack of education, low capital, and poor exposure to new technologies, absence of market intelligence, and a poor institutional framework. We found that, although the traditional crafts present some challenges, they can be developed into a profitable and sustainable market with appropriate channeling and allocation of resources. Thus the present study will focus on the marketing of handicraft products in Sikkim state.

2. TYPES OF HANDICRAFTS

India is rich in handicrafts. There are about 3500 handicraft items produced in the country and the sector employs 60 lakhs artisans who work independently or in small co-operatives or firms. Similarly Government of Sikkim has five categories of major

handicrafts. The crafts of Sikkim which are popular across the states include carpets, wood carving, bamboo and cane products, Thangka painting, and multicrafts which include toys, dolls and other decorative items.

2.1. Carpet:-

Carpet making is an oldest occupation among the people of Sikkim especially tribal women. The colours, design and pattern shows the influence of Buddhist culture and art form. They weave lovely colourful carpet with dragon, geometric and floral designs. Though originally they weaved carpet for domestic use, it has now become commercial items of handicraft product. Carpet can made through different methods like braiding, hand tying (hand knotting), shearing and tufting. In Sikkim among all these methods hand tying (hand knotting) and braiding is common among the weavers.

2.2. Wood carving:-

Wood carving is an ancient art form of Sikkim. The walls of the ancient monasteries, museums and other monuments which are adorned with the beautiful wood carvings prove the legacy of this beautiful traditional art form. Symbolism has played a critical role in art forms since time immemorial. The wood in the monasteries are engrossed with symbols and icons from Buddhism. The best specimen of wood carvings in Sikkim can be witnessed in the various monasteries. One of the exquisite carved wooden products is the Choktse tables. Choktse are foldable tables which are around 2 feet in height and has some beautiful designs carved all around the sides. But these tables are now made in different designs and dimensions. The skillful craftsmen of the States carve beautiful wooden ceilings, doors, lintels etc. using different kinds of wood found in local forest area. The craftsmen also make pipes, masks, tables, bowl, toys, doors, window frames and sculptures.

2.3. Thangka painting:-

The Thangka paintings of Sikkim originally are a medium of reverence, through which the highest ideals of Buddhism are evoked. Thangka painting became popular among traveling monks because the scroll paintings can be easily rolled and transported from monastery to monastery. These Thangkas served as important teaching tools depicting the life of the Buddha, various influential lamas and other deities and bodhisattvas. One popular subject is The Wheel of Life, which is a visual representation of the Abhidharma teachings (Art of Enlightenment). White stands for serenity, golden for the birth or life and enlightenment; red for the intensity of passion both loves and hatred; black for anger; yellow for compassion and green for consciousness. There are three types of Thangkas. One depicts the life of Buddha, his birth, his disillusionment with life, his search for enlightenment and his understanding of life. The second type of Thangka is more abstract. These paintings represent the Buddhist beliefs of life and death. The third type of the Thangka consists of paintings that are often used as a tool for meditation or as offerings to the deities. These paintings are usually done against a white background. Thangkas are created on cotton canvas and often framed with silk.

2.4. Bamboo and Cane:-

Bamboo and Cane are the two most commonly-used materials in daily life in Sikkim. Products ranging from household implements to construction of dwelling houses to weaving accessories to musical instruments are made in bamboo. Besides basket- weaving, bamboo is used chiefly in the construction of houses and fencing. Cane and bamboo is also used for religious rituals like for hoisting prayer flags, household furniture items like moorahs or small stools, decorative items like pen

stands, picture frames, baskets, hair clips, flower vases and dust bins. Bamboo and Cane craft in Sikkim is an integral part of their daily life. It is a traditional craft and has been practiced from time immemorial. Initially these natural fibers were used to make products of daily use. Every tribe and community makes materials of aesthetic yet functional use, their skills evolved over centuries of usage.

2.5. Multicrafts:-

Knitting, tailoring, decorative items and bag making are including as the multicrafts in Sikkim. Mufflers, decorative items like yaks, toys, mules, horses, pillow covers, cushion, table cloth purses, handmade flowers and colourful candles are the main product which comes under multicrafts. Multicrafts were introduced in Sikkim very recent time with the help of ITMT Kolkata. ITMT provides training facilities to local artisans for making of multicrafts.

Table 1: Total number of government handicraft products in Sikkim

Sl.no	Name of product	Total number of government handicraft units
1	Carpet	12
2	Wood carving	7
3	Thangka painting	4
4	Bamboo and cane crafts	6
5	Multicrafts	6
Total		35

Source: DHH, Government of Sikkim.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of literature avoids accidental imitation of previous studies and also places the researcher in a better position to interpret the significance of his own results. In the early literature on marketing of handicraft, it shows the problem of marketing, growth and development of handicraft sectors. Therefore there are some reviews which highlighted the marketing problem of handicraft products and its future prospects. Raghuvanesh (2007) observed that rural artisans who need a support

in the era of global marketing. It helps the rural craftsmen who intend to create a unique to withstand and compete in platform for developing the era of global market linkage with customers and oriented economy. Bharati (2005) express that the satisfactory performance in marketing of handicrafts could be possible due to the special interest taken by central as well as State Government to boost up the export of handicraft article and the qualitative performance of the artisans. Upadhyay (1973) on the Vedas and Upanishad comment enormously on the prodigious contributions of village crafts to India's trade and commerce. Rao (1978) in his book "Marketing of Handicrafts" has elaborated about marketing of handicrafts in which he has also highlighted about activities of artisans. Samal (1994) in his thesis has also explained in his article that the Tribal co-operative marketing Development Federation of India Ltd (TRIFED) has started the process of branding some of the tribal handicraft that it buys from artisans and sell them at its 36 'Tribes India' outlets in the country and two overseas which can provide marketing support to the artisans. Ahmed, (1980) in his book entitled "Problem and Management of Small Scale and Cottage Industries" expresses that the satisfactory performance in marketing of handicrafts could be possible due to the special interest taken by central as well as state governments to boost up the export of handicraft articles. Florence (2005) review suggest strategic measures to improve markets for village crafts, often supply of scattered, insufficient and unsystematic data on production and sales; will be the major obstacles for them to develop quantitative marketing strategies. Dak (1989) has been listed out reasons for the failure of village crafts such as poor designs, low quality materials and inefficient market approaches; consequently,

these weaknesses are exploited by machine made urban craft units, who apparently lockout village crafts from global markets. From the above literature, it is clear that marketing handicraft is facing various difficulties.

4. OBJECTIVE

- ↳ To probe the growth rate of sale of handicrafts products in Sikkim.
- ↳ To examine the problem being faced by the producers.

5. METHODOLOGY

The research design chosen for this study was exploratory research. The main objective is to examine current status of marketing, growth and problems of handicrafts industries. This paper is based on the secondary data, explored from various secondary data resources such as the governmental data, annual reports etc. The secondary data has been collected from the Directorate of Handicraft and Handloom (DHH), Government of Sikkim, annual reports, books, newsletters, magazines, journals, and newspaper. Data obtained from various sources was analyzed by using statistical techniques such as, simple percentage method and growth rate. Further SWAT analysis has also applied. Growth rate following formula has been used.

$$\text{Growth rate} = \frac{Q_t - Q_{t-1}}{Q_{t-1}} \times 100$$

(Where, Q_t = quantity in present year and
 $Q_t - 1$ = quantity in previous year)

The handicraft industry is the oldest traditional cottage industry; it has special socio-economic significance due to its vast potential for economic activities like the generation of employment and revenue. In Sikkim, Handcraft holds enormous potential to create self employment opportunities and bring distinctive improvement in the quality of life in rural areas. The unique selling point of the handicraft

sector is that it is highly labour intensive industry with low capital investment. Various types of handicrafts product were made in Sikkim.

6. ANALYSIS

In the scenario of North Eastern states where the artisans feel that the domestic market for the crafts is declining shapely and there is a need to look for an alternative marketing arrangement at a large scale. The artisans also face a variety of problems with the Rural Marketing System in the Northeastern States. Marketing channels such as private traders,

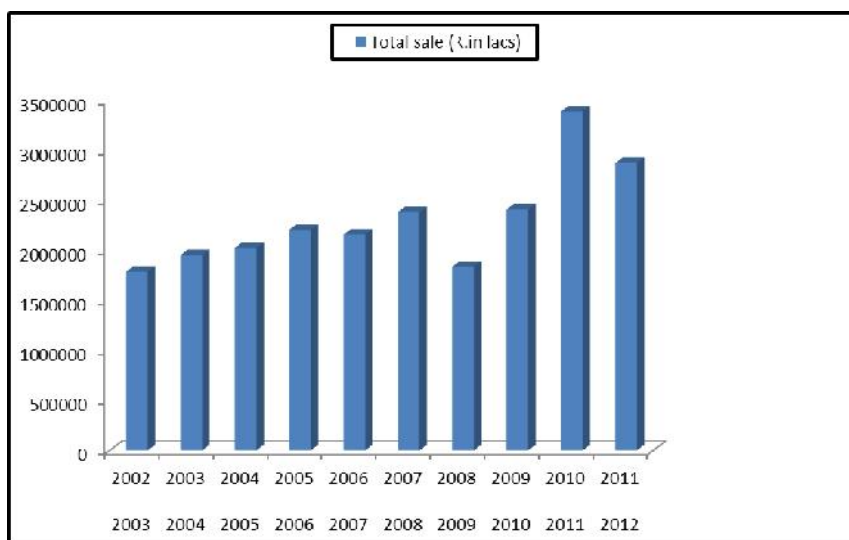
contractors and government emporia were not able to provide the proper and regulatory market for handicrafts. None of the State Handicrafts Development Corporations in the selected states makes spot payments to the artisans in procuring crafts and it takes 45-60 days to settle the bills of the artisans. These Corporations largely procure the products of artisans on consignment basis. The marketing of handicrafts is also concentrated in the hands of the private traders. The study revealed that the marketing of handicrafts through governments agencies.

Table 2: The sale within state and outside the state in year 2002 to 2012

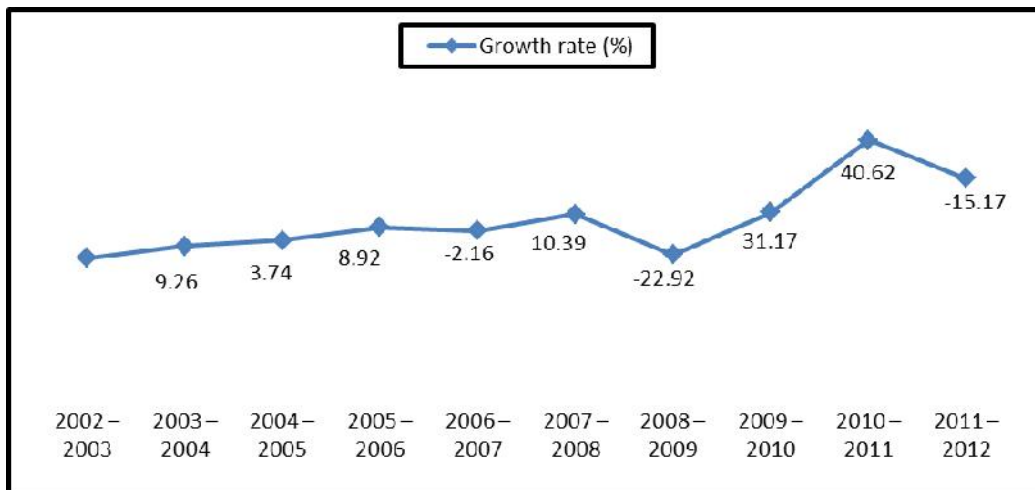
Years	Total sale (?.in lacs)	Growth (%)
2002 - 2003	1785250	-
2003 - 2004	1950730	9.26
2004 - 2005	2023800	3.74
2005 - 2006	2204450	8.92
2006 - 2007	2156625	-2.16
2007 - 2008	2380782	10.39
2008 - 2009	1835092	-22.92
2009 - 2010	2407135	31.17
2010 - 2011	3384985	40.62
2011 - 2012	2871454	-15.17

Source: DHH, Government of Sikkim.

Fig 1: Total sale of handicrafts products from 2002-2012 (¹ .in lacs)



Source: Computed from secondary data.

Fig 2: The sales growth rate of handicrafts products from 2002-2012

Source: Computed from secondary data.

The sales of handicrafts product from the year 2002 to 2012 is presented in above table2. During the year 2010-11, DHH registered sales of ¹ 3384985 as against ¹ 2407135 during 2009-10 registering the growth of 40.62%. In current year 2011-12, the total sales of ¹ 2871454 as compared to previous year 2010-11 of ¹ 3384985 at the growth rate of -15.17%. It shows the negative growth in sale of handicraft products in year 2011-12 due to low market demand. Similarly in year 2009-10 the total turnover sale of ¹ 2407135 as against ¹ 1835092 in year 2008-09 at growth rate of 31.17%. But in year 2008-09, the total registered sales of ¹ 1835092 as compared to ¹ 2380782 in previous year 2007-08, which shows the negative growth rate of -22.92%. From the above figure shows that the sales growth of handicrafts products

had not in constant rate of growth, it is fluctuation in nature. So there is urgent need for better marketing policy for the growth of sale of handicraft products.

Problems in marketing handicraft product:-

- ☞ Lack of accessibility of market information.
- ☞ Lack of awareness among the customer about products features.
- ☞ Promotion and advertising.
- ☞ Quality control.
- ☞ Logistics management.
- ☞ Raw material supply.
- ☞ Increasing competition.
- ☞ Low level of roads connectivity.

Handicraft industries in Sikkim: SWOT analysis

Strength

- Abundant and cheap labours.
- Low capital.
- Availability of local raw materials.
- Unique products feature.

Weakness

- Low market price.
- Inadequate market study.
- Low infrastructure, transport and communication means.
- Unable to handle large orders.

Opportunities

- Growth in employment.
- Rising interest of consumers towards handmade products.
- Inflow of tourists.
- Use of E- commerce in direct marketing.

Threats

- Competition from other neighboring states.
- Better packaging.
- Timely delivery.
- Consistent quality.
- Faster growing of machine made products.

CONCLUSION

The handicrafts Sector plays a significant and important role in the economy of Sikkim state. It provides employment to a vast segment of craft persons in rural and semi urban areas and generates plenty income. The handicraft sector has suffered due to poor infrastructure, transport facilities, low capital, and poor exposure to new technologies, absence of market intelligence, and a poor institutional framework. However, handicraft has great growth potential in the changing scenario with its basic strength being the abundant and cheap availability of manpower. Sikkim's handicraft has potential to produce a variety of products, employment generation and marketing. But there is a need to introduce new technologies and design, advertisement of products, logistics management and awareness about products features. Thus it is concluded that the handicraft in Sikkim has good opportunities to grow as well can create competitive market structure.

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