

DIGITALISATION: AN AID IN MARKETING OF HANDICRAFTS

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Abstract--Handicrafts is a form of creative art of making products by hands that have an artistic and pleasing character and require skill and craftsmanship in manufacturing. Handicraft ensures livelihood to artisans who are otherwise less educated on the one hand and belong to lower economic strata. The main quality of textile handicraft goods is sustainability. Handicraft is a way of income of the crafts persons and is essential to overall prosperity. But an average artisan has inadequate access to information about markets, buyers, tastes and tools & technologies in manufacturing and also lack of knowledge about use of information technology. With the aid of information technology such as World Wide Web (internet) and mobile applications not only it is customers and traders but also investors and scholars including the media gets enabled in locating craft persons (map assisted) and retail outlets for hand crafted products but exports also get a fillip. Even the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, which has a presence on Twitter and Face Book, would like to link up through an app with its main domain as developmental aspect in handicrafts. This study is based on actual and potential connections between crafts, sustainable development and technology.

Keywords: Handicrafts, Information Technology, Sustainability.

I. INTRODUCTION

Handicrafts in India have a long history covering the entire subcontinent. The orientation of handicrafts remained mostly in rural environment. Handicrafts is a form of creative art of making products by hands that have an artistic and pleasing character and require skill and craftsmanship in manufacturing. The beauty of things is that no two products precisely measure similar. According to UNESCO (1997) artisanal products are those produced by artisans, either completely by hand, or with the help of hand tools or even mechanical means, as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most substantial component of the finished product. These are produced without restriction in terms of quantity and using raw materials from sustainable resources. The special nature of artisanal products derives from their distinctive features, which can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, culturally attached, decorative, functional, traditional, religiously and socially symbolic and significant. History testifies the fact that the artisans of India were known worldwide for their skill and craftsmanship. Handicrafts constitute an important segment of the de-centralized/unorganized sector of our economy. The Indian handicraft industry is labour intensive cottage based industry and engages more than 10 million artisans who work either on wages or are self-employed. India, a country with 26 states and 18 languages and more than 1500 dialects has enormous rich heritage of handicraft production from ancient time. Haryana also has a rich history of handicrafts. In Haryana, regional variety is also noticeable. For instance, Panipat town recently came to be identified for creating rich tapestry handloom fabrics and durries i.e. cotton fiber carpets. Mahendragarh is gaining ground for woodcrafts and manufacture of lac bangles. Farukhnagar is famous for moodhas and Farmana (Majra) in Sonipat for pidhis -stools of low height made for a woman the frame of which is woven in cotton threads or sutli (a thick thread made from jute fiber). One of the conspicuous items made by artisans of potter community from Jhajjar is peculiar shaped pitcher –known as Surahi, made from clay. It has received Rashtrapati Award during one of the Annual Crafts Fair held at Surajkund, dist Faridabad. The Surahi is a popular item during summer season for storing water.

In an attempt to empower the Government of India has been quite supportive of the handicraft industry. Handicrafts craftsmen get many opportunities to showcase their products at well publicized trade shows and trade fairs. Haryana has been offering an opportunity by invitation to participate in the annual Surajkund International Handicrafts Fair, held in February, to display a large number of items. It provides them a better platform that opens up business opportunities for the artisans and crafts persons –majority of them indigenous, the world over. Many organized groups of crafts persons and artisans that were registered as society could promote own products through websites of their respective organization, nowadays. The Govt. of Haryana has instituted 13 awards that are conferred on woman Artisans for outstanding work -one in each of the following categories viz., painting, terracotta, clay objects, stone & marble, embroidery & textile, wood & bamboo, metal, leather, handloom, jute, wax & lac, miscellaneous. Not only for conservation but for protection of identifiable traditional handicrafts and folk arts or India both the Union and the State governments have done commendable ground work in providing business environment through various developmental schemes. In Haryana it has been done through Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana, Marketing Support and Service Scheme, Design and Technology Up-gradation Scheme, Export Promotion Scheme, Research and Development Scheme, Training and Extension Scheme, Bima Yojana for Handicrafts Artisans and Special Handicrafts Training Project. Besides, certain NGO's also work for the upliftment of artisans in Haryana viz. Mahila Vikas and Samaj Kalyan Samiti (MVSKS), The Ashoka Handloom and Handicraft Society, *Adhya Craft Organisation* (ACO).

Besides the seeding, promotional and marketing schemes, problem posing issues such as inferior governance, poorly designed policies, fragile institutional set up, lack of training and empowerment through subject education, accessibility of raw material, deficit in marketing skills have been identified and persistence diluted to some extent among the artisans. To keep pace with the growing market and purchasing power it is therefore essential to use information technology in marketing of handicrafts because Haryana is an important part of the total market of India.

II. HANDICRAFTS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:

The handicraft sector is highly creative sector and produces large variety of crafts products. But at present the rural producers/suppliers are struggling to market their products and services due to various reasons. Artisans are depending on the middlemen for raw materials, finance and market for the finished products because of their illiteracy, ignorance and poverty. The success of handicrafts depends on the products and introduced in the market in keeping with the tastes and preferences of consumers. Industrialization in any kind of arts and crafts must be recognized by the market of consumers, through the exchange of commodities in order to make the artistic and ethnic value with a touch of innovation. Artists are facing some problems and these are licensing problems, low demand, lack of access to raw materials, outdated tools & equipments, shortage of skilled labor, high excise, poor infrastructure, policy uncertainty, Local transportation (up to port) Shipping problems, Low subsidy, Income tax, internet connectivity, marketing, among these major one is of marketing. At present the rural producers/suppliers are struggling to market their products and services due to various reasons. Marketing means deals with customers more than any other business function, where building customer relationship based on customer value and satisfaction is the heart of modern marketing (Armstrong and Kotler, 2010). Marketing is defined as the process of creating, distributing, promoting, and selling the goods, services, and ideas to facilitate satisfying exchange relationship with customers in a dynamic environment (Pride and Ferrell, 2003) and artisans do not have any information about use of information technology for marketing. Laggard in use of information technology by the artisans is one other major reasons India has a low share of handicrafts market in the world. In case of India, the artisans are not known about advanced or frontier marketing tools and they have little information about use of internet for purchasing and selling. On other hand India's competitors in the handicraft trade like China, Thailand, Korea, etc have modern and superior technology in manufacturing and marketing as compared to India's manufacturing and marketing practices. Haryana's artisans also faced same problem. Information technology has played an important role in marketing of any product. Information technology is the technology that supports activities involving the creation, storage, manipulation and communication of information together with their related methods, management and application (Adeleke, 1985). The rate at which information technology is being developed will absolutely change the process of marketing research in handicraft product. However, the 2004 curriculum emphasized the meaning of technology from the point of view of everyday life, society, industry and environment, as well as human dependency on technologies. During last twenty years there has been an active discussion about the role of technology education and information technology.

Still, the development of information technology will bring about rapid change and development in marketing research. Information is the life blood of both an individual and organization. It is pivotal and essential to the growth and survival of every organization. In marketing, information serves both as a catalyst and channel for which the organizations' products, services and ideas reached the desire destination (Onuoha, 1998). Information technology affects marketing in many ways. Some of these save labor and provide services. Others create entirely new products and new organizational forms. Still others enhance use internet as a best way to reach target customers. The potential contribution of IT to handicrafts can be viewed through cost reduction, increase of efficiency and productivity improvement.

Foremost, information requirements of artisans should be analyzed and documented and then adequate information systems (IS) should be developed. In development of the systems, focus is on new challenges made from deregulation and globalization of handicrafts sector.

It is about communication of information between buyer and seller to change attitudes and behavior of consumers. Information technology includes advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, publicity of the handicraft product.

III. USES OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FOR MARKETING:

Advertising of Handicrafts products:

First of all artists can use information technology in advertising. For the promotion of handicrafts, the Corporation has been undertaking publicity, exhibitions, printing of brochures, and participation in trade fairs. The Corporation is also using internet as a tool for advertising e.g., facebook, whatsapp and other social media tools like pop-up advertisements, banner advertisements and search engine advertisements.

Promotion of Handicrafts products:

Sales promotion covers a wide range of techniques that provide an extra short-term incentive or inducement to patronize a store or buy a product. Techniques include demonstrations and exhibitions, samples, premiums, coupons, games and contests, displays and package inserts. In general, sales promotion is designed to reinforce the other factors of the promotion mix and to improve their short-term effectiveness. With the help of knowledge of internet artists can provide special offer for deals to the customers with the use of social media.

IV. TOOLS OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

As marketers today, we're lucky to have a vast number of free and low-cost tools which help us to know about our customers, competitors and market. These online services also help us to run our business successfully.

➤ *Autosend*

If you want to talk face-to-face to each person that joins your website, you can automatically send personalized, targeted email and text messages to every customer based on what they do on your website. So anytime a customer joins, makes a purchase or even looks at a particular FAQ question on your website, you can proactively send a personal message to them.

➤ *PromoRepublic*

It is a free posting tool. It provides users with more than 100,000 ideas, templates and visuals for striking Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn posts. All the social media templates are made by a team of professional designers and copywriters. Users can easily customize templates with a built-in graphics editor. With Promo Republic you get:

- Library with 100,000 post templates and visuals
- Calendar of post ideas for every day with holidays, days from history, trending topics and events
- Drag-and-drop graphics editor to customize stunning templates and create posts from scratch
- Auto-posting and scheduling to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn

➤ *Chattypeople*

Chat box have made their mark in the marketing world this year..Chat box technology has improved notably in the past decade, allowing marketers to create boxes without any coding knowledge. It is the perfect tool for those wanting to quickly create a Messenger chat box. The

platform allows entrepreneurs to create a box that works with Facebook, pushes promotions to customers on demand. With chat boxes, you will be able to:

- Use Facebook Messenger and comments to push customers through your sales funnel
- Take orders directly from Facebook
- Gather data about your customers to keep them up-to-date with relevant products

➤ **Hello Bar**

Hello Bar is a simple tool that will help you convert visitors into customers by easily creating banners that highlight your most important content, products, services and messages to your clients. All you have to do is log in and select a goal.

➤ **Typeform**

It is a tool one need to try if looking for new ways to interact with prospective customers.

V. CONCLUSION:

Handicrafts industry is highly labour intensive, cottage based and decentralized industry. The industry is spread all over the country mainly in rural and urban areas. Most of the manufacturing units are situated in rural and small towns, and there is huge commercial potential in all Indian cities and abroad. Handicraft industry is a major source of income for rural communities employing over six million artisans including a large number of women and people belonging to the weaker sections of the society. But lack of availability of communications facilities like computer, internet and telecommunication systems etc. to the artisans is a biggest problem of handicrafts market. Secondly, the level of literacy of artisans is quite low and consumer's behavior is kind of traditional, which is a cause of problem for effective communication. The study concluded that handicrafts products have huge opportunities and a need is felt to reach or communicate to the artisans about the use of tools of information technology to boost marketing.

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