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A Study on Market Opportunities & Consumer buying Behaviour towards Indian Handicraft Products

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Keywords: indian handicraft sector, market potential, consumer behaviour, handicraft marketing model, indian artistry, rural marketing.

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A Study on Market Opportunities & Consumer buying Behaviour towards Indian Handicraft Products

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Abstract- India has an extremely rich craft tradition, recognized by its unique aesthetic and mythological emotions expressed through artistry. The history of Indian Handicrafts dates back to one of the earliest civilizations of the world. It is now home to more than 7.3 million artisans residing mostly in rural or semi urban areas of India. This study will give a clear perception of the target consumers behaviour towards purchasing Indian handicrafts and would help stakeholders involved in Indian handicraft sectors to leverage on the critical findings stated in this study and devise a holistic marketing platform to explore the mentioned market opportunities of Indian Handicrafts. Certain critical challenges faced by this sector is inefficient institutional framework, relevant education, low capital, and deprived exposure to new technologies, no access to market intelligence. The paper also highlights critical constraints found during market research from consumer end and also suggests strategies which can be adopted. The study also focuses on strategic collaboration of artisans with designers, tourism industry, CSR, tech start-ups, NGOs, market research firms, SHG associations can bring the much awaiting change in this unorganised yet unexplored and lucrative sector of India. It will help artisans be in line with changing market trends and mould their artistic creativity as per the demand coming from target segments. In a nutshell, this study will bring in the lost enthusiasm in age old handicraft products and showcase the way to built a holistic model with a objective to explore the untapped potential of this sector and bring in a sustainable platform for Indian artisans who are unnoticedly responsible to preserve and pass our age old ancestral artistry skill to future generations.

Keywords: indian handicraft sector, market potential, consumer behaviour, handicraft marketing model, indian artistry, rural marketing.

I. Introduction

Handicraft refers to unique artistry work done by skilfully using hands and simple hand tools. It has ability to take back to the ancient roots and experience the incredible culture and traditions of a particular origin. It's a unique way to preserve and exhibit one's ancient traditions. India being so incredible and diverse possess a long rich history which dates to one of the oldest civilizations which goes back to 5000 BC when handicrafts revolved around depicting religion and culture. Today plethora of arts and crafts we spot in museums dates back to around 3000 BC when Indus-Valley Civilisation took place. The Vedic Age witness development of handicrafts in form of textiles, stone, metal, pottery, wood, painting. The Indian craftsmen evolved their artistry in Gupta period (320-670 AD) into woodcarving, sculpture, stone carving, jewellery-making and weaving. In later stages Indian handicrafts consistently evolved with time showcasing its flexibility viz-a-viz maintaining its unique patriotic and aesthetic attributes within its artistic expression.

Backed by such long rich heritage; India is home to about 7.3 million artisans (2018 data) residing in mostly rural and semi urban areas and identified as second major sector in terms of rural employment after agriculture. Indian artistry is facing challenges with technological and industrial revolution but still has not loosen its shine and is distinctive Indian traditioned attributes is significantly enchanted globally like hand-knotted rugs, embroidered & crocheted homeware, handcrafted jewellery, silk apparels textiles, scarves, shawls, leather as well as range of decorative handcrafted articles.

Today, there is huge gap in perception of handicrafts with respect to urbanization. In rural areas still handicraft is a legacy which is shared among generation after generation as a sense of preserving their ancestral culture and emotions attached to it. While, in urban areas handicraft is a symbol of luxury and classy style. There is a significant shift witnessed in consumer preference where there is a strong demand provides functional attributes along with emotional attributes in a product or a service. This is where Indian handicraft sector can leverage and upscale to make it a profitable livelihood for Indian artisans along with promoting and preserving our rich ancestral artistic skills.

Despite such huge potential, Indian handicraft export data reflects India is lagging behind in terms of fulfilling global demand. Westernisation and industry made cheap products are flooding market taking over aesthetic handicraft products. Rural artisans whose livelihood depends on their artistry work is not able to sustain as the income is very low. This has also resulted in migration of younger generation to other source of livelihood; leaving the burden of preserving such unique artistry work for elder craftsmen. This discrepancy needs a quick attention so that we don't lose our age-old historical artistry skills. Also, one huge challenge which

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prevails in this sector is the gap between what market actually demands and what Indian artisans pursue in making handicraft products. For example: A working class woman would not prefer heavy jewelleries instead would go for something which is light, descent and connects with age old artistry work. As mentioned earlier, now people are looking for products which satisfies both functional needs and give them sense of pride of promoting and taking ahead Indian artistic legacy. Some other limitations which acts as significant hurdles in development of Indian handicrafts sector i.e. keeping up with globally accepted quality parameters and consistency with each handicraft products as there is no check and control mechanism which artisans follow w.r.t raw material procurement, standard practices to maintain its quality and integrity.

There is immense potential for start-ups, fashion designers, MNCs, NGOs to intervene and provide market linkage, help educating and updating artisans, up scaling and fulfilling handicraft products to lucrative international demand and a huge opportunity lies in domestic market by helping artisans design such products which is in-line to market trend while holding its strong ancestral artistry emotions. Apart from private interventions; there is a need for government to take effective steps to promote and upscale Indian handicrafts to generate livelihood for millions of Indian artisans as well as preserve our age old handicraft skills. With digitization being a buzze word; there is an e commerce or digital wave coming in through different startups like Crafts bazaar, Craftsvilla, Engrave which has shown a promising path to provide a stable and lucrative market for Indian handicrafts.

II. Literature Review

Amir (2013) rightly mentioned Indian handicraft as an exhibit of rich Indian culture which includes social, religious, historical and mythological emotions preserved and expressed through artistry. As per Abraham (1964); man's connection with art and craft dates back to the period when human civilization began. He created stone weapons for protecting himself against wild animals in forests and hunt for food. The art of bamboo baskets, cotton weaving, pottery, stonework are few eminent ancient arts of India. Venkateswarlu, Rao, & Reddy (2018) indicated that there are various states of India such as Tripura, Gujarat, Kashmir, Maharashtra, Manipur, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Kerala, well known for its handicrafts. Each offers a wide plethora of handicrafts from respective states. Pani & Pradhan (2019) suggested that there are various attributes of tribal handicrafts especially like its aesthetic appeal, natural design and dyes used, simplicity, its artistic expression, deep connection with ancient culture and eco friendliness etc are some influencers for overall preference of consumer. The attribute like aesthetic and simplicity is also stated in the study of Planning commission of India (May, 2006) "Designing is a very vast subject and has different meanings for item to item, source to source and product for academic and practical purpose separately. The designing can be categorized in five types viz.: Natural design, Decorative & Stylish Design, Structural Design, Geometrical Design, Abstract Design."

M., Hawley, & Frater (2018) proposed that there is a whole new flow of trend where more and more people seek for such products which not only is exclusive and premium quality but also connect with the story of artisan and community from which it originates. Study conducted by Silver & Kundu (2013) also suggested that handicrafts are also used as a symbol of royalty and perseverance of age-old tradition. Pani & Pradhan (2016) connoted factors such as simplicity, aesthetic appeal, eco-friendly, creative expressions influences the buying decision of consumer. The Indian Handicraft Industry is responsible for the livelihood of more than 7.3 million Indian artisans as per KPMG report (2011-12) and is the second major employment sector after agriculture in India, have low per capita investment, high involvement of women and weaker section people & produces the product which is eco-friendly (Yadav & Bhat, Handicraft Sector: The Comforting Sector of Employment Review, 2017). In addition to this, study conducted by Mohin-ud-din (2014) reflected that the sector is economically imperative from the point of low capital investment, high ratio of value addition, and high potential for export and foreign exchange earnings for the country. Bhushan (2014) pointed the success and affluence of Indian Handicraft industry in terms of global market depends greatly on the degree of connection between artisans' work and preference and choice of the consumer in existing global market. P.V.Rajeev (2013) signified the importance of keeping in line with existing market trend and moulding artistic creativity with moderate prices, design, style, looks etc. considering the changing of time, marketing pattern in an acceptable and preferred form is crucial for artisans in today's market.

However study conducted by Seth (2018) pointed out that Indian Handicraft sector has suffered due to being highly unorganized sector, with the additional constraints of lack of education, low capital, and deprived exposure to new technologies, no access to market intelligence, and a poor institutional framework. As per Bhattacharyya & Datta (2016) indicated that the channel mediators, like middlemen, retailer or distributor try to capitalize and earn substantial profit at the cost of the craftsmen. On the other hand, (Rawat, & Srivastav, 2016; Bhat, 2015) suggested globalization is resulting into commoditizing of handicraft products thereby leading to a significant surge in facing high competition from all around world particularly China and other Asian countries. Also, Rao,

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Meesala, & H (2017) indicated that handicraft products face a detrimental competition with machine made cheap products w.r.t utility value and price affordability. Vadakepat & Khateeb (2012) proposed that for handicrafts to sustain competition from cheap machine made and fake antique products, it has to derive strategic by taking into consideration market threats to its pure creativity model.

A study conducted by Jain & Sharma (2015) suggested that there was no significant impact of government handicraft supporting policies and schemes on Artisans perception to earn livelihood from handicraft work which shows that there is much need of Government intervention in this sector. Funds offered under the Deen Dayal Hathkargh Protsahan Yogana (DDHPY) scheme has not significantly disbursed among artisans (Fiber2Fashion, 2010). Jadhav (2013) expressed concern that keeping next artistic generation engage in this sector is itself a struggle for Indian artisans as to earn their livelihood they have to forcefully shift to alternate occupation leaving their artistry unproductive. As per Yasmin (2013) there are certain states in India whose population majorly depends on handicrafts such as J & K where major issues is power supply, raw materials, lack of market linkage, labour. The employment growth rate has stepped down from 19.06% in 1990s to mere 0.25% in 2008. Pitchai & Akilandeeswari (2014) suggested that government should do periodical censes and survey of artisans to gauge the current status of the sector and derive impactful schemes for uplifting artisans.

A study conducted by Yadav & Bhat (2016) connoted that Indian handicraft Industry can potentially collaborate with Tourism Industry which will be a win-win promoting situation for both industries as it will result in increased diversification of tourism products such as home-stays, cultural experiences and help promoting responsible tourism in the respective area. Meanwhile, Mukherjee & Bhattacharya (2016) implied that artisans will get more potential customers which will encourage them learn tourists preferences and mould their products in a way to achieve sustainable business. Ghouse (2012) indicated that development of international markets for home accessory products and an amplified interest in rich Indian handicraft products exhibiting its age-old culture and traditions have opened up new-market opportunities for artisans. Conducting more regular national and international level handicraft exhibitions and festivals and encouraging FDIs with designers and artisans can be fruitful for the sector (G, 2019). Kapur & Mittar (2014) suggested that there can also be a collaborative innovation between designer and craftsmen which will give craftsmen an edge to market trend and also strategic design innovation which fit in the social, economic, ecological and cultural aspects.

A study conducted by Kumari & Srivastava (2016) recorded plethora of Indian handicrafts like Saharanpur for its wooden articles, Pashmina shawl of Kashmir, the North Western state of Rajasthan for Jaipuri quilts, Punjab for Phulkari, Jodhpur for wrought iron product, Gujarat for embroidered handlooms etc. This unorganized and fragmented sector needs a unified and accountable platform where in artisan's products are accessible to million of potential customer all over globe by a simple click. That's where E-tailing or E-retailing comes as a promising marketing channel for Indian handicrafts to reach ever rising demand in foreign countries in fashion industry, home décor market etc. Shah & Patel (2016) proposed a cluster level approach wherein NGOs or SHGs form their own website to sell handicraft at mass level or there could be Corporate level support under CSR could help form handicraft e commerce platform. Ratnesh & Kumari (2020) quoted CSR models adopted by Jindal Steel and Power Ltd. and Tata Steel Ltd which empowered tribal handicrafts of Jharkhand is one such successful CSR example. This will provide artisans with sustainable business and there won't be a need for artisans to leave artistry and do some random work for earning livelihood. Senapati & Agasty (2015) found a linkage of market research firms and Indian artisans for demand driven data will give to connect and get grip of global market trend and make product in line with the trend. Nagori & Saxena (2012) highlighted that handicraft marketing can be considered under rural marketing and thereby can utilize hub-spoke model, retailer model etc for its distribution. Dash (2011) suggested a need of strategic positioning of handicraft products is crucial on marketing front. This can be done by categorization of products-based export on domestic market, ease of storage, utility potential or decorative value and modernity or traditional orientation. Ghosal & Prasad (2019) also mentioned the need of strategic digital marketing of handicraft products to increase visibility and provide an online global market for artisans to sell their product. Anupama (2018) indicated digitalization will give one single platform for customers, traders, investors and scholars including the media gives access in locating craft persons (map assisted) and retail outlets for hand crafted products. Apart from this, a study conducted by Dey (2018) suggested a holistic managerial support is required to make this sector in an organized form as when a handicraft product is escalated at global level its brand image and management is considered significantly along with how well the business is managing its risk.

An empirical study conducted by Venkataramanaiah & Kumar (2011) faculty of IIM Indore suggests implementing cluster model to handicraft sector is the need of hour as it will help address specific barriers and will help achieve an organized structure for artisans which is missing in this fragmented sector. It will give ease to provide training and buy raw materials in bulk to give economies of scale which will make this sector profitable and reduce migration rate. As per

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McDonald (2007) study indicated that for government focusing one individual while designing and implementing development policy is very difficult and when cluster model exist it's easy to develop and intervene for government to address and make a profitable occupation for artisans.

A study conducted by All India Artisans and Craftworkers Welfare Association (AIACA) suggest that there are innovative collaborations and ventures like Etsy, Sanskriti, Fab-India, Craftsvilla etc in the handicraft market, leading to sustainable fashion. As per CSR (2017) report, these ventures target to specific but significant barrier existing in this sector and it seem to be benefitting artisans, the environment along with businesses enhancing scalability. Pande (2017) connoted that contribution of Private Sustainability Standards (PSS) can help handicraft sector match international compliances with respect to quality, eco-labelling, raw material usage, protocol followed etc which can introduce handicraft firmly to International trade.

III. Objectives of the Study

1. To gain insights on market opportunities of handicraft products and especially Indian-made.
2. To analyse the attributes that customer prioritizes while purchasing handicraft decisions.
3. To understand challenges faced by customers while purchasing handicrafts and suggest a holistic model to build a holistic handicraft marketing platform in India.

IV. Research Methodology

The market research was conducted with a random population sample of 399 residing in Tier-I and Tier-II cities of India as handicraft comes under luxury segment due to its premium price and symbol of royalty there is a huge demand of Indian handicrafts in these cities. The research tool used is questionnaire designed to gauge potential market opportunities & consumer buying behaviour towards Indian handicraft products.

The market research is descriptive in nature and helps to describe the attributes of identified target groups from the study using IBM SPSS statistics software.

Null Hypothesis (Ho): There exists no correlation between the variables.

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): There exists a correlation between the variables.

Variables in study: Age, Gender, Source of awareness, frequency of buying handicraft products, preferred source to buy handicrafts, most preferred category of handicraft, attributes prioritized while shopping handicrafts, constraints faced by customers while purchasing handicrafts, doorstep delivery preference.

Data Interpretation done by:

1. Cluster Analysis
2. Discriminant Analysis

V. Findings

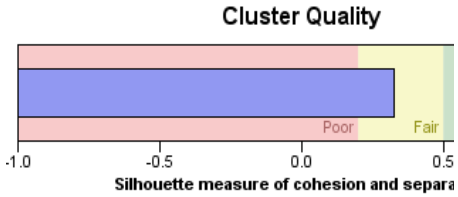
As per the market research conducted for the study; total 399 responses were recorded through online survey out of which 67.8% of respondents were from 18-25 age group showcasing the interest of millennials in preserving and exhibiting Indian handicrafts, while the study conducted was on PAN India level.

As per the research, 83.4% of respondents were highly interested in handicraft products while rest of the respondents who showed less interest; reflected some significant constraints faced while purchasing handicraft products such as availability (34.8%), authenticity (25.8%), pricing (31.8%), quality(30.1%) ,after sales service(16.7%) and others.

Also, one stimulating insight from the research was to know that more than half of the total respondents (i.e.54.8%) were interested in receiving handicraft products at door steps which reflects the urge of shifting the selling of handicraft products from offline mode to e commerce mode while rest of the respondents still consider to physically touch and experience the handicraft articles before making a purchasing decision.

To have a detailed analysis of the primary data collected, lets classify target segments with the help of cluster analysis followed by discriminant analysis which will give a deep understanding of factors that distinguishes the target segment clusters which will be then used to suggest a holistic marketing model for Indian handicrafts.

Cluster Analysis: As Indian handicraft consist of unique artistry which revisits our ancient roots. Every single article of this artistry consist of a strategic mix of functional attributes complemented with emotional attributes. Therefore it becomes necessary to classify the sample population based on psychological and behavioural aspects which is done by following cluster analysis.



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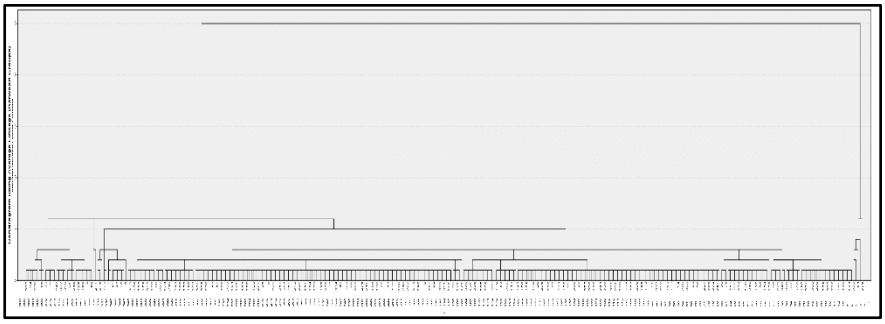
The Silhouette approach measures the quality of clustering. Here, the cluster quality is near to fair which shows a significant separation between resultant cluster therefore the sample considered is relevant to perform interpretation further.



Validation: As per the above dendrogram of cluster analysis, there are two clusters identified in this study.

Table1.1: Final Cluster Centers

Key Factors	Cluster 1	Cluster 2
Interest in handicrafts	1.60	1.23
Source of awareness about handicrafts	4.20	4.45
Frequency of buying handicrafts	2.80	3.11
Prioritzing purchasing location for handicrafts	1.60	1.76
Door-step delivery preference	11.00	2.0
Specifically interested in Indian handicrafts	1.60	1.34
Prioritzing Attributes- price, quality, availability	1.99	2.98

(Note: As per the criteria, K-Mean value > 0.5 it means that the value is significant for that particular cluster)

There are two clusters in terms of different factors influencing their purchasing decision:

Cluster 1: Factors like delivery at door steps, Indian made specific handicrafts influences the most. These people prefers doorstep delivery which suggest the difficulty of reaching out to offline stores because of hectic lifestyle and also inclination towards online purchasing .So cluster 1 can be named as online purchasing consumers.

Cluster 2: The source of knowing about handicraft products, purchasing location, attributes like price, quality, availability etc influences the purchasing decision. These people are the ones who prefer purchasing offline which means they are interested in buying handicrafts after having physical touch and experiencing the product. So cluster2 named as offline purchasing consumers.

Discriminant Analysis:

Purpose: As per the analysis, there is no significant separation between two cluster i.e. for both clusters all the factors influence in some or the other way but the intensity of its influence is different which is rightly suggested in discriminant analysis.

The pre requisite for discriminant analysis is cluster analysis. However during interpretation because of huge responses there was fair significant difference between two clusters as per K Mean values. As per the magnitude of the value we named:

- Cluster1 as Online purchasing consumers group
- Cluster 2 as offline purchasing consumer group.

Therefore, discriminant analysis will analyse differentiating factors that will result into clear distinguished target groups.

Table 1.2: Eigenvalues

Function	eigen-value	% of variance	cumulative %	canonical correlation
1	0.813	100.00	100.00	0.670

Canonical correlation helps to identify and measure association between set of variables. Here as the canonical correlation value is >0.5 it significant goodness of fit as variance is high.

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Table 1.3: Structure Matrix

Dicriminant Factors	Discriminant Loading values
Specific preference to Indian handicrafts	0.657
Age group preference	0.622
Preference for handicraft purchasing location	0.367
Gender preference	0.163
Frequency of purchasing handicrafts	-0.124
Awareness about handicraft products	0.058
Doorstep delivery preference for handicraft products	-0.049
Prioritizing Attributes- Quality, accessiblity, price	0.031

Structure matrix is also called as Discriminant loading where value>0.5 is considered to be good discriminant factor. So, following are the factors which can act as good discriminators for differentiating between above stated clusters are:

1. Indian made purchasing handicraft products preference.
2. Age group of target segment
3. Gender group

Table 1.4: Unstandardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients

Factors	Coefficient value
Preference for handicraft purchasing location	0.502
Specific preference to Indian handicrafts	1.606
Age group preference	0.680
Gender preference	0.621
(Constant)	-5.726

A part from the discriminant factor identified above; as per Canonical Discriminant Coefficients (Unstandardized) Preference for handicraft purchasing location can also be a potential discriminator for the two groups or clusters.

VI. Conclusion

To explore this huge market potential of Indian handicrafts; there is a need of holistic marketing model which should serve all the critical factors which influences one's decision to purchase handicrafts products. As per the analysis done in this research study:

- Handicraft purchasing location is one of the most critical factor as it reflects the traceabilityand credibility of handicraft product and gives a sense of trust and assurance that a particular handicraft is reliable in terms of quality, price, source etc.
- With the increase sense of patriotism,nationwide pride and a satisfaction to preserve and promote the aesthetic culture and traditions of India; there is a high preference to handicrafts especially designed by Indian artisans.
- There is a positive drive in today's millennials to include Indian handicrafts in their lifestyle where they seek for such products which not only is unique and high quality but also comes with story of artisan and community from which it originates, thus looking as a symbol of simplicity, aesthetic appeal, eco-friendly, creative expressions, royalty.
- With gender sensitizing society, it is evident in the study that more number of males have shown interest in purchasing Indian handicrafts along with females reflecting a need to come up with variants of handicrafts with not only focuses to lure females but also males.

The study also indicated significant shift in consumer preference where there is a strong demand for functional attributes along with emotional attributes in a product or a service. Start-ups, fashion designers, MNCs, NGOs, SHG associations to intervene and provide market linkage, help educating and updating artisans to design such products which is in-line to market trend while holding its strong ancestral artistry emotions. Apart from private interventions; there is a need for government to take effective steps to promote and upscale Indian handicrafts to generate livelihood for millions of Indian artisans as well as preserve our age-old handicraft skills.

Also, another finding from this study was the demand for doorstep delivery online model of handicrafts. With digitization being a buzze word; there is an e commerce or digital wave coming in through different startups like Craftsbazaar, Craftsvilla, Engrave which has shown a promising path to provide a stable and lucrative market for Indian handicrafts. It will not

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only complement the hectic lifestyle of target customers but also would solve one of the biggest constrain in this sector i.e. lack of accessibility of handicraft products because of its fragmented nature.

This conclusive study would help the above stated stakeholders involved in Indian handicraft sectors to leverage on the findings stated above and devise a holistic marketing platform to explore the mentioned market opportunities of Indian Handicrafts.

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