



Study of Handicraft Marketing Strategies of Artisans in Uttar Pradesh and Its Implications

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Abstract

At present the rural producers/suppliers are struggling to market their products and services due to various reasons. The performance of the manufacturer and artisans both for financing and marketing of handicrafts is far from satisfaction. 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 how well the artisans can produce the articles 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. This research paper is based on marketing concepts of four P's i.e. Product, Price, Place and Promotion.

Keywords: Handicraft, marketing, artisans, rural marketing, rural retail marketing, marketing innovations.

Introduction

Handicrafts are unique expressions of a particular culture or community through local craftsmanship and materials. It is no longer possible to look at traditional artisan communities and their products in isolation from global market trends and competition. Handicrafts are part of a much larger home accessory market, which includes handcrafted, semi handcrafted, and machine-made goods. The home accessory market is strongly influenced by fashion trends, consumer purchasing patterns, and economic conditions in end markets. In many cases, artisans are out of touch with those end markets, which presents a challenge to those seeking to export their products. The response of consumers to handicrafts is unpredictable. Handicraft production is a major form of employment in many developing countries and often a significant part of the export economy. With increased globalization, however, products are becoming more and more commoditized, with artisan producers facing increased competition from producers all over the world, particularly in China and other Asian countries. The All India Handicrafts Board assisted the state governments in setting up their Design and Technical centers in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Kashmir, Rajasthan, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Orissa, Manipur, Tripura, Haryana, West Bengal and Goa. In these centers, craftsmen and the artists jointly work out new designs and items in selected crafts. These artists strive to combine the traditional with modern. The handicraft items are carefully made by artisans so that they retain the ethnic value, while they can be put to modern day use. The designers have to keep in mind the changing needs of the consumers, especially the foreign markets.

Literature Review: Prajapati and Laila¹ explaining that the diversity marketing in craft industry, recommend regular market survey to compile market information to design workable solutions to solve market problems.

Thaimani² study focused on the lack of market awareness is the main obstacle for any village enterprises to put up their products in urban markets.

Dak³ 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.

Florence⁴ 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. Resource centre-RCIP⁵ reveals that the euro crises can affect the profit margins and hence will difficult to remain in the market. The players in the leather industry are small & cottage leather manufacturers and do not have the financial potential to use hedging techniques.

Sanyal, Banerjee and Majumder⁶ performed study on the Leather Industry in India by using the Constant Market Share (CMS) Analysis, find the change in export from (1991-2006) and conveys that the leather export has been seen decreasing due the change in demand in the world, change and market competitiveness.

Objectives: i. To study the importance of marketing in handicraft sector. ii. To study the marketing concepts based on four P's and try to relate with handicraft.

Research Methodology

This research paper is based on the secondary data by exploring various secondary data resources such as old research papers various journals, books internet, some of the governmental data etc.

The study is descriptive in nature and therefore the information presented is based on secondary data. Secondary data has been studied from various documents such as books, newsletters, reports, magazines, journals, newspaper, internet, as well as from existing literature to understand the marketing strategies in handicraft business.

Importance of Handicrafts: Handicraft sector occupies a prime position in the Indian economy. It is the largest employer, next to agriculture. The sector, while providing livelihood for thousands of artisans, provides avenues for realization of social and cultural potential of millions of people. The mythological, religious, social, historical and artistic expressions in crafts symbolize the strengths of Indian heritage while combining in these crafts both utility and beauty.

High employment potential, low per capita investment and high value addition, involvement of women and weaker section, eco friendliness and the potential to stimulate creative talents make the sector one of the most preferred sectors in the process of economic development.

India which consists of a variety of ethnic traditions and culture is also a treasure house of Indian handicrafts. Exquisite handicrafts using diverse raw materials are produced in different parts of the country. This include art metal ware, wood ware, hand printed textiles and scarves, leather crafts, hand knotted carpets and embroidered goods, wood design, shawls as art ware, stone carvings, imitation jewellery and miscellaneous other handicrafts.

One of the unique feature of the handicrafts is that more often the same item of the handicraft, produced in different regions, are different from each other in terms of the craftsmanship, style, color combination and finish by artesian creativity.

Marketing Practices in Handicraft⁷: 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 members of his family. Most of his time is spent in the production. In case, he has a little time at his disposal, he uses it for acquiring raw materials. Usually, he has little knowledge and market information relating to his products. Hopefully, the artisans in handicraft industry give little importance to the vital marketing function. The important marketing aspects are discussed under the heads of the following are: i. Product, ii. Price, iii. Place, iv. Promotion.

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

Product-Line: Handicraft: Firms which market only one product are rare today. Most firms offer a product line. A product line is a group of products related in function or customer purchase needs. The benefits of changing the composition of the product line, by either adding or subtracting products, depend on a number of factors- the preferences of consumers, the tactics of competitors, the firm's cost structure, and from the product to another name but a few. The handicraft units produce a number of products applying the concept of product line. The size of product line depends on the demand for products and availability of resources like financial and raw material. In the process of assessing the demand for the products and resources availability, the artisans from time to time add new products to its existing product line or drop some of its present products.

The products which are not profitable are usually deleted from the product line. The decision whether to discontinue a product is often based on how fast it moves. Deletion of some of the products from product line may also be a practice in handicrafts.

Handicrafts designs: The Design of a handicraft product should be in accordance with the tastes and preferences of customers. There are three types of designs viz., conventional, modern, combination of conventional and modern which are usually adopted by artesian. Conventional designs are age-old and traditional designs. While modern designs are in keeping with the changes of consumer preferences and tastes. Conventional and modern is a combination of both types.

Product planning and development in Handicraft: Product planning and development can be found even in handicrafts. Handicrafts are the products of creativity and workmanship. Artisans, usually, strive for excellence in their crafts by undertaking product planning and development.

Expansion in Handicraft: Expansion is increasing the present scale of operation either by mechanizing the process of production or by enhancing tile installed capacity. Expansion is undertaken when there is more demand for the products. It can also be undertaken in anticipation of future demand. However, expansion involves finance, without adequate finance,

expansion activity cannot be taken. The expansion of the unit can be done in various ways; that is by mechanization, enhancing the installed capacity and increasing manpower.

II –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.

Fixing the price in Handicraft: The craftsmen are unable to estimate the exact cost, of production due to several reasons. Hence, they find it difficult to fix the price basing on cost of production. The craftsmen have said that they fix prices of articles basing on its market acceptance and basing on the price offered by master craftsmen, dealers and co-operative societies. Prices of handicraft articles are fixed by craftsman himself, master craftsman, dealer and co-operative societies, the extent of influence of these people in fixing the prices differ from craft to craft. Dealers and co-operative societies as viewed by a majority of the respondents influence a great deal in fixing the prices or handicrafts.

Taxes in Handicraft: Sales tax is not only high on handicrafts but also varied from craft to craft. It is suggested that the State Government may exempt handicrafts from sales tax, as it is already done in States like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala. The absence of sales tax on handicrafts will result in reduction of Handicrafts prices and thereby increase the sales. It's quite difficult for artesian to survive in market unless government should protect them.

III-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. Some producers sell directly to the consumers, whereas some sell through dealers, master craftsmen and sales emporia. Sometimes, the dealers and master craftsmen sell the handicraft products through sales emporia, which directly contact the galaxy of consumers through its various outlets located at various important towns in India. There are certain limitations in the present channels of distribution of handicrafts. Co-operative societies are not serving' as a channels or distribution. Handicrafts producers are depending on the dealers and master craftsmen for selling handicrafts to consumers. Sales markets are purchasing handicrafts from dealers and master craftsmen; but not from handicrafts manufacturers.

The first channel, handicrafts producers may sell their articles directly to their customers. Second channel, handicraft

producers may sell to private dealers, who in turn, sell to galaxy of customers. The third channel, handicraft producers may sell to All India Handicraft Development Corporation, which in turn, sells to customers through its sales emporia and State owned emporia. The fourth channel, handicrafts producers may sell their articles to co-operative society which, in turn, may sell to All India Handicrafts Development Corporation which may sell to State owned emporia which, in turn, may sell to customers.

IV- Promotion: Basically, it is communication information between buyer and seller to change attitudes and behavior of consumers. Promotion-mix includes advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, publicity and packaging.

Advertising of Handicraft: Advertising is not undertaken by and respondent. The small scale operation of the artisans does not permit the craftsmen to undertake advertising of their products individually. For the promotion of handicrafts, the Corporation has been undertaking publicity, exhibitions, printing of brochures, and participation in trade fairs. The Corporation is also putting up hoardings in important places and centers to tourist interest, which would serve as a good medium of publicity. Other forms of publicity include participation in trade fairs, and sponsoring trade / study teams covering particular crafts to other States in the country.

Promotions in Handicraft: 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.

Marketing problem in Handicraft: Artisans face several problems in marketing. In view of shortage of financial resources and small scale of operation; advertising publicity cannot be undertaken by artisans. Hence, it is suggested that the Corporation may increase advertising and publicity for all the crafts. The Corporation should save the artisans from the exploitative clutches of middlemen by purchasing handicrafts at remunerative prices from artisans by giving payments promptly. Thus, government Uttar Pradesh of Handicrafts required to, play a vital role in solving the marketing problems faced by artisans.

Suggestions: In order to make handicrafts reach the top spot the following suggestions may be implemented.

Organizing marketing network of Handicraft: Absence of systematic marketing network has been a discouraging factor in this region. In my opinion, the artisans must be organized by themselves under the co-operative umbrella for marketing their products by themselves. For this more and more linkages must be developed with outside parties.

Copy right of Handicraft: Design registration should be done. That means whatever designs any artisan has introduced on any item should be registered. Then no one can copy it.

Price Uniformity in Handicraft: It is often complained that prices of handicraft products are very much erratic and not uniform. There is significant difference in prices of the same article if purchase from two shops or from two places. In this situation the customer feels very much exploited and harassed. This might have very bad repercussion on the demand of the products. Categorization of art in each craft should be done according to the skill exhibited and quality of raw materials used and pricing should be made accordingly by a team of experts.

Awareness Creation: The majority of artisans are not aware about various new schemes like loan at concessional rates, free tools, dyes and chemical, work shed-cum-housing facilities. It is the duty of the promotional organizations to make the weavers aware about the various welfare schemes and to implement the same on a war footing.

More research and development in Handicraft: For improving the quality of the products R and D is a must. Many more new items and new designs can be developed with the help of R and D.

Foreign Collaboration with designers and artisans: Foreign master designers may be invited to the design centers to render guidance to the craftsmen.

Value addition in Handicraft: The various specialized organization, like DC (handicrafts), may help the local units to produce various value added items which would not only help to penetrate the local market, but also help in exporting of such items to foreign countries.

Publicity in Handicraft: To attract more and more buyers both within and outside the country, promotional and marketing organizations must give due emphasis on wide publicity of various local products. For this frequent buyers and sellers meets may be organized by promotional organizations.

Exports of Handicraft: If systematic efforts are made, some of the selective products could emerge as a major foreign exchange earner in the near future. However, before exporting of such items care should be taken on product identification, quantum of production, supply arrangements, price, delivery, quality, payment terms etc.

Window display of Handicraft products: In whatever possible manner, all the promotional and marketing organization, must display the local items in various airports, railway stations, bus stands, commercial centers etc. This will help the local artisans to get more orders from foreign tourists, traders, marketing organization etc.

Positioning of handicraft Products: Handicrafts, which are produced with traditional skill, are gradually facing competition from machine made products, which give greater uniformity and better finish. For large number of handicraft items, there have been neither substitutes nor competition from any significant entrant into the field. Thus, suppliers, new entrants and substitute products do not appear to be significant factors in the strategic positioning of Handicrafts. By the process of isolation we come to the buyers and buyer groups. This also includes the middlemen and distribution chain.

Conclusion

Handicraft is such a product that when a buyer likes it, he is prepared to pay a price, which may be far in excess of the standard price of the product. The prime consideration is his liking of the product. Channel agents, such as middlemen, retailer or distributor try to capitalize on such possibilities and earn significant profit almost wholly at the cost of the craftsmen. Handicraft product may be categorized on the basis of price, export on domestic market, ease of maintenance, ease of storage, utility value or decorative value and modernity or traditional orientation. Besides, it is necessary for likeminded institutions to come together to provide the strategic direction and action plans to evolve systems. Procedure and norms related to design, market, technology, innovation and quality of life so that product designs, technology and marketing become integral part of the craft up gradation and repositioning process.

Craft is the standard mark of creativity and the essential differentiator for a country in the sweeping waves of globalization. Most importantly, craft has to become a fountainhead for both industrial design and communication design, for deriving the differential advantage of Indian design in the global market place.

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