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REVIVING INDIAN TRADITIONAL CRAFTS THROUGH E-COMMERCE AND GLOBAL TRADE

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ABSTRACT

In consequence, the idea of resurrecting the Indian traditional handicraft through e-commerce and global circuits has revolutionized the handicraft industry and secured business viability for artisans. Handmade traditions of Indian fabrics, pottery, metals and woods formed a strong history which has had problems like falling customers, an influx of the industrial and machinery products and shrinking number of artisans. However, recent mega online markets such as Amazon, Etsy, E-tails, and exclusive Indian sites, etc., are helping small artisan groups to straight away through their products to the international markets without involving several middlemen and retrieving actual prices a bit. Schemes like Make in India, Vocal for Local, and One District One Product (ODOP) are helping to teach local artefacts to the world. Increasingly, traditional marketing approaches are complemented with social media and modern techniques help bring particular attention to artisans and their creations. However, illustrating these opportunities, digital literacy, logistic issues, control over product quality, and fair-trade practices still pose a huge problem. Drawing from the case of e-commerce, trade policies and interventionist measures in this paper, the author looks at how the artistry can have a sustainable environment in Tanzania. This exposes the weakness in skill development, fund and infrastructure for handcrafted product industries in India for a sustainable future in the IT enhanced global market.

KEYWORDS: Indian Traditional Handicraft, E-commerce, Global Market and Make in India

INTRODUCTION

Indian handicrafts form a very special part of the country's cultural legacy and also substantial business market, owing to their long history and diverse geographical roots. Madhubani paintings, Banarasi silk weaving, Kutch embroidery all can be identified not only as separate means of artistic manifestations, but also as the primary handicrafts' images of the given regional identity, history, and craftsmanship. These crafts build India's soft power, which draws global admiration and helps to

organize cultural intercourse (Kumar 56). Economically, handicraft sector is among the many sources of income for millions of people where a major part of the population is in the rural and semi urban regions. The handicraft sector of India serves around seven million artists, including the backward class of the population (Ministry of Textiles, Annual Report 2021-22). Further, the sector provides a boost to export earnings through exporting Indian handicrafts in the United States and European and Middle Eastern countries. Hand made products have been an integral part of India's art and craft culture for decades and carry believed historical and cultural values along with rich richness of the country's different states. Madhubani paintings, Banarasi silk weaving, Kutch embroidery are not only paintings, cloths and embellishments but they are art to depict identity, history, culture, and heritage of generations of artisans. These crafts help Indian soft power – these crafts have foreign appeal and goodwill, promoting reciprocal exchange (Kumar 56).

Economically, the handicraft industry remains one of the important sources of income especially for millions of people in rural and semi urban areas. A latest revelation by the Ministry of Textiles states that handicraft sector in India involves seven Million plus artisans, the majority of them from the deprived section of the society. Moreover, the sector earns the country a good percentage of its export income especially to countries like the U.S., Europe and the Middle East where made in India handicrafts enjoys a good market.

OBJECTIVES

- To explore how e-commerce can empower Indian artisans.
- To analyse global market trends for Indian handicrafts.
- To suggest policy recommendations for sustainable growth.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: In this study both descriptive and exploratory research design are used.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS:

Literature Review:

Comprehensive analysis of existing research papers and case studies related to societal pressures, financial literacy, and consumer behaviour. Incorporation of findings from various studies to identify key factors such as social media influence, peer pressure, and cultural stigmas. This paper employs a qualitative methodology that combines literature review, theoretical insights, and case analysis to explore the interplay between societal pressures and financial literacy.

Overview of Indian Traditional Crafts

Handicraft in India is extensive and enriched with a variety of arts and crafts that represent the whole culture and geographical divisions of the country. Main classifications of Indian handicrafts include

textiles, pottery, metals and alloys, woods, and paintings. Traditional hand-woven fabrics as Banarasi silk fabric, Kanjeevaram sarees, and Pashmina shawls are very much part of India's textile culture (Gupta 34). Rajasthan's terracotta pottery, blue pottery of Jaipur city and black pottery of Nizamabad are famous (*Handicrafts of India* 56). Metals involve Dhokra metal from Chhattisgarh and Bidriware from Karnataka which depicts the art of fine metal inlay (Sharma 78). Hailing from Saharanpur, wood carving is another unique craft that has got India on the map of fine craftsmanship; other superior quality craft include toys made from Channapatna, and Kashmiri walnut woodwork. Madhubani paintings from Bihar, Warli from Maharashtra and Tanjore paintings from Tamil Nadu depict the art of painting that used paintings for telling stories (Sen 45).

Indian handicrafts have been used in the export business for centuries. In ancient trading time particularly in the Silk Routes time India exports Textiles, ceramics and metal work to Asia, Middle east and Europe (Mukherjee 112). During the colonial period, artisans suffered economic hardships because British policies discouraged locally manufactured products preferring machine-made items from England (Chandra 67). Post-independence of India by launching of All India Handicrafts Board and promotion of Khadi many handicrafts were revived but they still remained a face competitor to industrial products (Roy 98).

The handicraft industry on the other hand is an important sector for employment generation particularly for over seven million artisans in India out of which a large number of artisans are from distressed groups it is finding it difficult to employed (*Annual Report 2021-22*). It provides sustainable livelihoods, empowers women, and promotes traditional skills (Das 134). In urban areas, the sector fuels the luxury market, designer collaborations, and e-commerce-driven exports, boosting India's GDP and global cultural influence. However, challenges such as lack of fair wages, market access, and declining artisan numbers threaten the industry's sustainability (Jain and Verma 88). Strengthening policy support and integrating digital platforms can ensure the long-term growth of India's craft sector.

Challenges Faced by Indian Craftsmen

There are many problems that the craftsmen in India face which make the continuation of truly Indian handicrafts problematic. Some of them are poor market access and market exploitation through middlemen who set higher prices to earnings of artisans. Small and unorganised producers, especially craftsmen in rural areas, lack direct access to consumers results in lower margins and thus low income and employment or job insecurities (*Annual Report 2021-22*). There is also less demand for traditional skills which youths feel that handicrafts are not as profitable as other modern professions (Sharma 89). A worry for the continuation of these streams of arts is that the generational changes of artisans mean that young artists are less willing to learn how to continue their traditions.

The industry also struggles with competition from machine made and imported products that are easier to obtain and usually at a lower price. Cheap merchandise originating from economic power houses such as China has over flooded the market thus doing away with the need to import handmade items from India (Gupta 112). In addition, supply chain and logistical challenges affect the distribution of products within the artisan's networks urgently. These hitches include unstable roads, high transportation costs, and lack of smooth outlets to the market and reduce prospect and profitability. Another tremendous factor is the minimal digital literacy among the artisans mainly because they cannot effectively market on electronic commerce and social media networking sites to the international market. Most of the master builders and artisans who previously depended on their skills to earn a living cannot be acquainted with digital technologies and funds and, therefore, cannot market themselves adequately in the current society (Jain and Verma 65). It is essential that policy measures are implemented, financial resources are increased and government takes appropriate action for the digital enablement of handicrafts for the survival of handicrafts in India.

Role of E-Commerce in Reviving Traditional Crafts

The home shopping business has turned out to be influential in the revival of the handicraft industry of India as designers and other conventional craftsmen gain direct access to both the domestic market and the international market. Popular leading international shopping websites like amazon Etsy and Flipkart along with Indian based specific indigenous products selling website like okhai, Gaatha and iTokri has a chance for these artisans to sell their handmade products without interferences of middlemen (Sharma 56). They aid artisans in breaking geographical barriers so that their artwork goes to the right customer and showcase the diverse cultures of India. Another bonus of digital marketplaces is that the majority of them are or involve a direct-to-consumer (D2C) approach, which lessens the level of intermediaries. Originally, the merchants buying from craftsmen pay them off little and yet they make high profits by reselling the same. A seller can bypass these layers through e-commerce, thereby enabling the artisans to get better terms for their products and also get to set better terms of their sale (Jain and Verma 78). Thirdly, modern information technologies give artisans an opportunity to attract consumers with awareness on global availability of hand-made, sustainable, and environmentally friendly products, which are becoming a trend in global markets (Mehta and Roy 90). Another advantage is higher earnings for more member artisans as when selling their products online, they can set their prices and even get direct customer feedback. Additional government support such as the India Handmade Portal and partnership between digital market places and NGOs have further enhanced of e-commerce channel for rural artisans (*Annual Report 2021-22*).

Hence, success stories available here demonstrate the extent of change that e-commerce brings. For instance, Okhai, an artisan led collective, has helped rural women in Gujarat by linking them directly with buyers around the world through their online store. Likewise, iTokri and Gaatha have revived

the craft that was on the verge of extinction and providing the artisans with a fair wage for their products, as well as a regular market need (Das 67). Such case studies demonstrate how digital platforms not only provide economic security to artisans but also contribute to cultural preservation and sustainable livelihoods. Some challenges such as digital literacy, logistics and financial constraints are a barrier to widespread adoption. These issues can be addressed with the help of targeted training programs and improved infrastructure which will eventually enhance the role of e-commerce in revitalizing India's handicraft sector.

Impact of Global Trade on Indian Handicrafts

Analysis of global trade impact shows that the Indian handicraft industry has benefited from and has faced difficulties due to trade. There has been a trend and thrust for sustainable and handmade brands within the international markets especially due to the challenges of green and social responsibility. exotic Indian passions of craft that are aesthetically appealing, consist of conspicuous features such as intricate patterns, basics traditional making methods, and are, basically natural (Gupta 45). Customers for locally made or handmade products are growing due to rejection of synthetic and inorganic products leading to exportation of products such as woven fabrics, metalwork, pottery, and wooden carvings (*Annual Report 2021-22*). The Indian handicraft industry has benefited from the political leadership's action plans to boost handicraft exports. Through initiatives like "Make in India," "Vocal for Local," and the "One District, One Product (ODOP)" one, can add value to the products and take them to global platforms by improving quality and access to markets and branding (Sharma 67). The proponents of the ODOP initiative ensure that region-based crafts are recognized and marketed so that heritage craft enjoys priority and funding (Mehta and Roy 89). There has also been the undertaking of trade agreements and export incentives in as far as promotion of Indian handicrafts is concerned. The forum for Indian handicrafts Export Promotion Council (EPCH) conducts trade fairs, exhibition and buyer-sellers meets for the artisans to market their products. Also, the question of taxes, export incentives, and freedom from customs provide artisans the opportunity to challenge manufacturers around the globe (Jain and Verma 102). Yet, the constraint like demand volatility, high freight costs and complicated export measures still act as a hindrance to international export of handicrafts.

Brand creation and GI tags have gone further in reinforcing the international image of Indian traditional ornament. Dress materials like Banarasi sarees, Pashmina shawls, paintings like Madhubani paintings and wooden toys like Channapatna toys have been granted GI tags, so also to safeguard the artisans from fake products (*Geographical Indications Registry, Government of India*). GI certification boosts export value by preserving the uniqueness of these crafts, assuring buyers of their quality and origin (Das 78). Despite the positive developments, the handicrafts sector requires support in digital adoption, infrastructure improvements and policy reforms to successfully capitalize on global trade opportunities. The sustainability and economic viability of the Indian Handicrafts will be

enhanced with the help of strengthening artisan cooperatives, expanding e-commerce exports, and fostering international collaborations.

Policy Recommendations and Future Roadmap

Technological intervention and employment of appropriate government policies and regulation, backed by the private sector collaborates, are critical for the growth of handicrafts' sustainable business and its international market relevance in India. It should also provide support for the development of artisans' skills concerning the use of the internet. Most craftsmen are unaware of how to efficiently market themselves and their products using e-commerce tools. With partnership between the government and the private sector, training programs regarding online selling, social media marketing, and digital payment solutions are possible (Jain and Verma 72). Various Non-Governmental Organizations, and organization like the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) & Handicrafts and Handloom Export Corporation of India (HHEC) can also participate actively in these programmes. Further, an essential strategy is to improve access to Gigabit capable networks in the rural areas so they can fully engage with e-commerce platforms. Upgrades in internet connection, supply chain infrastructure, and availability and affordability of smartphones will equip artisans for direct selling to global consumer markets. The increasing global programs such as 'Digital India' may help to close the digital gap and enable artisans to successfully participate and sell their products in the global markets. Another of these is financial services, especially credit facilities as most artisans lack access to formal sources of credit. The existing strategies of increasing micro financing, offering cheap credit, and targeted subsidies will enable artisans to improve on materials, processing equipment and technology (Gupta 55). The government can also offer special financial incentives such as grants to attract cooperatives and self-help groups into ladder handicraft production. The application of Information Technology especially IoT, AI, blockchain, and AR/VR can go a long way in expanding Indian handicrafts on the international market. The recommendation engines developed with artificial intelligence can make recommendations about customers who may be interested in the products of artisans and make them available to the artisans. In particular, blockchain can be helpful to testify product originality and safeguard owners' rights, thus excluding fake products from the market (Mehta and Roy 88). AR/VR can create appealing shopping experiences where customers may engage in virtual visiting handcrafted products and then buy them.

Finally, a partial socialization of Indian handicrafts means that the quests for forging effective collaborations between designers, artisans, and global customers can create substantial value for Indian handicrafts. Designers must be in a position of balancing the traditional craft and making crafts fashionable for the modern world, which is possible through developing techniques of Beton. Product placement in creative collaborations such as international trade fairs, craft residencies, and other forms of affiliation can give artisans openness to global markets and valued buyer-seller interface (Sharma

64). For instance, the India Handicrafts Fair can be broadened in the same way as UNESCO's Artisan Connect to facilitate such experiences. With these strategies, Indian handicrafts will not only survive the age of the internet, but they will be successful as well. This paper argues that integrating policy advocacy, technology development, and sustainable buying practices shall continue to support traditional crafts as integral components of India's culture and market.

CONCLUSION

Indian handicrafts embody a historic indigenous tradition as well as a current business value chain but are fraught with issues of market access, attrition of interest among artisans, and increased pressure from counterfeit products. But with the advent of e-commerce players like Amazon, Etsy, Flipkart or other niche Indian players like Okhai or iTokri has provided a new generation exposure and sales route to the artisans and improve their price realization. The handicraft segment has received appropriate support from government exercises such as 'Make in India', 'Vocal for Local', and 'One District, One Product' policies which have assisted the handicraft business in terms of funds and structural support. Further, the Geographical Indications (GI) have been very effective in protecting such products, as well as promoting and enhancing the genuineness of the craft products, especially in terms of heritage value. The opportunities derived from e-commerce are that artisans are able to gain direct access to customers, there is no exploitation from middlemen, and there is encouraging of the right and ethical use of products. Nonetheless, for such potential to be captured to the fullest, there is need for cooperation of everybody inclusive of policymakers, entrepreneurs, and customers. Political decision-makers need to fund the digital infrastructure improvements in rural areas, increase consumption of financial services, and support digital skills programs for the general population, while entrepreneurs need to help artisans and designers work together. Customers in turn must patronise ethics such products thus keeping such traditional artisans at work. Subsequent studies must examine AI adoption in craft marketing, blockchain technology in verifying the authenticity of handicraft products, and ethical standards for international handicraft trade to improve customer confidence in the handicraft markets. Moreover, there are opportunities of locally sourcing sustainable materials or practicing environment friendly production methods, so that the Indian crafts can actually sustain or even compete on the international market. Only by supporting innovation while maintaining craft heritage can India provide artisans a bright and sustainable future for the nation.

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