

Handicrafts of Meghalaya: An Analysis of the Marketing Practices

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ABSTRACT

Meghalaya, home to three major tribal groups – the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos, is known for its handicrafts. The tribes of Meghalaya are known for weaving artistically designed products that not only have local demand, but also attract tourists. The present study aims at understanding the nature of the handicraft market of the state, and the marketing practices and strategies adopted to position the products. A survey, using a structured schedule, was conducted to ascertain the position of handicrafts marketing in Meghalaya. The survey revealed that cane and bamboo products have the highest demand followed by wooden products. The survey also showed that the market for handicrafts has not yet been optimally tapped. Unorganized structure of the market, unavailability of adequate quantity of quality raw materials, lack of credit, ineffective marketing channels, lack of proper pricing policy and advertising tools have impeded the growth of the handicraft sector. Realizing the importance of developing the industry to generate revenue and employment, the Government of Meghalaya has taken initiatives to organize the artisans into societies and clusters. Training facilities, financial and marketing assistance are also provided by the Government to the craftsmen. There are opportunities galore. The present study indicates that development of efficient marketing channels and implementation of effective marketing strategies can carve a niche market for the handicraft products of Meghalaya globally.

Keywords: handicraft, marketing, government initiatives, opportunities, interventions

The growth of the human civilization has always been directly proportional to the expansion of the human mind. From being mere hunters dwelling in caves to living in a more organized agricultural setup, human beings have taken major strides and leaps for their development. Simple objects of daily use like clothes to wear, food to store, etc., were made by hand. Thus, weaving, pottery making, basket making, etc., as genres of handicraft, are not new to the 21st century humans. Etymologically, the term 'Handicraft' refers to any object prepared or made by hand or made in a traditional manner. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/Information Technology Community (UNESCO/ITC) defined the term 'Handicraft' at a Symposium on Crafts and the International Market in 1997 as “those produced by artisans, either completely by hand or with the help of hand-tools and even mechanical means, as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most substantial component of the finished product” (Official Website of UNESCO).

India witnessed a tremendous growth in handicrafts since the Harappan era. With time, as the Indian society began to grow more complex, handicrafts began to be made by individual castes. They formed the craftsmen guilds, and the merchant guilds traded those goods. History has enough proof to reveal the demand of the Indian handicrafts all over the world. This demand made the Europeans find a way via sea to enter India. The British East India Company, however, completely abolished the Indian handicraft sector, replacing them with the machine-made products of England, whose raw materials were transported from India. The Freedom Movement saw a revival of the Indian handicrafts with movements such as the Swadeshi and the Boycott Movement.

Post Independence, the Government of India established the All India Handicrafts Board in November, 1952 and the Crafts Museum in 1953. In 1958, the Handicrafts and Handloom Export Corporation of India Ltd. was set up. Several zonal cultural centers were also established in several cities. A major initiative taken by the Indian government was involving the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in this sector. Moreover, the Indian industrial policy allows the manufacturing units for handicrafts to be established and located anywhere, and is exempted from obtaining an

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industrial license to manufacture. The Indian government also launched schemes like Baba Sahab Ambedkar Hastshilp Yojna, Marketing and Support Services Scheme, Gandhi Shilp Bazaar Scheme, etc., for the handicraft sector.

The Handicrafts sector plays a significant role in the country's economy, providing employment and generating income and foreign exchange. The Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH), set up by the Indian government in 1986-87, is responsible for creating and managing a healthy environment for the handicrafts industry.

HANDICRAFTS IN NORTH EAST INDIA

The art of handicraft making is not new for the people of North East India. Being a tribal society, barring the plains of the rivers Brahmaputra and Barak, the people of the region have been living in communion with nature since time immemorial. Their subsistence being agrarian, the people of the region heavily depend on products made with hand for their daily use. Hence, we find a host of handicraft items prepared by the people of this region. These items are made from substances like bamboo, cane, wood, ivory, silk, etc. In fact, each and every state of the North Eastern region of India produces uniquely vibrant products which breathe in an essence of their culture and tradition.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study is an attempt to:

- 1) Understand the nature of the handicrafts market of Meghalaya and assess the possibilities of its future growth and prospects.
- 2) Analyze the marketing practices and strategies adopted to position the products.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Studies across the world have analyzed the global market for handicrafts, and also examined the various marketing strategies adopted to increase the sales volume.

Shahi and Kachhipati (1999) described how collective marketing efforts and the fair-trade movement have helped in enlarging the market for handicraft products of Nepal. The authors opined that such initiatives have not only increased production, but have also yielded higher income for the artisans.

Mutua, Massimo, and Mburu (2004) suggested the markets to be targeted and highlighted the importance of linking handicraft sales with tourism, especially cultural tourism, to increase the sale volumes of the products. The authors pointed out the marketing channels and strategies to be adopted to position the handicrafts of Botswana.

Barber and Krivoslykova (2006) analyzed the global market for handicrafts and its impact on producers of developing countries. Through an assessment of the Haitian handicraft market, the study outlined the strategies to be adopted by the developing countries to face competition in the global market.

Kashyap and Raut (2006) opined that lack of understanding of the market dynamics, marketing channel, demand pattern and price mechanism among the craftsmen result in low returns and low productivity. Proper knowledge of the market will enable the craftsmen to manufacture the products with the desired features and develop a comprehensive plan that will enlarge the market base and yield higher returns.

Giron et al. (2007) emphasized the importance of marketing strategies for the success of rural artisans in Mexico. The authors opined that profit-oriented pricing strategy, personal recommendations to promote products, product diversification and information given to consumers by the artisans are factors that effectively influence marketing of crafts.

Raju and Ranganath (2010) lamented the lack of knowledge and information relating to marketing of handicraft products, especially the brass products, in Srikakulam District of Andhra Pradesh. The Brass handicraft makers, who are also proprietors of their own units, do not have the means to establish a separate and well-organized marketing system. For the marketing of their products, they are heavily dependent on other agencies like the master craftsmen and private retail outlets.

Arora (2011) focused on innovative approaches in the rural market for promotion and distribution of products. The paper highlighted how information technology can be used to create more marketing opportunities for the products produced in the farm and non-farm sectors.

Dash (2011) opined that in the absence of well established marketing network for the handicraft products of Orissa, the artisans are often exploited by the middlemen, retailers and distributors. She stressed on the need for strategic positioning of the products through quality improvement and design modifications based on the consumer demand in both the national and international markets. The author felt that the Government's involvement by way of provision of financial assistance, skill development training, marketing assistance and promotion of the products can boost sale of handicraft products of Orissa.

Aithal (2012) analyzed the structure of distribution channel from the village retailer to the channel intermediaries in the nearest small towns. The study revealed that based upon the variation in the external environment, the channel length varies in regions. The village retailers, through their unique buying preferences, also influence the distribution channels.

Arshad and Reza (2012) analyzed how value chain up-gradation strategy adopted by artisans in the bamboo sector of Tripura has enabled them to participate directly in the domestic market and enhance their income, providing them with sustainable livelihood.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on primary data obtained through structured schedules, direct interviews with government officials and retailers over a period of five months from April - August 2012. Samples of 253 consumers and 34 retailers were considered for the purpose. Relevant information was also retrieved from government documents and published journal papers.

HANDICRAFTS IN MEGHALAYA

Meghalaya, a state of North -East India, is known for its handicrafts. Home to three major tribal groups – the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos, Meghalaya has preserved her tradition of weaving beautiful products of abundant use. The presence of a suitable climate that facilitates the speedy growth of bamboo and cane in the state has aided the artisans in developing unique handicraft products. The popular handicraft products of the state are listed in the Table 1.

MARKETING OF HANDICRAFT PRODUCTS

Marketing plays a very crucial role in the success of a business. A well-designed marketing strategy can influence the consumers and create a niche market for the product. Insufficient market information and marketing channels are, however, major impediments in the growth of the handicraft sector in Meghalaya. Taking into consideration the 4Ps as stated by marketer, E. Jerome McCarthy, an analysis is made to understand the handicraft marketing scenario in the state.

❖ **Product:** The tribes of Meghalaya are known for weaving artistically designed products that not only have local demand, but also attract tourists. The survey has revealed that cane and bamboo products have the highest demand followed by wooden products. While artistically designed items of décor, gifts and home accessories made of cane and bamboo are mostly demanded by the tourists visiting the state; utility items are purchased more by the locals. 83 percent of the consumers considered in the survey expressed their liking for the intricately designed handicraft items, which they opined not only added to the beauty of their houses, but were durable too. The handicraft products are generally made by artisans with the aid of their family members following the concept of the product line.

Depending on the availability of finance and raw materials, a number of products are produced by the artisans based on consumers' needs and preferences. The handicraft products of the state are conventionally designed and produced using traditional techniques of production. The survey revealed that low level of technical know-how among the artisans and craftsmen in raw material processing results in variation in quality and colour of the products.

The retailers opined that despite the durability of the products, lack of standardization, inflexibility of the artisans to incorporate modern designs based on changing preferences and tastes of consumers were the major causes of the small size of the market. Financial constraints, lack of access to adequate quantity of quality raw materials, and shortage of man-power were cited by artisans and craftsmen interviewed as important reasons that prevented them from undertaking large-scale production to meet the demands of the retailers. Failure to supply standardized products of desired quality and quantity specification and inability to meet delivery deadlines resulted in cancellation of orders

Table 1: Handicraft Products of Meghalaya		
Product	Made in	Description
Chairs, Tables, Moorahs	Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills	Furniture: Made of cane and bamboo
Decorative Items and Home Accessories		Made of cane, bamboo, pine cones, wood
Carpets		Made of cotton and wool
Wood Carving		
Nakra (Drum), Duitara (String Instrument), Bisli (Flute)	Khasi Hills	Musical Instruments: Made of wood, bamboo and cane
Bhuri (Drum), Ksing (Small Drum),	Jaintia Hills	
Theng-Theng (String Instrument)		
Dama (Drum), Bangsi (Flute), Chigring (String Instrument)	Garo Hills	
Khiew Rnong (Water Pot), Klong (Rice Pot)	Khasi Hills	Utensils: Made of aluminum
Pliang (Plate), Klongskoo (Water Pot), Luta (Small Pot)	Jaintia Hills	
Medik (Rice Pot), Samdik (Pan), Basing (Water Pot)	Garo Hills	
Shanryndang (Small Necklace), Kpieng Paila Ksiar and Kpeing Paila (Long Necklace)	Khasi Hills	Ornaments: Made of beads, cowrie shells, ivory and metals like gold and silver
Lasubon (Necklace), Locket, Paila (Long Necklace)	Jaintia Hills	
Sengki (Belt), Ripok Dokachi (Necklace), Jaksram (Bangle), Natapsi (Ear Rings)	Garo Hills	
Thugis or Khoks	Khasi and Jaintia Hills	Baskets: Small and large, open weave and coiled, and made of bamboo and cane
Meghum Khoks	Garo Hills	
Dakmanda, Sonidan	Garo Hills	Dress: Made of cotton and endi silk respectively
Bed Cover, Bed Sheet, Table Cloth		Made of cotton
Toys, Dolls		Made of clay
Bows, Arrows	Khasi Hills	Made of Bamboo and Cane
Thlings		Mats: Made of cane
Winnowing Fans, Trays		Made of cane and bamboo
Pipes, Combs		Made of bamboo
Knups, Kurups		Rain Shield and Umbrella respectively: Made of cane and bamboo
Mud Shovels, Locks, Knives		Made of metals like iron and tin
Jainsem and Dhara		Dress: made of local mulberry silk
Fishing Traps		Jaintia Hills
Hats	Khasi and Garo Hills	Made of bamboo and cloth
Nets, Bags, Purses	Khasi and Jaintia Hills	Made of pineapple fibre
Source: Primary data		

by retailers of the national handicraft market, thereby shrinking the market share of the handicrafts of Meghalaya.

❖ **Price:** The prices of the handicraft products are fixed by the artisan/craftsman independently taking into consideration the demand for the product in the market, and the price of identical products produced by competitors. Unavailability of quality raw materials at reasonable rates is the main cause of an increase in the cost of production, thereby leading to an increase in the price of the products. A survey of 34 retail outlets revealed that the price of the products sold at retail outlets vary from seller to seller. Imperfect knowledge of the market among the manufacturers and their inability to organize themselves into groups gives greater bargaining power to the retailers, who often manage to buy at a lower price. While 71 percent of the retailers often gave discounts on the products sold, a majority of the retailers, i.e., 28 out of the 34 retailers considered for the study, however, did not practice price discrimination among the tourists and the local buyers. The handicraft products produced by the cooperative societies also influenced

the price to a considerable extent. The extent of influence, however, varies from craft to craft. The addition of 12.5% VAT imposed upon the handicraft products along with a 15-20% profit margin on an average of the retailers make the products very expensive and uncompetitive in comparison to the machine made standardized identical products.

❖ **Place (Distribution):** The Handicrafts sector of Meghalaya is unorganized. Despite attempts by the State Government to organize them into clusters and cooperatives, the artisans prefer to produce independently. While some manufacturers sell their products directly to the consumers, especially at tourist locations, some sell their products to the Meghalaya Handloom and Handicrafts Corporation, North East Handloom and Handicraft Emporium, Khadi Gramodyog, Purbashree, Govt. owned sales emporia and private retail outlets spread across the state. Finished products of the artisans residing in remote areas also reach the retail outlets through middlemen, dealers and master craftsmen. While 14 retailers told us that they procured the products directly from the manufacturers; 13 retailers purchased the products from the dealers and middlemen, and the remaining 7 were dependant upon both - manufacturers and dealers & middlemen. The handicrafts of Meghalaya in general have a local market. Small-scale production by independent manufacturers is often insufficient to meet the growing demand for handicrafts, especially in the wake of increased inflow of tourists to the state. 71 percent of the consumers considered for the study were of the opinion that an increase in the variety of products and the number of retail outlets in the State can increase sales volume significantly.

The Women's Group Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd. situated at Mowkyndeng village of Jaintia Hills District of Meghalaya is a successful cooperative society which has been effectively affiliated with nearly 200 self-help groups from the surrounding areas of operation and is promoted by the Khadi Commission under the Spurti Scheme. The society undertakes mass production and has a well-developed supply chain of artisans who provide them with finished products that are marketed within and outside the state. Their products are now also available in select boutiques in Bangalore as well. The cooperative society participates regularly in National and State level exhibitions to expand its market size. In 2007, the society also showcased their dry flower products and other handicrafts products in an international exhibition at Johannesburg, South Africa.

The Credit Cooperatives (Nongthlulh SCS) and Handloom Weaving (Upper Nongstoin Women Society) also produce quality handicrafts and handloom products and have won cooperative excellence awards from the Government of India. These cooperatives regularly participate in fairs and exhibitions to showcase their products and increase their market base. The Shillong Marketing Cooperative Society also serves as a channel through which the handicraft products are marketed.

❖ **Promotion:** An important aspect of marketing strategy is promotion of the product. The volume of sales can be increased through advertisement and adoption of sales promotion techniques. Handicraft manufacturers of Meghalaya are predominantly independent producers involved in small-scale operations. Inaccessibility to cheap credit and low income yields from the sale of such products prevents them from undertaking any promotional activity on their own. The co-operative societies too do not have enough resources to undertake large-scale advertisements of their products. It is only through participation in government sponsored trade fairs and exhibitions that the artisans showcase their products in the national market. Display of the products at government as well as at privately owned retail outlets of the state is the only method of advertisement for their products.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

In 2008-2009, there were 63 registered handicraft units in Meghalaya employing only 235 people (Statistical Handbook of Meghalaya, 2010-2011). Realizing the importance of developing the industry for its immense potential to generate revenue and employment for the rural people, and the need for preserving the traditional skill of the artisans, the Government of Meghalaya has taken initiatives to organize the artisans into societies and clusters. The other initiatives undertaken by the Government are as follows :

❖ **Training Facilities:** To increase the competitiveness of the products in the market, the Government provides training facilities to the artisans through its various training centers such as the Cane and Bamboo Training Center at Gambigra, South Garo Hills; West Garo Hills Training Center ; Government sponsored training at private centers such as Bethany Society, Don Bosco, Tura; Women for Integrated Sustainable Empowerment, an NGO etc. The artisans are provided

skill upgradation, design development and raw material processing training at these centers conducted by master craftsmen. The courses are for ten months to one year duration. Experts are also invited from the Cane and Bamboo Technology Centre (CBTC), Guwahati for the purpose. For further skill development, the Government of Meghalaya sends artisans to Tripura.

❖ **Financial Assistance:** The Government of Meghalaya gives a stipend of ₹ 500 to the trainees attending the various skill up-gradation programmes organized at its training centers and centers run by NGOs. Financial assistance in the form of stipends and travelling and dearness allowances are also provided to Cane and Bamboo artisans undertaking training at Tripura. The Department of Industry and Commerce, Government of Meghalaya also links the artisans and societies with banks for securing loans based on the merit of the project proposal submitted.

❖ **Marketing Assistance:** Although the Department of Industry and Commerce is not directly involved in marketing of the products, but to boost sales of the products, it invites and sponsors artisans to participate in national/international exhibitions and fairs on a regular basis.

To improve the quantity and quality of handicraft products of the State, the Government of Meghalaya has undertaken a project, named Integrated Craft Complex in Shillong with financial assistance from the Development Commission of Handicrafts and Handlooms, Delhi. Processed raw materials at subsidized rates and skill development training facilities are to be made available to the artisans at the complex. A marketing center is also expected to be set up at the complex where artisans can get a fair price for their products. The center may eventually develop as the nodal point for marketing of the products. For infrastructure development, the complex is receiving funding from the Association of State for Infrastructure Development for Exports.

As part of the MOU signed between the Governments of India and Bangladesh, the Central Government has set up two Border *Haats* to aid marketing of the indigenously developed products of the State - one near Balat in East Khasi Hills District and the other in Kalaichar near Ampati in South West Garo Hills. People residing within 5 km radius of the haats are allowed to sell their produce through these haats. One hundred and fifty vendors each from India and Bangladesh participate in custom-free trade in these haats.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEGHALAYA'S HANDICRAFTS

Growth in the fashion industry and the retail, real estate and tourism sectors has increased the demand for handicraft products domestically as well as in countries such as USA, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, UK, Belgium, Denmark, Australia, Saudi Arabia and Japan to name a few. Cane and bamboo products, such as furniture, partitions, mats, bags, home accessories, sports items, musical instruments, etc., of the North East have a huge demand in these countries. Marketability of the unique traditional crafts of Meghalaya can be increased if they are tailor-made to meet global tastes and requirements. The launching of the e-business portal through the website of the Meghalaya Handloom and Handicrafts Corporation Limited is certainly a step ahead in the right direction to enhance marketing of the handicrafts.

SUGGESTED INTERVENTIONS

The unorganized structure of the handicraft sector is the major impediment to the growth of the sector. Barring a few cooperative societies, the artisans are highly dispersed and prefer to produce and market their products independently. Lack of trust among the artisans prevents them from forming associations. This attitudinal problem of the artisans has resulted in failure of attempts made by the Government to organize them into clusters. What is, therefore, required is to educate the artisans about the benefits of working in groups. Not only will they have access to larger finances needed for undertaking large-scale production, but forming groups will also enable them to increase their market base. To preserve the rich cultural heritage and skills of the artisans which are on the verge of extinction in the face of stiff competition provided by highly standardized, cheap and modern machine-made products in the globalized environment, it is necessary that the State Government plays a more pro-active role. The following suggestions may be implemented :

1) Cluster Approach: Concerted efforts should be made by the Government to organize the artisans/craftsmen into clusters through educative and informative campaigns highlighting the benefits that accrue from joint production.

Governmental assistance by way of establishment of work place equipped with tools and equipments, facilitating access to cheap credit through linkage with banks and creation of awareness about the various welfare schemes can instill a spirit of confidence and trust among the artisans and encourage them to form consortia/associations.

2) Market Specific Approach

❖ **Market Research:** Comprehensive market survey (national and international) may be undertaken by the Government to understand the nature of demand and delineate the market segments to be targeted. Such an initiative will highlight the areas where interventions are required and also help in the introduction of new products based on consumer preference.

❖ **Product Development based on Market Requirement:** The Government should provide skill upgradation and design development training to the artisans based upon the demands of both national and international buyers. Research and development centers should be opened to develop new products with enhanced quality and modern designs. More training centers should also be opened at various places with larger involvement of NGOs. Experts may be invited from within and outside the country for the purpose. The artisans may be linked to the North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd., which besides giving financial support also provides skill upgradation and capacity building of rural artisans of the North East region of India. The Government may also collaborate with foreign design development institutions in a bid to make inroads into the international markets.

❖ **Uniformity in Price:** Price variation affects sales volumes directly. Multiple prices for the same product in the retail market dampen the morale of the prospective buyer, thereby adversely affecting the demand for the product. The State Government may classify the craft types and on the basis of input cost, quality, and design fix the prices of the products. Such an endeavour will not only fetch remunerative prices for the products to the artisans, but will also increase sales volumes. To make the products competitive, the currently charged VAT on handicraft products may be abolished following the states like Bihar, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh in doing so.

❖ **Branding of Products:** Branding of products helps to create a perceptible notion of the product in the minds of the consumer. Brand equity from the marketing perspective stems from the greater confidence that consumers place in a brand than they do in its competitors (Lassar, Mittal, & Sharma, 1995). Lack of certification and branding of handicraft products of Meghalaya have made the products vulnerable to duplication. These duplicate products, by virtue of being machine made, are highly standardized and low priced than the original ones, and hence provide stiff competition to the handicraft products. To protect the crafts of the region from duplication and the community's right over their tradition, they should be registered under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 of India. GIs prevent exploitation and misuse of the 'brand name', thereby preserving the uniqueness of the ethnic products. Meghalaya Handloom and Handicrafts Corporation can create awareness among the artisans about the importance of getting the products registered under the GI Act and be a facilitator for the same.

3) Efficient Marketing Networks: In the absence of efficient and effective marketing networks, the handicraft products generally have a local market with some finding place in the houses of the tourists visiting the State. Establishment of proper marketing networks will expand the market base, providing increased and sustainable income to the artisans.

❖ **Inter State Marketing :** Meghalaya Handloom and Handicrafts Corporation, established under the aegis of the Directorate of Industry and Commerce of the Govt. of Meghalaya, can act as a nodal center that procures the products and channelizes their distribution to retail outlets through dealer networks established for the purpose. Links can be established with the marketing agencies of the various State Governments. NGOs can also provide an effective channel for the sale of the products. The corporate sector should also be encouraged to market the products. This will increase the reach of the indigenously made products to the hitherto unreached areas of the national market.

❖ **Export Marketing :** The products can also be exported through NEHHDC, TRIFED, COHAND, EPCH and the International Marketing Project of NEDFi. The Corporation can also partner with the Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) Exchange programme for Asia and South-East Asia, a collaborative network of NGOs and community-based organizations, to establish market linkages with the developed countries of the West. Handicraft products may be

promoted in the export market by sending samples to major export and import houses located in India and abroad.

❖ **Online Marketing :** E-Business can also be used as an effective and efficient mode of conducting business. Efforts should be made to move the handicraft products from the lower-end to upper-end markets through niche marketing. The e-portal launched by the Government should have detailed information of the various handicraft products of the state.

4) Promotion: The Government should embark on aggressive advertisement campaigns to promote the indigenously produced products of the state. To improve the brand value of Meghalaya's handicrafts, advertisements can be published in newspapers, national and international magazines of repute. Organization of *melas*, especially during festivals, exhibitions, and fairs with wide publicity through posters, banners, handbills, and the electronic media will attract consumers. Increased participation at national and international exhibitions, fairs and road shows will enable the artisans to showcase their products and expand their market base. The software, named Rural Bazaar Gateway, developed by NIC under the auspices of the Ministry of Rural Development, should be utilized to promote the products as has been successfully done by Tamil Nadu. Linking handicraft with the Tourism Department of the state, as has been done by the Rajasthan Handicraft and Tourism Sector, in generating awareness among tourists about how and where the products are made, can enhance the growth of the sector.

5) Positioning of Handicraft Products: In-depth analyses of the buyers' purchase decision and preferences in the target market will help in differentiating the products from that of its competitors. The handicraft products may be modified to make 'global style' products by synthesizing the ethnic elements with contemporary designs, improving the quality and introducing new features based on the needs of the consumers. The products must be positioned as niche products. The unique characteristics of the products may be highlighted to position the products in the minds of the consumers and influence the consumers' buying decision in favor of the products.

CONCLUSION

The Handicraft sector in Meghalaya has immense potentiality to grow and prosper. Needless to point is the fact that it can generate a huge amount of rural employment in the state. However, the absence of a proper organizational structure, marketing know-how, well established distribution channels, and infrastructural facilities are causing impediments in its path to prosperity. Apart from these, inaccessibility to cheap credit and low income yields from the sale of such products also prevents them from undertaking any large-scale production. The skills among the artisans are inherent and if tapped to their full potential, it can position their handicrafts globally. The Government of Meghalaya has taken a lot of initiatives to organize the artisans into societies and clusters upon accessing the significance of tapping the enormous prospects of the handicraft industry in creating revenue and employment for the rural populace and also a means to preserve the traditional skills of the artisans. All that is required is sensitizing the artisans about the benefits of collective production - providing proper training to these artisans, making them aware of the use of new technologies, implementing effective marketing strategies, and developing efficient marketing channels. The rudimentary bottlenecks as seen can only be removed if proper interventions are made at the right time and at the right place. Again, branding the products as those of Meghalaya will also boost in reviving this sector. Once this is done, competition in the market can definitely be sustained.

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