A STUDY ON HANDLOOM WEAVERS OF THANJAVUR, TAMILNADU

INTRODUCTION
Handloom industry can be better referred as the collection of processing series that makes fabric using hand operated looms, which is interestingly capturing on employment front for a volume of over 10 million people in our nation. It would not be an err to believe that government played a key role to sustain this industry till now, apart from the fact that it succeeded more or less but somehow it managed well. Meanwhile in the time of emergence of the industry, entities, in the form of NGO made a way to produce social results by cultivating the art of weavers. The handloom Industry traces the mark in the history with the evolution of Mohenjodaro and Harrappa Civilization. It has got the roots in our culture so deepened as the growth outputs of those roots are visible today in the form of contributions which are taking place today to continue that heritage. Being a niche producer, the unparalleled work speaks the value and efforts are on to make the patrons identify this novel segment.

Handloom Production India:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cloth Production</th>
<th>Exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008 - 09</td>
<td>6947</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 - 10</td>
<td>6677</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 - 11</td>
<td>6806</td>
<td>1252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 - 12</td>
<td>6907</td>
<td>1575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 - 13</td>
<td>6901</td>
<td>2624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 - 14</td>
<td>6952</td>
<td>2812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 - 15</td>
<td>7104</td>
<td>2233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015 - 16</td>
<td>7203</td>
<td>2246</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY
To study the contributions Rehwa Society made for the weavers.
To study the satisfaction level of weavers on working under this society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
A descriptive research design has been adopted to obtain information concerning the current status.

Qualitative and Quantitative both type of data has been collected

Qualitative:
Current state of the society prevailing has been noted by opinions of the society administrators and weavers, and through observations also Weaver’s opinion in terms of their working condition facilities provided, and difference in terms of their standard of living before and after being associated with society has been collected.

Quantitative:
Demographic profile of weavers like age, gender, income level has been drawn as quantitative data.

Primary: Observation functional perspective of weaving. Non participant, structured, Controlled - value chain of weaving has been noted through observation method. Schedules were used to extract the information.

Secondary Data was collected from Society publications and their website, MSME website and documents.

Sampling Design
Sample size: 50 weavers response has been collected.

Sampling Method: Simple Random Sampling has been done.

REHWA SOCIETY
Handloom weaving dates the ancient history of some 1500 years back. Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar are said to be the one who contributed to a great extent for the rebirth of this art, she ruled at that time from 1765 to 1795. By the time of India’s partition in 1947, the local families who use to promote this elite art work earlier began declining and as a result quality of work and income of weavers both diminished. To cope up with the issue Holkar dynasty took initiative to establish Rehwa Society in 1978, the main founders were Richard Holkar and Sally Holkar. Central Welfare Board provided the fund grants to set up this society.

The beginning of this formal society had only eight handlooms at that time, but the concrete objectives of Rehwa made what it is today. The society had their goal to provide sustainability of Handwoven tradition of Thanjavur district. The distortion and exploitation of women class made them consider this women gender section by enlisting the aim to empower the females by providing employment and hence income to improve standard of living, lastly they made their focus to provide essential amenities to weavers’ family free
education, healthcare facilities and an accommodation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
To probe into the matter of issues generally faced by weavers certain studies were referred.

B. Premnandar (2013) attempts to familiarize with the current status and livelihood problems of unorganized women handloom workers and argued on the importance of social security. The author pinpointed the condition of women for weaving and the reasons why they diverted to weaving in a much generalized form. He also took up the issue relating to health a women weaving. The study lacks the specific points which can be noted alongside the data comprises Pan India. It details the numbers of female weavers state wise. There are many other small aspects in a wide variety which prevails in different clusters. So we can’t conclude their generalized points as the problems of women weavers. Suggestions were also emphasized in the study by the author who claims that women weaving soul have the facility to indulge in specific development programs, initiatives should be considered to uplift the literacy rates, free of cost medical facilities must be provided, and most importantly the entrepreneur- ship aspect must be introduced to them.

R. Raveendra discussed about significant of handloom sector by emphasizing the market assessment need, problems faced by handloom sector, marketing strategy and suggestions and discovered marketing mix if Handloom segment with respect to six clusters: West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Manipur. Author shed the light on the complex nature of handloom industry which he believes is quite unorganized needs to have a detail assessment to know about several other players in the market. Due to a large number of agencies which share the same aim and objectives which the weavers are not aware about. The market tapping is also what is required to strengthen the handloom sector. Author also classified the Quality Standardization, improper management of logistics, mill looms as major competitions. Proper organization, well planned pricing strategy according to the target segment, working on brand segment were suggested as the remedial measures for the problems mentioned.

ANALYSIS
TABLE 2
With a sample set of 40 weavers the frequency distribution of the demographic profile has been drawn to shed light on the current status of weavers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were 17 male weavers recorded in the data set and 23 female weavers. Majority of them were engaged in making sarees primarily, but they also make shawl and dupattas.

TABLE 3
Accommodation Type | Total
---|---
Own | 22
Rented | 18
Total | 40

Though the housing facility has been provided by the society itself, there are many small flat accommodation built for facilitating shelter to weavers. The distribution above shows the weavers who reside in the rented flats by rehwa or if they own their own house in Thanjavur.

TABLE 4
Income Range | Code | Counts
---|---|---
0 – 5000 | 1 | 19

A major portion of the respondent set was found earning below 10000, on an average per saree the weaver earns 200 INR. Only two of the weavers were recorded having a monthly income above ten thousand rupees.

TABLE 5
Weaving Background | Total
---|---
Ancestral | 6
Learnt through Agency | 34

The weavers usually have another occupation running parallel to support the earning and they have engagement as a part time, or in some cases it was witnessed that they have their own looms at home by which they weave the Thanjavur silk fabric and sell them in market. The art is encouraged by the society so there are a number of weavers who got the skill set of weaving developed by Rehwa and however there are also major cases whose families from past generations were well seasoned in weaving silk. This distribution gave an insight of number of weavers who learnt the skill through society's support and those whose art is inherited from ages.

TABLE 6
Satisfaction Level | Satisfied | Dissatisfied | Total
---|---|---|---
Earning | 37 | 3 | 40
Job | 36 | 4 | 40
Considering Job Shift | 0 | 40 | 40

The satisfaction level of the weavers were asked through schedule on income parameter, the type of job they are engaged in and if they considering to shift to some other profession for livelihood to get a fair idea about their satisfaction.

FINDINGS
Total Weavers - 180
Available weavers - 147
Interviewed - 30

1. Income of Thanjavur Silk weavers ranges Rs. 160 to 200 per piece.
2. They weave majorly silk sarees, shawls and dress material.
3. Exposer to fairs and Haat is very low, only 5% of the total weavers got the opportunity to exhibit.
4. Awareness about KVIC Schemes was found very low, only 13 weavers out of 30 were aware about KVIC Schemes.
5. Out of those 13 people who are aware about KVIC schemes, only 3 applied for KVIC Scheme and there application is under process, none has yet availed the scheme.
6. 94 percent of weavers were found satisfied working under Rehwa Society which took over Thanjavur Cluster.
7. Society also made them aware about CPF contribution, weavers contribute 12 percent of their earning into CPF, 28 weavers revealed they do contribute.
8. Some of them also have looms at their home and they earn in between 12000 to 15000, they work part time in society or one member of that family is engaged in society and others weave the silk at home.
9. The sarees, shawls and dress material ; all products are sold by society to wholesalers, those who produces at home with their own looms sell directly in market or engage dealer sometime in between.
10. Most of the weavers were not aware about at what cost the sarees and shawls are finally sold in market. The actual price for their saree in the market was enquired and it was in between 1000 INR to 5000 INR.
11. The weavers who weave silk at home and engage dealers to sell their sarees have linkages with good online brands to – showcase their products - Fabindia and Cafisian.
12. Around 3 weavers made the remarks regarding desire to have more pay per piece.

13. For housing facility Rehwa Society made 50 apartments to accommodate these weavers, 500 INR is the rent per month. The remaining weavers are located in either slums or have own houses or some other rented accommodation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There was number of reasons observed for the success of clustering the weavers under a group which facilitates amenities along with providing livelihood, and in return it is not taking anything but the credit in terms of good name and ownership of being a strong pillar to enhance the potential of weaving group. Following points can be suggested however there was not much loopholes observed:

1. Such NGO or social entity should be encourages in more numbers so that maximum number of artisans can be located and covered.
2. There should be a more exposure visits for weavers to make them more aware about the market trends, upcoming designs and preferences of customers groups.
3. Awareness should be there for the initiatives taken by Government, there are number of schemes enforced each year to enhance weavers’ productivity.
4. There must be some scope of innovation from the weavers side to boggle around to create novel designs.

As discussed there are not much loopholes found in the physical findings of this cluster under Rehwa Society, still the areas of improvements may arise time to time as the society will progress in future. Researches will definitely lead to new results pointing towards the success of such social players.

REFERENCES