



ASSOCIATION OF THE TRADITIONAL PINE NEEDLE CRAFT WITH MODERN TECHNIQUES OF COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is designed to associate traditional local craft with modern techniques of communication in order to sustain the traditional crafts of Himachal Pradesh.

This research is being executed in the **Mahi Panchayat of District Solan, Himachal Pradesh where the main problem is lack of manifestation, representation and promotion of the local craft and the village tourism.**

The Mahi Panchayat is bound to the sensibilities and promotion of **Pine needle products, its local cuisine and the village tourism** as a whole. Himachal Pradesh, has attracted 19.6 million tourists last year, as per the state's Economic Survey 2017-18 due to which the Central Government has approved a tourism infrastructure development project of **Rs 1,900 crore on June 14th, 2018** under which the following project is being carried out.

The suitable solutions for bridging the gaps identified will include:

- Training techniques for product range diversification.**
- Packaging**
- Promotion techniques which include : Brochures, posters, tags, exhibition collaterals and space design.**
- Beautification and awareness which includes : Wall art, posters and signages.**
- Opening of a retail outlet which will include all the handicrafts of Himachal Pradesh under one roof.**

The outcome will help the development of the local craft, both as practice and as discipline, increase sales of the artisans making Mahi Panchayat a noticeable village tourism destination, thus for advancing craft as a discipline that is viable and relevant for the future.

KEYWORDS : Pine needle Craft, Sustainability, Promotion

Literature Review: The arts and craft of any region is the reflection of its environment, people, traditions and so is in Himachal Pradesh. Several kinds of handicrafts are the cultural heritage of Himachali people. According to the book "*Crafts of Himachal Pradesh*", in the pre-independence days, secondary occupations like handicraft, were most common throughout the state.

Crafts can be an important contributor to a country's economy, employing artisans that are preserving cultural heritage, while generating an important source of income through the informal sector. **Mahi** is a village in Kandaghat Tehsil of Solan District in Himachal Pradesh, India with an extensive growth of pine trees. It lies on the border of the Solan District and Shimla District. **Though pine needle weaving is a centuries-old craft, it is still as inexpensive, natural and unique. The women of the self help group of Mahi Panchayat, of Himachal Pradesh are being trained to work with this abundantly available raw material and make innovative products. Pine needles are woven, coiled or braided to make products.** The cold climate of the state is prevalent for the growth of pine trees, which fulfills the necessity of the pine needle products.

The modern emerging communication techniques have a big impact on the promotion of these indigenous crafts and their sustainability. The traditional practices adopted by artisans need to be protected and promoted in order to be preserved and sustained according to the current market trends. The realisation of the potential of these crafts to generate employment for the self help group and to sustain the traditional crafts and artisans for future will be fulfilled through the means of modern communication techniques.

OBJECTIVES:

- To identify the role of modern communication techniques in promoting the pine needle handicraft as an ideal craft of Himachal Pradesh.

- To increase sales of the products and make a better livelihood for the artisans.

Scope of the study: The focus of the study is on pine needle craft. The study will cover artisans at Mahi Panchayat and the sales from the handicraft. The scope of the study will be restricted to regions of Solan, Kandaghat and Shimla of the state of Himachal Pradesh. The study was carried out for a period of two months.

Need for the study: India being a country rich in culture, it is of highest importance to preserve its myriad kinds of crafts and other wares. Now, with technology and globalisation, people are offered cheaper and often poorer quality mechanised products, leaving the craftsmen struggling to make ends meet. Mahi panchayat artisans are no different. It is the only work they know besides household activities to lead their lives. As tourists often like to take home souvenirs that represent the culture of the places they visit, the pine needle craft can be revived and promoted only through better promotional programs.

METHODOLOGY

To collect the primary data the locale selected was Mahi Panchayat as it is a major source of manufacturing of pine needle products. A seminar organised by Himachal Tourism in Mahi was attended in order to collect primary data and secondary data which included various facts generated by the department.

The tool used was **interview schedule** which was framed in **open and close ended form** and **participation observation technique** to collect data at the workplace of the artisans.

Qualitative data collection method:

- The qualitative data collection method used was **focus groups** where a group of artisans were interviewed about the production process and their sale as a result of which suitable promotional techniques could be derived.

2. Interview Analysis

Anita Thakur, (age 39 years) is a resident of Mahi Panchayat, District Solan, Himachal Pradesh. Initially, she was a housewife working in the fields and doing activities like knitting as her pass time.

Due to the suitable climatic conditions there is an extensive growth of pine trees in this region of Himachal. In February 2018, the Tourism Department saw this as an opportunity to encourage women of Mahi in making pine needle products and enhancing self dependence.

Anita Thakur started by saying “I had been considering setting up a household business to become self dependent for a number of years and tried agriculture and knitting but couldn't succeed. With limited knowledge, funds and experience myself I decided to sign up for an intensive training of making pine needle products organised by the Tourism Department which would at least allow me to understand the basic techniques of making the products.”

She started working with various designs and ideas that were provided by the training department itself and in turn started training other rural blocks nearby. The exhibitions organised by Himachal Tourism in Shimla had her products exhibited and she earned a profit of approximately 7,000 out of them.

She stills wants to continue by exploring new ideas and designs because she was able to earn a profit of approximately 30-35,000 during these 8 months with negligible investment (as the raw material is free of cost) and wants to enhance her sales in future.

Quantitative data collection method:

1. Questionnaire (Using Likert Scale)

Data was collected from 30 respondents from among the **tourists of Shimla** through questionnaire method.

Questionnaires were prepared in a structured style, using Likert Scale.

Sample size

A sample of 60 was taken from among the tourists and locals of Shimla.

Sampling Technique

Convenient sampling technique: This technique was used because of the convenient accessibility and proximity to us and for detecting relationships among different phenomena. **Tourists and locals were chosen based on convenience.**

Findings

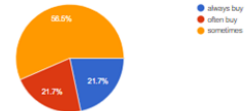
Tourists Questionnaire

- a) Majority of the respondents were in the age group 20-30 years (11 of them) and 30-40 years (9 of them). Also, the male respondents were 20 and the female respondents were 10.
- b) 6 of respondents always buy souvenirs at the end of their tour, 9 often buy and 15 sometimes buy.
- c) 17 of the respondents believe that handicrafts are very important in symbolising a region's culture, 8 of them say it is important and 5 say that it of little importance.
- d) It is also proved in the study when all 30 of the respondents agree that pine needles a beautiful and ideal craft of Himachal Pradesh.
- e) 17 of respondents sometimes purchase handicrafts as souvenir, 9 often purchase and 3 of them always do so.
- f) While 15 of the respondents disagree that there is not enough variety in pine needle crafts, 15 say that the variety is good enough.
- g) Only 7 of the respondents believe that handicrafts are easily available for tourists to purchase in the region of their production, while the remaining 23 either disagree (21) or strongly disagree (2) to the statement
- h) All of the respondents agree that promotional activities are required to sustain pine needle as a craft in Himachal and so that the products are available to tourists easily. (19 strongly Agree and 11 agree)
- i) 29 of the respondents believe that increase in promotional activities will increase sales of the handicraft and will be beneficial to the artisans.
- j) All of the respondents agree (63% strongly agree) that there is scope for retail outlets to increase sales of handicrafts.
- k) 29 of the respondents believe that increased sales will improve livelihood of artisans.

Locals questionnaire

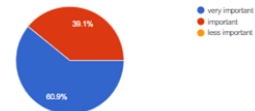
Do you buy souvenirs at the end of your tour?

23 responses



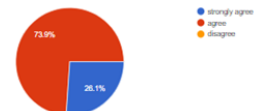
Are handicrafts important in symbolizing a regions culture?

23 responses



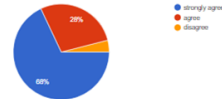
Pine needle is an ideal craft of Himachal Pradesh:

23 responses



Are promotional activities required to sustain pine needle craft?

23 responses



Will increase in promotion lead to increase in sales of the handicraft?

23 responses



Is there a scope of retail outlets to increase of the handicraft?

23 responses



Analysis

Chi Square analysis

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Total
TOURISTS	19	9	2	30
LOCALS	10	7	3	20

Chi Square Value: 2.4
Degree of Freedom: 2

Since the value is **4.65** there is no difference in the opinions of tourists and locals, both the categories considering promotion as an important tool to increase the revival of the handicraft which results in increase in sales of the pine needle products.

Interview findings

- 1. Due to the extensive growth of pine trees in the Mahi region the opportunity to utilise the natural resource in order to make pine needle products which can be an ideal handicraft of Himachal Pradesh.
- 2. The housewives of Mahi are getting an opportunity to become self dependant and it will also make the panchayat a prominent

tourism destination.

3. The figure of the profit margin determines the increase in sales by the manufacture of these products, hence can be taken to an extensive level for further sales growth of the handicraft.

Suggestions and solutions:

1. After the study, it was understood that many tourists as well as locals were not well-informed about the pine needle crafts, its quality and its variety. They are still hesitant to make a purchase of the crafts. Promotional techniques such as brochures, posters, tags, exhibition collaterals and space design can be made to increase the awareness of the craft and therefore increase sales.
2. Also, many of them suggested that the product range diversification should increase which can be accomplished by providing proper training techniques.

Scope for future study:

There is a scope to extend the study to include the handicraft in retail outlets which can act as one roof for all handicrafts of Himachal making it easier for the tourists to buy products and increase the sales of the products which would result in better livelihood of the artisans.