



Exploring the Potentials of Handicraft as a Promotional Tool for West Bengal Tourism

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ABSTRACT

The handicrafts sector has a rich and traditional offering for the world through its huge items offered by the artisans and the indigenous products. Handicraft play significant role in familiarizing the country's tourism resources, attracting tourists, stated the inhabitant of a country engaged in handicraft work. West Bengal is very reach in handicrafts because of its long heritage and culture. Since decades, a large number migration took place in Bengal which made the state a culturally diversified. Artisans from various parts of the state are engaged in creating their own quality products. This paper explore the various potential and culturally enriched handicrafts of West Bengal to promote tourism and also identifies the challenges and threats faced by craftsman of Bengal along with their strengths and future opportunities to establish handicraft as a promotional tool for tourism industry.

KEYWORDS

Heritage, Culture, Handicrafts, Promotion, Craftsmen

Introduction

Tourism is the largest and fastest growing service sector, which generates foreign exchange for the country which can be utilized to benefit poor handicraft producers as the number of international tourists increase. Strengthening the handicraft sector ensures that tourists choose to buy more locally produced handicraft items rather than other common products available in the market. Handicraft production can increase diversification of tourism products which include home-stays, cultural experiences and help promoting responsible tourism in the respective area.

Handicraft production is a labour intensive industry which can actually support skilled and unskilled people who are involved in this profession. Supporting and creating partnerships between tourism enterprises and handicraft producers can be very much beneficial for the development of tourism. People from the rural areas migrating form villages to nearest cities in search of jobs which can be prevented if an emphasis is given to promote local handicraft in the tourist market as handicraft sector is an important source of employment for both the urban and the rural poor which encourages the final goals of job creation and poverty reduction in the respective areas. It is always observed that When poor communities receives tangible benefits from handicraft sales in areas where livelihoods of the local community is dependent on natural resources, they may be more likely to support and value protected areas. Working with local artisans is a marketable asset to a souvenir shop which can actually improve their image. Selling of handicraft can reduce negative impact of tourism as there will be less criminality as tourists are seen as a source of income for the poor people. When artisans understand that they can sell their product to the tourists at higher value than the prevailing local market value, they take interest in learning how to diversify their product base and add value to their business. This way, artisans gain interest in learning new skills to enhance the sustainability of their business. Thus the handicraft of a particular region or a place make a huge different in the life of the local aboriginal peoples and in the same time it gives a deep impact with the small memento in their life as a small

token of the place where the tourist visited with a great enthusiast and zeal for travel.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore various potential and culturally enriched handicrafts of West Bengal to promote tourism.
2. To find out challenges and threats faced by craftsman of Bengal along with their strengths and future opportunities to establish handicraft as a promotional tool for tourism industry.

Research Methodology

This research paper is descriptive and analytical in nature, based on secondary data which has been collected from various research papers, journals, books, internet, and some of the government agencies etc to understand the importance and contribution of handicraft in tourism industry of West Bengal and related problems and challenges.

Role of Handicrafts in Tourism Development

The handicrafts sector has a rich and traditional offering for the world through its huge items offered by the artisans and the indigenous products. Handicraft play significant role in familiarizing the country's tourism resources, attracting tourists, stated the inhabitant of a country engaged in handicraft work. The handicraft used in house decorating could also make a contribution in familiarizing the culture of a country. It consists of centuries-old traditions with production techniques carried on from one generation to the other. And these handicrafts are the best souvenir for the tourist from ancient time to till now. It's a tendency of the tourist that they like to collect a small piece of memory with them while they return from a place and the best thing to be collect is - Handicraft. Handicraft thus playas a pivotal role in the field of tourism sector and it helps not only attracts the tourist groups but it also helps the countries economy to increase its GDP by earning foreign currencies. From the statement of Jafari this will be clearer to us -"One third of tourist's expenditures are devoted to retail and shopping related activities. Handicrafts comprise a major category of their souvenir purchases.....Through pur-

chasing and using handicrafts, tourist experience indigenous lifestyle, expand their world view, differentiate the self form or integrate with others, express creativity and experience aesthetic pleasure." [Encyclopaedia of Tourism/ Jafari Jafar].

According to survey findings, on an average a foreign tourist spends about Rs. 12,187 on handicrafts. The female tourists spent more than their male counterparts. Income level of the respondent tourists has a direct relationship with expenditure. Profession wise business persons are spending more on handicrafts than the others. Total expenditure on handicrafts by all the foreign tourists has been estimated at Rs. 29,851.54 million in 2001, which constitutes about 18% of the total value of production of handicraft items in India in 2001-02. This also forms approximately 44% of the total handicrafts exports (excluding hand knotted carpets) from India during the year 2001-02. The amount spent on handicrafts by foreign tourists can be considered as deemed export of handicrafts [Survey of Foreign Tourists' Expenses on Handicrafts / Ministry of Tourism and Culture/Govt. Of India/ <http://incredibleindia.org/lang/images/docs/trade-pdf/surveys-and-studies/study-reports/Foreign%20Tourist%20Expenses%20on%20Handicrafts.pdf>]

Handicrafts of West Bengal

Handicrafts of West Bengal have a unique characteristics and beauty from the ancient time to till date. Bengal is famous for its art form, and handicraft is one of the prominent arts of such artistic forms. In the time of British rule handicrafts of west Bengal had a huge demand over the European market as the manufacturing cost is less but the value is more. Even the East India Company also involved them into that trade. According to Om Prakash-"The commodity exports by the company were substantially and chronologically in excess of its commodity imports into Bengal..... This put the Indian producers, with their considerably lower labour costs and a much longer history of sophisticated skills in handicrafts of various kinds, in a position of advantage over their European counterparts in the production of a variety of manufactured goods" [The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal/ Prakash / Om]. The finest handicrafts of Bengal are given below which has an immense touristic value.

1. Terracotta, Clay dolls & Pottery:

West Bengal is famous for several unique arts and crafts and all these distinctive identity to its culture. The terracotta craft is one such exclusive craft. The word 'terracotta' has been derived from Latin phrase "terra cocta", which means 'baked earth'. These terracotta handicrafts are mainly of two types—one is sun dried and another is burned in fire. Different types of clay dolls and handicrafts are famous almost all the districts of West Bengal. Some of these rich cultural products are given below. The terracotta dolls of Panchmura, Bankura is one of the eminent name in this field. The models of horse and elephants are used previously as the wish making offering to the folk God and Goddess, but now a days it become an item of interior designing through its unique decorative design. "The Bankura horse is very popular. The Bankura pottery is mainly used for ritualistic purpose. The rituals are almost all exclusively associated with local village gods and folk-festivals in the worship of various kinds of tribal, semi-tribal and folk deities"-[Northeast India/ Bindloss Joe]. The Ghurni region of Nadia is also famous for its life-like sundried clay dolls since Krishnachandra, the king of Krishnanagar. The 250 years old art form of this region actually got patronage from the royal family and flourished become famous all over the world. "In Krishnanagar pottery the social science of our country and the people, the different caste and racial types are reproduced realistically in clay models. For example social scenes like collectors court, tea garden, Pandit sabha, Charak festivaletc are used in clay modelling"- [Land and people of Indian states and union territories : (in 36 volumes)/ Bhatt S C]. The Boul couple, farmer, black smith, vegetable seller, tribal couple are also some prominent example of these day to day clay dolls. Apart from these horse and elephant doll there are Sasthi dolls, Manasaghat, Bonga dolls which are also very popular form of fire burned clay dolls. Apart from these clay dolls

there are verities of clay dolls available all over the state, some of them are Jhulan dolls of North 24 parganas and Kalighat, Hingul dolls of bishnupur, hand pressed Joo dolls of Paschim Medinipur, stripped dolls of Kanthalia-Murshidabad, Rani putul of Howrah, nodding dolls of north 24 parganas, Sosthi doll of Kunoor-north Dinajpur, clay doll of Majilapur south 24 parganas, Tusu dolls of Bankura, Diwali dolls of Paschim medinipur, Manasha Ghat of both 24 parganas etc.

2. Brass and Bell Metal

Brass and Bell Metal craft is the oldest handicraft product of West Bengal. From the ancient time west Bengal is famous for the utensils and the bell. Apart from the utensils and temple –bell artists now a day makes lampshade, flower vase, idol of god and goddesses etc. Artisans of Bankura, Bishnupur, Ghatal and Chandanpur are famous for brass and bell metal work. The places like Khagra, Kandi, Jangipur and Baharampur of Murshidabad district also produces a huge number of brass and bell metal handicrafts and utensils.

3. Cane and Bamboo crafts

Thousands of artisans in Bengal are involved in the production of bamboo & cane crafts. The mutra cane is derived from Cooch-Bihar and is used for the craft work in Bengal. Dolls and toys are also made with cane and bamboo. Apart from human and animal figures, toy shotguns and musical instruments are made with bamboo and cane. Some famous product made of cane is chair, flower vase, bag etc. Bamboo is also a useful resource for masking of various handicrafts. Umbrella handles made of bamboo are a special among them and it has designs of leaves, creepers, plants, rings curved on them. A special variety of bamboo known as the muli found on the jungles of north Bengal and is used for the handles. "In India, cane and bamboo craft has been generally carried out by different tribes. The tribal's have been using cane and bamboo in their artwork since ancient times to earn living..... A wide range of items like tablemats, floorings, furniture, panels, partitions, and lampshade are produced..... Best known example of basket and weaving can be seen in Assam and west Bengal" [Lets know Handicrafts of India/ Tyagi Amar]

4. Dokra

The Dokra or Dhokra group of tribal craftsmen who lives in the landscapes of Bengal, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh – give us unique beautifully shaped and ornamented handicrafts of cast metals. The Bikna group of Dokra artisans of Bankura and the Dariapur group of Burdwan is the specialized one in dokra art. There are similar artisan's lives at Kharagpur in Midnapore and Malda. Dokra metal craft is regarded as one of the most famous arts of West Bengal. The dokra artists made statues, jewellerys, idols and many other decorative pieces, with the help of clay, wax and metal. Dokra craftsmen not only make figures of birds and animals they also make santali jewels, like anklets and tinkling dancing bells. The decorative piece like lamp holders, lamps, chains, vases and stands also another gift from the dokra artists. It is very much in demand in the domestic and foreign markets, because of its rural simplicity and enriches folk motifs. "The practise was in the hands of family groups of non-Hindu, semi nomadic artisans called Dhokras. Some of the Dhokra families appear to have migrated alluvial plains of Bengal, finally setting around centres such as Burdwan, Bankura, Purulia and Medinipur .[Cognition, Communication and Interaction: Transdisciplinary Perspectives on Interactive Technology/ Gill Satinder P]

5. Horn-Bone Crafts

Horn bone craft in West Bengal have a great historic value from the past reigns of Nawbabs. Including crafts of horn and bone ivory was he material that became very famous during that time. Apart from horn bone craft in West Bengal the artisans included themselves in the art of crating various items of ivory. The horn bone and ivory carving is a mixture of Hindu and Islamic culture of the then society. People of Khagra and Jiagunj are the famous places in the Murshidabad district which are popular for horn bone and ivory crafts. The designs

created by the artisans are mostly derived from the old tradition of ancient Bengal. The present market changed the art form according to the demand of the mass and modify accordingly. Craft persons of those places make gorgeous ivory panels which are part to the beds, simhasans or the royal chairs, palanquins and thrones. The craftsman gifted us beautiful pieces of bullock carts, trail of elephants crossing the bridge, patterns carved on the complete tusk, engraved jewelry boxes, chariots with horses and many more items. Artists put lot of effort and hard work while engraving their art in these items. Artisans working on this art make figures of Hindu gods and goddesses- Lakshmi, Durga and Ganesh. Craftpersons of Midnapur make combs made out of the horns and are designed in many shapes and designs. Combs made out of horn are believed that it is excellent for hair and the scalp. People living in the villages are the regular users of that comb. This craft is mainly common in the villages of Jyot Ghanashyam, Narayan Chak, Tamluk in the Midnapur district of West Bengal. [<http://www.craftandartisans.com/ivory-bone-horn-of-west-bengal.html> // http://www.indianetzone.com/41/horn_bone_craft_west_bengal.htm]

6. Mat

Mats (Madur) are the most popular household traditional handicrafts used in Indian villages as well as city houses. Mat sticks (Madurkathi) are obtained by cultivation and these are eco-friendly in its nature. The artists cut Madurkathi into various shapes, both small and big for useful purposes. Madurkathi weaving is a traditional craft in different areas of rural Bengal like Bhagwanpur, Patashpur, Ramnagar and Sabang in the districts of Purba and paschim Medinipur. Medinipur artists made three different types of madur mats. These are ek-rokha, do-rokha and masland. Do-rokha is thicker than the ek-rokha and is more suitable and comfortable when compared to ek-rokha. These mats can be carried anywhere. Masland is a textured mat on which the craftsman designs geometrical designs on both the borders. These designs are self in colour but sometimes they are painted in the shade of magenta to make it more attractive. [<http://www.craftandartisans.com/mats-baskets-of-west-bengal.html>]

7. Sitalpati

Sital-pati or cool mats are utilitarian items crafted from green canes, hand-woven skilfully. The quality of sitalpati is indicated by glossiness, fineness and smoothness of texture. The craft community is mostly refugees from Bangladesh with presently around 4000 families involved in the art. Out of these around 525 weavers are associated with the Rural Craft Hub [<http://www.msmtfc.in/sitalpati>]

7. Mask

West Bengal is famous for its unique art form and the mask is one of these art forms. Mainly there are two types of mask one is wooden mask and another is mask made of paper and pulp. The wooden masks are found in the northern part of Bengal. Kushmundi of Dakshin Dinajpur is home to 250 crafts persons who are involved in making wooden masks locally called as "Mukha," inextricably linked to the Gombhira dance. Bold and demonic look is the characteristic feature of the masks. The ecstatic wooden mask of Kushmandi in Dakshin Dinajpur district is associated with the Rajbangshi community of the area. Around 150 artists are involved in making of wooden mask to earn their daily bread. The wood is generally sourced from the Gamar trees as it is a soft wood. Another famous mask of West Bengal is chhou mask. Paper, mud, and clay are used to make the Chhou masks. The masks are painted in vigorous colours with a simple and bold look. Each mask depicts a character from the epics, from the puranas, and from mythology. The eye-brows, mouth, and eyes are painted to give those special effects and give completeness to the looks of the Chhou dancers. "These are most popular items of interior decoration and are in demand throughout the state. The mask made of clay, paper and cloth are found mainly in the Purulia district of West Bengal. These masks are worn by the Chhou dancers of Purulia and Gombhira dances of Malda, and thus are a part of the theatrical tradition". [Indian States

at a Glance 2008-09: Performance, Facts and Figures - West Bengal/Bhandari Laveesh J]. The masks of Asur, devi Durga, rama, kartik and tribal couple are very famous and popular among this chhou masks. [<http://purulia.gov.in/services/notice/graminhaat/graminhaat.html>]

9. Kantha

The Kantha Embroidery is the most popular form of embroidery practiced by the rural women of West Bengal. The traditional form of Kantha embroidery was done upon the soft dhotis and saris. The thread for this craft was drawn out of the borders of the used cloth. It is a simple running stitch made on the edges of the cloth. When five to six layers of the cloth were embroidered together it becomes a quilt. The outer layers of the cloth comprises of white or light colour clothes which made the embroidery noticeable. Depending on the use of the finishing of the product they were known as Lepkantha, Sujni Kantha etc. The embroidered cloth is used as stoles for women and shawls. The clothes also used as covers for mirrors, boxes, pillows etc. The entire cloth is covered with running stitches made of needle and usually has beautiful folk motifs, floral motifs, animal and birds figures and geometrical shapes. The contemporary Kantha is not necessarily done on old multiple layered saris or dhotis. It can also be seen on the present day garments like the sarees, dupatta, shirts for men and women, bedding and other furnishing fabrics. For these fabrics and dresses the base fabric used is cotton and silk. The legendary Nakshi Kanchas which is one of the best examples of embroidery can be done with 50 different stitches. Nanur, a place in Birbhum district, is famous for its exquisite beautiful nakshi kantha.

[<http://www.craftandartisans.com/kantha-embroidery-of-west-bengal.html>// <http://www.biswabangla.in/ldf-blog/2015/9/22/kantha-the-art-of-story-telling>]

10. Wood Carving

The examples of wood carving are one of the ancient craft and it can best be seen in the wooden images of village temples of Bengal. Some domestic shrines are also made of wood and beautifully carved. The style is related to folk and the subject includes folk gods, goddess and figures. The wood from Bel and Neem is used for carving and the figures are then painted with various colours. In Burdwan district of West Bengal is very famous. The wood carvers are known as sutradhars and are best known for huge platters and bowls which are made out of mango wood. In south Bengal, in the districts of 24-parganas and Howrah, both Hindu and Muslim community practises this craft form. Delicate and fine carving can be seen on wood panels and furniture's. Bengal is also famous for the Rath which are made of wood and festooned with carved panels. The panels of the raths have figures carved into geometric and floral motifs. The raths usually also have a pair of horses. The village Nabagram in Burdwan district is famous for its carved wooden doll. The king and queen, Shree Chaitanya, The owl are the well known art example of wood carving. [<http://www.craftandartisans.com/wood-carving-of-west-bengal.html>]

11. Patachitar

Patachitro or pater gaan is one of the ancient arts of West Bengal. The word pat came from the Sanskrit word patta which means cloth. In patachitra the pat-artist draws colourful pictures in a scrolled long cloth using natural colour made from various trees, flowers, leaves, seeds and clay. The painter, called as patua, unfurls the pot painting and sings a song to show it to his audience. The sweet story telling song sung by the patua is called pater gaan. The main theme of patachitro is mythological story of God and Goddess and tribal rituals. Patachitra is famous in the district of Purba Medinipur and Paschim-Medinipur. One of the important patachitra is founded in Kalighat also known as Kalighat pat. The village Naya near pingla Paschim Medinipur is worldwide famous for its pat image. The Muradpur and Hanschara village in Purba Medinipur is also famous for its patachitra [<http://midnapore.in>].

12. Stone Curving

Stone carving, another popular handicraft in west Bengal, is a ancient art of cutting natural rough rocks or stones into utility and decorative items. The main centre for traditional stone carving in West Bengal is Simulpur in Midnapur and the carvers here are known as Sildah. Small dolls, faces of God and Goddesses and regular useful tools in kitchen for pasting spices are made through these artists.

13. Solapith

Shola pith or Indian cork is a milky-white sponge-wood which is carved into delicate and beautiful objects of art in West Bengal. This plant grows wildly in water marshy lands. These plants are dried under the sun and stored in shade for use throughout the year. The soft, white, light and shiny inner section of the plant is used by the craftsmen. The main handicraft from this ingredient is the head gear or topor used in Bengali weddings. The handicrafts found in the districts of mainly practised in the districts of Bardhaman, Murshidabad, Birbhum, Nadia, Hooghly, Malda and some other parts of this state. In Bengal, exquisite figurines of gods and goddesses, elephant-howdahs, peacock-boats, palanquins and so on are made of sholapith. [<http://www.infobanc.com/solapith.htm> // <http://www.nanditapalchoudhuri.in/lecture/shola.html>]

14. Jute handicrafts

Jute, a bio-degradable product, is grown almost all over West Bengal used to make different kinds of handicrafts Jute handicraft is another exclusive example of indigenous product of Bengal. Some places of Howrah, Nabadwip and Murshidabad and Dinajpur are well known for its jute crafts. The artisan of Bengal used to make the products like rugs, carpets, footwear, wine bottle bags, carry bags, handbags, wall hangings, jewellery, baskets, coasters, lamp shades, decorative articles and showpieces with jute. Jute doll made of jute is an exclusive and unique product of Murshidabad. The village women used to make such dolls along with bag, key ring and home decor products. [<http://murshidabad.net/handicrafts/handicrafts.html>]

15. Shell and Oyster

West Bengal is well known all over the world for its rich resource of handicrafts. One of them is handicraft made of Conch Shell and Oyster. Conch shell is used as an ornament for married hindu women, as a trumpet, as a musical instrument, a wind chime .The artisans of North 24-Paraganas, PurbaMedinipur, PaschimMedinipur and Bankura are used to make such crafts.[<http://www.craftandartisans.com/shell-craft-of-west-bengal.html>]

16. Lac Crafts

Though lac has many uses, but in handicraft industry it is predominantly used in crafting of jewellery. Various jewellery items made include necklaces, bangles, earrings and jewellery boxes. Other articles of lac include pen, pen stand, coasters, ashtrays, napkin holders, mirrors, key chain, photo frame etc. Some places of Purulia, bankura and Paschim Medinipur the artists are found who produces gala craft. From the book "The Cambridge Economic History of India" we came to know "The lac industry ,was of necessity ,localized in the regions in Bihar and Birbhum where the lac insect was reared"- [The Cambridge Economic History of India/ Raychaudhuri Tapan , Kumar Dharma, Habib Irfan , Desai Meghnad]

17. Leather craft

A fine example of contemporary art and craft of Bengal is leather crafts done by gifted artists at Santiniketan. It includes a number of beautiful artefacts including handbags, suitcases, wallets, cushion and moorah covers. Leather accessory are one of the trendiest articles of all time. Apparels, sandals, shoes, belts, jacket and gloves exhibit unique style and elegance. [http://www.indianetzone.com/68/leather_craft_west_bengal.htm]

Craft Concentration (District-Wise) of West Bengal

Now some of these famous handicrafts are given below which gives an essence of the rich cultural craftsmanship of Bengal

artisans. In the below chart we are giving the details of the artisans of Bengal who can be the greatest support to the tourism sector for promoting such indigenous handicrafts.

Name of Craft	Estimated No. of Artisans	Districts Covered
BRASS & BELL-METALS	4,092	Bankura, Birbhum, Burdwan, Darjeeling, West Dinajpur, Malda, Midnapur, Murshidabad, Nadia, North 24-Parganas.
CANE/BAMBOO	6,526	Bankura, Birbhum, Burdwan, Kolkata, Coochbehar, Darjeeling, West Dinajpur, Howrah, Jalpaiguri, Malda, Midnapur, Nadia, Purulia North 24-Parganas, South 24-Parganas.
DOKRA (Metal Casting)	57	Bankura, Birbhum, Burdwan, Midnapur
DOLLS/TOYS/ MODELING (Clay Dolls & Modeling/ Soft Dolls/Other Varieties of Dolls)	847	Birbhum, Kolkata, Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri, Hooghly, Howrah, Darjeeling, Murshidabad, Nadia, Burdwan, North 24-Parganas, South 24-Parganas.
HORN	168	Howrah, Midnapur, South 24-Parganas.
IVORY	32	Murshidabad
FANCY LEATHER	164	Birbhum, Burdwan, Kolkata, North 24-Parganas, South 24-Parganas.
MAT (Ekharu/ Dohara/ Masland/ Fibre)	9,692	Birbhum, Burdwan, Coochbehar, West Dinajpur, Hooghly, Midnapur, Nadia, North 24-Parganas, South 24-Parganas.
MASK OF ALL VARIETIES	218	Darjeeling, West Dinajpur, Purulia.
NEEDLE CRAFT (Chikon, Embroidery, Kantha, Zari)	8,137	Birbhum, Burdwan, Kolkata, Coochbehar, Darjeeling, West Dinajpur, Hooghly, Howrah, Jalpaiguri, Malda, Midnapur, Murshidabad, Nadia, North 24-Parganas, South 24-Parganas
PAINTING (Scroll/ Card/ Pata/ Hanging)	50	Bankura, Birbhum, Burdwan, Kolkata, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Midnapur, Nadia.
POTTERY/ TERRACOTTA/ CERAMICS	1,864	Bankura, Birbhum, Burdwan, Kolkata, Coochbehar, West Dinajpur, Hooghly, Midnapur, Nadia, North 24-Parganas.
SHOLAPITH	1,554	Bankura, Birbhum, Burdwan, Kolkata, Coochbehar, West Dinajpur, Hooghly, Howrah, Jalpaiguri, Malda, Midnapur, Murshidabad, Nadia, Purulia, North 24-Parganas, South 24-Parganas.
STONE CARVING	107	Bankura, Burdwan, Midnapur, Malda.
SHELL CARVING (Conch Shell/ Sea & River Shell/ Coconut Shell)	6,077	Bankura, Birbhum, Burdwan, Kolkata, Coochbehar, West Dinajpur, Hooghly, Howrah, Midnapur, Murshidabad, Nadia, Purulia, North 24-Parganas, South 24-Parganas.
WOOD CARVING	754	Bankura, Birbhum, Burdwan, Coochbehar, Darjeeling, West Dinajpur, Hooghly, Jalpaiguri, Malda, Midnapur, Murshidabad, Nadia, Purulia, North 24-Parganas, South 24-Parganas.

** Source: Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, Government of West Bengal

District wise Available Handicrafts to Promote Tourism

West Bengal is such a state where you can find at least one handicraft in every district. Some of the district wise handicrafts are given below.

District	Available Handicrafts
Howrah	Jute crafts, Silver filigree, Embroidery etc.
South and North 24 Parganas	Clay doll, cotton doll and dolls made of cloths

Purulia	Chhou mask and Dokra
East Midnapur	Clay doll, Mat, Conch –Shell
West Midnapur	Mat, Horn, Fold painting (patachitra)
Hooghly	Chikon embroidery
Nadia	Clay dolls and Terracotta
Birbhum	Leather goods, Dokra and Kantha stitch
Burdwan	Dokra, Sola craft ,Wooden doll and Kantha Stitch
Bankura	Terracotta, Stone curving, Dokra, Wood Curving
Murshidabad	Jute doll and Handicrafts, Brass and Bell Metal
Malda	Wooden Mask, Brass and Bell Metal
Uttar Dinajpur	Terracotta, Bamboo made Handicraft, Cane work
Dakshin Dinajpur	Dokra, Cane work and Bamboo made Handicraft
Coochbehar	Sitalpati
Jalpaiquri	Cane work , Bamboo Crafts
Darjeeling	Woollen hill-crafts and Painting, Mask

** Source: Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, Government of West Bengal

Annual Village Festivals Celebrating Heritage Handicrafts Products by UNESCO

UNESCO with the help of government of West Bengal and a private NGO banglanatok.com choose some handicraft products of Bengal which has heritage value. Such product of that particular place displays their unique characteristics and the craftsmanship of the artisans in different fair and festivals of that place. The essences of such details are given below.

Location	Heritage handicrafts	District	Prob. Festival date
Ghughumari	Shitalpati	Cooch Bihar	1 st week of January
Kushmandi	Wooden Mask	Dakkshin Dinajpur	2 nd week of December
Nanoor	Kantha	Birbhum	4 th week of November
Ghurni	Clay doll	Nadia	1 st week of December
Natungram	Wooden Doll	Bardhaman	2 nd week of March
Daryapur	Dokra	Bardhaman	4 th week of December
Bikna	Dokra	Bankura	4 th week of October
Panchmura	Teracotta	Bankura	4 th week Oct-1 st week Nov
Charida	Chhau Mask	Purulia	4 th week Feb-1 st week Mar
Pingla	Patachitra	Paschim Medinipur	2 nd week of November
Bhagabanpur	Madurkathi	Purba Medinipur	1 st week of February

**SOURCE: UNESCO & MSME WB

Government Initiative to Promote Handicrafts as a Tourism Resource

Handicrafts are such an indigenous product which gives a huge amount of foreign currency every year to enrich the economy of a country and its GDP. As a culturally enriched state of India, Bengal is not an exception of this reproductive practise. Every year a huge number of foreign and domestic tourists come and buy the attractive handicrafts which are a permanent source of income for government and artisans. Previously this art and the artisans were in the dark side but now some government and private initiative are seen in this field to uplift this crafts and craftsman. Some of the initiatives are discussed below.

1. MSME

The Directorate of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises under the Department of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises and Textile, Govt. of West Bengal, is an important agency for the growth and promotion of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises in West Bengal. The main objective of MSME is to facilitate the growth of the industry and to promote the handicrafts. This project was started by the central government in 1978

with the objective of providing a focal point for promoting small, tiny, cottage and village industries in a particular area and to make available to them all necessary services and facilities at one place. It tries to develop the enterprises by harnessing the existing resources and new fast growing infrastructure facilities in the state. Training programmes are given for existing and new prospective entrepreneurs for development of their managerial as well as technical skill for their own field. MSME conducts awareness as well as motivational programmes are convened in the polytechnics and engineering colleges of the state to overcome the shyness in entrepreneurship. The Directorate and DICs are equipped with specialized officers like engineers, technologist, and economist, and statistician, food processing experts supported by managerial and other officials. There are 22 District Industries Centres and Sub-DICs. There are four zones headed by Joint Directors at Howrah, Durgapur, Siliguri and Baharampore. It has groups of Managers in the rank of Asst. Director and also a number of Industrial Development officers to assist the General Manager who is the organizational Head of the District, in each District Industries Centre. Thus with strong and eminent organizational structure MSME in Bengal continuously and spontaneously try their level best to rich the handicraft and the artists to its golden era.[<http://mssewb.gov.in> // <http://www.wbsidcl.com/>]

2. BISWA BANGLA

Biswa Bangla, Bengals global brand, was launched in the Synergy MSME Conclave 2013, at Milan Mela on 16th September 2013 to give a brand image for the handicrafts and handlooms of West bengal. Biswa Bangla takes some great initiative to improve the handicraft market not only for India, they also targeting to the global market. One major plan of them is Mammoth Marketing initiative of the handicrafts. According to the plan, Brand Bengal Marketing Corporation would be formed on a public-private partnership (PPP) basis. Opinions of experts will be taken from various fields to promoting the company. Biswa Bangla is providing better opportunities to artisans to sell their products by setting up urban and rural markets with a modern set up and with a globalized marketing policy. West Bengal has a major presence in the MSME sector in the country. It ranks second in the country with 43,000 registered and 20.8 lakh unregistered MSMEs that provide employment to 58.5 lakh people. Biswa Bangla Brand would thus help in improving the livelihoods of these tens of lakhs of people all over the state. The brand stores are being set up to revive the handloom and handicrafts industries of the state and to uplift the socio economic condition of the people who are involved in these industries. The Biswa Bangla store in the Kolkata airport is attracts many tourists for the crafts available in Bengal. Thus with the global brand image the crafts not only got an brand image to the world, but it attracts the enthusiastic and curious tourists from every part of the globe to come and watch the rich craft products of Bengal [<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Biswa-Bangla-brand-stores-to-come-up-in-London-and-China/article-show/47747444.cms> // <http://www.biswabangla.in>]

3. BANGLA NATOK DOT COM

Banglanatok dot com is a social enterprise which works at grass roots with a mission to foster pro-poor growth and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage of Bengal. The organisation uses culture based approach for development and community skill empowerment such as The Department of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises & Textiles (MSME&T). It also works with Government of West Bengal and developed 10 Craft Hubs in association with UNESCO, as UNESCO partner. Capacity building, infrastructure, technology and marketing support to 3000 craft persons for building 10 handicraft hubs with national and international market linkages. This non govt. Enterprise developed knowledgebase on craft community and use of ICT for strengthening access to information from and to the craft artisans. It also supports policy development for handicraft sector through building of evidence and data on socio-economic situation of artists. Thus being a non govt. enterprise Banglanatok dot com plays a important role to uplift the artisans and the handicraft of Bengal which

give a deeper and huge impact on tourism scenario of Bengal.
[\[http://www.banglanatak.com/areaofwork.aspx\]](http://www.banglanatak.com/areaofwork.aspx)

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