



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Management

Will Consumption of Indian Handicrafts Endure?

KEY WORDS: Culture, Personal Values, Motives, Taste, Heritage, and Creative Industries

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This article examines the survival probability of Indian handicrafts in the face of globalization and the artisans' descendants exiting this industry for other new-age professions.
Approach/Research Methodology: Literature has been reviewed and important theories behind consumption of handicrafts examined and a theoretical framework that explains the survival potential of handicrafts presented.
Findings: Handicrafts are one of the means of the community to display its values and spiritualities. They give a social and cultural identity; this has been handed down through generations. A 'true blue' handicraft is characterized by singularity which, in turn, comprises (1) uniqueness, (2) rarity, and (3) extraordinariness. Singularity comes from design intensity. Design cannot be minimal. The handicrafts of such minimal design are doomed to die. This article sets out to argue that (a) culture, (b) taste, (c) personal values and (d) ancestral and identity motives in conjunction with singularity of product have the potential to restrain the globalization forces from consumers' withdrawal of patronage for handicrafts.
Practical Applications: These findings which come in the form of a theoretical framework will potentially help the industry formulate their survival and growth strategies; the article establishes that if the product attributes are unique, extraordinary and rare, their survival probability will be high since culture, personal factors and personal values drive their consumption of handicrafts embedded with uniqueness, rarity and extraordinariness.
Originality: No comprehensive review of literature as been made yet, as done in this; all the relevant theories are examined and integrated into a new theoretical framework. It integrates social forces and personal factors with singularity of product to drive positive customer outcomes.

Introduction

Will the 'flickering' handicrafts survive the pressures of modernity and globalization? Handicrafts are a mirror of the cultural identity of the ethnic people who make as well as those who use them. They long enjoyed the patronage of royal and elitist families. Contrast this with the fact that now a big chunk of the current generation of craftspeople and their descendants have left the craft to get into the modern-day professions presumably due to the craft production being less remunerative as well as socially less respectable. Importantly, the culture of handicrafts consumption too underwent enormous changes apparently triggered by modernity. The consumers' patronage of handicrafts has been tapering off. These changes do occur although, through the ages, handicrafts like ceramics, textiles, embroidery, jewelry, woodwork, engravings, etc. have maintained their exclusiveness. The number of seriously working artisans is now on a fast decline and thus the production base has become narrower. Then, what is their story? Are handicrafts, which have survived through the ages, on their way to extinction what with the pressures of industrialization, mass production of cheap replicas, new age callings, and declining patronage for such traditional labor-intensive products? Can the accusing finger point at modernization and globalization?

But what is obvious is that "the millions of artisans who produce these goods (handicrafts) still struggle with the very basics of existence; there are difficulties up and down the line in the crafts sector, and those at the beginning of the line – the artisan – must confront the most serious of the difficulties with the least resources" (Libel & Roy, 2003). Guided by the foregoing scenario, should the nations give up hopes on handicrafts as instruments of employment generation? Have handicrafts lost their relevance to the new era markets? Is the culture of handicrafts' production and consumption slowly disappearing from the market scene? Will 'cultural imperialism' of

multinationals annihilate handicrafts since multinationals promote their products which replace the traditional products like those of clothing, jewelry, furniture and so on? Is there a threat from the

Zeitgeist? *Zeitgeist* (which means spirit of the age or spirit of the time) is the intellectual fashion or dominant school of thought that typifies and influences the culture of a particular period in time. For example, the *Zeitgeist* of modernism typified and influenced architecture, art, and fashion during much of the 20th century. Is the current *Zeitgeist* engulfing the handicrafts? The lukewarm treatment of heritage products like finely crafted furniture by the current younger generation is probably a pointer to the handicrafts being edged out by the globalization-induced *Zeitgeist*.

This article attempts to answer the following questions. Are there any distinct characteristics of handicrafts that help them survive? Does the culture of handicrafts consumption still exist? Will it endure? What is the role of personal values and culture in handicrafts consumption? Are there natural human motives that drive handicrafts consumption? What is the role of such motives in patronizing handicrafts? What are the unique features of the handicrafts that have the potential to help handicrafts survive?

This article sets out to argue that (a) culture, (b) taste, (c) personal values and (d) ancestral and identity motives have the potential to restrain the globalization forces and *Zeitgeist* from withdrawal of patronage for handicrafts; importantly, the patronage withdrawal might be slower for some products. Handicrafts' survival and death is a function of the product and its target

market. For some handicrafts, the death is not imminent or sudden, and so may take some more decades; thus, the artisans would get time to plan their exit. But it is not so with other product models that target different markets. Finally, the article classifies the handicrafts into four product types each targeting a different market segment.

This article is organized into four sections. Section I traces the place occupied by handicrafts in economic and cultural history of India. Section II defines 'handicraft' and its characteristics, and presents a classification of them. Section III discusses how products like handicrafts reflect a culture; it shows the relationship of products with culture and personal values; a detailed discussion on cultural

consumption, creative industries and cultural industries has been presented to show that culture drives consumption of handicrafts; the role of 'taste' and 'heritage' in production and consumption of handicrafts also has been described.

Section IV discusses how motives have a major role in consumption of handicrafts; the role of ancestral and fundamental buying motives in handicrafts consumption has been discussed; further, luxury consumption motives that determine handicrafts consumption have been discussed. This section, importantly proposes and discusses the four different product models and their target markets. The article concludes on a positive note, assuring the industry that culture, taste, personal values and ancestral and identity motives can restrain the globalization forces from consumers' withdrawal of patronage for handicrafts; but, of course, those handicrafts have to meet strict mandates of quality and design; thus, such crafts will get enough breathing time to plan their exit from the production. But the other products which depend solely on culture and give less importance to quality and design are faced with low demand and eventual extinction.

Pride of Place for Handicrafts in India

The workmanship of the Indian craftsmen is so exquisite that, throughout the 18th and 19th centuries India was known to other countries on the trade route more by her crafts than by her art, religion and philosophy (Saraf, 1991). "To write about Indian Handicrafts is almost like writing about the country itself. So vast, complex and colorful, and yet with a simplicity and charm, difficult to attain under comparable conditions - are these handicrafts" (Upadhyaya, 1976).

The Indian handicrafts industry has over the ages contributed significantly to the employment and foreign exchequer of the country. The crafts production has been spread across the states with each state contributing through one or more types of crafts native to it, and has made tremendous progress during the last decade. However, despite the large production base the market at international level is still unexplored. India's share in the world handicraft exports is less than 2%. (Working group report on Handicrafts for the 12th Five Year Plan, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India)

Indian Handicrafts stand as an eternal symbol of its culture. They represent the Indian way of life that loves aesthetics, tradition, and artistry. Indian craftspeople use environmentally safe local materials and hand tools and bring out products that embody the heritage of creativity, taste, and craftsmanship. The handicrafts are as diverse as the culture of India. Handicrafts production is an occupation that had enjoyed the patronage of the royal families and the rich from the times immemorial and thus was sustained for generations. (Working group report on handicrafts for 12th- Five Year Plan, 2012). Handicrafts sector is the second largest sector of rural employment next to agriculture. But, rather unpleasantly, its performance in the overseas market is very low, as reflected in the fact that India's share in the world handicraft exports is less than 2%.

What is a handicraft?

Crafts are 'defined as products that are produced by hand with attention to material design, and workmanship, and are useful and/or decorative' (Littrell et al, 1992).

In 1989, the office of the Development Commissioner for Handicrafts of India provided a simple and workable definition of handicrafts as: '...items made by hand, often with the use of simple tools, and...generally artistic and/ or traditional in nature; they include objects of utility and objects of decoration'.

Symposium on Crafts held in Manila in 1997 defined the handicrafts 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 (Symposium on Crafts and the International Market: Trade and Customs

Codification held in Manila, the Philippines, October 1997).

Their special nature derives from their distinctive features, which can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, culturally attached, decorative, functional, traditional, and religiously and socially symbolic and significant. Particularly, they are made from sustainably produced raw materials. The six main categories of handicrafts are: (1) Basket/wicker/vegetable fiber-works, (2) leather, (3) metal, (4) pottery, (5) textiles, and (6) wood. Crafts-production involves use of stone, glass, ivory, bone, horn, shell, sea shells, or mother-of-pearl

Characteristics of Handicrafts

The following definition of handicrafts is adopted in 1997 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/Information Technology Community (UNESCO/ITC) Symposium on Crafts and the International Market: "Artisanal products or handicrafts are those produced by artisans, 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. Their special nature derives from their distinctive features, which can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, culturally attached, decorative, functional, traditional, and religiously and socially symbolic and significant. They are made of sustainably produced raw materials and there is no particular restriction in terms of production quantity. Even when artisans make quantities of the same design, no two pieces are ever exactly alike." Each handicraft is distinct, because they are aesthetic, creative, decorative, functional and traditional, and thus a lot of specialties are rolled into each of them.

A 'true blue' handicraft should be essentially characterized by singularity which, in turn, is comprised of (1) uniqueness, (2) rarity, and (3) extraordinariness. Uniqueness is about visibility; it is uncommon and so stands out. Rarity is about availability; it is not widely available everywhere like bath soaps or cigarettes. It is not intensively distributed. Extraordinariness is about the unusual skills and materials used. But all three characteristics should also be premised on superior quality and functional utility. Devoid of quality and utility, the three qualities - uniqueness, rarity, and extraordinariness - are unimaginable. Singularity, the trinity, can assure survival for the handicrafts. This is an important component of survival theory which this article proposes. Singularity gives 'eternity'. Singularity, of course, comes from design intensity. So design cannot be minimal. The handicrafts of such minimal design are doomed. The following sections discuss how culture, values, and motives drive consumption of handicrafts if the latter's characteristics are aligned with them.

Products & Culture

Do products reflect culture? Culture has been recognized as the main backstage where consumption behaviors are assumed (Lindridge and Dibb, 2003). It is difficult to understand the society independent of the material objects it uses. The cultures and ages are distinguished by the material objects they used. The intelligence levels and lifestyles of past generations are known from the objects they used. Much of the peoples' daily lives is spent on interacting with products rather than with others. Artifacts (like handicrafts) help individuals fulfill their desires (psychological), allow them to communicate and express cultural togetherness, as well as individuality in their collectivity. Products have quasi-social relationships with the human beings. Material culture is about designing products to fulfill individuals' desires but also an expression of how society is organized

Product attributes, Personal Values and Culture

Innate attributes of a product make it attractive and desirable. These attributes are of two types.

- (a) Concrete attributes: objectively measurable (design, quality, color, materials used)
- (b) Abstract Attributes: subjective in nature, (their long history, continuous patronage of the affluent and elite, wide desirability,

singularity etc.)

To illustrate abstract attributes, certain hand-woven textiles, hand-made gold ornaments, wall paintings etc. have a long history of use; elite sections of the society patronized them; people desire to have them; some of them (like specially crafted wooden furniture or gold-lace saris or women clothing) are exclusively made against a specific single order. Product purchase leads to emotional consequences (resulting from satisfaction of wishes), which can also be called 'psychological consequences'; they occur a lot of time after a purchase decision is made. They are personal experiences which are related to social consequences. With these, their self-esteem shoots up and they would feel they are better connected to the society that they want to be part of. These social consequences are an outcome of existence and interaction of product attributes and personal values. Abstract attributes do impact desirability and patronage of the products much more than concrete attributes. Handicrafts are loaded with abstract attributes as well as concrete attributes. If some handicrafts (like kitsch) lack these attributes, they will most likely fall out of their desirability and patronage. That way, they earn the notoriety as non-handicrafts.

Personal Values

Personal values determine if the consequences of product attributes will be positive or negative. Personal values are the enduring beliefs that specific modes of conduct or end-states of existence that are personally or socially preferred over the opposite modes of conduct or end states of existence. Engel et al (1995) define values as people's beliefs about life and acceptable behavior, as well as the goals that motivate people and the way to achieve these goals appropriately (Engel et al., 1995). The sum total of personal values of all the individuals in a community makes the culture of the community. To illustrate, some individuals respect the local talent, some practice fair trade principles, and some respect the heritage; they exemplify personal values. Consumers tend to choose the product which satisfies their wishes. As said before, these wishes are derived from a consumer's personal values. Values underlie attitudes. But importantly, a limited number of values have a major impact on an unlimited number of attitudes. For example, if one wants to respect heritage (his personal value), he will intend to do many things to protect it and it can cover a wide range of products. Attitude is an evaluation of an idea or object so that he is either in favor of it or against it. The question that pops up here is: Which personal values drive purchase of handicrafts? They might be: liking for tradition, love for heritage, and support for Fair Trade (paying more for inherent disadvantage).

Handicrafts Consumption Culture

Do handicrafts symbolize a nation's culture? Culture has been recognized as the main backstage where consumption behaviors are assumed and where certain products have acquired a particular symbolism (Lindridge and Dibb, 2003). Culture determines consumption and handicrafts symbolize a culture. Culture, consumption and handicrafts are intertwined each influencing the other two.

How does creation and use of handicrafts represent a distinct 'culture'? Handicrafts (bangles, garlands, utensils, furniture, jewelry, worship idols, bridal clothing, ceremonial clothing, tapestry, wall hangings etc.) are compulsorily used in ceremonies and rituals; their use is inviolable. Finely crafted furniture and hand-woven tapestry, expensive jewelry, clothing with intricate designs etc. are used as status symbols. Further, individuals consume handicrafts (furniture, jewelry and clothing) to display their appreciation of aesthetic value and love for creative talent. Some philanthropic individuals want to pay 'fair and just' prices (although products are obviously expensive) to satisfy their longing for being just and fair (this is known as adoption of 'Fair Trade' principles). They tend to encourage local talent and use of safe, local materials. Moreover, they want to respect the heritage that comes in the form of fine handicrafts.

All these behaviors represent a distinct culture. Use of handicrafts is the true face of culture. This cultural compulsion which is a long-enduring force holds the promise for the survival of handicrafts. There is another related concept called 'cultural consumption' which sounds like handicrafts consumption culture. What is cultural consumption? How is it related to handicrafts consumption?

What is culture?

According to Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952), "Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values." How does the above definition relate to handicrafts? Handicrafts are the distinctive achievements of human groups (craftspeople); production and consumption (of handicrafts) represent the explicit behavior acquired and transmitted from generation to generation. Human achievements are embodied in artifacts (a. k. a. handicrafts). The core of the culture comprises traditional ideas and their attached values. Producing and consuming handicrafts is a traditional idea. Production and consumption of handicrafts is driven by a combination of certain values; these values constitute 'the cultural compulsion'. Those values could be, among others, (a) respecting the traditional creative talent which has been transferred from ancestors, (b) paying just prices to the disadvantaged groups (by adopting Fair Trade principles), (c) respecting the rituals, (d) displaying fine taste in choice of goods, and (e) living a distinct lifestyle with the use of unique heritage products (e.g. finely crafted furniture, jewelry, clothing etc.), and (f) inclination to use products made with safe, time-tested local materials and traditional knowledge.

Similarly, the above definition refers to learned culture, mutual dependency of culture and behavior, and the manifestation of culture through symbols, heroes, rituals, and values. Production and use of handicrafts is a learned culture; it is learned from the previous generation and the peer members of the consuming community. Production and use of handicrafts is driven by the culture that encourages production and consumption of handicrafts.

Handicrafts are symbols of fine taste, distinct lifestyle, respect for tradition, adoption of fair trade principles, and inclination to use products made of safe, local material and traditional skills. Culture can be understood from the daily living, attitudes, traditions, and norms of a society. Culture is our outward display of our values and living attitudes, it often reflects heritage, but the two (culture and heritage) are not the same. Culture also refers to the common ways of living and behaving that is practiced by a large group of people such as people of a country, geographic area or a religion. A particular culture which is distinct from other cultures is manifested in and recognized from the objects that the people use. The objects that were found from Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro excavations reflect the specific culture of those inhabitants.

What is taste? How is taste for handicrafts developed?

Handicrafts' consumption relates to 'taste' one has for aesthetics and culture. Tastes are the manifest cultural preferences of individuals, groups, and social classes. Taste is an individual's personal and cultural patterns of choice and preference. Taste is drawing distinctions between things such as styles, manners, consumer goods and works of art and relating to these. Social inquiry of taste is about the human ability to judge what is beautiful, good and proper. Social and cultural phenomena concerning taste are closely associated to social relations and dynamics between people. The concept of social taste is therefore rarely separated from its accompanying sociological concepts. An understanding of taste as something that is expressed in actions between people helps to perceive many social phenomena that would otherwise be inconceivable.

Aesthetic preferences and attendance to various cultural events

are associated with education and social origin. Different socioeconomic groups are likely to have different tastes. Social class is one of the prominent factors structuring taste. Having a look at the business launched by William Morris is highly relevant here. The business launched by William Morris (Cultural Leadership) in 1861 was a powerhouse for the production of original designs and decorative-art objects, especially stained glass, furniture, printed and woven fabrics, embroidery, carpets, wallpapers, tapestries, and decorative schemes for large houses and public buildings. It was a long-lived enterprise (trading until 1940) that had a profound influence within the decorative arts that extends down to the present. Few businesses could lay claim to comparable cultural significance. Morris inspired the Arts and Crafts Movement; through his writings and making an example as craftsman-designer par excellence, he helped in laying the intellectual foundations for design education in Britain and beyond. This entity holds the promise for the survival of finely crafted handicrafts.

Motives

Psychology provides fabulous insights into consumer behavior because it is based on important areas such as learning, motivation (the force of motives), memory, perception, emotions, thinking, attitudes, and beliefs, (Britt, 1970), which are critical to consumer purchase decisions. Motives are person-specific. Recent studies show that personal orientation has been incorporated into consumption and it has been gradually increasing worldwide (Bhat & Reddy, 1998).

Conspicuous Consumption Motives for Buying Handicrafts

According to Optimal Distinctiveness Theory, individuals strive to maintain a balance between the need to be assimilated by the peers and family, and the need for autonomy and differentiation (Sorrentino et al, 2009). When the members of a person's community have purchased handicrafts and they flaunt them before him, he will not keep quiet without buying them. He will buy to show that he is no less. At the same time, he will not buy the same product; he will choose a different and unique product from a different seller. A handicraft has the potential to cause conspicuous consumption because of its uniqueness.

McGuire (1976) has identified sixteen major motivational influences (motives) that drive a person's activities in his life. They are: (1) self-expression, (2) identification, (3) assertion, (4) affiliation, (5) autonomy, (6) consistency, (7) attribution, (8) categorization, (9) objectification, (10) exploration, (11) matching, (12) utility, (13) tension reduction, (14) modeling, (15) ego defense, and (16) reinforcement. Of them, self-expression and identification motives drive the purchase of handicrafts which help one establish their identity while affiliation motive is fulfilled by purchase of handicrafts which help one get affiliated to a particular cultural group or reference group.

Identity and Luxury

As said before, artifacts (like handicrafts) help individuals fulfill their desires (psychological), allow them to communicate and express cultural togetherness, as well as individuality in their collectivity. On reading of the literature, one gets the idea that the major driving force behind a person's purchases is identity. This is the one which handicrafts designers and producers should clearly understand to factor the same into the products. Identity is defined as any category label to which a consumer self-associates that is amenable to a clear picture of what the person in the category looks like, thinks, feels and does. What are the properties of identity-giving objects? For example, Identity-Seeking Russians look for the following attributes in a product: esthetics, Premium Quality, Product Personal History and Expensiveness, Uniqueness for Russian Culture, Self-Pleasure, and Superfluosity. It can be deduced from the foregoing that these characteristics belong to luxuries and luxuries give identity. Luxury brands are connected with several characteristics, such as exclusivity, uniqueness, scarcity, premium price, excellent quality and aesthetics. Leaving aside what Russians look for identity, what, in general, are identity-giving features of a product? Most features of luxury products are

the identity-giving features.

Narcissistic consumers- can handicrafts satisfy their needs?

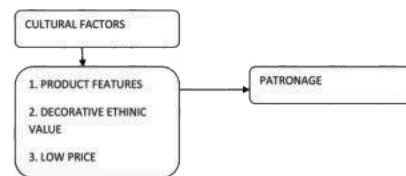
Some individuals who have vanity, excessive love and egotistic admiration for themselves leave no stone unturned to distinguish themselves. Do they buy products (like expensive jewelry or clothing) that help them self-enhance or set them apart from others? This quality is different from self-esteem which is more realistic. Certain studies found that they buy products which promote personal uniqueness. Narcissists buy or show interest in exclusive and customizable products. They think others are not likely to own what they own. According to extant literature perceived exclusivity, and scarcity appear to attract narcissists. Handicrafts could be exclusive but not scarce. Handicrafts can satisfy them owing to the singularity, a characteristic that is a blend of exclusivity, rarity, and extraordinariness. But pursuit of singularity puts a cap on the production capacity. But as said before, the identity-establishing motive and certain fundamental and ancestral motives quietly drive the purchase of handicrafts.

Market Models

Based on the foregoing analysis of motives and values, consumers' handicrafts patronage comes from four different consumer segments; in other words, they can be seen through four different models; each model represents a different market segment and a different product type. Each model has a different survival probability. A discussion of those four models is presented in the following.

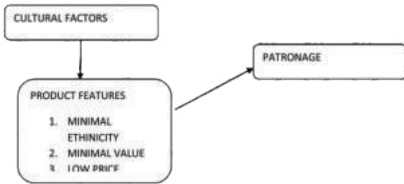
1. Low-End Ethnic Decoration Consumers Market: Domestic ethnic consumers buy low-priced handicrafts with average decorative value such as some products of personal jewelry and home decoration; the term, 'ethnic' is used in the sense of a particular local culture; these 'ethnic' products naturally derive their demand from their culture. Some of home decorative items bangles, pots, sea-shell-products, bamboo products, jewelry, some clothing etc. fall into this patronage model. Their non-decorative value is insignificant. Identity and high-quality are not the focus of this model. This model is shown in Picture No.1. This model can be called 'Low-End Ethnic Decoration Consumers Market Model'. These products can be replaced by cheap substitutes which are produced in a large number. Culture cannot stop people from shifting to mass-produced cheap substitutes. These products are on their way to extinction since the cultural compulsion is insignificant.

Picture 1: Low-End Ethnic Decoration Consumers Market



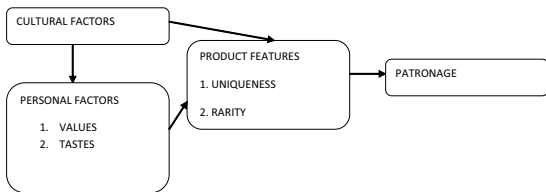
2. Low-End Ethnic Utility Market: This market comprises domestic ethnic consumers who buy certain low-priced handicrafts for their utility; the products include certain clothing items like towels, home-use items like baskets and mats, personal-use items like bath powder and jewelry etc. What distinguishes this model from the previous one is the use to which these products are put. These products are bought for their functional utility whereas the products in the previous model are used for their decorative utility. Culture, of course, drives the consumption. Prices that these consumers prefer to pay should be low as in the case of previous market. This model can be called 'Low-End Ethnic Utility Market Model'. This model is shown in Picture No.2. Most importantly, these will be soon replaced by mass-produced cheap substitutes. The influence of cultural compulsion is rather insignificant. They face a high risk of extinction. Artisans belonging to these product categories leave the profession since earnings from these are not adequate.

Picture 2: Low-End Ethnic Utility Market



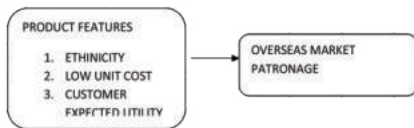
3. High-End Ethnic Market: This high-end, quality-conscious, identity-seeking market is driven by culture, personal values, and taste. The product for this market is and should be characterized by singularity. Singularity comprises uniqueness, rarity, and extraordinariness. High design and high quality should be the defining characteristics of this product. This can be called 'High-End Ethnic Market Model'. This is shown in Picture No.3. The product that is targeted at this market can defy the forces of the globalization quite long, due to the combined effect of the product singularity, culture and personal factors. But this model proves tough for the industry unless it is well-organized. Several high-end shops retailing in clothing, furniture and jewelry in big Indian cities have adopted this model and are successful and well-trenched for several decades. But the challenge is to discipline the artisans so that quality and design stand out.

Picture 3: High-End Ethnic Consumers Patronage of Handicrafts



4. Handicrafts Overseas Market: This market is outside India. It draws on the ethnic talent of Indian crafts persons. This market consisting of overseas buyers looks for products created with the functional utility and ethnic design element. Indian exporters are serving this market by producing massive quantities using cheap local labor. The consumers are more attached to the ethnicity-induced innovation and functionality but not to culture and ethnicity per se. This model can be called 'Handicrafts Overseas Market Model'. This is shown in Picture no.4. It requires skills relating to organizing production with local talent and understanding what the overseas market requires. Unorganized and individual artisans cannot take advantage of this market but only local exporters can do. Like any other product, this is more an innovation-based one and so role of ethnicity is minimal. This market is highly dynamic and uncertain; they may either live like products of Model 3 or they face extinction like products of Model 1 and 2.

Picture 4: Handicrafts Overseas Market Development



To put it in a nutshell, handicrafts fall into four different market models to serve four different market segments. Model 1 serves the market for low-value decorative ethnic products and Model 2 targets low-value ethnic utility market. These products under Models 1 & 2 face high risk of extinction. Model 4 targets overseas market that looks for innovative utility products drawing on the ethnic design elements. Product development and marketing are the key to the survival of handicrafts targeted at this market. It implies that survival of these products is a function of product development and marketing efforts. Model 3 serves the market that looks for high quality, high design ethnic products. These

products have high probability of survival for more decades.

Conclusion

Culture, taste, personal values and ancestral and identity motives can neutralize forces of the globalization and Zeitgeist and arrest the withdrawal of patronage for handicrafts if those products are characterized by high quality and high design. The patronage withdrawal for these products is slower, and hence their death is neither imminent nor sudden. This situation gives long and enough breathing time to the crafts producers and their families to plan their exit from this profession. But there is a tension between singularity (characterized by rarity, extraordinariness, and exclusiveness) and economic quantity. Focus on singularity reduces the production quantity and thus cannot provide employment to a substantial number of craftspeople, particularly those old and less skilled artisans. This article assures marketing ease only for handicrafts characterized by exclusiveness, rarity and extraordinariness. But the survival is not assured for other product models that target different markets. These low survival probability products are based on ethnic demand but not on quality and innovation. Further, the survival of another product model that is targeted at overseas market is a function of marketing and innovation, although ethnicity guides the innovation.

Summary

Handicrafts are one of the means of the community to display its values and spiritualities. They give a social and cultural identity which has been handed down through generations. Are handicrafts, which have survived through the ages, on the way to extinction what with the pressures of industrialization, mass production of cheap replicas, new-age callings, and declining patronage for such traditional labor-intensive products? Are there any distinct characteristics of handicrafts that help them survive? Does the culture of handicrafts consumption still exist? What is the role of personal values and culture in handicrafts consumption? Are there natural human motives that drive handicrafts consumption? Handicrafts fall into four different market models to serve four different market segments. Model 1 serves the market for low-value decorative ethnic products and Model 2 targets low-value ethnic utility market. These products under Models 1 & 2 face high risk of extinction. Model 4 targets overseas market that looks for innovative utility products drawing on the ethnic design elements. Product development and marketing is the key to the survival of handicrafts targeted at this market. It implies that survival of these products is a function of product development and marketing efforts. Model 3 serves the market that looks for high quality, high design ethnic products. These products have high probability of survival for more decades.

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