



## ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

## Management

### MARKETING COMMUNICATION FOR PROMOTION OF HANDLOOM PRODUCTS PRODUCED BY HANDLOOM CLUSTERS OF TRIPURA

**KEY WORDS:** Poverty Eradication, Marketing Of Handlooms, Upliftment Of Weavers Lives, Community Development, Marketing Promotion.

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#### ABSTRACT

The handloom sector of India is the second-largest economic activity after agriculture providing direct and indirect employment to 43 lakh weavers and allied workers according to the Handloom Census 2009-10. Indian handlooms are well known for its artistry, design, the motif has been facing competition from power loom and mill sector. Marketing has been identified as the crux of the problem. The Government of Tripura has set up handloom clusters for the production of innovative and niche fabrics through weavers. An awareness regarding the unmatched handloom weaving and its richness, superior artistry and intricate design of handloom products to the consumers would help the sector grow and prosper. This paper tries to explore how Marketing Communication could play an important in the promotion of handloom products produced in handloom clusters of Tripura.

#### I. INTRODUCTION

Handloom weaving is one of the largest economic activities after agriculture providing direct and indirect employment to more than 43 lakh weavers and allied workers. This sector contributes nearly 15% of the cloth production in the country and also contributes to the export earnings of the country. 95% of the world's hand-woven fabric comes from India. The handloom sector has a unique place in our economy. It has been sustained by transferring skills from one generation to another. The strength of the sector lies in its uniqueness, flexibility of production, openness to innovations, adaptability to the supplier's requirement and the wealth of its tradition. The adoption of modern techniques and economic liberalization, however, have made serious inroads into the handloom sector. Competition from power loom and mill sector, availability of cheaper imported fabrics, changing consumer preferences and alternative employment opportunities have threatened the vibrancy of the handloom sector. (Annual Report 2018-19, Ministry of Textiles)

The handloom sector of Tripura comprises of the traditional wisdom, cultural heritage and art form also have weavers belonging from the marginalised section who weave for their livelihood. Debbarma & Geetha (2017), suggests that Handloom weaving is the most important speciality in the state. The principle highlight of Tripuri handloom is vertical and even stripes with scattered weaving in various hues. It has a rich legacy in plans that vary from tribe to tribe. The handloom industry assumes an essential part of the economy of the state and gives an optional method for work and wage to tribal cultivators. The challenge from machine-made fabrics, lower-priced textile products and competition from branded and value-added products are proving to be a serious threat for the weavers of the state who are from the vulnerable and weaker section of the society. To empower the weavers of the state to design and develop innovative and diversified handloom fabrics the Government of Tripura has implemented Cluster Development Schemes to facilitate sustainable development of handloom weavers.

According to Kotler et al. (2009), Marketing Communications are the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade and remind consumers-directly or indirectly-about the products and brands they sell. In a sense, marketing communications represent the 'voice' of the company and its brands and are a means by which it can establish a dialogue and build relationships with consumers. Goswami & Jain (2014) opines that in the case of handloom, first of all, there is a need to create awareness about the features and advantages of

handloom products. Effective publicity through an appropriate media mix should be done. Print and electric media can be used in the right proportion. Ismail & Safrana (2015) identifies that promotion is one of the marketing strategies and it is very important to the business environment. Promotion is also one major reason where handloom sector lacked behind and pushed out of the competition. It has been identified that the handloom products of Tripura have immense potentiality because of its heritage, elegant design, pattern, texture. In spite of the government taking many initiatives to promote the sector by setting up handloom clusters, the sector still faces many challenges and problems especially from the competition of mill made fabrics and cheaper substitutes for which it is not growing as per expectations. The government also has launched initiatives like Handloom Mark which guarantees the buyers that product being purchased by them is a genuine handwoven product and not a power loom or mill made product. In spite of this a lacunae can be felt and that's how this paper is conceived. The paper tries to explore the role of Marketing Communication in promotion of handloom products produced in Clusters of Tripura and its contribution to the growth and development of the sector in the State.

#### II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of literature helps to know the existing literature on the topic being pursued and also on the related aspects. It finds the gaps and also the uncovered areas on the topic.

According to Vinayagamoorthy (2018), Handloom industries are having a traditional method for products. They will be able to adopt new technologies in the production process. 4Ps of Marketing have all types of strategies if the industries follow suitable strategies in favour of production and marketing. They will be able to make fruitful development process in the country's economic growth through the reduction of poverty and unemployment level in the rural area.

Humbe & Bhalerao (2019) identified that consumers are aware of handloom brand, purchases handloom products, but very few of them only can differentiate between handloom products and power loom products. Handloom industry has been facing competition from power loom products. Customers are deciding on purchasing of handloom products with reference from friends, relatives mostly. Effective promotion through applicable media combine ought to be done. Print and electrical media may be utilized in the right proportion.

Dhineshkumar (2018) feels that the handloom sector needs a focussed strategy of continuous promotion, regular advertising and marketing support

Khatoun (2016) suggested that there is a need to create awareness about the features, advantages and demand of handloom products in the national and international market and for this different promotional means can be adopted.

Ramana et al. (2019) highlighted that to increase sales of handloom products the promotional activities for handloom fabrics need to be improved. Further, the government has to take initiatives to improve the marketing facilities for handloom products. Handloom exhibitions and melas need to be organised as a part of promotional activity to uplift the marketing of handloom fabrics. Also, the state and central governments have to take initiatives to reduce the impact of power loom products on handlooms

The literature reviewed above seems limited or no work in the area of Marketing Communication and promotion of products produced by the Clusters of Tripura. The researchers are confident that this paper would help to identify the importance of Marketing Communication in awareness creation of the potentiality of handloom products of the state. The researchers' feel that Marketing Communication if properly applied for the promotion of the products produced by different clusters would contribute to the development of the sector as well as the economy of the state.

### III.OBJECTIVES

The following objectives of the study are outlined.

- To understand the role of Marketing Communications for the promotion of various types of handloom products produced through clusters in Tripura and its significance in the rural economy of the state.
- To review the role of the Department of handloom, the government of Tripura and the handloom clusters in the promotion of handloom products produced in the State.
- To suggest measures for strengthening handloom clusters of the state.

### IV.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was based on an appropriate survey of literature and collection of information from the Department of Handlooms, Government of Tripura, Tripura Weavers Association and MSME. Based on the above, a mixed method of enquiry was adopted for the study. For conceptual framework, several relevant books, State Government publications including the publications of Department of Handlooms, Handicrafts and Sericulture and Weavers Service Centre, notifications, reports, publications of Development Commissioner (Ministry of Textile, Govt. of India), publications of North East Council (NEC) and other published and unpublished documents relating to the study were consulted. The researchers also collected secondary data from different online sources, reports, host of ministries reports, online Magazines, online Journals, online Periodicals, Newspapers, Previous work of scholars, etc.

The issues associated with handloom clusters in Tripura are dealt herewith on the basis of discussion with the stakeholders namely weavers, handloom cluster functionaries, distribution partners, concerned government officials and consumers. The researchers have interacted with cluster functionaries of different handloom clusters of the state and the concerned government organisations like Department of Handloom, Handicraft & Sericulture, Weavers Service Center (WSC) and National Handloom Development Corporation Ltd. (NHDC). A formal discussion with few Cluster Heads and representatives from concerned government department regarding the importance of Marketing Communication for the marketing of products of

clusters and the tools adopted by them was undertaken by the researchers for the study.

### V.FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The discussion between the cluster heads and the concerned government officials has provided insights, feedback and suggestions to the researchers regarding the role Marketing Communication which are mentioned as under:

- a) The responding cluster functionaries and the concerned government officials were of the opinion that all the clusters participate in fairs. Fairs provide excellent opportunities for the different clusters to showcase the products produced by them. That way the clusters could promote and publicise their offerings to the customers. According to the respondents, the customers also gets a chance to see and choose from the wide varieties of products available to them in the fairs. Handloom fair also is a fantastic platform to the handloom cluster to display their products and provide awareness and exposure to the customer about the distinctness of the products on offer. That way the interaction between the cluster functionaries and the weavers representing the clusters could help in create awareness about the benefits and advantages of handloom products with the actual and potential customers which could help in building relationship and development of loyal customer base.
- b) According to the respondents the clusters have not created any brand name for the different products produced by them. Brands are names, terms, sign and symbol which helps in identifying the producers' products and differentiating from the competitors' offerings. Brand names play an important role as during purchase decision it helps a customer in the recall of a brand. Thereafter during buying, brand name assists a customer in identifying the product from the different available alternatives. Brands also develop a distinct identity of the products. Unfortunately, the handloom clusters are not involved in the creation of brands or branding their products. That way they are doing a mistake by continuing as a generic product and losing an opportunity of not creating an identity, not being distinct and not being chosen during purchasing.
- c) The respondents suggested that the government arrange fairs to connect with buyers and sellers. According to them, the government plays an important role to arrange fairs for the clusters to display and promote their products. By organising fairs, the government also offers an opportunity to the clusters for networking with the customers and creation of repeat buyers which would help them grow and prosper.
- d) The respondents opined that the government also provides support like advertising support. Advertisements communicate and promotes the products of handloom clusters to the actual and potential buyers and encourage them to buy. The respondents informed about the role of government in the publication of souvenirs during different festivals for awareness of handloom products of clusters thereby encouraging the potential customers to make a purchase decision in favour of handloom products. For the creation of awareness of the benefits of handloom products among all, the government also organises roadshows. Roadshows help in increasing the awareness and knowledge about the handloom products produced by clusters, their benefits among people. By organising roadshows government is allowing the handloom clusters to take their products collections out into different places and meet both customers and prospects face to face beyond their normal territory. This also allows the handloom clusters to interact with people which would not otherwise possible due to the travel

restrictions by them and the prospective clients.

- e) The respondents mentioned about the benefits and importance of maintaining customer database which according to them, unfortunately, no cluster maintain any database. The customer database is vital information for any organisation as they provide scope for having a dialogue with the customers. By keeping and maintaining a database of customers, organisations can create affinity with them, develop a loyal customer base, inform them during the development of new handloom products etc. Customer Database is information about the actual customers who bought products in the past. By not maintaining customer database the clusters are losing the opportunity to communicate, inform, build and maintain customer relationship.

## VI. SUGGESTIONS & CONCLUSION

The interaction with the respondents has provided insights about the clusters involvement in Communicating with the customers and it can be identified that the government plays an important role in disseminating the benefits of handloom products through advertisement. Participation in fairs provides scope to communicate, interact and inform customers about the different products produced in clusters and building of a relationship with them. Unfortunately, two important things have been found missing in the whole process of communication, absence of branding and maintaining of the customer database. A brand name helps customers to make repeat purchase thus benefitting the seller or the handloom, cluster. So it is suggested that the clusters should create brands which would help customers recall and recognition during the purchase decision. Also by maintaining a database of customers which would contain personal information and about the past purchase, the clusters could customise their communication with the customers and would determine future needs. The customers through the database can be informed about promotional offers and the introduction of new products. That way it would be direct communication with the customers and the creation of a loyal customer base. So finally we can conclude that a combination of Marketing Communication like advertising and publicity, participation of fairs and personal selling, creation of brands and personal relations by maintaining the database of the customers would help the handloom clusters of Tripura grow, prosper and contribute to the economy of the state.

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