

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF WOOLEN HANDICRAFT IN ALMORA DISTRICT OF UTTARAKHAND

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ABSTRACT

Woolen handicraft is a traditional skill in the mountainous region of Uttarakhand. This study tends to identify various challenges faced by various handicraft players in Almora district of Uttarakhand and try to sort out such challenges with the help of a conceptual model. The conceptual model is based on primary data collected by the researchers and available literature as well. The questionnaire and focused group discussion were used as a tool for conducting the study. The study found fourteen factors in order to reduce several challenges faced by the handicraft industry. The factor includes improvement in local resources, government interventions on inter-state purchase, protection to wild animals, modernization of the handicraft sector, infrastructural facility, altering the production structure to suit consumer preferences, strengthen the private sector in craft industry, product diversification, government-sponsored and aided distribution channels, proper advertisement, door-to-door marketing, area reservation for craft retail stores, sample distribution for product testing and information communication technology (ICT). This study was based on primary and secondary data.

KEYWORDS: *Handicraft, Traditional Skill, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Consumer Preferences*

INTRODUCTION

One of the inherited, traditional skills founded in the mountainous region of Uttarakhand is woolen handicraft. Uttarakhand, cradled in the lap of the lofty Himalayas, the state boasts of snow-capped peaks, stealthy glaciers, meandering rivers, mist-laden valleys and exotic species of flora and fauna. Inspired by this flawless natural splendor, the people of Uttarakhand have created and nurtured various forms of arts and crafts since ages. Crafts usually utility items such as carpets, blanket, thulma, baskets, copper utensils or the folk art Aipan made by Uttarakhandis have a unique touch of nature in their designs. Due to stiff competition faced by these arts and crafts from the modern and cheap machine-made products, the Government of Uttarakhand felt the need to take necessary step for their revival and promotion in order to prevent this precious creativity from fading away. In order to promote such craft related activities, a separate body has been set up by the Uttarakhand Government namely, Uttarakhand Handloom & Handicraft Development Council (UHHDC). It is registered council constituted by the Government of Uttarakhand and acts as the apex body for the overall development and promotion of handicrafts in the state. It aims at sustainable development of the handicraft and handloom activities in the state in order to enhance the employment opportunities in such sector.

Uttarakhand is one of the richest regions in terms of bio-resources. The people of Uttarakhand are highly depended on natural resources for their livelihood. Eco-friendly natural fibers, i.e. wool, silk, and cotton and various

products made by utilizing such resources play a vital role in the economy of Uttarakhand. Handicraft and handloom activities have been a major source of earning from a long time for several households in Uttarakhand. In Uttarakhand, the craft activities passed down to generations from their ancestors and have seen various transformations in past years. A number of artisans practicing weaving activities here for their livelihood. The town of Almora, located in the mid ranges of the Kumoun hills, was famous in the olden days for its handmade tweeds. Panchachuli Women Weavers have revived this tradition and offer hand spun and hand woven tweed fabrics in a range of colors and textures using fine Australian Merino wool as well as local sheep wool which is scoured, washed, spun and woven entirely by hand. Many people engaged in the craft industry in the district. The social activist Mukti Dutta play a vital role in such industry in the district and the state. A lot of initiatives taken by her for the sustainable development of the handicraft industry. In the wake of the 2013 floods, Mukti Datta set out to implement the lessons of reviving rural economies she learned from pioneering the Panchachuli Women Weavers collective. The result, Mandakini Women Weavers, is a self-sustaining enterprise providing women, many of whom lost generations of male relatives and family breadwinners in the flood, with livelihoods linked to global markets. The success has catalyzed a new hub for the craft industry across the Himalayas. Mandakini Women Weavers is an initiative to bring economic relief, empowerment, and self-determination to women in India's Himalayan foothills through the production of luxury handloom products.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Pani (1990) handloom sector is its declining stage and if present situations will continue then the sector may have to face the danger of its liquidation. He suggests several measures for the survival of the handloom sector such as modernization of the sector, change in production structure, focus on consumer preferences etc. Venugopal (1993) emphasizes competitiveness. He said that the village and cottage industries must focus on competitiveness in order to survive in the market and indulge the customers for purchasing such products of handicraft and handloom sector.

Kamaraj (2005) studied that the self-help groups may create a huge change in such sector because they may undertake entrepreneurial activities at smaller level with low investment and pave the way to undertake mega projects in future. In India, SHGs have strong power for the development of rural areas. Srivastav and Goshwami (2007) discussed Indian carpet industry. They suggest several ideas to strengthen the carpet industry such as the creation of the physical raw material bank, process re-engineering for reducing the cost and up gradation of quality of products.

Reddy (2008) suggests that the government must focus on the handloom sector in order to achieve sustainable development of the country because the sector has enough potential for employment generation and reducing the level of poverty. The Department of Sports, Arts, Recreation & Culture, SA(2007) craft producers lack the necessary skills and abilities required for running the business in an optimum way. They are unable to capture market opportunities and not able to pursue them due to lack of skills. According to Jena, 2010 global-local combination may create greater opportunities for the local craft. He said that there should be awareness among customers about the craft products and the products should be as per the modern style and fashion.

Darbanhosseiniamirkhiz et al. (2011) emphasized on the competitiveness of the craft industry, technological advancement and innovative ideas. They said that the products of the craft industry should be competitive and advanced production technology should be utilized in the production process with innovation.

According to Roston(1969), the handicraft and handloom is an engine for development. According to Rao(1970), handicraft and handloom industries have high employment potential which is very helpful in reducing the level of poverty. Kilby (1971); Jaya Prakash Narayan(1972); Deshpande(1984); Streefkerk(1985) and Rao, V. C.(1986) have also acknowledged the potential role of rural industries and role of handicrafts in the economic development of the country.

Mohandas K. Gandhi (1934) suggested co-operativisation of the crafts industry. According to him, by establishing co-operatives, villagers can make crafts by pooling their products for sale and thereby profits can be divided equally. Jawahar Lal Nehru (1955) also emphasized on co-operation of handicraft industries. He said that with the help of co-operation among members we can easily develop discipline and it will also be suitable for the training of workers. Kale (1963) also emphasized the concept of co-operation of such industries.

Uma Maheswara Rao (1965) talked about disparities of artisans and impact of disparities on artisans. According to him, due to wide disparities, the artisans may not be able to derive external economy like training, marketing, research etc. Therefore, the per capita production in small industries is much less, especially in rural areas.

Marketing plays a vital role in each kind of industry. Marketing simply means to satisfy the needs and wants of consumers in an optimum way. According to Alderson, W.(1964) marketing plays a vital role in the dynamic process of making goods and needs in the industries and possess the features to serve their ultimate purpose. According to Thambi (1975), the current scenario of modernization will compel the producers to apply scientific marketing in order to sell their products.

Kotler et al. (2013) discussed that marketers find many opportunities by identifying trends and megatrends such as social, political, economic and technological changes. They said that such trends have a huge impact on marketing. In the current scenario, marketers must focus on several environmental forces such as demographic, economic, socio-cultural, natural, technological and political.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Almora district of Uttarakhand. The researchers were met with several manufacturers of craft industry, weavers and government organizations. Primary and secondary data were collected from such organizations and respondents. In order to collect primary data researchers were utilized questionnaires. Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) technique was also utilized to collect primary data. The data was collected as per the suitability of the respondents. The study was conducted during the months of October and November 2018. The questionnaire was given to 77 respondents out of which 22 questionnaires were rejected due to inappropriate data.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

A conceptual model is prepared by the researchers on the basis of collected data and literature review. The main object of this conceptual model is to helping the craft industry in reducing the problems faced by the players of such industry, reducing their poverty level, improving their living standards, employment generation and sustainable development of the handicraft and handloom industry.

On the basis of primary and secondary data the researchers have identified fourteen factors i.e. improvement in local resources, Government interventions on inter-state purchase, protection to wild animals, modernization of handicraft

and handloom sector, infrastructural facility, altering the production structure to suit consumer preferences, strengthening the private sector in craft industry, product diversification, Government sponsored and aided distribution channels, proper advertisement, door-to-door marketing, area reservation (in market), sample distribution for product testing and ICT. The model is trying to formulate a relationship between various factors and the raw material, processing, and output. Fig. 1 depicts the conceptual model of the study.

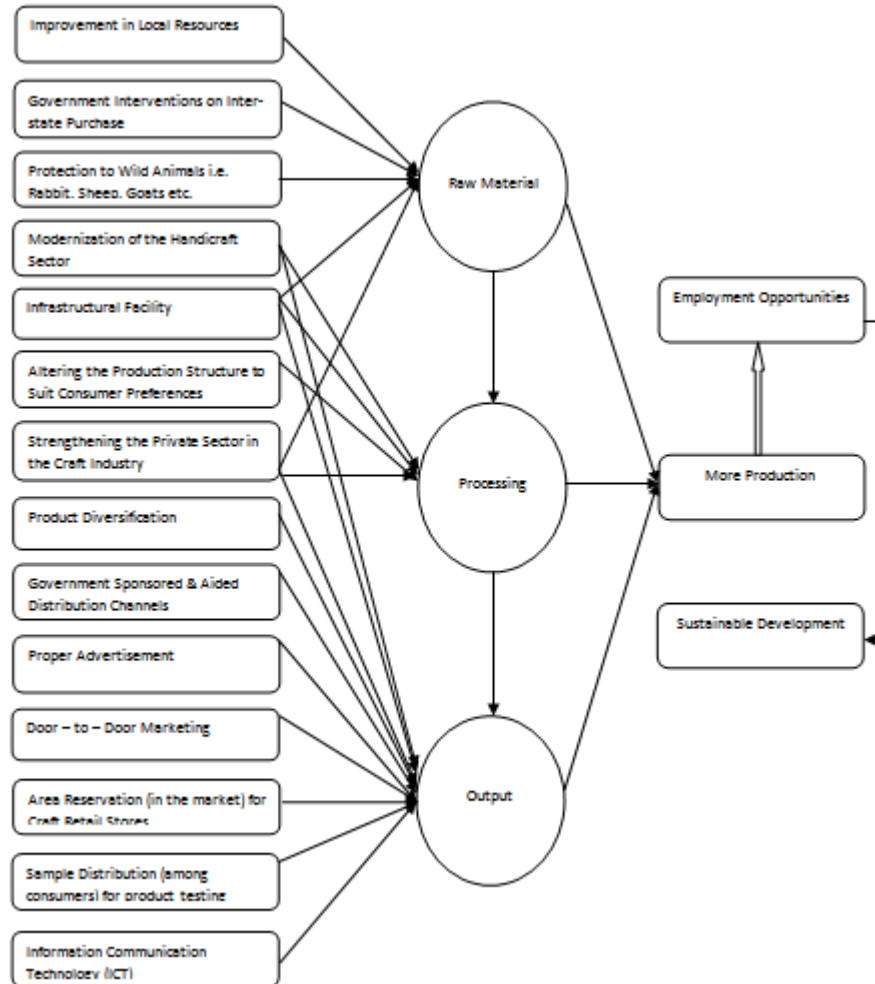


Figure 1: A Conceptual Model (Source: Author)

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Demographics of the Respondents

Type of Respondents	Frequencies	Percentage
Male	19	34.55
Female	36	65.45
Total	55	100

(Source: Primary Data)

The table - 1 shows that out of 55 respondents 19 were male respondents whereas, 36 were female respondents. In other words, 34.55 percent respondents were male and 65.55 percent respondents were female. It shows that the participation of women is much larger in comparison of men’s participation.

Table 2: Age Group of the Respondents

Respondents Age Group	Frequencies	Percentage
21-30	11	20
31-40	16	29.09
41-50	18	32.72
51-60	10	18.19
Total	55	100

(Source: Primary Data)

The above table shows the various age groups of the respondents. The age group 21-30 consists of 11 respondents; 31-40 consists of 16 respondents; 41-50 consists of 18 respondents and 51-60 consists of 10 respondents. It reveals that the age group 41-50 consists of the highest number of respondents.

Table 3: Monthly Income of the Respondents

Income Level	Frequencies	Percentage
5000-10000	28	50.90
10001-15000	19	34.55
15001-20000	08	14.55
Total	55	100

(Source: Primary Data)

The table - 3 reveals that out of 28 respondents out of 55 have come under the income level group of rs. 5000 - 10,000. On the other hand, only 08 respondents came under the income level group of rs. 15,001 – 20,000. It reveals that the living standards of the people engaged in handicraft activities are very poor. The government should take the necessary actions in order to uplift the living standards of such people.

Table 4: Education Level of the Respondents

Education	Frequencies	Percentage
Post-Graduate	06	10.90
Under-Graduate	08	14.55
Senior-Secondary	12	21.83
Higher-Secondary	05	9.09
8 th	03	5.45
5 th	07	12.73
Illiterate	14	25.45
Total	55	100

(Source: Primary Data)

The table - 4 reveals that out of 55 respondents 25.45 percent respondents are coming under the category of illiterate. Only 10.90 percent respondents have a post-graduate degree and 14.55 percent of respondents have an undergraduate degree. 21.83 percent respondents have a qualification of senior-secondary and 9.09 percent of respondents have a qualification of higher-secondary. 5.45 percent respondents have passed 8th standard and 12.73 percent respondents have passed 5th standard. The data shows that the education level of people engaged in handicraft industry is very poor. Most of the people are illiterate in such craft industry so that they may lack necessary skills and abilities. The government may make necessary arrangements for improving the education level of artisans/weavers.

Table 5: Social Participation

Participation/Non-Participation	Frequencies	Percentage
Participation in SHGs	32	58.18
Non-participation in SHGs	23	41.82
Total	55	100

(Source: Primary Data)

The table - 5 shows that 58.18 percent respondents actively participate in social activities such as self-help groups (SHGs) and 41.82 percent respondents are not a member of SHGs. Emphasizes should be made to engage most of the people in SHGs which in turn promote the level of savings of such people.

Table 6: Products Detail

Name of the Product	Quantity Manufactured (in a Year)	Quantity Sale (in a Year)	Percentage of Sale
Carpet	205	105	51.21
Blanket	320	205	64.06
Shawl	525	375	71.42
Thulma	155	77	49.67
Tweed	180	102	56.66
Pankhi	495	302	61.01
Total	1880	1166	62.02

(Source: Primary Data)

The table - 6 reveals that in Almora district of Uttarakhand the total number of various woolen products produced in a year is 1880 and out of which 1166 products are purchased by the consumers. It means the percentage of the sale of products in a year is 62.02 which is quite low. The remaining part i.e. 48.98 percent of quantity manufactured is remaining in the stock of the manufacturers. This may lead to a low return on investments made by the manufacturers, obsolescence of the products, lower the income level of the workers and lower the living standards.

RESULTS

The study reveals that the income level of the people engaged in craft-related activities is very poor. The reason may be a lack of skills and abilities due to the low level of education. Another important thing is that most of the participants in the craft industry are women. During the study, the researchers were found that the manufacturers, artisans/weavers etc. faced several kinds of problems such as low quality of raw materials, infrastructural problems, obsolescence of products due to lack of knowledge etc. These challenges create obstacles in the process of sustainable development of the handicraft industry.

DISCUSSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In order to remove the obstacles faced by the handicraft industry, the Government and various private sector players need to take several necessary actions. The government should take the necessary initiative in order to improve the level of local resources which in turn resulted in the reduction of raw material cost for the manufacturers. During the study, it was founded that the raw materials were purchased from other states i.e. Ludhiana, Punjab. In order to promote ease of doing business in the handicraft sector, the state government should intervene in such kinds of inter-state purchase. The government must make necessary rules for the protection of wild animals and promote livestock activities in the district for such kind of animals which are utilized in handicraft related activities. The handicraft and handloom sector should be

modernized as per the requirements of the consumers and necessary infrastructural facilities should be provided to the manufacturers and other players of the industry. The production structure should be altered as per the preferences of the consumers. In order to increase the level of investment for various kinds of activities, the government should focus on the public-private partnership model in such sector. Product diversification is another important area of focus. Manufacturers and government must focus on such aspect so that the range for customers will be increased. The distribution channel should be government sponsored so that the consumer will believe in the products easily and the level of the sale will also be enhanced. Marketing of products is very essential in each and every kind of industry. Government and private players of the industry may play an important role in such kinds of activities. The advertisement of the products should be proper and must influence the customers. The government may reserve some area in the market for craft retail stores. It will make it easy for the customers to find the product of his choices in one place. The industry should also focus on Information Communication Technology (ICT) for various kinds of activities such as promotional activities, e-commerce etc., that helps for the upliftment of the handloom industry.

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