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RESEARCH ARTICLE

BASTAR ART : INSIGNIA OF CULTURAL BEQUEST AND MARKET APPREHENSIONS.

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Abstract

The history of Indian handicrafts has been age old. Indian arts and artisans have astonished people from other countries of the world through their creations since a very long time. Bastar region of Chhattisgarh possesses excellence in creating exceptional artifacts along with a wide variety .The tribals of this region hold proficiency in creating various Bastar art products categorized as Bell metal or Dhokra Art, Wrought Iron art, Sisal art, Wooden art and the Terracotta art. There is an elevating demand of these products but in spite of that these products fall short in reaching the target audience and the artisans are striving to earn their livelihood due to the barriers in marketing, which in turn arises a need to identify the marketing opportunities and come up with apt strategy to resolve the existing issue. This research paper is intended to scrutinize the challenges in marketing of these products along with emphasis on the opportunities in this sector , also underlining the role of emerging media in marketing of these tribal products. It also presents a SWOT analysis of this segment along with emphasis on present market links and some of the existing government schemes.

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Introduction:-



Since ancient times our country has been popularly known for its creativity and culture , and handicrafts have played a major role in reflecting our country's traditional and cultural ideologies. A part from being a depiction of India's

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cultural heritage and priced possession, handicrafts sector has also been a medium of generating employment to large number of artisans. Every state of our country is specialized in creating its own specific art form known as the folk art . Handicrafts belonging to the states of Madhya Pradesh , Chhattisgarh , Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are mostly trending now a days.

Bastar art is one such age old art form associated to Bastar district of Chhattisgarh. Various researches have found out the evidence of existence of this art form during the medieval times of Mohenjodaro and Harappa . This art form is further categorized into Terracotta art, Dhokra Art also known as Bell Metal Art, Sisal Art , Wooden Art and Wrought iron art . It is widely practiced in the regions of Kondagaon , Jagdalpur , Narayanpur , Chitrakote(wooden art),Tokapal(Bell Metal/Dhokra art),Tumnar, Balenga ,Parchanpal etc.

Dhokra Art:

Dhokra Art an age old creation by the craftsmen of Bastar. Primarily this art form is practiced by the Ghasiya tribe of Bastar. It is prepared by foundry of metals such as Copper, Zinc, Tin etc in mixed state to create idols, jewellery, utensils, decorative items and other utility products. These artifacts crated out of a mixture of soil ,wax and metal are extremely attractive. Since wax from beehive is also used in preparing these artifacts the technique for preparing these artifacts is named as the “Lost Wax Technique”. In this the art work is made out of metal but the craftsman molds it with the help of wax. Firstly as per the required design , mold is prepared out of clay. Then this clay mold is covered with wax obtained from beehive after which it is imparted with desired design. After this again a coating of clay is provided so as to copy the design over it. Finally this piece of art work is heated, during this process the wax melts which creates empty spaces, after this a diffluent substance is inserted in the gaps generated. This diffluent substance takes the desired pattern as imparted to the clay, then as soon as the metal solidifies the coating of clay is removed. Lastly the objects generated out of metal are subjected to final finishing to obtain a bright sheen. Some of the popular designs are idols of gods and goddesses, peacock ,horse, elephants, tribal warriors etc.

Terracotta Art:

Terracotta Art form is practiced by the Kumhara tribe of Chhattisgarh. This art form is practiced in Bastar since a very long time , earlier it was only restricted to creating utensils and this art form was in poor state. A very few artisans in earlier times could dare to create idols or other designs, but later on the artisans created artifacts depicting their cultural and religious patterns which became highly popular in market. Every year these artisans come up with different designs for displaying it in exhibitions. Recently the “mrinshilp” created by Kumhara tribe is grabbing higher demand and so the government is taking efforts to conduct survey in villages and find out the best artisans and give them bulk orders. Earlier the designs of these artifacts used to be simple but now a days the artisans are taking their best efforts in adding more and more creativity to it and make more attractive. After our country became independent initially there were a very few art forms which became popular and Bastar Arts is the primitive one amongst those art forms. In the year 1968 , world famous scholar organized “ Unknown India : Ritual Arts in Tribe and Village”, in this exhibition of Indian art forms in an international platform was done in which the artifacts of Bastar region were also included. Since the year 2000, Nagarnar, Ekda and Makri have been considered as prime centers of this art form. Each region has its own discrete design which distinguishes it from the other regions, Nagarnar is popular in creating designs of horse and bull, Ekda is popular in creating lion and elephant idols, Makri is more popular in creating idols of gods and goddesses. Firstly the idols made of soil are heated to red color after the heating process they turn slightly black . After heating the artifacts, they are kept for drying for 2-3 hrs. These idols are not kept in sun for drying to avoid damage. After this lastly these idols are colored with clay obtained from the sides of river bed for imparting color to it.

Sisal Art:

This art form is quite similar to jute art. Firstly the leaves of a plant named as “Ranbas” are collected . These leaves are then processed in machines to obtain threads of Sisal. These threads are then washed properly and then dried out , this process is called as the carding process. After which these threads are binded together , then these threads are utilized in creating various artifacts . Some of the most popular designs include sisal dolls, baskets, carry bags , rugs , wall hangings and other decoration and utility items. The thread which is freshly obtained has a soft texture and is shiny in nature also this material has an excellent tensile strength. Parchanpal and Kolchur areas of Bastar district are very popular for this art form. One can always find best of these products displayed in local exhibitions . Carry bags created out of these threads are very popular among the customers . The artists revealed that dolls, bags, wall hangings grab more attention from the foreign customers.

Wrought Iron Art:

In Chhattisgarh state there are two types of tribes indulged in practicing this art form, Lohar and Agriya. Both these tribes create daily utility items and agricultural tools but the most famous products carved by them which are the lamps and other decorative items are created by the Lohar tribe. Traditional artifacts of this art form created by the tribals are presently in trend but since these items are less in consumption, so it becomes difficult for the artisans to earn their living. Fortunately the local consumers contribute in creating a stable market for these products but still struggles persists to increase consumption on a greater scale. Raigarh and Sarguja region of Chhattisgarh are popularly known for practicing this art form. Since past few years various designers have been motivating the artisans to come up with various discrete designs.

Wooden Art:

Rich source of woods from nearby forests have been a major source of raw material for this art form which has motivated the artisans to indulge in this art form. This art form is practiced by the Muriya tribe of Chhattisgarh. Bastar's wooden art is extremely famous for depicting the tribal cultural patterns through art work. Some of the popular designs include Dhanush Baan, Wooden Panels, horse, flute and other items of utility and décor. This art form became more popular when refugees from Bengal explored it in the year 1964 and started trading these products. After this the demand for these products increased from the year 1970 and they started to become more and more popular. In the present scenario there are a very few artisans who create products for self consumption. Jagdalpur, Deurgaon, Parchanpal, Sonarpal, Kolchur, Taragaon are some of the areas popularly known for this art form. Jagdalpur region has the highest number of wooden artists as compared to the other mentioned regions, the artifacts designed here are a fusion of the traditional Bastar and Bengali cultures and patterns. Parchanpal has a Shilpgram(workshop), where approximately 20 wooden artisans reside and conduct their practice. Deurgaon has an emporium, a workshop and association of wooden artisans where these artisans are provided training. One of the most marvelous piece of art created by these wooden art artisans is the "Dussehra Rath" i.e. the huge chariot carved by the artisans which is displayed in the public during Dussehra.

Objective of the study:-

To study the challenges and opportunities in market for Bastar Art products.

Research Methodology:-

This research paper is based on exploratory research. The data for this research paper was collected through various secondary sources.

Designs:

Bastar art products are created in accordance to the consumer preference and taste. These products are classified into three categories on the basis of their designs.

1. Customary Products : These products use the antediluvian and traditional designs.
2. Contemporary Products : These are the ones that are created according to the prevailing modern designs.
3. Confederacy Products: These products are fusion of both the designs i.e the customary and contemporary designs.

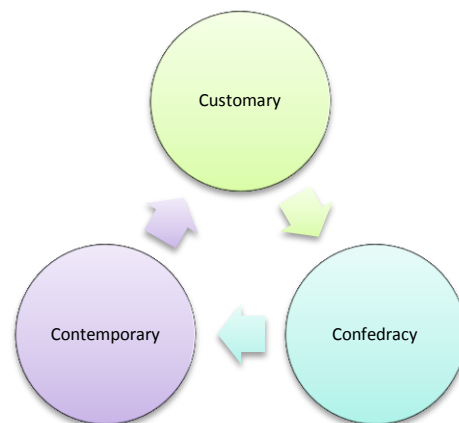


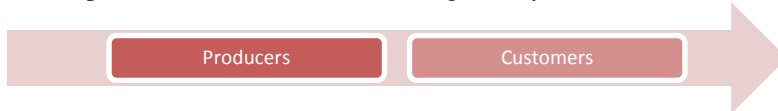
Fig:-Representation of the types of designs

Artisans are dependent on traders , master artisans and considerate society for disposing the end product. Few craftsmen prefer to sell it straight away to consumers while others favor to sell it via the dealers, master artisans or obliging society.

Lots of times these dealers sell their products via the emporiums which directly appends to galaxy of customers. Producers of these tribal products mainly dependent on other links for selling their product.

The various genres of selling are :

Genre 1:-The producers sell their creations straight away to consumers.



Genre 2:-The producers sell their artifacts to traders which sequentially sell these creations to the consumers.



Genre 3:-The producers sell their creations to government associations such as TRIFED which sequentially sell them to consumers.



Genre 4:-The producers sell their creations to the considerate society which sells it to government emporiums which sells these products to customers.

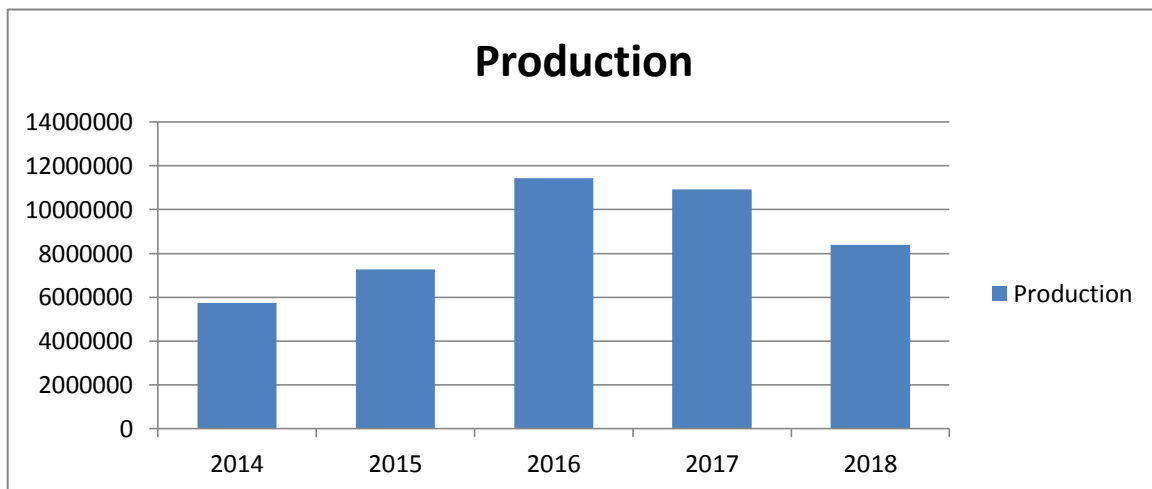


Fig:-Production Pattern of Products as per the data of TRIFED.

Problems:

1. Increasing competition.
2. Lack of proper infrastructural facility to the artisans.

3. Declining returns on Bastar Art products without understanding the number of labor involved in generating the product.
4. Lack of availability of raw materials especially for art forms like wrought iron art form and some wooden art form requiring some specific raw material source.
5. Competing with the machine made products in the market.
6. Lack of direct link of the artisans with customers as middlemen ruin the scenario in present circumstances.
7. Lack of apt marketing strategy for promoting these products.
8. Less involvement of every artisan by the government in marketing. Some artisans don't get chance to display their products because of this.
9. Less focus on advertising these products on a larger platform to grab masses.

Existing Government Efforts in Promotion:

As per the constitution of our country the responsibility of promoting and developing these art forms is subject to the state government, and the central government only complements endeavors of the state government. For the purpose of fortifying the comprehensive expansion of this sector some specific schemes have been instigated:

1. Market Service and Support Plan : Adopted for generating awareness about the artifacts amongst the consumers and also to extend financial support to state corporation to initiate number of shops.
2. Research and Development Plan: Adopted to collect opinions on fiscal, artistic, societal and encouragement facets of these art forms.
3. Training and Extension Plan: It aims in achieving competence building.
4. Special Training Projects for Handicrafts: To increase the opportunities in this sector and to enhance the skills of artisans.
5. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hastship Vikas Yojna: It aims in increasing participation of artisans .
6. Export Promoting Plan: It aims in elevating the the promotion by stressing on some specific products such as rugs. Major elements of this plan include development and welfare.
7. Bima Yojna for Artisans: Life insurance is provided to artists between the age group of 18 to 60 yrs.

Impediments:

The prevailing pattern of consumption is a matter of concern. There is an escalating demand for Bastar Art products in domestic and international platforms but the problem lies with the accessibility of these products, consumers are unable to access these products and the problem lies with the current marketing pattern which is turning out to be less effective in grabbing the right audience. Also less educated artisans are a subject of worry because they are duped by the middlemen. Also there are some unfair practices carried out by some non tribal artisans who charge extremely high value for the same products available in less price with the tribal artisans so such practices become a means of declining customers .Also some inimitable products which were very popular earlier are diminishing from the markets because of lack of consumer awareness . Also there is production of some less profitable products in bulk which are mostly stocked , such products should be eliminated from the product line .

Latitude for Bastar Arts :

There are various opportunities of growth prevailing in this sector . There is scope for substantial international presence. Also there are ample number of artisans available which means there is further capacity to develop skilled manpower by providing the necessary training. The exports of these products could be spread to a larger extent by creating awareness amongst the foreign consumers and increasing the total consumption of products. Various sectors contributing in sales of these tribal artifacts should be promoted rigorously such as the Tourism sector which is one of the major contributor in raising the sales of such products for e.g. by increasing the display of wide variety of designs of these products in Tourist destinations like Chitrakoot waterfalls , Kutumsar Caves e.tc., these are the places in Bastar region that are most popular tourist destinations but unfortunately one can't find ample amount of quality products displayed over there. Some of the artisans have come up with the concept of designing fusion artifacts such as a fusion of wooden art and wrought iron art , and fusion of Dhokra art and wrought iron art but unfortunately these products are out of the reach of apt audience . During interaction with the artisans it was found out that tourists from foreign destinations are highly attracted to such products but only those customers who can inquire about its availability that too in right place get to see and buy such products . There are other dealers selling such products at a very unfair price who grab this opportunity to dupe the consumers as well as the artisans. So there room for eliminating such market links .

Role of emerging media in marketing :

Now a days social media indicates the technique of communication between the folks on such a way that enables them to share and switch ideas and information in a virtual platform amongst various networks. It is largely dependent upon the web based as well as mobile technology usage with the help of which users can contribute , converse and amend consumer created content .

It contributes in creating considerable and influential transformations in communication between several parties. This wide platform is fragmented into various units such as Wikipedia, forums, podcasts, social networks, e-magazines, bookmarking and rating, videos e.tc. A website provides a vibrant platform which allows individual to generate independent content and describe their own experiences. It’s one of the most important means of promotion these days.

These mediums allow to convey large amount of information in an accessible form. It is highly useful in brand building through enhanced interactions. It has made interaction between the consumers and interaction between consumer and supplier easier. The promotional activities could be merged flawlessly with online purchasing. It enables the consumers to achieve one to one and one to many type of activities.

SWOT Analysis:

Strengths	Weakness	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huge, expanded and prospective market. • Availability of wide range and variety of products. • Low cost labor contributing to competitive pricing. • Some art forms require less capital. • Less number of barriers of new entry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortage of apt infrastructural facility. • Less awareness about the technological advancements in designs. • Restricted to needs of typical consumers, needs broader spectrum . • Less awareness in artisans about the current market trends. • Less effective promotional strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tapping the international market focusing on countries like Canada, Germany, USA etc. • Promoting the development of sectors where such products are desired for ex; retail sector, Real Estate sector. • Rigorous usage of new media in promoting the products. • Focusing on expansion of the tourism sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalating competition in the market. • Equilibrium between elevated demand and supply . • Strategies of trade adopted by competing countries. • Technological advancements in designing opted by other domestic and international competitors.

Suggestions:-

From Artisan’s Perspective following changes are desirable:

1. Every product should be allotted fair pricing.
2. The product should reach the customer on time.
3. The product should be able to grab larger masses.
4. Some of the art forms need quality control checks.
5. Efforts should be taken by Government for availability of raw material.
6. Various timely changes in designs of the products are desirable.
7. As Dhokra art has been allotted the GI mark , other various art forms should also taken into account for allotting copyright of products.
8. There is a necessary action desired from government’s side to cope up with the existing marketing trouble.
9. Rigorous advertisement and marketing strategies should be opted for promotion.
10. Regular display of products in fairs and exhibitions in national and international platforms is desired with more and more entries by artisans.
11. Apt amount of capital should be provided for modernization in designs.
12. Exemption from taxes is desirable.
13. Artisans should be provided with some fixed regular wages.

From Government’s perspective following changes should be considered:

1. Infrastructural support is desirable.

2. Every craftsman should be provided with equal chances and opportunities of production.
3. Workshops for training should be organized with increased number of participants.
4. Workshops focusing on new trends in designing should be conducted.
5. Facilities for direct marketing should be provided to eliminate the intermediate linkages.
6. Promoting the growth of marketing complex for such products.
7. Indulgence of corporate houses and private houses is desirable for promoting these products.
8. Assistance should be provided to revive diminishing art forms.

Conclusion:-

The crafts of tribal artisans of Bastar are deeply impacted by their religions and rituals. These tribal art products are astonishing and due to this reason the consumers are attracted to them and some of them are even ready to pay higher charges for these products. Here's when the brokers come into the picture and try to dupe the consumers as well as the artisans by unfair pricing policies to generate profit for themselves. It has become an inevitability to impart strategic direction to foster the existing system. Desirable measures should be taken with the help of innovation and technological advancements to encourage these art forms.

We came across a few suggestions for the artisans as well as the government organizations and also highlighting the role of emerging media in marketing which could be fully explored to generate potential clients, along with the SWOT analysis of present scenario of this sector. So basically the conclusion drawn out of it is that there is a need of earnest and genuine approach towards accepting the fresh modern day techniques and approaches of marketing and merchandise communication.

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