



CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS HANDLOOM PRODUCTS IN THE STATE OF PUNJAB & HARYANA

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Abstract: *The Handloom industry fulfils one of the basic needs i.e. the cloth. It is one of the oldest cottage industries in India. The artisans of India are famous for hand spinning, hand printing and hand typing. The handloom sector occupies a distinct and unique place in Indian economy. Handloom products are symbolic to the Indian civilization. India has a long tradition of excellence in making high quality of handloom products with extraordinary skills and craftsmanship. Consumers prefer handloom brands irrespective of current fashion trends. They give recognition to our indigenous industry. They have perception that the handloom products are medically good for skin and have Aesthetic sense. The use of handloom products effect swadeshi feelings and even the purchase of handloom products satisfy them.*

Keywords: *Cottage industries, hand spinning, hand typing, hand printing, craftsmanship, aesthetic sense, swadeshi feelings.*

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INTRODUCTION

Handloom Industry

Handloom Industry is one of the most important industry as it generates employment for the weaker sections of the society and is next to the agriculture industry in India. As per the last handloom census “Handloom Census of India” (2009-10)⁽¹⁾ there are 23.77 lakh handlooms employing 43.31 lakh handloom weavers and allied workers. Handloom sector provides both direct and indirect employment to the handloom weavers. The handloom sector is decentralized, unorganized and rural based which occupies a distinct and unique place in Indian economy. Major portion of total household units are located in rural areas. This industry supports a large section of weavers and allied workers who belong to the weaker sections like SC, ST and OBC. It is labour oriented cottage industry and have no effect on environment. Handlooms do not cause noise, air and water pollution. They do not consume power which is scarce these days especially in rural areas where most of the handlooms are located. Natural fibres like cotton, wool, silk and jute are mainly used for making handloom products therefore handloom products are ecofriendly.

Handloom is a traditional product. The traditional handloom weaving in India has been kept alive by the traditional skilled weavers. The strength of handloom lies in innovative designs which cannot be replicated by the mill products. Due to innovative designs and different weaving techniques the handloom sector has managed to withstand competition from the mill sector in the country. Handloom is unparalleled in its flexibility and versatility.

Handloom sector forms a part of heritage of India. It exemplifies the richness and diversity of our country and the artistry of the weavers. The Northeastern region has a rich heritage of handlooms and the government has been laying considerable emphasis in uplifting this sector.

STATUS & IMPORTANCE OF INDIAN HANDLOOM INDUSTRY

Indian handloom sector of the textile industry is ancient and has served the economy well in terms of employment. At present juncture, it plays a major role in the quota free trade regime by getting rationalized support for bringing out with value added and customized products for consumers all over the world. This is achieved with the support of government. The intervention of government in the form of financial assistance as well as development



and welfare schemes have helped it to withstand the pressures and competition from economic and technological developments.

Handloom products are produced at low capital cost using indigenous raw material and utilizing local skills. The profession of handloom weaving is one of the main factors of growth in Indian economy, promoting inter and intra relationship between different communities.

This 5000 years old Indian industry has a broad spectrum of production techniques from hand operated to automated technology. Important features include a dualistic structure including decentralised or unorganised small scale segment in weaving and knitting along with a vertically integrated large scale composite mill segment (spinning and weaving). It is predominantly a domestic oriented industry with cotton as the primary raw material.

DEVELOPMENT OF HANDLOOM SECTOR

Handlooms have been known in India right from the historic ages. The use of fabrics and various techniques created designer art pieces and expressed ethnicity which became the essential part of India. As a result handloom industry constitutes around 14 percent of total preindustrial production and 30 percent of the total export business. It is also the second largest industry in India.

Every state of India has the gift of handloom to offer, which shows their uniqueness. The high quality of Indian handloom products like Muslin of Chanderi, Silk brocades of Varanasi, Tie & dye products of Rajasthan & Orissa, Chintas of Machhliapatnam, Himroos of Hyderabad, Kheses of Punjab, Durries of Haryana, Prints of Farrukhabad, Phenek, Tongam & Bottle designs of Assam and Manipur, Maheshwari sarees of Madhya Pradesh and the Patola sarees of Baroda are famous all over. Even the quality and style of handloom products is attracting foreigners and increasing their knowledge about Indian cultural heritage. In fact, our handloom industry acts as a bridge between cultural differences. Handloom weavers in India are producing most intricate designs and exemplifying richness of the country.

From using hand spinning and printing to mechanical looms, the handloom industry has travelled a lot. With the help of mechanical looms and technology the weavers and embroiders are able to manage dreary tasks with great efficiency. In order to boost this industry Indian government has also introduced various schemes for the benefit of weavers,



dyers and fabric printers. The handloom industry of India has a sagacity of unity in diversity which captures the hearts and senses in India and abroad.

BRIEF HISTORY OF INDIAN HANDLOOM

Indian handloom was excavated from the parts of Egypt. Thereafter fine woven cotton fabrics were found in Mohenjo Daro during Indus Valley Civilization. The civilizations of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro also reveal the use of woolen and designer embroidery in handloom. This industry seems to grow between 5000 and 4000 BC. The art and craft tradition one of the oldest forms was kept alive by the generations of the handloom weavers. Even the Vedic literature has also mentioned about the Indian weaving styles.

Prior to imperialism and migration all the natural fabrics i.e. silk, cotton and jute were hand-woven and khadi was among the widespread materials at that time. After some period the mechanical system was utilized for faster work in spinning and weaving. During the British rule the export business of cotton and silk started. This facilitated the Indians to show their expertise talent in other countries. During the freedom struggle Mahatama Gandhi appealed to general public to use of hand-woven clothes. The main objective was to help the then poor rural weavers. On 15th August 1947 the charkha a spinning wheel of handloom weavers became the symbol of national regeneration. Handloom has carried forward an age old heritage and has evolved with specific regional features that are identifiable due to use of distinctive styles and techniques. The post independence period has witnessed substantial growth in this sector.

HANDLOOM – ITS MEANING

The word loom means a weaving machine, hence the word handloom means a machine on which weaving is done manually through hands. The weaving on handloom is done through the intersection of warp and weft. The warp is a vertical thread wound on a roller and the weft is a thread at right angles to warp/horizontal thread. The master weaver known as Julaha used to throw the shuttle weft through the tightly stretched warp threads back and onward over and over again.

Sudalaimuthu (2011)² has stated that the Handloom Textiles constitute a timeless part of the rich cultural heritage of India. The element of art and craft present in Indian handlooms makes it a potential sector for the upper segments of market domestic as well as global.



Himanshu Chaudhary (2010)³ has described that the devices and machines in handmade manufacturing is a systematic approach to improve the existing tools and processes used by the artisans engaged in handloom sectors to enhance the productivity and the quality of the finished products in a cost effective manner.

Kondaiah (2010)⁴ has explained that the Indian handloom industry is one of the most ancient cottage industries and plays an important role in the country's economy. The organised sector contributes over 95% of spinning, but hardly 5% of weaving fabric.

Bhagavatula (2010)⁵ described that it is virtually impossible for any industry to remain relevant for centuries but the handloom industry in India has been surviving since time immemorial. The aim of his study was to document the entrepreneurial functioning of a master weaver and understand how he sells in the same markets where the cooperatives are unable to sell.

Maureen Liebl (2004)⁶ explained that Indian handicrafts have emerged as a major exportable, illustrating the potential that these apparently obsolete technologies possess for meeting new kinds of consumer demand and examined why the potential has not so far been realised and discusses some interventions.

Jha (2004)⁷ described that in Gandhian discourse, the charkha signifies 'decentralisation against centralised production', 'the sole remedy' for the dwindling handloom industry and the traditional sector in general. This reading of erasures of a popular Gandhian symbol contributes to an understanding of the different layers of the politics of disjuncture which operate at many levels.

PARAMETERS OF THE STUDY

The Handloom industry fulfils one of the basic needs i.e. the cloth. It plays a vital role in the economy of our country and gives self employment opportunity to many people in the country. Marketing of Handloom products is not only concerned with the flow of Handloom products from the producer to the consumer but also the flow of information from consumer to producer. This is essential for the smooth sale of products. With the help of information related to consumer demand, the producers will be able to produce the right products, fix the right price of the products, place the products to the right channel of distribution and select right media to communicate with the consumer.



WORLD HANDLOOM DAY

World Handloom Day is celebrated on 7th August all over the world to celebrate the sustenance of handloom-based textile production. In Asian Countries where handloom production is a major economic activity this day helps in promoting traditional, environment friendly livelihood, employment and economy. On 7th August many organisations including handloom weavers, consumer groups, teachers, traders and handloom industry representatives along with environmental and civil society organisations come together to celebrate.

World Handloom Day is an effort to enhance the growth of handloom sector, revive the livelihood of handloom weavers and protection of scarce natural resources.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Handloom fabrics are an essential part of the heritage of India. It shows not only the richness and diversity of our country but also the artistry of the Indian weavers. Handwoven fabrics are the products of Indian tradition and the inspiration sought from the cultural ethos by the weavers. The tradition of weaving cloth by hand constitutes one of the richest aspects of Indian culture and heritage. The artistry and intricacy achieved in handloom fabrics are unparalleled and unique. Weavers with their skilful blending of myths, faiths, symbols and imagery provide the fabric an appealing dynamism.

The handloom is most ancient cottage industry in India. Its prevention for posterity ensure the preservation of our cultural heritage. Now it has become a mature industry. Handloom production is family based activity and is inseparable from the living atmosphere of the handloom families. Handloom sector constitutes a distinct feature of the rich cultural heritage of India and plays a vital role in the economy of the country. The weavers are typical of rural Indians left behind by market forces, rapid development of industry.

Handloom is the cultural heritage of our country and hence it is imperative to protect and promote this sector.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

The Office of the Development Commissioner for Handlooms since its inception in the year 1976 has been implementing various schemes for the promotion and development of the handloom sector and providing assistance to the handloom weavers in a number of ways. Some of the major programmes formulated by them are Employment Generation



Programme, Modernization & Upgradation of Technology, Input Support, Marketing Support, Publicity, Welfare Measures, Composite Growth Oriented Package and Development of Exportable Products.

All these measures are taken for the growth of decentralized handloom sector. Efforts are being made through the schemes and programmes to enhance productivity, income and socio-economic status of weavers by upgrading their skills and providing essential inputs.

The Government of India is implementing five schemes for the development of handloom sector and welfare of weavers. The schemes are (i) Integrated Handloom Development Scheme, (ii) Handloom Weavers Comprehensive Welfare Scheme, (iii) Mill Gate Price Scheme, (iv) Marketing and Export Promotion Scheme (v) Diversified Handloom Development Scheme. With Government intervention through financial assistance and implementation of various developmental, welfare and marketing schemes this sector has been able to withstand competition from the mill sectors.

REBATE SCHEME OF GOVT. OF INDIA, MINISTRY OF TEXTILES

To uplift this ailing sector, the Central Government has floated many schemes for the benefit of weavers. One of such scheme is “Scheme for Reimbursement of One Time Rebate @ 10% given on Sale of Handloom Products by the Handloom Agencies” The main objective of the Scheme is to provide marketing support to the National level handloom organizations by way of reimbursement of 10% rebate on sale of handloom products during festival seasons like Mahavir Jayanti, Good Friday, Milad-un-Nabi (Birthday of Prophet Mohammad) and Budha Purnima, Rath Yatra, Independence Day/ Ganesh Chaturdashi/ Parsi New Year/ Onam/Raksha Bandhan, Gandhi Jayanti/Dussehra/ Durga Puja/Depawali/ Bhai Duj & Id-ULFitr, Christmas Makar Sankranti/ Magh Bihu/Pongal and Holi. These agencies are (i) National Handloom Development Corporation (NHDC), (ii) All India Handloom Fabrics Marketing Cooperative Society (AIHFMCS), (iii) Handicrafts and Handlooms Export Corporation (HHEC) along with State level organizations. The state level organisations are (i) State Handlooms Corporations/ State Apex Cooperative Societies/ Handloom Federations/ Regional Handloom organizations and (ii) Primary Handloom Weavers Cooperative Societies. In Rebate/ discount system, the retailers use to sell the products after giving the specific rebate/ discount to the consumers of handloom products on various occasions throughout the year as per the policy of Government of India, Ministry of Textiles, New Delhi. After the



closure of financial year they get the reimbursement of rebate/ discount amount through proper procedure under the “ Scheme for reimbursement of one time rebate @ 10% given on the sale of handloom products by the handloom agencies”.

The secondary data have been collected from Ministry of Textiles, Government of India regarding the amount of sales by the various public and private parties/ agencies/ societies in the State of Punjab and Haryana. As per data the sale of handloom products during Rebate/ discount period were Rs. 1.51 crores in the State of Punjab and Rs. 51.50 crores in the state of Haryana.

MARKETING - HANDLOOM PRODUCTS

The marketing of handloom products is done by the weavers and middlemen. There are marketing organizations which provide facilities directly or indirectly for the marketing of handloom products. These organizations are Weavers Cooperative Societies, All India Handlooms Fabric Marketing Cooperative Societies, National Handloom Development Corporation, Association of Corporations and Apex Society for Handlooms. These organizations save the weavers from the corrupt middlemen and provide opportunities to sell their produce at competitive rates.

HANDLOOM IN THE STATES OF PUNJAB & HARYANA

Punjab State

Punjab reminds us of royalty and richness prevailing in the heart of people and is visible in the handloom sector of this state too. The state of Punjab being primarily an agricultural state, the art of touching senses with the style of handloom has a special place here. The women of Punjab are busy in making beautiful designs of Phulkari embroidery on ladies suits, table covers, dining sheets, shawls, dupattas, bed sheets and bed covers. In the folk art form the embroidery is done closely and entire piece of cloth is covered which is famous as “Bagh”. The embroiderers use the vibrant colors to match the prosperity and the tone of celebration in Punjab. Apart from the gift of Phulkari embroidery, Punjab is also known for weaving stylish durries. These durries are made from pile less cotton. Even bed or floors durries are decorated with various kinds of patterns such as animals, leaves, flowers and birds weaved in different colors. This art form is taught to the girls at very young age. It is the handloom traditions in Punjab that has found a special place in the heart of people staying worldwide.



Haryana State

Haryana is very famous for its woven work on shawls, durries, robes or lungis. Panipat is a major handloom hub of India famous for its rugs and upholstery fabric. The Haryana shawl is known as phulkari and it is a spectacular piece of cloth full of wonderful colours and intricate embroidery. Traditionally, Women weave durries and Kheses. The rugs especially the panja durries weaved in the state of Haryana are marketed all over the world. Thick fabrics are a specialty of Haryana because the climatic conditions do not allow the use of fine threads in normal looms. The thick thread used by most weavers is called sooth in the local language. The weavers have also developed their skills using thick threads and weave many beautiful and complicated designs.

POSITION OF HANDLOOMS IN THE STATE OF PUNJAB & HARYANA

As per the handloom census during the year 2009-10, the number of handloom units, weavers & allied workers and number of handlooms in the State of Punjab and Haryana are given in table below:

Table 1.1

S.No.	State	No. of Units	No. of Handloom Weavers & Allied Workers	No. of Handlooms
1	Haryana	6455	7967	4876
2	Punjab	2377	2636	261
Total		8832	10603	5137

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

A process of buying starts in the mind of the consumers which leads to find alternatives between products that can be acquired with their relative advantages and disadvantages. This leads to internal and external research. It is the decision of the consumers how to spend their available resources i.e. time, money and effort on consumption-related items that includes what, why, when, where, how often they buy, use, evaluate, dispose off after the purchase, impact of such evaluations on future purchases. There are several aspects which influence buying decision of a consumer i.e. psychological, social and economic. During festival season the buying tendencies of consumers increases as compared to other months. Hence, consumer behaviour deals with the buying behaviour of individuals. The main method which triggers the buying decision of an individual is need for a particular



product/service. As and when need arises, consumers purchase products and services. Consumer behaviour consists of ideas, feelings, experiences and actions of consumers with additional environmental factors like advertisements, prices and commends. It is a dynamic process, because of the continuous changes in ideas, perceptions and activities of consumers as an individual or in a group. (Olson and Peter,2008)⁹.

Christopher (1989)¹⁰ talks about the shopping habits of consumers to form an idea of whether or not the store concepts, product ranges and strategies of the companies are appropriate towards consumer requirements. The author believed that consumer behaviours are unpredictable and changing continuously while trying to understand how individual or group make their decision to spend their available resources on consumption-related items. These are factors that influence the consumer before, during and after a purchase.

(Schiffman and Kanuk, 1997)¹¹ described it as feedback from other customers, packing, advertising, product appearance and price.

Solomon and others (2001)¹² described it as – the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experience to satisfy needs and desires.

Chunawalia (2002)¹³ stated “ the behaviour of consumers in deciding to buy or use or not to use or dispose off the products which satisfy their needs”. Moreover one of the key analyses under the heading “ Consumer Behaviour” refers to the decision-making process and physical activity involved in acquiring, evaluating, using and disposing of goods and services. This definition clearly brings out that it is not just the buying of goods/services that receives attention in consumer behaviour but the process starts much before the goods have been acquired or bought. A process of buying starts in the minds of the consumer which leads to the finding of alternatives between products. Consumer behaviour can be classified in many ways but understanding the consumer’s needs, wants and buying behaviour is at the heart of delivering successful products to the market place.

According to **Belch and Belch (2004)**¹⁴ whenever need arises a consumer searches for several information which would help him in his purchase. The sources of information are personal sources, commercial sources, public sources and personal experience.



Perception also plays an important role in influencing the buying decision of consumers.

Buying decisions of consumers also depend on the following factors:

- Consumer goes through various selective exposure i.e. messages, advertisements and promotional materials.
- A consumer is not excited with promotional materials and advertisements. A consumer not only pays attention to everything he sees but is interested in only what he wants to see. This behaviour is called selective attention.
- Consumer interpretation is how an individual perceives a particular message.

A consumer would certainly buy something which appeals him the most. He remembers the most relevant and meaningful message also called as selective retention. He would obviously not remember anything which has nothing to do with his need.

VARIABLES OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Consumer's decisions are generally influenced by different variables such as culture, sub-culture, social class and personal factors.

Culture: The most important determinant of consumer behaviour is culture. When a child grows he is normally influenced by his surrounding culture. Marketers try to spot cultural variances so that they can target their customers according to their cultural preferences.

Subculture: Within a cultural group there is a smaller group which has been termed as subculture. North Indian, south Indian, communal groups, linguistic, etc are some of the examples of Indian subculture.

Social Class: It refers to several homogeneous groups that exist in the society. Different caste group and income group constitute different social classes.

Personal Factors: According to Philip Kotler (2008)¹⁶, personal factors also influence buying decision of the consumers. Personal characteristics such as age, income, occupation, life style and personality also count. Preference for any product varies depending on the age and income level of an individual.

IMPORTANCE OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

The study of consumer behaviour is important due to following reasons:-

- (i) It enables us to become better consumers and help to take more precise consumption related decisions.



- (ii) It helps marketers to understand consumer buying behaviour and make better marketing decisions.
- (iii) The size of the consumer market is constantly expanding and their preferences are also changing and becoming highly diversified. Hence, without studying it, marketers can not predict the future of their business.

Marketing managers regarded consumer behaviour discipline as an applied marketing science. If one could predict consumer behaviour, they could influence it. This approach is known as positivism and the consumer researcher who are primarily concerned with predicting consumer behaviour are known as positivists. Consumers prefer differential products that they feel will reflect their own special needs, personalities and lifestyles.

To meet the need of consumers marketers adopt market segmentation policy. They use promotional techniques to vary the image of their products so that they would be perceived as better fulfilling the specific needs of certain target segments. Other reasons for the development of consumer behaviour includes the rate of new product development, growth of consumer movement, public policy concerns, environmental concerns and the growth of both nonprofit marketing as well as international marketing.

FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Consumer's buying behavior is influenced by a large number of factors. Kotler and Armstrong (2008)¹⁷ classify these as:

Psychological (motivation, perception, learning, beliefs and attitudes)

Personal (age and life-cycle stage, occupation, economic circumstances, lifestyle, personality and self concept)

Social (reference groups, family, roles and status)

Cultural (culture, subculture and social class system).\

CONCLUSION

Handloom industry can play more and more important role in the economy of our country if the same is operated efficiently and this efficiency however depends on the effective marketing program of the handloom products. This industry is considered as an important growth providing employment opportunity to the rural poor.



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