

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON PRODUCT DESIGN IMPROVEMENT FOR SELECTED HANDICRAFTS OF ORISSA

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ABSTRACT:

Orissa's unique topography and the gracious nature bestowed their choicest blessings on the artisans of Orissa Handicrafts items are acknowledged to be among the best in the country and also abroad due to their beauty, elegance and exquisite designs. The old, traditional designs, patterns and styles have to be discarded and new designs are to be evolved. The product design of handicraft items needs to be improved in several aspects. The design of a product should be in accordance with the tastes and preferences of customers. Handicraft is such a product that when a buyer likes it, he is prepared to pay a price, which may be far in excess of the standard price of the product. The prime consideration is his liking of the product. So outdated repetitive designs do not attract buyers. A little touch of modernity with the traditional style will add flavour to the art without killing its originality. So it is necessary for institutions to come together to provide the strategic direction and action plans to evolve systems, procedures and norms related to design, market, technology, innovation and quality.

INTRODUCTION:

Orissa handicrafts items are acknowledged to be among the best in the country and also abroad due to their beauty, elegance and exquisite designs.. The present handicrafts are largely the visual manifests produced with remarkable fidelity to the historical continuance of thousands of years of Orissan culture. Most of the designs, styles, forms, colours and methods employed in the Orissa's handicrafts are indigenous and have some distinctiveness, which have evolved slowly through the discipline efforts of generation of craftsmen. The craftsmanship of the arts and crafts embodies a tradition, which lives in the creative imagination of the artists of the state. The beauty and charm of its crafts has always been a source of attraction to many Indian and foreign tourists. Orissa has a distinguished craft heritage. The craftsmanship of the arts and crafts embodies a tradition, which lives in the creative imagination of the artists of the state. So the design of a product should be in accordance with the tastes and preferences of customers. There are three types of designs viz., conventional, modern, conventional and modern which are usually adopted by craftsmen.

Conventional designs are age-old and traditional designs.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this article is to study the perception of the customers of handicraft products regarding their product design. The factors affecting the buying behavior of customers have also been examined in this article.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the present investigation, Orissa state is purposively selected, mainly because of the striking selection of decorative and utilitarian art and craft and special creative and imaginative craftsmanship's of Orissa. The present research has been conducted for four handicraft items, i.e. 1. Stone Carving, 2. Applique 3. Filigree 4. Pattachitra.

The required data for the present study have been collected mainly from primary sources. Primary data have been collected through the "Survey Method" with the help of structured questionnaires. We have designed two types of questionnaires; one for customers and second for artisans. We have divided the sample customers in two parts; rural and urban. The proposed sample size was 1000 for customers, out of which 900 valid questionnaires have been received. Three hundred artisans were also covered in the second survey. We have interviewed each artisan producing four different craft items.

If the crafts field is to grow and become ever more relevant in peoples lives, we must pay attention to consumer trends. After all, trends are caused by what is happening in our world, such an aging population, reaction to the pressures of technology, etc. Crafts people should pay attention to consumer trends crafts people, particularly those, who are in production, must pay attention to trends if they want to sell in a highly competitive gift market place. Artisans who are keenly aware of current trends in the market place and also have a good foundation in craft can combine styles and ideas to create really wonderful work.

Handicrafts have not received as much attention as they deserve. The Government agencies are not giving financial fillip to handicrafts industry to the required extent. The performance of the existing institutional infrastructure both for financing and marketing of handicrafts is far from satisfaction. Artisans are depending on the middlemen for raw materials, finance and market for the finished products because of their illiteracy, ignorance and poverty.

Marketing determines the survival and success of any business unit. Marketing organization is necessary for the realisation of organization objectives. However, it is not possible for all the business units to have a well-structured marketing network. The large-scale industries with abundant financial and other resources may be able to establish an efficient marketing organization of their own; but to the small scale and cottage industries, it is not possible to have such an

organization owing to resource crunch. Handicraft units, which are mostly run by individuals with sole proprietary form of organization, can ill-afford to have separate and well-organized marketing systems. Usually, the artisans have little market intelligence and market information relating to their products. The artisans in handicraft industry give little importance to the vital marketing function. Thus, marketing is a neglected function in handicraft. (Chandrasekhar, Venugopal & Rao, 1994)

The emphasis in marketing today is on the consumer needs. The artisans in handicrafts adopt production oriented selling concept rather than marketing concept. Consumer research in handicrafts is conspicuous by its absence. The success of handicrafts depends on how well the artisans can produce the articles in keeping with the tastes and preferences of consumers.

An understanding of the consumer behavior of various market segments helps sellers to select the most effective product design, price, advertising appeals, channels of distribution etc. A clear understanding of consumer behavior can give marketers a better idea of how marketing works, enabling them to devise more potent marketing strategies. Consumer behavior involves the study not only of what people consume but where, how often, and under what conditions goods and services are consumed.

ANALYSIS OF DATA:

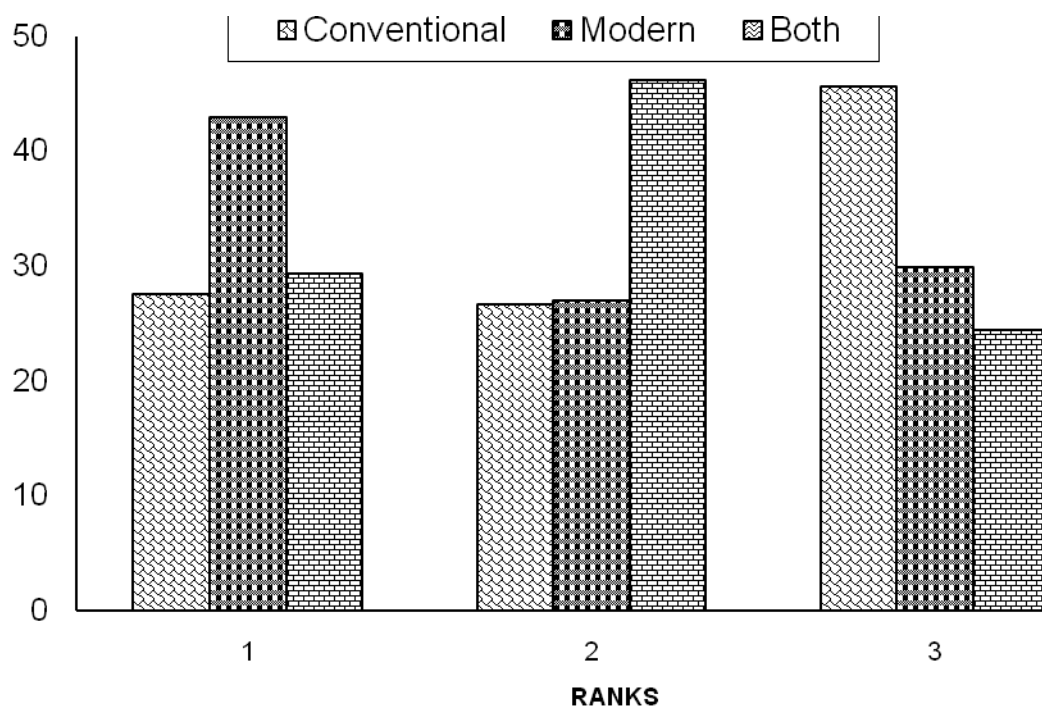
Modern Handicraft Design Vs Traditional Handicraft Design

Usually outdated designs do not attract buyers. In keeping with the changes in consumer tastes and preferences, artisans have to change product designs. So, here we will examine and will select the right choice of design accepted by the respondents.

TABLE - 6: Comparison of modern handicraft designs with traditional ones.

Ranks	Conventional	Modern	Both
1	27.62% (248)	42.98% (386)	29.40% (264)
2	26.73% (240)	27.06% (243)	46.21% (415)
3	45.65% (410)	29.96% (269)	24.39% (219)

CHART - 3 :



Preferential responses towards types of handicraft designs

It is clear from above that most respondents have opted for modern handicraft designs as the frequency 386 (42.98%) is maximum in rank 1. This is further strengthened with the fact that maximum have opted for both modern and traditional designs 415 (46.21%) at rank 2. But, conventional design has been put in rank 3 by maximum of the customers 410 (45.65%).

TABLE - 7: Area-wise opinion on preferred handicraft designs

Ranks	Conventional		Modern		Both	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
1	16.04% (144)	11.58% (104)	25.06% (225)	17.93% (161)	17.15% (154)	12.25% (110)
2	15.59% (140)	11.14% (100)	15.81% (142)	11.25% (101)	26.95% (242)	19.27% (173)
3	26.61% (239)	19.04% (171)	17.37% (156)	12.58% (113)	14.25% (128)	10.13% (91)
Total	58.2% (523)	41.8% (375)	58.2% (523)	41.8% (375)	58.2% (523)	41.8% (375)
χ^2 value	0.004 ^{NS}		0.011 ^{NS}		0.001 ^{NS}	

TABLE – 8 : Income-wise opinion on preferred handicraft designs

Ranks	Conventional			Modern			Both		
	LIG	MIG	HIG	LIG	MIG	HIG	LIG	MIG	HIG
1	11.02% (99)	10.8% (97)	5.79% (52)	17.15% (154)	16.82% (151)	9.02% (81)	11.88% (106)	11.47% (103)	6.12% (55)
2	10.69% (96)	10.47% (94)	5.57% (50)	10.8% (97)	10.58% (95)	5.68% (51)	18.49% (166)	18.04% (162)	9.69% (87)
3	18.26% (164)	17.71% (159)	9.69% (87)	12.03% (108)	11.58% (104)	6.35% (57)	9.69% (87)	9.47% (85)	5.23% (47)
Total	40.0% (359)	39.0% (350)	21.0% (189)	40.0% (359)	39.0% (350)	21.0% (189)	40.0% (359)	39.0% (350)	21.0% (189)
χ^2 value	0.019 ^{NS}			0.016 ^{NS}			0.032 ^{NS}		

It has been analyzed earlier, the same procedure has been adopted to test the preference of the respondents on handicraft designs. The obtained rank scores in responses have been considered for analysis by classifying the respondents in to two categories of income and residence. However, the significant computed χ^2 values in all probable reveal that there is no significant difference at 5% level ($P < 0.05$) between expected frequencies and observed frequencies. Hence it is concluded that people like modern handicraft designs irrespective of their income groups and residence. Table – 7 and table – 8 reveals that the respondents have accepted modern designs rather than conventional designs.

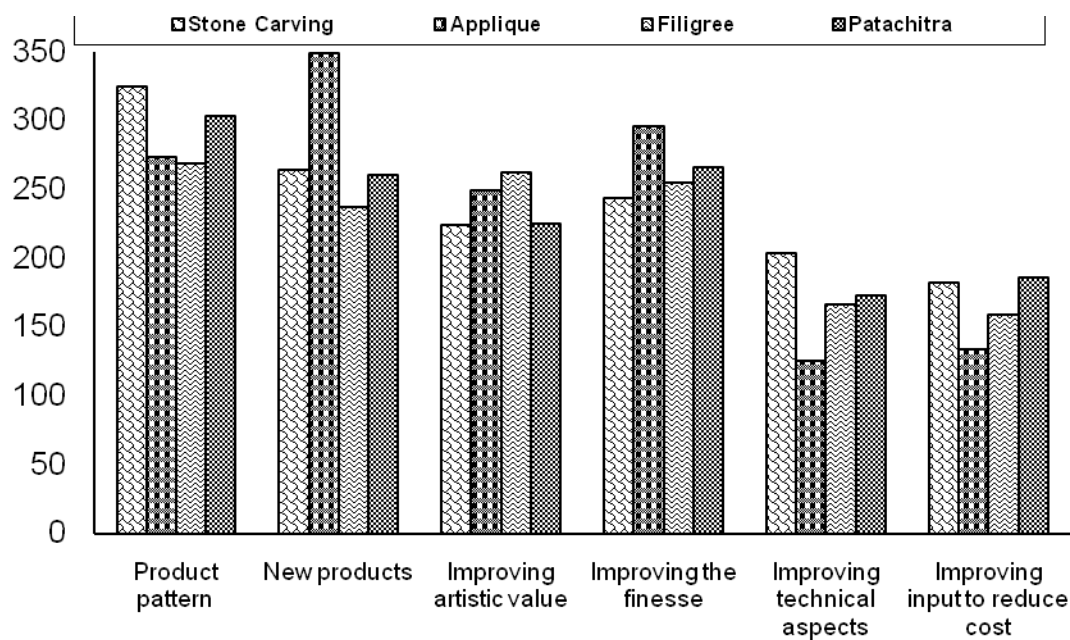
Product design

The product design is the problem of anticipating or trying to do what will be required in future and improving what is being already produced. Product design involves primarily the determination of what a product will look like, what it will do, how it will function, what it will be made of, and how it will be made. So here, table - 9 reveals some of the important aspects relating to product design of handicraft items. Product design of handicraft items needs to be improved.

TABLE – 9 : Overall opinion on improvement of handicraft items.

	Stone carving	Applique	Filigree	Pattachitra
Product patterns	325	273	269	303
New products	264	349	237	260
Improving artistic value	224	249	262	225
Improving the finesse	244	296	255	266
Improving the technical aspects	204	125	166	173
Improving on input use to reduce cost	182	134	159	186

CHART - 4 :



Responses on improvement of product designs of handicraft items

TABLE – 10 : Area-wise opinion on improvement of handicraft items.

	Stone carving		Applique		Filigree		Pattachitra	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Product patterns	14.8% (133)	21.4% (192)	13.0% (117)	17.4% (156)	13.3% (119)	16.7% (150)	16.8% (150)	17.1% (153)
New products	21.0% (189)	8.4% (75)	21.5% (193)	17.4% (156)	15.7% (141)	10.7% (96)	16.6% (149)	12.4% (111)
Improving artistic value	13.6% (122)	11.4% (102)	15.4% (138)	12.4% (111)	16.5% (148)	12.7% (114)	15.8% (141)	9.4% (84)
Improving the finesse	19.2% (172)	8.0% (72)	18.6% (167)	14.4% (129)	17.7% (159)	10.7% (96)	17.0% (152)	12.7% (114)
Improving the technical aspects	14.7% (132)	8.0% (72)	8.9% (80)	5.0% (45)	10.1% (91)	8.4% (75)	11.6% (104)	7.7% (69)
Improving on input use to reduce cost	12.2% (110)	8.0% (72)	11.2% (101)	3.7% (33)	13.0% (117)	4.7% (42)	11.7% (105)	9.1% (81)

TABLE – 11 : Income wise responses on improvement of handicraft items.

	Stone carving			Applique			Filigree			Pattachitra		
	LIG	MIG	HIG	LIG	MIG	HIG	LIG	MIG	HIG	LIG	MIG	HIG
Product patterns	12.2% (110)	14.6% (131)	9.4% (84)	11.7% (105)	11.7% (105)	7.0% (63)	10.4% (93)	10.6% (98)	8.7% (78)	13.7% (123)	11.1% (99)	9.1% (81)
New products	9.4% (84)	11.4% (102)	8.7% (78)	13.9% (125)	16.3% (146)	8.7% (78)	8.4% (75)	10.4% (93)	7.7% (69)	11.1% (99)	11.3% (101)	6.7% (60)
Improving artistic value	11.7% (105)	8.6% (77)	4.7% (42)	9.7% (87)	12.0% (108)	6.0% (54)	11.6% (104)	12.6% (113)	5.0% (45)	7.1% (63)	11.4% (102)	6.7% (60)

Improving the finesse	14.6% (131)	10.2% (92)	2.3% (21)	16.7% (150)	10.9% (98)	5.3% (48)	13.4% (120)	9.0% (81)	6.0% (54)	15.1% (135)	9.3% (83)	5.4% (48)
Improving the technical aspects	8.0% (72)	9.4% (84)	5.3% (48)	6.2% (56)	5.3% (48)	2.3% (21)	7.9% (71)	7.6% (68)	3.0% (27)	8.7% (78)	6.6% (59)	4.0% (36)
Improving on input use to reduce cost	4.9% (44)	9.4% (84)	6.0% (54)	6.0% (54)	5.6% (50)	3.3% (30)	5.7% (51)	7.7% (69)	4.3% (39)	7.4% (66)	10.7% (96)	2.7% (24)

The product design of handicraft items needs to be improved in several aspects as cited above. The detailed opinion on these aspects have been presented in the foregoing tables. The results are similar to our assumption. Every body has opined for improvement in the design of the products.

SUGGESTIONS:

In order to make handicrafts reach the top spot the following suggestions were provided by the customers and artisans.

- **Creating awareness:** The majority of artisans are not aware about various new schemes like loan at concessional rates, free tools, dyes and chemical, workshed-cum-housing facilities. It is the duty of the promotional organizations to make the weavers aware about the various welfare schemes and to implement the same on a war footing.
- **More R & D :** For improving the quality of the products R & D is a must. Many more new items and new designs can be developed with the help of R & D.
- **Invitation of Foreign Designers:** Foreign master designers may be invited to our design centres to render guidance to our craftsmen. This task should be transferred to the Department of Tourism and Culture. The reason is that this department maintains better information about taste, choice and liking of tourists (both inland and overseas) as it comes in contact with them. Keeping in an eye on tourists preferences design development on different crafts could be effected by master craftsmen who are to be placed under the Department of Tourism and Culture.
- **Registration of design:** According to some artisans, design registration should be done. That means whatever design somebody has introduced, should be registered and then should come to the market then no one can copy it. The state Government should take initiative for preventing duplicating of designs.

- **Arrangement of Workshops:** The govt. should arrange workshop for master crafts persons on colour combination and design development by which they can able to make new designs.

CONCLUSION:

Handicraft is such a product that when a buyer likes it, he is prepared to pay a price, which may be far in excess of the standard price of the product. The prime consideration is his liking of the product. So outdated repetitive designs do not attract buyers. A little touch of modernity with the traditional style will add flavour to the art without killing its originality. For example: in patta painting if instead of the same mythological pictures in the traditional style, painting is done in oriental style, it may attract more customers. Also in appliqué craft, if instead of animal motifs like elephants and houses, some other motifs like human figures can be stitched, it will definitely give a new feeling to the eyes of observers.

So it is necessary for institutions to come together to provide the strategic direction and action plans to evolve systems, procedures and norms related to design, market, technology, innovation and quality of life so that product designs, technology and marketing become integral part of the craft upgradation and repositioning process. Craft is the bedrock of creativity and the essential differentiator for a country in the sweeping winds of globalization. Most importantly, craft has to become a fountainhead for both industrial design and communication design, for deriving the differential advantage of Indian design in the global marketplace handicraft items which transmitted to designs centres and production units to accommodate such preferences.

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