

## **A SNEAK-PEAK INTO THE HARDSHIPS OF INDIAN HANDICRAFTS INDUSTRY: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*India has been an axis of various craft activities and a wide range of hand-crafted products are fabricated through these craft processes. The essence of the Indian Handicrafts lies in the distinctive and rich cultures and traditions of our motherland. The industry of Indian Handicrafts provides sustenance to an astoundingly large proportion of Indian population. However, this creative path has always been a track full of thorns for these people and the industry. This review paper is an attempt to study the body and understand the soul of the vast handicrafts industry of India and understand the concerns hampering its growth to the fullest.*

**Keywords:** Handicrafts, Indian Handicrafts, Issues and Challenges, Artisans

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

India is a land of vivid culture and traditions which have been kept alive by its diversified population and as such, numerable forms of handicrafts have also been a vital part of our nation's culture. Various artisans across the nation practice several different types of craft forms which have been an integral part of India's cultural as well as commercial market since times immemorial. Indian handicrafts industry comprises of several craft clusters spread throughout the nation which are unorganized but employ a whopping number of 68.86 lakhs <sup>[1]</sup> of people in the country and females outrun males in these figures as there are 38.61 female and 30.25 male artisans in the industry <sup>[1]</sup>. Handicrafts industry ranks second in the nation in terms of employment, only after agriculture and exports hand crafted items worth INR 29020.94 crores (2022-23) to various nations across the globe <sup>[1]</sup>. The handicrafts industry has a huge potential to grow itself as well as add laurels to the economy of the nation but it is facing a number of challenges and issues which are hampering its growth to the fullest. Being an unorganized sector, these issues and challenges pose a great threat to the sustenance of the industry and need to be taken care of for smooth operations of the industry and to increase its productivity.

## **II. OBJECTIVES**

- To study and review the available literature about the Indian handicrafts industry
- To study the issues and challenges pertaining to the industry

## **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The sources of data for the study are secondary which includes various research papers from varied journals, articles, case studies and various other internet sources. An extensive literature survey was carried out to serve the purpose of this research study and articles based on both qualitative as well as quantitative research were taken into consideration.

## **IV. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study was restricted and the data was collected only from the secondary sources due to limitation of time, access and financial constraints. However, a research study can further be conducted including the primary sources as well which would help in providing a broader sense of the industry.

## V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ud Din T. M. and Reshi S. A. (2018) in their paper 'A Review of Craft Work in Present World with Special Reference to India' told that various rituals, traditions and culture have a strong hold in India which act as a strong foundation for the prevalence of handicrafts in the nation. The number of artisans involved in the industry is as large as six million who are dependent on the industry for their daily living necessities. The industry is eco-friendly and has gained prestige around the globe so it is crucial to pay attention to this sector. Government needs to take necessary measures to improve the working conditions of this sector while also appreciating the artisans for their tiresome labor. <sup>[2]</sup>

Garg A. K., Mittal R. K. and Goyal O. P. (2005) in their paper 'A Study of Quality Management in Indian Handicraft Units' emphasized that despite a gradual growth in the exports of handicrafts over years, Indian handicrafts are still lagging behind its competitors in the global market. There are various factors which are affecting the performance of the Indian handicrafts in the global market viz. lack of manpower and quality consciousness, not implementing the quality control methods, less expenditure on quality-enhancing measures, lack of innovation in products and services, unawareness to total quality management concept, insufficient funds for quality management and inadequate participation in quality management. To tackle all these issues, a practical approach towards export planning and management is the need of the hour. <sup>[3]</sup>

Trivedi J. Y. (2013) in his paper 'A Study on Marketing Strategies of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises' mentioned that there are around 1.3 million SMEs in the country which employ around 40% of India's total workforce but contribute about only 17% to the nation's GDP when at the same time they are accountable for 40% of the total exports of the nation. This is due to poor technology and ill marketing practices. However, many of the SMEs have sensed the need of the hour and started to utilize contemporary marketing tools and techniques in their trade practices like digital marketing, CRM, use of various internet platforms, mobile app for their customers and so forth. Due to the absence of layers in the management system of an SME, it is easier to take decisions and implement innovative techniques among the workforce while keeping in mind to provide favorable working conditions for the employees where they can work together in harmony to attain the organization's goals. <sup>[4]</sup>

Kumawat R. (2017) in his paper 'Rajasthan the destination of Handicrafts' talks about this state being the hub of some of the most prominent handicraft clusters of India. Almost each city of Rajasthan is involved in craft making and the whole state varying in its natural setting is a destination for a wide range of hand-crafted products. The rulers who have ruled this state in the past have enthusiastically contributed in developing the different forms of art and crafts in this state which has resulted in the active prevalence of various handcrafted products in the state. <sup>[5]</sup>

Ahmad Y. and Anees M. (2016) in their paper 'Issues of the Lucknow Chikan Handicraft Industry' threw light on various problems faced by the artisans and the entrepreneurs involved in the Chikankari industry of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh which used to be a profession for men in the past but is now a cottage industry for women. The artisans involved in the industry are highly

under-paid because the middlemen eat up their fair share of money. Also, the most important drawback is that the artisans are illiterate which makes them unaware about the concept of incentives, no idea of any organization where they can seek help, no training and development of their skills, poor standard of living with various medical issues and no medical insurance and the artisans are not even sure as to when they will get the next assignment of work. The entrepreneurs on the other hand face issues due to the spread of the artisans in scattered locations which adds to time and transportation costs and also gives way to the entry of middlemen in the industry. This results in wastage of fabric and a single garment involves work from different artisans affecting the intricacy of work. They also face a tough competition from Chinese Chikan products which are machine-made and faster to produce. <sup>[6]</sup>

Akhtar F. and Khan A. A. (2014) in their case study ‘ART Womens (Association of Rural Trained Womens): Organising the Unorganised’ mentioned that the most prominent player among the textile exporting countries from 1600 AD till 1800 AD was India. The authors specify a report by William Hoey (1880) which reveals that during those times, men practiced Chikankari as a profession who did the best of work and were paid a handsome amount and then there were women and children who were employed for low quality assignments and for longer durations to earn a meagre sum of money. Today, the craft is losing its essence and the number of artisans who are aware with the true form of Chikankari is so low that it can be counted on fingers. Even after repeated efforts from the government the artisans are not even able to produce quality work, let alone the revival of the craft’s Mughal era glory. The UP government has set up centers to train the artisans and help them with free raw material, free infrastructure and the finished products are marketed by the government authorities. The government is inclined to improve the Chikan craft conditions and has taken various measures to ensure proper organization of the artisans, fair wages proper marketing to produce good quality Chikankari products. <sup>[7]</sup>

Bhat M. A. and Bhat A. A. (2018) in their paper ‘Employment Through Handicraft Sector in Jammu and Kashmir State: A Comparative Study of Kathua and Anantnag District’ reveals that according to the Annual Report (2005-06) of Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, the number of people employed in the handicrafts and handloom sector goes to around 65.72 lacs and the report of NCAER survey (1995-96) tells that 47.42% of workers employed in the handicrafts are women and 37.11% of these women belong to the backward communities. Handicrafts industry is the most suitable employment sector for women, children and older people with the availability of options of seasonal and part time employment. Training and development of artisans is required to refine their skills and government needs to take necessary steps to help promote the crafts, introduce new technologies to ease the process of craft production for the artisans and create marketing centers to help the artisans sell their products at fair price. The author also suggested ‘women welfare schemes’ to be introduced by the government for the women artisans employed in the industry and all the artisans should be made aware of various government policies which can facilitate their trade. <sup>[8]</sup>

Ghouse S. M. (2012) in his paper 'Indian Handicraft Industry: Problems and Strategies' stated that India holds only 2% share of the world's handicraft market which is worth US\$ 235 billion whereas its competitor China has a very strong position with 18% share of the market. The author listed various problems such as lack of access to raw materials and their high costs, unskilled or less-skilled labor, outdated tools and equipment, issues of credit, high excise and income tax issues, problems of infrastructure, transportation issues, issues of subsidy provided by the government and a major issue of inappropriate awareness of the market conditions. The author suggested some strategies to be implemented by the government which includes promoting and positioning the handicrafts in the target markets through events and campaigns, collaborate with others to increase strength of the industry, buyers in different nations should be provided with relevant information and updates, proper infrastructural facilities, adequate quantity of raw materials which should be rationally priced, proper finances should be provided with modern technology along with training programs to revive the art and the conditions of the artisans, Special Economic Zones (SZE) should be formed for the handicraft exporters in major handicraft clusters and the industry should be provided with economic support during the periods of slowdown of national or world economy. As for the concerned handicraft exporters, the author has given certain suggestions to boost their business such as hiring of professional manpower, the products need to be customer specific and should be designed according to the global trend, the manufacturers should specialize in a particular product and focus on quality, packaging and branding of products, exploration of new markets and should try to engage the Indian national students abroad to expand their business, being a part of international trade fairs can help glorify their business and utilization of internet facility to manage their supply chain is required. <sup>[9]</sup>

Ghouse S. M. (2017) in his paper 'Export Challenges to MSMEs: A Case Study of Indian Handicraft Industry' highlighted that various nations are focusing on expanding their businesses internationally because of increased opportunities and development of regional integration. The most preferred form of international businesses for SMEs is Direct Exporting. The available literature shows that SMEs have psychological/ mental barriers which hinder them from overseas operations whereas managers face challenges of limited resources and facilities which is an obstacle to the exploration of foreign markets by them. The researcher found that the microscopic export challenges faced by the SMEs are manageable and can be controlled as compared to the macroscopic export challenges faced by the SMEs. The macroscopic export challenges include poor infrastructure, ineffective export promotion and market awareness, low export subsidies, uncertain regulatory policies, insufficient social capital resources and psychic distance. The microscopic export challenges underline documentation problems, issues with the Human Resources, problems of geopolitics and exchange rates, technological issues, RandD issues, demand of the product and issues with the export value chain. The competitors have an advantage of higher subsidy packages by their governments and proper infrastructure facilities as compared to the Indian exporters. Lack of information and inadequate funds lead to poor export promotions and most of the SMEs prefer to carry out their operations by visiting their export markets or through their personal contacts. The major export markets for Indian SMEs are the ones which they consider as low in psychic distance such as the US, the UK, France and

Germany whereas the nations such as Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina, Japan etc. which they consider as higher in psychic distance (with regard to culture and language) are not lucrative enough for many of the SMEs to conduct their business. The factors creating the psychic distance such as lack of management skills, less exposure to the culture of the foreign markets and lack of knowledge of foreign languages have a major impact on the business of the Indian SMEs because most of the managers themselves are not skilled enough to train their employees. The government needs to provide proper training and efficient infrastructure to this sector to make them survive the global competition as this sector has a significant contribution in the nation's economy. <sup>[10]</sup>

Sharma C., Sharma S. and Subhedar U. (2007) in their paper 'Putting ICTs in the Hands of the Women of Kanpur and the Chikan Embroidery Workers of Lucknow' described the importance of technical aptitude for the women workers of Kanpur and Lucknow so they can acquire the skill to grow their employment ability and seek self-dependence and empowerment. An ICT project was designed by the Datamation Foundation and InfoDev in which Community Media Centers (CMCs) were established to provide training in handicrafts, IT and other traditional vocational activities as well as impart knowledge on education, health and empowerment of women in the poor communities of these districts. A survey was conducted on the women participants getting their training in the CMCs to self-evaluate their learning. The study shows that most of the women in Lucknow and Kanpur acquired additional computer skills along with the training for which they joined the CMC initially. Above 22% of the participants from Kanpur reported an increase in income after the completion of the courses. 48.2% of participants from Lucknow and 52% participants from Kanpur are confident regarding their future and 31.14% of participants from Lucknow and 43.32% of participants from Kanpur have made their parents proud. 66.19% and 20.14% of participants from Kanpur and 70.5% and 21.31% of participants from Lucknow have found the CMCs to be useful and very useful respectively. The study reveals that the Datamation ICT project has empowered women by providing them access to income-generating activities, multimedia facilities and content related to health and education. <sup>[11]</sup>

Bano R. (2016) in her paper 'Role of Handicrafts in Economic Development: A Case Study of Carpet Industry of India' describes that the Indian handmade carpet industry is the one and only sector of handicrafts which is almost 100% export oriented. The industry provides employment to over a million workers and contributes around US \$932 million to the nation through exports (as of 2016). The Indian handmade carpet industry covers 6 states viz. Uttar Pradesh, Kashmir, Rajasthan, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh with UP being the largest producer among them. The share of Indian handmade carpets in the global market is nearly 35% and the industry has always been growing for 6 decades (from 1961-62 till 2011-12). The industry has been so fruitful for the nation's economy still it faces multiple challenges like poor infrastructure, problems with transportation facilities, poor electricity supply, inappropriate wages leading to migration of workers, obsolete technology and lack of awareness of government schemes. The author suggested that proper transportation facilities in terms of connection of routes of these small towns with highways should be provided, modern tools and technology should be introduced and migration of the workers should be checked upon by



providing them with fair wages. While UP produces the maximum share of the carpets, other states should also be motivated to increase their production and the manufacturers and workers should be exposed to the global market to make them aware of the global trends. <sup>[12]</sup>

Khan W. A. and Amir Z. (2013) in their paper ‘Study of Handicraft Marketing Strategies of Artisans in Uttar Pradesh and its Implications’ discuss the marketing aspects of Indian handicrafts in the form of 4 Ps i.e. Product, Price, Place and Promotion and outline the salient features of each of these aspects with regard to the handicrafts. They conclude that sales in the handicrafts sector highly depends upon the likeness of the products by the customers and the middlemen or the channel agents in this sector take advantage of this situation and gain profit for themselves at the cost of the craftsmen. Good strategies and action plans are required for the upgradation and repositioning of craft activities including design, technology and marketing. <sup>[13]</sup>

Agrahari R. and Brar K. K. (2016) in their paper ‘Role of Chikankari NGOs to Ameliorate the Artisans: An Exploratory Study in Lucknow’ investigated the role of NGOs working in the Chikankari craft cluster of Lucknow about the implementation of rural development schemes related to the craft sector. After interviewing various NGOs operative in several blocks of Lucknow district, the authors concluded that the NGOs play a significant role in the upliftment of the craft and the craftsmen through providing them with adequate training sessions, helping them with design activities and assistance in marketing of the craft products create by the artisans. <sup>[14]</sup>

Kinot D. K., Bisht P. S. and Pandey C. (2018) in their paper ‘Sustaining Chikancraft as a Means of Livelihood: Issues and Challenges’ highlighted the importance of understanding the tidbits of the craft in order to realize the conditions of the artisans who are compelled to leave the craft practices to join other sectors for petty jobs due to the social and financial inconveniences that they are facing. Tough competition from Chinese Chikan products, lack of proper awareness of the market and scarcity of skilled artisans in the industry are some of the major causes of decline of the industry. The authors also mention that the women artisans are not technologically updated and this has made them ignorant about the possibilities of marketing their products to the right customer residing in distinct parts of not just the nation but the world. <sup>[15]</sup>

Das D., Kumar A. and Sharma M. (2018) in their paper ‘A Systematic Review of Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders among Handicraft Workers’ mention that the work environment and infrastructure of the handicraft industry bounds the artisans to work for longer hours in uncomfortable postures which leads them to develop musculoskeletal disorders in the long run which in turn affects their productivity while also affecting the craft as a whole. <sup>[16]</sup>

Shah M. R. (2016) in his paper ‘An Assessment of Handicraft Sector of J&K with reference to Central Kashmir’ outlined the problems associated with the Indian handicrafts industry including use of obsolete tools and techniques, inadequate infrastructure, inappropriate financial literacy among entrepreneurs in the sector, problems with the packaging of the products and lack of skilled workers. Also, there is a need to take measures to attract foreign investors in the handicraft sector and fair remuneration for artisans is required. Entrepreneurs require credit for

the sustenance of their businesses but high cost of credit proves to be a hurdle in growing their businesses which needs to be taken care of by the government and the entrepreneurs need to produce the items in accordance with global demand and actively participate in various national and international events to grow their reach globally. <sup>[17]</sup>

Renu and Anupama (2018) in their paper ‘Digitalization: An Aid in Marketing of Handicrafts’ mentioned that despite possessing a huge commercial potential in India as well as abroad, the Indian handicrafts sector suffers due to the low literacy rate among the artisans and lack of proper digital communication tools such as internet, computers and telecommunications. <sup>[18]</sup>

Jadhav S. (2013) in her paper ‘Indian Handicrafts: Growing or Depleting?’ focuses on the idea of bringing out the true potential of the numerous workers employed in the unorganized sector of Indian handicrafts. The author mentions that the efforts taken for the sector go in vain due to concentration on the macro perspective of the industry and lack of effective implementation of government policies. Also, developing the skills of the artisans through proper training is the need of the hour. <sup>[19]</sup>

Maity S. (2013) in her paper ‘India’s Leather and Manufactures Export in the Scenario of WTO: An Analysis Trend and Structural Shift’ identified several problems pertaining to exports in the Indian leather industry viz. fluctuations in international pricing, weaker hold in global fashion markets, inadequate warehousing support from the government, difficulties in the process of obtaining bank loans which in turn results in high cost of private borrowing and finally, strict international standards of products along with unawareness of these standards by the members of this sector which is unorganized. <sup>[20]</sup>

Dey M. (2018) in her paper ‘Managerial Challenges of Handicraft Industry: An Indian Perspective’ highlighted some issues which cause concern for artisans in the Indian handicrafts industry including lack of exposure to market, low income, lack of managerial and business skills, financial burdens and constraints, no contacts with suppliers and lack of co-ordination with different agencies involved in the development of business activities. Apart from these, there are several other issues such as fewer financial opportunities, old and obsolete methods of production, no easy access to raw materials, issues of quality in the products and presence of various competitors in the market. <sup>[21]</sup>

Hashmi S. K. (2012) in his paper ‘Market for Indian Handicrafts’ conducted a SWOT analysis of the industry and listed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the industry. The strengths of the industry include abundance of cheap labor, aesthetic qualities and functionality of the products, unique products which are handmade so less competition, and exporters are ready to handle small orders as well. Inappropriate marketing strategy, inconsistent quality of products, untimely delivery, inadequate infrastructure and communication facilities, capacity to handle small orders and unawareness to international quality standards are some of the weaknesses of this industry. Global consumers’ appreciation for handcrafted and novel products, their high disposable income, promotion of marketing activities and use of digital marketing can prove to be opportunistic for the Indian handicrafts industry. Strict international standards act as



a threat to Indian handcrafted products as better terms of trade, better quality products, better packaging and increased focus on R&D by the competitors are resulting in the decline of India's share in the global market. <sup>[22]</sup>

Wason N. and Wason S. (2016) in their paper 'Topsy Turvy in Changing Scenarios: A Case on Chikankari Textiles' revealed that the chikankari craft sector in Lucknow is itself promoting the sale of machine-made duplicate Chikankari products under the name of authentic Chikankari embroidered products. The craft has reached the digital domain but most of the websites lack innovative designs and modern approach to marketing of the products and the presence of commission-holders or middlemen proves to be a threat to this business sector. There are issues with the process of production as the artisans are scattered in the periphery of Lucknow district which makes it for a longer duration for creating the products while also making space for middlemen as it becomes hectic for the manufacturers and retailers to communicate with a series of different workers involved in various steps of the craft process. The craft was given a GI tag by the government but its usage and implementation by the craft sector is negligible. Also, the functionality of the products has not been effectively identified and they are majorly sold as gift items or as a cheaper alternative of clothing which makes the artisans incline towards quantity rather than quality. <sup>[23]</sup>

Venkataramanaiah S. and Kumar N. G. (2011) in their paper 'Building Competitiveness: A Case of Handicrafts Manufacturing Cluster Units' in their paper described various challenges faced by the handicrafts cluster units as follows: uncertain supply and fluctuations in price of raw materials, low productivity from obsolete manufacturing resources, high production cost due to inefficient layout of resources, fluctuations in exchange rates, poor infrastructure and logistics facilities, high cost of procuring input resources and inefficient marketing of finished products. Manufacturers also face issues because of limited availability of skilled manpower and inadequate support in terms of IT, infrastructure and finances from government or non-government institutions and the cluster units suffer due to difficulties in provisions such as packaging, printing and distribution services, timely availability and quality of input material, gap in marketing activities and connectivity within domestic as well as overseas market, limited awareness about technological updates and market linkages, inappropriate tools and equipment for quality check and limited power supply. <sup>[24]</sup>

Jena P. K. (2010) in his paper 'Indian Handicrafts in Globalization Times: An Analysis of Global-Local Dynamics' apprised that being an unorganized sector, the handicrafts industry faces many challenges and the craftsmen utilize conventional tools and techniques which hampers their productivity. The poor uneducated artisans of the Indian handicrafts industry require immense support from the government in terms of finances and skill enhancement for the sustenance of this industry while also. Artisans need to be made aware of marketing knowledge to lessen the role of middlemen and government needs to support the craft clusters in the export of their products. Also, focus needs to be put upon promoting the craft products with a modern approach in the domestic markets while keeping the originality of the art form intact. <sup>[25]</sup>

Upadhyay M. and Jain U. C. (2019) in their paper 'Managerial Challenges of Handicraft Industry: An Indian Perspective' identified certain problems with the Indian handicrafts industry including lack of exposure and low income of artisans, financial adversities, lack of business skills, no contacts with suppliers for raw materials and with clients to increase the customer base, obsolete methods of production, quality issues and tough competition with other products. <sup>[26]</sup>

Majeed, I. (2018) in his paper 'Indian Handicraft Industry and Globalization: An Analysis of Issues and Challenges' concluded that although globalization has created many avenues for the development of the economy of the nation as whole, it has made the artisans move away from their generational occupation of handicrafts and has severely affected their livelihood which is making them switch employment from this creative industry to other industries. Government needs to take appropriate measures and implement them efficiently in order to improve the conditions of the artisans and keep their skills alive so that the craft forms do not become obsolete in this modernized era. <sup>[27]</sup>

## VI. PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED

Through this extensive literature survey, it was found that there are so many problems prevailing in the industry, some of which are relative to artisans, some to manufacturers/ retailers and some mutual to both.

1. **Illiteracy and Poverty:** Majority of the artisans working in the handicrafts industry are uneducated and face many day-to-day challenges in their livelihood as they come from a poor background.
2. **Low Income:** Most of the artisans have been practicing the craft forms since generation and the whole family remains involved in the craft sector itself. These artisans have low average family income which is the main concern of their social well-being and leads to poor living conditions.
3. **Involvement of Middlemen:** The artisans are majorly based in rural or semi-urban areas and due to lack of awareness about the business practices, there is a creation of space for middlemen who in turn hamper effective business operations and their involvement leads to increase of cost for the manufacturers and unfair wages to the artisans.
4. **Unfair wages:** The middlemen take up the responsibility of communication between the manufacturers and artisans and taking advantage of this scenario, they eat up a good share of the wages earned by the unaware artisans.
5. **Untimely Delivery:** Most of the artisans work from home and are involved in the craft along with performing other household responsibilities. Also, scattered locations of the artisans and the presence of middlemen adds to the time in the delivery of the finished products.
6. **Lack of communication between artisans and manufacturers:** In most of the craft clusters in our nation, there is a lack of communication between the manufacturers and the artisans due to varied reasons which is actually a major issue to the efficient operations in the industry.

7. **Obsolete tools and techniques:** The artisans still utilize old and obsolete tools and techniques for handcrafting the products which adds to the time of production and also hampers the productivity and efficiency of the sector.
8. **Outdated designs:** The artisans as well as the manufacturers are still using the age-old designs and are not much experimenting with new ideas which the new age customer desires.
9. **Artisans not realizing their self-worth:** The uneducated and unaware artisans are not aware of the recent market scenario and don't realize their caliber and self-worth and also the value of the intricate products that they create, hence, they don't put a step forward for their upliftment.
10. **Lack of information:** The artisans stay uninformed about the market trends, the schemes initiated by the government for their benefits, the fashion trends, the consumer choices and many other things as well.
11. **Hesitant to go online:** The artisans are not very well equipped with digital technologies and don't understand the benefits they can reap from its usage hence, they hesitate in selling their products online.
12. **Poor working conditions:** Coming from lower sections of the society, the artisans live in small houses where they are involved in the practice of the craft form as well. The artisans work in improper lighting and ventilation in uncomfortable posture for long hours which causes various musculoskeletal disorders and other diseases in the long run and decreases their productivity.
13. **Lack of access to credits:** Due to weak economic background of the artisans, the financial institutions are reluctant to provide them loans and even if they are in a stable condition, the process of getting the loan is complex which makes the artisans divert to private lenders who in turn charge higher rates of interest.
14. **Poor infrastructure:** Being an unorganized sector, the industry lacks proper infrastructural and warehousing facilities where effective production and storage of the craft products can be performed.
15. **Issues of power supply:** Frequent power cuts slow down the production process of the craft products and affects the productivity of the industry as a whole.
16. **Issues with supply of raw material:** Fluctuations in supply of raw materials, quality of raw materials, fluctuations in price of raw materials, untimely deliver of raw materials are some issues with the supply of raw materials in the industry.
17. **Unawareness to digital techniques:** Most of the artisans are not digitally equipped and are unaware of digital communications and their benefits. Meanwhile, the manufacturers even after being digitally equipped don't actually utilize much digital technologies to uplift their businesses.
18. **Absence of marketing intelligence:** The artisans and also many of the manufacturers are not targeting the right customer segment. Also, they are unaware about the recent market trends, the consumer demands and other market tidbits.
19. **Poor packaging:** Packaging proves to be a vital component not just for safeguarding the product but also for increasing the aesthetics of a product, however, the industry lags behind its competitors due to poor packaging of its products.

20. **Competition from machine-made and duplicates:** The market is full of machine-made products which take less time to be produced and are cheaper than the hand-crafted products. Also, there are so many duplicate products sold in the name of authentic hand-crafted products and all this has created a lot of competition for handicrafts which is resulting in the downfall of the industry.
21. **Strict international standards:** The quality standards in the global market are very strict and high and it becomes difficult for our unorganized handicrafts industry to meet those standards due to lack of resources.
22. **Quantity, not Quality:** The players in the industry are much more focused upon creating more and more quantities of handcrafted products while neglecting the quality of the products because most of the local consumers are inclined to buy cheaper products for gifting purposes and not high quality products which are relatively expensive.
23. **Inadequate government support:** The government has initiated various schemes for the benefits of the artisans and the manufacturers in the industry but their ineffective implementation is hampering the growth of the industry. Also, the government needs to provide proper marketing, training, warehousing, financial support to the players in the industry to empower them.
24. **Lack of skilled labor:** The artisans are much more focused upon quantity rather than quality because they receive wages on the quantity of the products. This has made the artisans focus more upon completing the product without putting much effort, henceforth, their skills are declining. Also, considering their economic status, most of the artisans don't want their children to join this industry for full time employment as it has not provided them a promising future. This is resulting in decline in the number of skilled artisans in the industry.
25. **Lack of manpower due to increasing attrition rate:** As mentioned earlier, the artisans are not in a stable financial condition while working in the handicrafts industry, so they are taking up petty jobs leaving the industry to earn relatively higher income. This is resulting in decrease in manpower employed in the industry.
26. **Minimal quality check measures:** The manufacturers and exporters do not perform proper quality check measures to keep a check on the quality of the products hand crafted by the artisans.
27. **Lack of innovation:** The artisans and manufacturers need to adopt innovative tools and techniques to increase their productivity and innovative designs as per the consumer demands to increase their sales.
28. **Lack of sound promotional activities:** The players in the industry are not aware of the right target customer they need to cater to and also how to reach them and attract them towards their products.
29. **No focus on R&D:** The players in the industry do not put much time and effort into research and development measures to realize and fill out the gaps prevailing in the industry and bring out innovations to increase the growth of the industry.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The Indian Handicrafts Industry is the commercialization of an ancient heritage of the glorious tradition of our nation which keeps our culture alive through its varied products. The quintessential products manufactured finely and intricately through the magical hands of the artisans add not just an aesthetic value to our nation but also adds to its economic value. However, the industry being vulnerable to decline due to the presence of numerous issues and challenges makes it difficult for the artisans to sustain themselves and the art form as well. The list of issues prevailing in the industry goes long including lack of infrastructure, obsolete tools and techniques, irrelevant marketing knowledge, unawareness to the consumers' needs and wants, outdated designs, inappropriate promotional measures, strict international standards, issues of quality, bad packaging, untimely delivery of products, presence of middlemen, lack of skilled artisans, issues with supply of raw materials, problems with power supply, unfair wages to the artisans, inefficient communication between the manufacturers and the artisans, unawareness to market trends and illiteracy of the artisans along with various social issues. So, it becomes important for the government to intervene in such scenario and boost the strengths of the industry through appropriate schemes while also focusing upon effective implementation of these schemes. The handicrafts industry employs an amazingly large number of people in our nation, and it hides within itself a huge economic potential which can be tapped and utilized through proper measures to be taken hand-in-hand by the government and the players in the industry to bring out its true colors.

## VIII. REFERENCES

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