

CHALLENGES FACED BY THE RURAL HANDLOOM WEAVERS IN KERALA

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ABSTRACT

Kerala's leading traditional industry is handloom. Since the beginning of time, Kerala has been home to a large number of looms, and even in the early nineteenth century, a facility for handloom production operated here. Despite having an absolutely fantastic future and a huge potential for employment, this business currently faces a significant amount of challenges in addition to contributing to the GDP of the nation. This paper takes a critical look at the issues and challenges facing this business in this setting and offers some solutions and policy options.

Key Words: Power Looms, Handloom Sector, Challenges, Gross National Product.

INTRODUCTION

The handloom industry plays a dynamic role in the Indian economy. This industry helps in creating the perfect work opportunity, especially for rural employees. In the case of Kerala in particular, the handloom industry plays a significant role in the state economy due to its vast working potential. The hand-woven industries produce green and energy-efficient goods,

resulting in improved sustainable development. In the past, the rhythm of the handloom could be heard in every village. The skill and artistic ability of the weavers could be seen in their products. Most handloom weavers followed the hereditary method. The main weaving communities were Salias and Devangas. Today, despite its huge potential and prospects for growth, many problems and challenges are affecting the sector, especially in Kerala. The looms disappear one after another, and the number of handloom workers continues to decline. The sector is now dominated by the cooperative sector. Generally speaking, a cooperative society is a business organization in which a group or individual comes together for the common good. Kerala's handloom products are well-known for their intricate designs, exquisite workmanship, vibrant colors, and delicate texture. Over the centuries, most products have been made by family weavers and each has a unique story of how they were introduced into this particular business. Each of these weaving centers has its signature. Weavers work from home and provide finished products to these societies.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study explores and examines challenges faced by the rural handloom weavers in Kerala. The handloom sector plays an important role in the rural economy because most of them depend on this field for their subsistence because it is a household sector. Now-a-days this sector is facing a drawback with emerge of power loom sector. Therefore, the study made an attempt to find the problem of handloom weavers and to give the suitable suggestions to this problem.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- **Das (2018)** in his study highlighted that although the handloom sector provides

employment to a fairly good number of people, it faces problems relating to the product life cycle.

- **Kumar S and Sulaiman(2017)** The study highlighted the need for executing effective management information system (MIS) in this field and the significance of producing value-added products like apparel and suggested that the handloom sector should concentrate on those fabrics which require artisan and handcrafted work and low count yarn products which other sectors cannot produce and leave the production of plain finer cloth to power loom which can be economically produced by their operational efficiency.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has the following objectives.

- ✓ To study the demographic profile of the respondents.
- ✓ To study the major problems and challenges of the handloom industry in Kerala.
- ✓ To suggest suitable remedial strategies for the healthy growth of the handloom sector in Kerala.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the problem. It is a science of studying how research is done scientifically. Essentially; it is the procedure by which the researcher goes about their work of describing, evaluating and predicting phenomenon. It aims to give the work plan of research. It provides training in choosing methods materials, scientific tools and techniques relevant solution of the problem.

- **COLLECTION OF DATA:**

In special science there are two outstanding research methods

✓ **PRIMARY DATA**

The primary data were collected personally by approaching the weavers by using questionnaire method.

✓ **SECONDARY DATA**

The secondary data has been collected through reports, books, journals, periodicals, newspaper, articles, and websites.

• **SAMPLE SIZE:**

As far as the study concerned, the researcher selected 96 respondents for this research.

❖ **SAMPLING TECHNIQUE:**

Convenience sampling method is used while selecting the samples.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS:

Demographic factors are personal characteristics which are used to evaluate the data on people in a given population. In social science research, personal characteristics of respondents have significant role to play in expressing and giving responses about challenges faced by the rural handloom weavers in Kerala. In this study a set of personal characteristics namely age, gender, marital status, size of family, type of family, monthly income and their educational qualification of the 96 respondents have been presented in the table1

TABLE 1

DEMOGRAPHIC PROILE OF THE CONSUMERS

Category	Options	No of respondents	Percentage
Age	Below 25	15	16
	25-40	27	28
	40-55	24	25
	Above 55	30	31
	Total	96	100
Gender	Male	34	35.4
	Female	62	64.6
	Total	96	100
Marital status	Married	77	80.20
	Unmarried	19	19.8
	Total	96	100
Size of family	Below 3 members	16	17
	3-5 members	31	32
	Above 5 members	49	51
	Total	96	100
Type of family	Nuclear	55	57.3
	Joint	41	42.7
	Total	96	100
Education qualification	Illiterate	32	33
	Below 5 th	25	26
	5 th -10 th	27	28
	Above 10 th	12	13
	Total	96	100
Monthly income	Below 10,000	17	18
	10,000-20,000	47	49
	Above 20,000	32	33
	Total	96	100

Source: primary data

From the above table, it shows that 31 per cent respondents were from the age

group of above 55 years. Gender of the weavers indicates 64.6 per cents are females. Majority of the respondents were married which constitute 80.2 per cent. Most of the respondents family size is above 3-5 members which constitutes 51 per cent. 55 per cent were belongs to nuclear family. Majority of the respondents were illiterate which consists of 33 percent. The income of majority (49 per cent) of the respondents range between 10,000-20,000 per month.

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF THE HANDLOOM INDUSTRY

TABLE 2

S.No	Problems and challenges of the handloom industry	Mean Score	Rank
1	High cost of raw material	38.2	VIII
2	scarcity of raw materials	84.3	I
3	Under utilisation of installed capacity	79.6	II
4	Inadequate design and product development	45.1	VII
5	Labour Shortage	64.9	IV
6	Lack of technology up-gradation:	60.1	V
7	Lack of credit availability	72.2	III
8	Unorganised nature of the industry	49.3	VI
9	Lack of information on schemes	37.5	IX

Source: Primary Data

The table 2 shows that problems and challenges of the handloom industry in Trivandrum district. In that with scarcity of raw materials the mean score of 84.3 contributed first rank, Under utilisation of installed capacity with the mean score of 79.6 contributed second rank, Lack of credit availability with the mean score of 72.2 contributed third rank. Fourth rank is for Labour Shortage

with a mean score of 64.9. Fifth rank is for Lack of technology up-gradation with a mean score of 60.1. Sixth rank is for Unorganised nature of the industry with a mean score of 49.3. Seventh rank is for Lack of credit availability with a mean score of 45.1. Eighth rank is for Unorganised nature of the industry with a mean score of 38.2 and least rank is for Lack of information on schemes with a mean score of 37.5 respectively.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

After the analysis and interpretation of the data these are the following findings were emerged:

- ❖ It shows that 31 per cent respondents were from the age group of above 55 years.
- ❖ It is revealed that gender of the weavers indicates 64.6 per cents are females.
- ❖ Majority of the respondents were married which constitute 80.2 per cent.
- ❖ Most of the respondents family size is above 3-5 members which constitutes 51 per cent.
- ❖ Majority of the respondents were belongs to nuclear family which constitutes 55 per cent.
- ❖ Majority of the respondents were illiterate which consists of 33 percent.
- ❖ Most of the respondents have an income level between 10,000-20,000.
- ❖ Problems and challenges of the handloom industry industry in Kerala. In that with scarcity of raw materials the mean score of 84.3 contributed first rank, and least rank is for Lack of information on schemes with a mean score of 37.5.

SUGGESTIONS

The researchers have given the following suggestions for further improvement in the study area.

- ❖ To construct a raw material bank where all types of inputs for handloom weaving are made available for efficient and prompt distribution to weavers in order to increase the productivity of the handloom business.
- ❖ To encourage private entrance in this industry, the state government may also offer incentives like tax exemptions, free energy and water for a predetermined period of time, etc.
- ❖ Weavers and other workers in this field must get all outstanding payments (such as subsidies, rebates, etc.) in order to encourage them to contribute to the best of their abilities.
- ❖ For the purposeful marketing of handloom items through affordable distribution channels, handloom employees need to receive specialized training.
- ❖ The handloom industry needs a good branding system to maintain the quality and uniqueness of the handloom products; and to prevent the entry of power loom products camouflaged as handloom products in the markets

CONCLUSIONS

Handloom weavers doing this job on heredity basis even though they are facing lot of problems like high cost of production to increase quality of product. The study also finds that the financial support from the side of the Government is very limited. The immediate

intervention of the Government is inevitable for the survival of these handloom weavers. The manufacturing of handloom cotton sarees, which are still popular in the current market but whose high price discourages consumers from buying them, is declining as a result. But compared to power loom sarees, cotton sarees are of higher quality. For instance, people like and purchase their own onam sarees for their festivals in Kerala State. The tradition of wearing cotton and hand-woven sarees should be adopted in our State as well; only then will sales rise. Additionally, the handloom industry will boost the nation's economy and create a lot of jobs for people.

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