

Addressing Women Empowerment Issues through Handicraft Linked Tourism - Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract- *This paper attempts to explore advantageous possibilities for women through linking handicraft sector with tourism sector. Women are resourceful and they can be involved in tourism sector more supportively through handicraft sector. They can be promoted as key players in promotion of sustainable tourism as well. Considering the growing trends of tourism prospects, Handicraft sector can be linked to tourism sector more productively. Women comprise nearly 50% of the population in India and majority of them are absolutely dependent upon male partners. Rural women and marginalized women are at a receiving end because they lack opportunities for sustainability. Handicraft sector presupposes plenty of opportunities for these women who can be involved locally and resourcefully. Besides, handicraft related tourism is important for the empowerment of both urban and rural poor women. Tourism sector linking handicraft sector is viewed as beneficial not only for women but also for the sponsorship of handicraft industries as a part of the cultural legacy of great Indian tradition. No one can deny the plenty of employability opportunities it can create indigenously. Tourism sector policy makers need to consider the potential of this linkage and need to draw attention of the all the stake holders towards a market oriented approach that incorporates. This assimilation can prove to be a bridge between sustainable employment creation for women and reducing migration from rural to urban locales in search of employment. But such a linkage is not without challenges. There are supply related market related and production related changes. But an integrated policy with a vision to empower millions of poor and marginalized women through handicraft production can spotlight Indian traditional legacy.*

Indexed Terms- *Tourism, handicraft sector, women empowerment strategies, challenges, emerging opportunities*

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism in India is a large and growing sector. It is a service –centred sector and it generates huge foreign exchange. The chart below shows the foreign visitors visiting India

Sl no	Year	Number in millions
1	2014 -2015	20082.53
2	2015 -2016	21557.12
3	2016 -2017	24392.39
4	2017-2018	23029.36
5	2018 -2019	26590.25

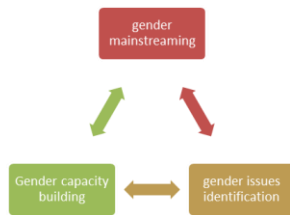
Source: Indian business report, published in financial express dated 23-1-2019

Slno	Country	export in millions
1	USA	29.59
2	UK	11.45
3	GERMANY	10.63
4	FRANCE	4.14
5	CANADA	3.00
6	ARAB COUNTRIES	2.24
7	JAPAN	2.93

Source: Indian Handicraft exports, published in Business standard dated 2-1-2019

The following diagram points to need of mainstream gender gaps in tourism industry through linking training and leadership needs. If capacity building

and training for women to handle handicraft demands, they can prove an asset to tourism sector.



1. Promotion of handicraft industries to creation of employability opportunities -Tourism in India can be associated with handicraft sector to involve women and create employment locally as this also supports women empowerment strategies. Tourism in India linking handicraft sector is viewed as beneficial not only for women folk but also for the promotion of handicraft industries and creation of employability opportunities.
2. Promotion of handicraft industries to attract foreign tourists -Strengthening this sector can be supportive to foreign tourists who love to be a part of India culture and tradition. Handicraft production can be diversified to include home stays cultural experiences. This can prove to be a bridge between sustainable employment creation for women and reducing male migration from rural to urban locales.
3. Promotion of handicraft industries to reduce poverty- The handicraft sector is an important source of employment for urban and rural poor as it encourages poverty reduction initiatives and also support them with yearlong employment.
4. Promotion of handicraft industries to support partnerships- NGOs and women self-help groups can be made to create awareness among women to increasing benefits from handicraft sector the marketing and supply chain link can be become more organized. Poor and marginalized women from rural areas can be made to obtain tangible benefits from handicraft sales where people's livelihood is dependent upon natural resources. For instance women from hilly regions of North India are experts in woollen weaving. Their skills can be used to attract tourist with hand woven sweaters, dresses, knit wears etc.
5. Promotion of handicraft industries to support private sector involvement - The private sector can also be supported by Handicraft sector. It enables tourism enterprises to source higher

quality products locally which in turn increase the attractiveness of the product. Working with local craftsmen is a marketable asset to a which can improve their image. Many shops increase sales based on social responsibility as sales strategy.

6. Promotion of handicraft industries to support hospitality sector- There will be increased hospitality services towards tourists because local view them as source of income and supportive to their livelihood. This also reduces criminality in the tourist destination.
- Challenging Lesson for handicraft sector
 1. Lesson of identifying tourism industry as potential customer- In India , existing handicraft producers have failed to link with tourism sector They have so far not considered tourism industry as a potential consumer They have heavily concentrated on local customers with less product range.
 2. Lesson of diversification- This linkage also helps craftsmen to diversify their products. For instance Karnataka tourism Department has made KSIC silk saris more diversified to reach foreign tourists during touring seasons such as Dussera and Deepavali .
 3. Lesson of new skills expertise- This linkage also helps local craftsmen to infuse new skills to sustainability of their business.
 - Supply related challenges
 1. Issues of limited supply- There is a limited or only traditional product range due to lack of innovation and new skills in handicraft sector.
 2. Issues of missing technical knowhow- Poor product quality in handicraft sector due to poor skills or missing knowledge about tourist expectations.
 3. Issues of competitiveness- Local handicraft producers find it difficult to compete with imported handicraft sector products in terms of price
 4. Issues of seasonality- Raw materials and other inputs in handicraft sector are not available or their availability is seasonal hence market needs are also seasonal
 5. Issues of equipment usage- Handicraft producers are not able to invest in machinery / equipment to raise the quality of the products

6. Issues of organization as a single unit- Producers in handicraft sector are dispersed and not well organized leading to less continuous slow and uncertain supply.
- Supply related challenges – In handicraft sector, supply related challenges are plenty and are entwined with seasonality.
1. Issues of market outlets- The lack of suitable market outlets in handicraft sector which are attractive to tourists both foreign and indigenous, is a big challenge as tourist nowadays wish to find everything online. E commerce opportunities have broadened to include smaller towns and rural hamlets as well.
 2. Issues of organized market handling- Handicraft traders are not organized hence they are uninformed of the supply and demand situation at tourist destinations.
 3. Issues of poor awareness about supply prospective- In handicraft sector all handicraft manufacturers and suppliers are not uniformly conscientious of the supply prospective in other tourist destinations within the country.
 4. Issues of intermediaries and Middlemen- Different levels of middlemen and intermediaries in handicraft sector, as well as petty traders increase prices of the handicraft
 5. Issues of distrust and lack of co-operation - Distrust between traders and craft producers in handicraft sector prevents from better co-operation
 6. Issues of poor online market linkages- Poorly developed market linkages in handicraft sector with retail shops in the main tourist locations
 7. Issues of poor integration of holiday / festive packages Low integration in holiday /festive packages of tour operators and hotel resorts. Customers often look for useful gift items rather than traditional attire of items of hand made

CONCLUSION

Thus, handicraft sector is a major contributor to employment in the areas and the development of the tourist has the potential to increase communities' revenue. Handicraft production provides an opportunity for communities to preserve their natural

and cultural heritage and expose the diversity of their culture at International levels. Thus, strengthening handicraft related tourism is important for the empowerment of women and rural poor. Successful in this sector requires a market oriented approach that incorporates lessons learnt from past experiences and that allows stable business partnerships to be created. All stake holders need to consider lessons learnt from past experiences and allow stable women lead business. Besides, reinforcement of this sector with foreign tourism experiences can be considered a strong point. Assimilation of heterogeneous tourists into great India cultural legacy thus becomes reality. Handicraft production can be diversified to incorporate women who are basically very creative, innovative and have culturally rich experiences.

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