

Social Media - A Tool for Empowering Women Working in Handloom Industry

¹Dr. Veena R. Humbe, ²Dr. Pallavi Bhalerao

¹Professor, ²Research Scholar

Department of Commerce, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University

Aurangabad 431 005, Maharashtra, India

E-mail : v_humbe@yahoo.com

Abstract: *New social media have become increasingly popular components of everyday lives in today's globalizing society. Social media provide a context where people across the world can communicate, exchange messages, share knowledge, and interact with each other regardless of the distance that separates them. Now-a-days, in every sector women are doing effective role and they are now freely entering into various sectors, with this, it is very usual for women to be connected with social media. The purpose of this study is to understand and analyze the impact of the social media on women in handloom industry. The importance of the social media is nowadays highlighted. This study mainly focused on the opinion of women respondents regarding the social media as a tool for economic empowerment of them in handloom industry.*

The study is conducted to investigate the purpose of the female respondents to use social media and its popularity, its positive, negative impacts and finding about using social media. For this study 100 respondents from the Aurangabad City were contacted for administering the questionnaire. The analysis is based on questionnaire and the conclusion is drawn on the basis of findings.

Key Words : *Social Media, Society, Empowerment, Handloom .*

1. INTRODUCTION:

India's handloom fabrics are an integral part of the rich culture and heritage of India, and are appreciated world over for their color, texture and design. The Handloom sector is one of the largest economic activities after agriculture and constitutes an integral part of the rural and semi rural livelihood. Handloom weaving constitutes one of the richest and most vibrant aspects of the Indian cultural heritage. The sector has an advantage of being less capital intensive, minimal use of power, eco-friendly, and flexibility of small production, openness to innovations and adaptability to market requirements. It is a natural productive asset and tradition at cottage level, which has sustained and grown by transfer of skill from one generation to other. Handloom weaving is largely decentralized and the weavers are mainly from weaker sections of the society, who weave for their household needs and also contribute to the production in the textile sector. The weavers of this industry are keeping alive the traditional crafts of different states. The level of artistry and intricacy achieved in the handloom fabrics is unparalleled and certain weaves / designs are still beyond the scope of modern machines. Handloom sector can meet every need ranging from the exquisite fabrics, which takes months to weave, to popular items of mass production for daily use. The real strength of our handloom industry lies in its exquisite designs, unique motifs, and link with culture and tradition on the one hand, and its socio-economic importance in providing livelihood opportunity to lakhs of people living in rural areas, on the other hand.

As per 3rd Handloom Census carried out in 2009-10 more than 43lakh people are engaged in weaving and allied activities, which was 65.5 lakh as per 2nd handloom census conducted during 1995-96. Out of the 38.47 lakh adult weavers and allied workers in the country 77% are women and 23% are male weavers as per the Handloom Census report. From this it can be said that, handloom industries social significance lies in its role in empowering women and disadvantaged segments of society, which makes the promotion of handloom an ideal tool in achieving the goal of making development inclusive, participative and sustainable. This Handloom census report also finds out that, Maharashtra State has 3418 handloom weavers and allied workers in 4511 handlooms. This handloom sector plays a vital role in the context of present Indian economy, as it provides employment and it is the second largest sector in the employment generation stands only next to agriculture.

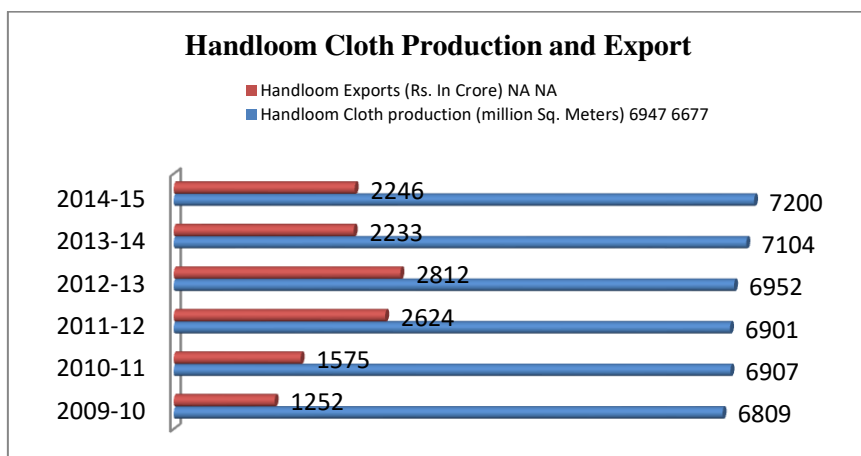
1.1. Current Trend in Handloom Sector :

Year wise Production of Handloom Cloth and Export of Handloom Products

Year	Handloom Cloth production Million Sq.Mtrs	Growth percentages	Handloom Exports (Rs. In Crore)	Handloom Export Growth percentages
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2007-08	6947	-	NA	-
2008-09	6677	3.88%	NA	-
2009-10	6809	1.98%	1252	-
2010-11	6907	1.43%	1575	20.50%
2011-12	6901	0.08%	2624	39.97%
2012-13	6952	0.74%	2812	06.69%
2013-14	7104	2.19%	2233	20.59%
2014-15	7200	1.35%	2246	0.582%
Total	55497	11.65%	12742	88.33%
Average	6937	1.46%	2124	14.72

Source: Textile Commissioner Office and HEPC



The above table shows that handloom production is increasing as from the 2009-10, but in the year 2008-09 and 2011-12 it is decreased by 3.88% and 0.08% respectively, but after it is increasing and in the year 2013-14 it has shown more growth in handloom product by 2.19%, though the number of handlooms and number of handloom weavers are declining, the handloom cloth production is more or less constant and sustained around 6900 square meters, besides exports are increasing.

1.2. Handloom Marketing

Marketing has been recognized as being central to the growth and development of the handloom industry. The objective of handloom marketing assistance is to develop and promote the marketing channels in domestic as well as export markets. Domestic marketing is important for providing linkage between the producer and the consumer to promote for marketing and sales of handloom products both inside and outside state. Therefore, strengthening of handloom organizations for improvement in the marketing and export of handloom items, organization of festive fairs, exhibitions, digital advertisements etc. facilitate in the promotion of marketing of handloom products.

The development of Information Technology in India has moved very fast. Marketing institutions are gaining the advantages from information technology activities and at the same time provide more benefits and opportunities especially in marketing services. In last few years the idea of buying and selling has tremendously changed. The internet has overtaken television as the largest advertising market. In the manner, it can be seen that social media is one of the new outlets that is helping to close the gap for women. With this social media women are able to start their own new business, can easily market products and speak to customers directly, as well as can take help from other businesses, which helps women for becoming successful entrepreneurs.

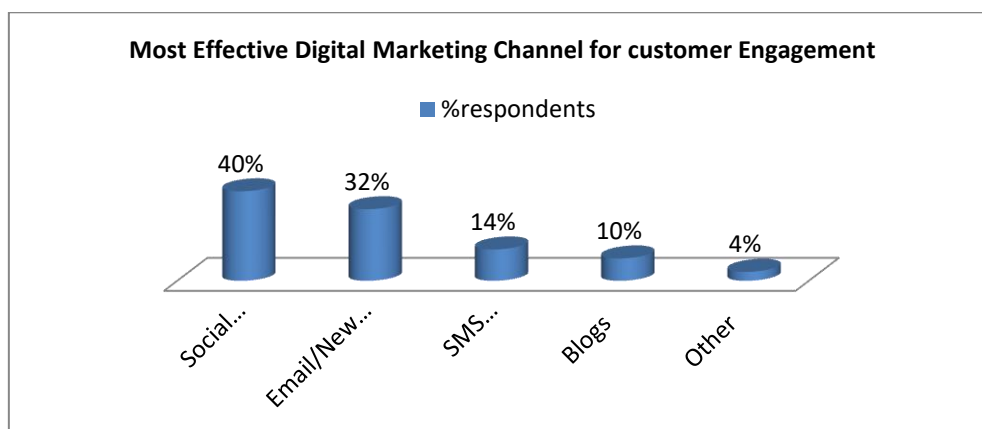
Traditionally marketing methods have required a large investment of time and a team of people to support the various associated costs and expenditure of resources. Female entrepreneurs especially are finding that they have a much less expensive, more effective way of marketing. They are using social media channels to promote their brands and business.

The handloom industry has much to gain from this social media. Surveys show that e-commerce market in India is growing fast. Once listed on an online platform, a weaver can instantly start selling directly to a population of billion plus, whereas currently they sell to a middle man at much lower prices. E-commerce players have already started to lend a helping hand to this industry. Amazon has a store called 'Crafted in India' which curates authentic handloom and handcraft. Flipkart also has tied up with the Ministry of Textiles under its Abhiyaan program.

1.3. Social Media – The Latest Technological Tool for Economic Empowerment of Women

Social networking concept has emerged over the past ten to fifteen years. Social media have transformed both local and global communication significantly in the past few decades. Internet medium is developing with the increased usage of social media. Nowadays, rather than only understanding of how to use email, online shopping etc. the internet is more about blogs, facebook, MySpace, whatsapp, YouTube, twitter, etc. These are some of the tools and technology associated with a recent phenomenon called social networking and is present everywhere easily. Now-a-days, in every sector women are doing effective role and they are now freely entering into various sectors, with this, it is very usual for women to be connected with social media.

There are various enterprises that are using social media power to increase brand awareness, and sell products. There are various such enterprises that link to main social network services that they use including facebook page, Google plus, Twitter page, and can make YouTube video embedded in it. All of the social media services complement the main site and work together to increase brand awareness and improve market reach.



Source: Octane Research, 'Digital by default- Digital India 2017: Marketing Trends and Forecast', Dec. 15, 2016

Above graph explains about a survey conducted in 2016, marketing professional in India by Octane, which found that 40% of respondents believed that social media updates were the most effective digital activity for engaging consumers. Social media marketing has become the most widely used digital marketing tool in India. This research found social media marketing was the digital marketing activity the greatest share of respondents to its survey 68% expected to increase spending on in the coming year.

Online presence in social media is providing women with new freedom, independence and control, liberty, and empowerment like never before. It helps them to try things that were impossible in real scenario. Social networking offers more of an opportunity to network and get to know people and places. Women can no more be lost nor does she have to depend on others to carry out her requirements. Social media can really turnout to be a friend indeed that gives both intellectual and emotional company without having to lose identity.

Social media networks are a very valuable marketing tool. With the recent growth in popularity of many of the networking websites, marketers are better able to market their brands to a mass market without having to invest the time and money that they would by marketing through other means. These sites are beneficial to companies both big and small and allow companies to market themselves in new and creative ways.

The use of social media in marketing can benefit the handloom industries by developing the awareness and benefits of handloom products, reducing marketing expenses, increasing the sales, providing the details regarding the marketplace to purchase the handloom products and exposure towards handloom products.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

For the sake of the study, following literatures were reviewed.

Shanmuga Priya and Sakthi (2015), have studied in their research, 'social media a tool for economic empowerment of women' that social media is a part of everyday life and also evolved with technological solutions for entrepreneurial ventures for women. This study also provides a new direction for enabling to provide the necessary technological education that this information era requires.

Ricky Roni Boruah, Satvinder Kaur(2015), in their research reveals that central and state Govt. have evolved many schemes to uplift the economic conditions by providing incentives in the form of grants and loans to impart training on new designs, modernization of looms, etc. but handloom wearing units continue to be in the grip of problems.

K. Rari John and S. Kamini (2016), conducted a study on the Socio-economic status of women entrepreneurs in Handloom sector. This study focuses on technological backwardness and unsatisfactory working environments and tries to find out constraints encountered by the women entrepreneur weavers.

Venkatesh J. and Vinoth Kumarasamy (2016), focus on the impact of viral marketing on handloom products. This research study gives strong idea about viral marketing scenario, the companies and industries are using the combination of both traditional and social media marketing for the development of business. This study further helps to understand that social media helps the marketers to deliver their messages in a clear and simple without any chaos in the promotion of their brands.

Teena V.S and Nisha Sheen (2016), conducted a research on Impact of cooperative societies on Empowerment of women weaver in handloom industry. This research focuses on health status of women weavers and functioning of cooperative societies and their benefits. This study also proves through statistical analysis that socio-economic factors and health and dietary patterns have significant relation with the empowerment attained through cooperative societies.

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

Handloom industry is the largest employment providing sector next to agriculture. The potential for the handloom products in India are higher. According to Govt. Textile report of year 2015, 77% women are engaged in these handloom industries. The issue of women empowerment is the need of hour in today’s environment and handloom industry plays a significant role, therefore to strengthen women weavers in this sector handloom industry should be organized and strengthened. It is observed through various researches that handloom industry suffers from lack of market information, lack of awareness about handloom products among the people, heavy competition and appropriate promotional and advertising techniques, which can be solved through proper utilization of social media. The purpose of this study is to find the level of understanding handloom weavers have about social media, the importance of social media in their day to day life, study the benefits of social media with regards to women handloom weavers, and finally to analyze the opinions, value the judgments and suggest valuable recommendations for the use of social media for the benefits of women handloom weavers.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To study the benefits of social media with regards to women handloom weavers.
- To analyze the opinions, value the judgment and suggest valuable recommendations for the use of social media for the benefits of women handloom weavers.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

It uses both primary and secondary data. The secondary data uses information from both published and unpublished sources. The primary data was collected by survey method. Survey was conducted by convenience sample method. The sampling unit consists of women online users who are engaging in a business venture through social media. The sample size was 100 so as to fit the constraint of time and resources. A sample survey collects information from all the participants who were selected through the convenience sampling method. Percentage, ratio were used to analyze the data.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

The following table depicts the Summarized Analysis of the Study.

Table 1: Summarized Analysis of Social Media as a tool for Economic Empowerment of Women

Sr. No.	Questions	Yes	No	Don't Know
1	Social Media Helps to create awareness for new trends and styles?	80	10	10
2	Social media helps for creating advertisement easily?	88	02	10
3	Social media help to Find and contact with the customers easily?	79	09	12
4	Have you marketed your products through social media?	77	10	13
5	Do you have a facebook page for interaction with clients?	77	10	13
6	Do you own a web page / blog / other source online?	78	08	14
7	Do you think social media is necessary for business growth?	89	05	06
8	Is there any increase in your Business turnover after connecting with social media?	76	10	14
9	Have you faced any technical difficulty in your online venture?	66	19	17
10	Are you willing to develop/expand if trained?	90	05	05

Source : Questionnaire

The following results are drawn from the study :

- It is revealed through various researches that, smart phones are mostly used. In handloom industry also, these handloom weavers also take help of smart phones. These women weavers have very limited smart phones and they take help from younger ones of their family for operating these phones.
- 80% respondents also agreed that social media creates awareness about new trends, new styles and designs demanded by the customers. With the help of social media direct communication can be possible with customers.
- 88% respondents have agreed that social media helps for creating advertisement easily. 2% respondents have not agreed as they face difficulty while using social media.
- 79% respondents agreed that social media help to find and contact with customers easily. It is also observed that through social media respondents finds easy to communicate with customer.
- 77% respondents marketed their products through social media whereas 10% respondents said they have not marketed their products through social media as they need training regarding using social media.
- 77% respondents have made interaction with facebook page through facebook.
- 78% respondents also agreed that they use other sources such as whatsapp, web page and blogs.
- 89% respondents have given their acceptance towards the necessity of social media as everyone is engaged on social media for communication, updated news and for new styles, etc. so it is necessary for business growth.
- 76% respondents have experienced that social media marketing helps to increase in business turnover.
- 66% respondents have also agreed that they faced difficulty in using social media, as most of them are illiterate, find difficult to operate social media some times.
- 90% respondents have shown their willingness to develop or get training for better utilization of these modern techniques for growth and expansion of their handloom industry.
- Youtube video, facebook page can easily make communication of handloom product. Through youtube video exact weaving and the efforts which have been taken by these weavers can be seen. The power loom and handloom products can be bifurcated easily.
- As the prime minister of India Mr. Narendra Modi has taken an initiative for launching a brand and handloom day that is on 7th August.
- The use of social media marketing in the handloom industry to reach out more customers geographically.
- By reaching out more customers, the business can improve its marketing strategies and create brand awareness and brand equity.
- The marketing strategy through the use of social media can also help to the increase the sales of handloom products. This helps to improve the life of weavers across the country.
- Social media marketing has a powerful influence over the brand awareness of a product.
- Skill Development programmes should be implemented in remote corners of India in order to make easy commutation for the women who are coming from very far.
- Women handloom workers should be given priority to participate in entrepreneurship.
- Through social media new patterns, modern ideas can be communicated and direct benefit to the weaver can be possible.

7. CONCLUSION:

This research study gives idea about social media in today's marketing scenario, the companies and industries are using the combination of both traditional and social media marketing for the development of business. This helps them to reach out more customers and increase the sales and revenue. This also helps the marketers in creating brand awareness and brand image and bring brand equity in handloom products.

This research also observes the various benefits of social media to handloom women weavers, as they can directly communicate to the customer within a few seconds, which has great impact on sell. In the same manner they all are interested in learning these social media as it is less expensive, can make direct contact with customer, and make change in new designs, etc. it is very helpful to all the women weavers to use social media for increasing business and brand also.

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