

**MARKETING PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY HANDICRAFT
ARTISANS OF KASHMIR**

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Abstract

Handicrafts are usually locally made products using locally available raw material with hands or using simple tools. These items also represent culture and tradition of a place. As per J&K Directorate of Handicrafts, more than 0.25 million artisans are directly dependent upon the handicraft industry of Jammu and Kashmir for earning their livelihood and this industry earns foreign exchange of about Rs. 17000 million annually, but the market space of these products is reportedly shrinking. This paper aimed to understand the marketing strategies and marketing problems experienced by the people associated with the handicraft industry of Kashmir. The data for this paper was gathered from a survey wherein 340 people were interviewed on a structured interview schedule.

Keywords: Handicrafts of Kashmir, Kashmiri artisans, paper-mache, wood-carving, shawl-making

Introduction

Handicraft sector holds an important position in the economic profile of Kashmir. A large number of people are directly or indirectly depended on the handicraft industry, because of its eco-friendly and labour intensive in nature which generates good opportunities for employment with low investment of capital. Due to absence of large industries, handicraft industry the main cottage-industry of Kashmir, remains the key economic activity in both rural and urban areas of Kashmir after agriculture.

However, the handicraft industry of the valley is not in its bloom at present. It is believed to be underperformed due to multiple reasons that include absence of a Kashmiri brand, ages-old designs, involvement of the intermediators that is sometimes very exploitative, limitations of genuine raw material and competition from products made on machine. Low income returns, little exposure to advanced technologies, lack of market and financial intelligence, poor physical infrastructure and institutional framework, etc. also contribute to the challenges experienced by the people who are associated with the handicraft industry of Kashmir.