

Role of Social Media in Marketing of Handloom Products

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Abstract: *The Indian handloom products have a distinct place in the world of fabrics. It provides employment for 12 million people and it is the second largest sector in the employment generation stands only next to agriculture. It provides direct employment to 6.5 million people in the country. Marketing is essential to boost the sale of handloom products. Marketing has been recognized as being central to the growth and development of the handloom industry. In last few years the idea of buying and selling has tremendously changed. The Internet has overtaken television as the largest advertising market, as banner and pop-up advertisements showcase a vast array of products and services. The total population of India is 1,283,810,000. Out of which 13% use social media and spend approximately 2 hours 26 minutes daily. The use of social media by mobile users is 57% of total population and time spend is 2 hours 36 minutes per day. Social media marketing is one of the most important types of online marketing where small businesses are marketing their products/services and brands on social media websites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, etc. It enables individuals and communities to co-create, share, and modify content in an interactive, Internet-based environment. The use of social media in marketing can benefit the handloom industries by developing the awareness and benefits of the handloom products, reducing marketing expenses, increasing the sales, providing the details regarding the marketplace to purchase the handloom products and exposure towards handloom products.*

Keywords: Social Media, Handloom, Marketing, Internet, Facebook.

1. Introduction

The Indian handloom products have a distinct place in the world of fabrics. This is not just a cloth material or traditional wear; it is symbolic to the Indian civilization, which is one of the oldest on the planet. India has a long tradition of excellence in making high quality of handloom products with extraordinary skills and craftsmanship.

The Handloom sector is not only the past glory but also it plays a vital role even in the context of present Indian economy. The level of artistry and intricacy achieved in the handloom fabrics is unparalleled and beyond the scope of modern machinery. It represents diverse cultural ethos ranging from exquisite fabrics, which take months to weave, to popular items of mass production for daily use. Hand weaving is one of the richest and the most resilient media of ethnic expression. It provides employment for 12 million people and it is the second largest sector in the employment generation stands only next to agriculture. It provides direct employment to 6.5 million people in the country.

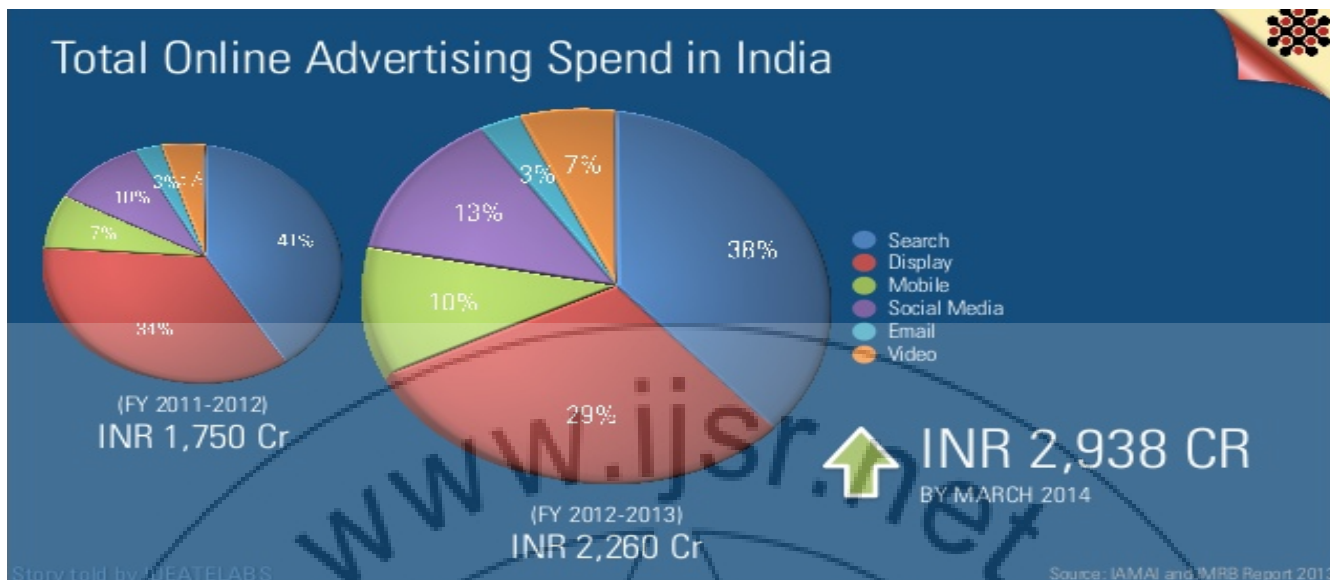
Marketing has been recognized as being central to the growth and development of the handloom industry. Domestic marketing is important for providing linkage

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.

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Social media marketing is one of the most important types of online marketing where small businesses are marketing their products/services and brands on social media websites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, etc. According to Mediabistro, 73% of small businesses are using social media these days. This clearly shows the growing importance of social media marketing among small businesses.

Today, companies, brands and personalities are using social media techniques to reach out people. Such techniques are used by social media and digital marketing agencies to gain website traffic or attention through various social media sites. Here, one gets a chance to interact, build relationship and reputation for their brands also.

Social media enables individuals and communities to co-create, share, and modify content in an interactive, Internet-based environment. Social media marketing refers to the process of gaining website traffic through social networking sites. It is driven by word of mouth. Results come from earned, as opposed to paid media.

As a marketing tool, social media is distinct from industrial or traditional media. It provides useful and valuable measurable data on trends, consumer interaction, feedback, public opinion, brand activity, and customer buying habits. It is versatile, far-reaching, fast, relatively inexpensive, fosters brand awareness and improves customer service.

2. Popular Social Media Tools and Platforms

Social media have transformed the face of human interactions in the 21st century. The popular use of this new technology is social networking with businesses. Companies have found that social networking sites are great ways to build their brand image. The companies are able to drive traffic to their own online sites while encouraging their consumers and clients to have discussions on how to improve or change products or services.

Table 1: showing Social Media Platforms and their Features

S. No.	Name of the Social Media	Features
1.	Facebook	The world's largest social network, with more than 1.15 billion people using the site (as of September 2013). Users create a personal profile, add other users as friends, and exchange messages, including status updates. Brands create pages and Facebook users can "like" brands' pages.
2.	Twitter	A social networking/micro-blogging platform that allows groups and individuals to stay connected through the exchange of short status messages (140 character limit).
3.	YouTube	YouTube is video hosting / sharing platforms that showcase a variety of user-generated content. Videos can be shared on other social sites or taken directly on users blog or website.
4.	Flickr	An image and video hosting website and online community. Photos can be shared on Facebook and Twitter and other social networking sites.
5.	LinkedIn Group	A place where groups of professionals with similar areas of interest can share and participate in a conversations happening in their fields.

Website: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media_marketing

The role that social media is currently playing in the business world, according to 2012 Social Media Marketing Industry Report are as follows:

- 94% of all businesses with a marketing department used social media as part of their marketing platform.
- Almost 60% of marketers are devoting the equivalent of a full work day to social media marketing development and maintenance.
- 43% of people aged 20-29 spend more than 10 hours a week on social media sites.
- 85% of all businesses that have a dedicated social media platform as part of their marketing strategy reported an increase in their market exposure and 58% of businesses that have used social media marketing for over 3 years reported an increase in sales over that period.

3. Benefits of Using Social Media in Marketing of Handloom Products

Marketing is a tool used to inform consumers about the products, who the manufacturer is and what it offers to the customers. Social media helps to do the same in easy way. It is the important media for sales and can be considered as one of the major and effective marketing tool.

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.

Handloom industries can use social media for marketing of their handloom products which can benefit them in various ways such as:

1. Handloom industries can use social media to provide their own identity and the products or services they offer. They can create relationships using social media with people who might not otherwise know about their products or service or what their industries represent.
2. Social media makes feel "real" to consumers. The information regarding the products can be provided and the opinion, requirement, and suggestions about the consumers regarding the handloom products can be shared.
3. Social media can be used very easily to communicate and provide the interaction that potential consumers look for.
4. It personalizes the "brand" and helps to spread the message in a relaxed and conversational way.
5. Indian handloom products are liked by the consumers of other countries. Social media marketing can help in gaining the confidence of these consumers by providing the facility of "Product at your Doorstep" without involvement of suppliers, brokers or agents.
6. Social media networks are used as a marketing tool for many different purposes. Those marketing large companies use these sites to gain information on their target market, and how people feel about their products. They can also use these sites to gain information on their competition. Small businesses may also use these sites to promote their brand.
7. Social media networks allow thousands of people to network with each other, meeting new people that may benefit their business or services being offered. Networking with different people through these sites is an excellent way to create new contacts, and potentially create new customers or business associates.
8. The most valuable part of marketing using social media networks is that, it allows people to market their services to a large market at no cost. Thousands of people enter these sites daily. Therefore they are able reach a mass market free of charge.
9. The popular network Facebook offers a free classifieds section where people are able to post things such as job

listings, items for sale, or services available. Companies of all sorts are able to place advertisements for their products or services, as well as post job opportunities. People are also able to market themselves by listing their skills and abilities for employers to view.

10. Another popular social network, MySpace, is widely used by its members as a way of promoting themselves. This site also allows members to send their videos to other members, and gain more recognition and feedback.
11. One large benefit to marketing on social media networks is the pass along factor. Users of these networks tend to pass along items that are of interest to them, or that they believe their friends will find interesting.
12. Social networks are also beneficial to companies who are wishing to create e-mail lists to send coupons or advertisements through the mail. Handloom industries can post bulletins on websites encouraging people to sign up for their daily newsletters, etc. In doing this they are able to greatly increase their mailing lists.
13. Placing paid advertisements, such as banners, on social media sites can also benefit a handloom industries greatly based on the amount of hits the sites receive each day. Thousands of members view these pages daily which means ads placed on these sites will reach a mass audience.
14. Marketers of handloom industries can monitor social networking sites, to read up on how people are viewing their brands. These sites allow them to see what their competitors are doing, and how customers view the competition. Receiving this feedback from customers allows marketers to understand what the target market is looking for, what people like about their products or services, and what needs to be improved.
15. Social media networks also allow marketers to gain information on their potential customers. By viewing user profiles, marketers are able to gather information regarding the demographics and psychographics of potential customers, making them better able to identify those that fit into their target market. This information can often be time consuming and costly. Having social networks to help them find this information is quite beneficial to marketers. Many of the social networking sites allow users to create groups regarding specific topics. This makes it much easier for marketers to find much of the information regarding their target market, and their competitors.

4. Conclusions

Social media-savvy organizations in India are very optimistic about the role of social media in future. Organizations today, have realized that social media plays an important role in generating awareness about their products by insights and building communities.

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

Indian handloom industries have to be aware of social media marketing facts in order to derive optimal benefit from it.

Social media networks have rocketed to the top of the most visited website list in a very short time and continue to increase in popularity. The great advantage of social media networks to marketing is their tendency to propagate information virally.

In future, the growth and use of social media networks within organizations will be marked by both, an increase in scale and sophistication. Over the last few years, organizations have experimented with various social media activities, platforms, and tools. The knowledge gained about the handloom products will help bring sophistication in the engagement programs that will be seen in the near future and they will have much larger scale.

It's obvious that social media will continue to have a significant impact in coming year on marketers and business owners. They now have the ability to reach out and communicate on a personal level with their target audience on a daily basis. This is a game changer for businesses engaging in marketing, sales, customer service and other business activities. This is very powerful and has never been available with traditional marketing.

Use of social media marketing by the handloom industries can increase the awareness about the handloom products in the society, promote and enhance skills of the handloom weavers, create new employment opportunities, help in developing of new designs, boost the sale of their products, help the weavers to earn money which will to the some extent help in removing the poverty and make them economically sustainable. Use of social media can help handloom industries to face the emerging global challenges and opportunities. It can benefit the society with promoting exports of handloom products to increase India's share of world exports and preserve the age old cultural heritage of India.

It is suggested that Government of India should help and promote handloom industries for using social media as one of their best marketing tool for promoting their products and bring awareness among the consumers for handloom products.

5. Future Scope of the Study

This study is limited to the study of Social Media and its applications in marketing of Handloom Products. Keeping in mind the various consumer behavior models, the opinion and value judgments of the respondents can be studied and suggestions for improvement in marketing and maintaining the age old heritage of handloom products can be preserved.

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