

Strengthening Craft through Tourism: A Case Study on Mashru

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Abstract—Indian art and crafts are famous all over the world for their unique designs and immaculate craftsmanship which has been transferred from one generation to other. Historically Indian craft has been very famous for its refinement, aesthetics, belief, sentiments and utility. It is just not a product or process but it has been way of their life-inseparable, part and parcel of daily life. With the passage of time it has gone through various changes, but still it has kept itself alive with that same essence and emotion. Artisans source materials from local areas and use their indigenous knowledge, hand built technique, simple tools to develop some product. Every art and craft has its own unique style and way of expression. It gives a very earthy and rich feeling that connects us to our ancestors, their life style, their thought process, rituals and belief. This kind of place or product gives you peace away from today's sophisticated busy and stressed life. There you can define a new world away from the chaos and hassles of our everyday life, full of pleasure and happiness-sitting in the lap of nature. Tourism has huge potential to promote and preserve our art and craft, which in turn has great impact on economic prosperity in that region. In this study researcher has studied "Mashru" craft of Gujarat. Gujarat has been very famous for art and craft tourism. It is one of the most popular destinations for domestic and international tourists. Mashru is a woven craft of over here. Earlier it has flourished in several parts of India but now it is limited to few regions of Gujarat only. In this study researcher's objective is to assess sustainable use and maintenance of indigenous knowledge and its impact on artisan's livelihood.

Keywords: Art, Craft, Tourism, Mashru.

1. INTRODUCTION

India has a rich cultural heritage and the various craft forms formed an integral part of it. Handlooms and handicrafts are the most vibrant characteristics of our country. They have won acclaim all over the world. It has a legacy of unrivalled

craftsmanship from ancient time. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari one can see a wide array of these craft. Though there have been few variations in technique and style from craft to craft but it represents its craft essence at its fullest. Actually, these aspects represent our cultural ethos and diversity connected through thread of unity. Artisans without any professional training use to learn their craft in their own house hold natural setting. It is of great importance to preserve, revive and revitalize our crafts.

Globalization which has influenced the globe in recent years has turned our planet into a small village but at the same time it has posed several challenges too. Now, with technology people are offered cheaper and often poorer quality mechanized products in name of handmade products, leaving the craftsmen struggling to meet their needs. The indigenous knowledge and local wisdom which artisan possess is their wealth to earn their livelihood and a way to lead their life. Otherwise they are forced to abandon their traditional profession and to move towards other lucrative jobs for the security of their food, health and other basic needs. In this concern tourism can be proved as an important sustainable catalyst to speed up the rate of development for artisans. It can prevent migration of artisan towards other place and profession, at the same time it can help to regenerate the rural livelihoods by connecting the indigenous communities and their rich resource skill base, crafts and culture to mainstream and markets. It is such a platform where both craft and tourism get benefited from each other. Tour packages could be planned around places involved in art and craft. In these places tourists can explore our heritage, art, craft, tradition and culture where they can relax themselves away from the hassled and chaos life of daily routine. It gives very rich, soothing and earthy experience defining a new world full of peace and calm. Craft tourism highlights the various ethnic items that are locally produced from the remotest parts of any region. Tourists often like to take products to their home as a token of memory which represents the culture of the place they visit.

Gujarat is a good example of craft tourism- full of rich culture, natural beauty and biodiversity. This art and craft only have made this state a land of rich and diverse artistic achievements. It is one of the most popular tourist places in the country visited by domestic and international tourists. It has good connectivity and commutation facility within and beyond India. Its rich treasure of hand woven, printed, embroidered colorful textiles, intricate wood carving, beautiful potteries, handmade bells, beadwork, metalwork, turned wood and lacquer work, marquetry, quilting, stone carving, etc. expresses story and journey of a long and rich culture that it has witnessed. How due to the reigns of several dynasties, migration and settlement of people from various geographical locations and background; culture,

art and crafts of the state underwent many changes, imitations, amalgamation and new creations from time to time. That is why we can see development of certain unique style and skill in art and craft related to different materials and in their fusions. Apart from this Gujarati people are supposed to be good host because of the way, they welcome guest over here with exclusive charm, warm, affection, dedication and love. Celebrity Amitabh Bachchan is currently the brand ambassador of Gujarat Tourism. The 'Khushboo Gujarat Ki' campaign by him has increased tourism in Gujarat by 4 per cent per annum, twice that of national growth rate. This provides good opportunity for artisans to tap broader market.

In this paper researcher has studied status of mashru craft of Gujarat, how far mashru artisans are able to avail benefit out of craft tourism and how come they can improve their status with this. Mashru is a handloom woven fabric of Gujarat. Earlier it was practiced in several centers of India but now it is limited to few places of Gujarat only. It is a dying craft where numbers of weavers have reduced severely in last few decades, especially in Bhuj-Kutch region. Many people have left their traditional profession and moved towards other lucrative jobs where they could earn better to fulfill needs of their family. Mashru craft is result of hard work and dedication of weavers who have devoted themselves completely for their craft but then also they are left to struggle for their needs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Earlier several studies has been done in context of craft marketing where it has been found that craft could be survived through craft tourism. Few of reviews related to marketing of craft through tourism are as follows:

John (2014), in his case study on Chhanapatna toys in Karnataka assessed the role of tourism in promoting art and craft where he found that there is a dependence on the awareness of Channapatna handicrafts and its revival. The more that people get to know about it, the more it will be known as a traditional handicraft of Karnataka. The findings of the study revealed that tourists are not well-informed about the Channapatna crafts, especially its quality and variety. The study suggests that stakeholders should open more number of retail outlets across the city. This will also help to improve the standard of living of the artisans and there by contributing to the sustainability of the craft form.

According to Jaya Jaitly in her study "Craft as Industry", tourism is looked at as a creative industry with a vast potential for improvement and growth. It flourishes best where it provides variety and ethnicity. Handicrafts have always been given the 'piggy' status, presumed to be riding on the back of tourism by producing goods for the souvenir industry. However, Dilli Haat, the Surajkund Crafts Mela

and many other such experiences have shown that the reverse is the reality. Tourism earnings have come to rely more and more on the handicrafts-craftsman component. Domestic and international tourists do not miss a visit to Dilli Haat if they are in town, and provide sizeable revenue to the Delhi Tourism Development Corporation from gate money alone. Tourism is today packaged around the artisan and his or her handmade, exotic, utilitarian or merely attractive crafts and handmade textiles, all of which create a cultural identity that is unique to that country or that area – the very thing tourists look for rather than synthetic or easily replicable products. (Source : Seminar Magazine Website).

According to Jaitly (2014), crafts , culture and tourism to be integrated in villages, one would need to discover its special soul that makes it unique. Cultural activists and tourism experts could look for potential to showcase local assets. Its special or traditional skills need to be mapped. Its cultural and historical heritage and places of special interest can be developed as social and cultural meeting places that stimulate conversation and creativity. Villages inhabited by communities practicing craft in Kutch are unique examples of forward thinking groups who have understood that their path to economic prosperity lies in presenting their traditional cultures and skills within the framework of tourism.

3. OBJECTIVE:

- 1: To assess sustainable use and maintenance of indigenous knowledge for mashru through craft tourism.
- 2: To assess impact of craft tourism on mashru artisans.
- 3: To sensitize and aware people towards mashru craft.

4. MATERIAL AND METHODS:

For this study survey method was used to collect the necessary data related to the objectives of the research. Initially literature review and field visit were carried out in order to get sufficient initial information of the study area, as well as defining respondent to be involved in the data collection. Then target craft “Mashru” and places “Don, Godara, Mandavi, Bhujodi and Patan” involved in it were selected. Total 50 respondents were selected through convenience sampling technique. Data collection was done through questionnaire, semi-structured interviews; focus group discussion with artisans involved in this craft and with tourists whosoever has visited either one or more of above mentioned regions.

5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

After discussion with artisans and tourists it was found that though Gujarat is very well renowned for craft tourism, mashru has not achieved a sound position in terms

of business development through tourism as compared to many other craft forms. Several lacunas were identified in term of low income generated by artisans due to poor marketing knowledge, connectivity with artisan, promotion, imitation of fabric, product diversification without quality assessment. Buying a craft product from craft pocket can provide satisfaction, authenticity and genuineness to the craft for tourists. But to access this opportunity efficiently effective promotional marketing strategy is necessary. Following results were obtained after analysis of data:

- 60% of the respondent agreed that they buy craft product during tour followed by 40 % sometimes and 20% often buy.
- 38% respondents were aware about mashru craft and 62% were not aware.
- 76% respondent agreed that craft's role is very important in symbolizing region's culture followed by 22% important and 2% little important.
- 54% respondent agreed that they greatly liked mashru fabric and its product in terms of quality, followed by 22 % somewhat and 24% didn't had idea.
- 48% respondent agreed that there is good enough variety in mashru fabric and their product followed by 33% disagreed and 19% didn't have idea.
- 42% respondent agreed that mashru fabrics are easily available for tourists to purchase in region of production followed by 36% disagreed and 22% strongly disagreed.
- 19% respondent agreed that they always buy handicraft and handloom from original manufacturing units followed by 12% often buy and 69% sometime buy.
- 69% respondent agreed that mashru products be made available at more retail outlets around cities near to regions of production and 31% strongly agreed.
- 24% respondent agreed that mashru fabrics are well showcased by stores followed by 48% not well and 28% didn't have idea.
- 61% respondent agreed that there is scope for retail outlets to increase sales of mashru fabric and their products and 39% strongly agreed.
- 78% respondent strongly agreed that retails outlets will help increase awareness of mashru craft followed by 22% agreed.
- 67% respondent strongly agreed that increased sales will improve livelihood of artisans followed by 23% agreed.

- 42% respondent agreed that they would you like to visit mashru craft as part of handloom and handicraft tourism followed by 32% disagreed and 26% agreed.

6. CONCLUSION

The development of tourism sector in and around craft pockets is a sustainable and feasible strategy for local economic development which allows the craftsmen to tap a new category of potential consumer through building relationships with tourists as well as promoting and sustaining traditional craft and indigenous knowledge. It can result in improved revenue generation and profitability for artisans. This region has been very famous center for tourism throughout the world but mashru so far had not acclaimed as a promising craft in context of better economic growth opportunities as many other craft forms had through tourism. Thus there is better scope of socio-economic rise of the artisan of this craft. There is need to bring change in mindset of consumers too, through promotion and awareness programs. It is a very common mentality among people that they value imported products more than local one. Sellers should promote original and locally handmade products of that region in tourist places. It is essential to realize that if we value our art, craft and tradition then only we can realize its value to others. So, the craft can be revived through better promotional program, opening of new outlets for mashru products, well planned showcase and display of products at retail stores to standout mashru product to convince tourists, which can gear up positive impact buildup for artisan's sustainable social and economic development through tourism.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to pay my sincere thanks to all artisans of Patan, Bhuj-Kutch and other respondents who have cooperated to make this study successful.

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