PRELIMINARY STUDY ON SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD GENERATION OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS: A CASE OF BANJARA CRAFT OF MAHARASHTRA

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ABSTRACT
Clusters represent groups of people engaged in common entrepreneurial activities which provide livelihood for the entire community. Cluster development focuses on promoting collective actions to achieve socio-economic self-sufficiency and growth. However, there are multiple factors that need to be resolved to establish a successful cluster. It requires strategic interventions in key areas to leverage the upside of spatial proximity and shared interests. This research paper attempts to understand the current state of the Banjara artisans through a questionnaire survey with the artisans and personal interviews with the government officials and NGO workers in the area. It also tries to identify the key areas where interventions are required and recommends strategies for the same. 70 artisans, 10 government officials and NGO workers were surveyed using judgmental and convenience sampling method. The survey and the interviews were conducted over a two month period. The research was conducted in Nanded area of Maharashtra where the craft is practiced by the Banjara women. The findings highlight that key areas of strategic interventions for creating a self-sustainable cluster model are Design Intervention, Product Development, Marketing Linkages and Financial Literacy. Setting up of a Common Facility Centre will provide the craftsmen access to required resources which they cannot individually own thereby leading to the holistic growth of the cluster and livelihood generation opportunities.

Keywords: Cluster Development, Banjara Craft, Sustainability, Livelihood

INTRODUCTION

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) defines clusters as “geographical concentrations of inter-connected enterprises and associated institutions that face common challenges and opportunities”. This definition focuses on two key aspects of clusters: firstly, a cluster comprises of units that have spatial proximity, and secondly, these units have common characteristics in terms of either raw material suppliers or customer markets, cultural identity, challenges of infrastructure and access to capital.

The origin of the concept of clusters can be attributed the famous economist Alfred Marshall, who in his book Principles of Economics (1890) described it as “the concentration of specialized industries in particular localities” and underlined the fact that the collaboration of these small units can lead to similar economies of scale as the big organized firms. Porter in his research defined clusters as
“Clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field. Clusters encompass an array of linked industries and other entities important to competition” (Porter, 1998). In 2011 Porter and Kramer officially introduced the concept with their research paper “The big idea: Creating Shared Value” (Porter, Kramer, 2011), where they define Creating Shared Value (CSV) as “creating economic value in a way that also creates value for society by addressing its needs and challenges”.

Cluster development can be viewed as a community development tool that creates opportunities for economic sustainability and fosters an environment to leverage the opportunities which leads to broad-based and inclusive development of the region. This holistic growth is based on the fact that the employees of the cluster enterprise model belong to the same socio-economic milieu thereby ensuring that the interests of the community are safeguarded. The collaboration of the members of the community members results in removal of bottlenecks whether in terms of delivery of large orders of standardized products or limited bargaining power or poor sources of fund for procuring support services or compliance with international standards which impede the economic growth of the cluster. Addressing these vital issues are beyond the means of individual members due to their small sizes. While individual firms are unable to grow beyond a certain scale due to their resource constraint, firms under the banner of a cluster can flourish due to collective efficiency gains. Firms within a cluster achieve high growth and become self-sufficient and sustainable due to the collaborative associations with various stakeholders who work together for achieving their common goals and fulfilling their shared vision. Even the institutional and policy framework becomes more supportive and attentive to the needs of the cluster.

This results in putting the entire cluster on a successful high performance oriented growth path. The cluster based approach focuses on addressing the key hindrances that prohibit growth and development leading to prosperity of the entire region. It tackles the root cause of cluster stagnation and focuses on initiatives and remedial measures that encourage collaboration and leads to benefit for the entire community.

The strategic intervention at the cluster level is primarily based on capacity building on the verticals of i) Trust Building and Networking, ii) Instituting a Collaborative approach to managing the cluster and iii) focus on economic measures for financial viability. The process of cluster development begins with instilling a common purpose among cluster members, underlining the primary socio-economic need of the cluster, quantifying the business potential, creating the required infrastructure to support the attainment of the goals and working collaboratively towards achieving he set targets.

Governments around the world have realized that cluster development approach is one of the most potent tools for nation building while preserving the heritage. However, the success of the model depends on the willingness of the entrepreneurs to collaborate which requires trust building as most of the unit owners have the tendency to operate alone. The cluster based development of micro small and medium enterprises in India is a recent phenomenon. Several policies have been formulated by the government to develop the clusters. In the late eighties to late nineties, cluster development in India was focused on key identified areas like technology or quality under the UPTECH programmes and was helmed by institutions like SIDBI, State Bank of India and the then Ministry of SSI. However, in 2002-03, cluster development programmes (CDPs), were initiated by Ministry of MSME and led to the introduction of the Small Industries Cluster Development Programme (SICDP) scheme. The Scheme was later renamed as Micro and Small Enterprise Cluster Development Programme (MSECDP), in the year 2006. Ministry of Textiles is another government body that actively participates in cluster development initiatives in the country.

The research paper is based on the diagnostic study of the Banjara cluster in Nanded and attempts to provide insights into the current state of the craft and the future prospects after cluster formation.
OBJECTIVES
1. To identify measures for enhancing the existing image of Banjara products as traditional Indian craft.
2. To identify key areas of strategic interventions for developing a sustainable cluster model for Banjara craft.
3. To suggest measures for increasing the financial viability of the Banjara cluster through design, product development and training interventions.
4. To suggest measures for establishing greater marketing linkages for the craft.

HYPOTHESES
H₀₁: Product Development initiatives in Banjara craft will have no significant improvement in the acceptance of the products in contemporary market.
H₀₂: Marketing initiatives in Banjara craft will have no significant improvement in the acceptance of the products in contemporary market.
H₀₃: Training of craftsmen on interpersonal and business related skills will have no significant improvement in the acceptance of the products in contemporary market.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
India is a storehouse of innumerable crafts that are practiced across the length and breadth of this country. Owing to its rich cultural heritage, India has the potential to be positioned as the hub of craft tourism on the world map. However, considerable efforts need to be made to preserve this heritage and capitalize on its equity. The state of Maharashtra occupies a dominant position as far as crafts are considered. The state is famous for Paithai Sari, Kolhapur Chappal, Warli Painting, Hupri Silver Jewelry, Sawantwadi Toys to name a few. Banjara craft is one such handicraft that is famous in the state. “Banjaras” originally belong to Marwar region. They are semi-nomadic people who reside primarily in Southern and Middle parts of India. Many Banjaras have settled in parts of northern Karnataka, and are known as Lambanis.

The Banjara women are preserving their ancient mode of dress. The dress of the Banjara women is very colorful and elaborate with intricate details. The Banjara women practice a unique mirror and embroidery craft, which they mostly use for making their own traditional dresses or for giving to their daughters for their weddings. The Banjara women's costume comprise of Lehenga, Choli and Odhni and are embroidered with bright rainbow-colored fabrics covered with a mosaic of patchwork mirrors.

TECHNIQUE OF BANJARA EMBROIDERY
The Banjara embroidery is an amalgamation of pattern darning, mirror work, cross stitch and quilting stitch with borders of “Kangura” patchwork applique which is done on loosely woven dark blue or red handloom base fabric. 14 types of stitches are used in Banjara embroidery.

The raw materials used are:
- Yarns
- Mirrors
- Buddi or aluminum buttons
- Coins
- Cowrie shells
- Ghungroo
- Chamki
- Panchdhatu for jewelry making: Silver, copper, bronze, brass and aluminum
The basic fabric traditionally used for Banjara embroidery is either cotton khadi or power loom fabric which may be printed or plain.

Although most of the fabric is dyed using chemical colours, vegetable dyes made from Kattha, Rathanjot, Chawal Kudi, Pomegranate peel etc are gaining popularity.

Fig 1: The process followed for making the embroidered articles

The basic raw material, which is fabrics, threads, needles, coins, cowrie shells, mirrors, beads and ghungroo are procured from local sources such as Nanded and Latur.

For the making of jewelry, they use panchdhatu viz. silver, bronze, copper, brass and zinc in different proportions. The manufacturing of jewelry is also very basic which includes instruments like soldering machine, hammer, chisel and clippers.

There are no common marketing channels available for the cluster. Some of the artisans work on the basis of the order which is given to them by the local people or NGO whereas some make their products and sell through middleman in exhibitions and fairs.

Most of the artisans work with their own capital.

Some NGOs have been working with Banjaras to help preserve their ancient needlework tradition but their operations are also unorganized and order based.

The district of Nanded, which is the hub of the Banjara tribe, lies between 18°15’ North latitude and 77°7’ to 78°15’ east longitude. The district has a geographical area of 10332 sq. Kms. In the pre-independence era, Nanded District was under the control of Nizam of Hyderabad as a part of Marathwada Region. After independence, Government of India, took the control of the region and Nanded District was carved out of Marathwada Region.

There are approximately 28 tandas in Kinwat and Mahoor taluka of Nanded where the Banjara tribe resides. These tandas are located within the radius of about 130 kms from the center of Nanded. The men are involved in the buffalo rearing and farming while the women practice the craft of Banjara embroidery as a household art. There are a total 60 units with of 100 craftsmen/Micro Units which are already registered as practitioners of the craft. Out of the 100-registered craftsmen, 45 are women.
SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS IN THE AREA

DISTRICT INDUSTRIES CENTRE (DIC)

DIC is the State Government wing for the promotion of small-scale industries sector. DIC helps in cluster development by imparting training on entrepreneurship, facilitating financial assistance and instituting awards for motivation.

THE MAHARASHTRA SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD (MSSIDC)

MSSIDC was established on October 19, 1962 for providing a vision and platform for the development of Small Scale Industries in the State of Maharashtra. The main objective of MSSIDC is to assist, motivate, provide financial support, protect and promote the interests of Small Industries in the state. It plays a significant role in the preservation, revival and growth of traditional handicrafts of Maharashtra catering to the need of the rural artisans and providing them marketing support in domestic and international markets.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FASHION TECHNOLOGY (NIFT) MUMBAI

NIFT was set up in 1986 under the aegis of the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India as an institution of repute providing design, management and technology education for national and international fashion business. The Craft Cluster Initiative of the NIFT Mumbai is a carefully developed formula for integrating the crafts sector of the country with the mainstream retail and fashion sector. NIFT focuses on developing the craft sector by sharing technical knowledge and providing design inputs on current trends, mapping opportunities and potential markets, developing branding and promotional strategies and liaising with the corporates for potential commerce patronage.

SIDBI (SMALL INDUSTRIES DEVELOPMENT BANK OF INDIA)

It is a subsidiary of IDBI and started during the year 1990. The main objective of SIDBI is to assist SSI and promote their growth by providing loans and funding.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

SOURCES OF DATA

1. Primary Data: The Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire for the craftsmen and interviews with MSSIDC officials and DI officials.
2. Secondary Data: The secondary data was collected by referring to research papers and online sources.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Descriptive Quantitative Research

The Research focused on understanding the needs of the craftsmen and their psychographics for developing a successful strategy for cluster development. It also tried to capture the ground realities in terms of challenges and scope by discussion with the government officials working in the area. The findings were related to who, what and how, as such Descriptive Research Design was used. The primary data was quantified for the purpose of analysis. Hence, the methodology adopted was Descriptive Quantitative Research.

SAMPLING TYPE

Judgment and Convenience Sampling method was followed.

SAMPLE SIZE

Craftspeople - 70
Government Officials – 10
NGO workers - 5

Sampling Frame: Out of the total number of 70 craftspeople, 30 were males and 40 females.

RESEARCH AREA

Nanded

FINDINGS/RESULTS

Following are the key findings of the survey and personal interviews.

Fig 2: Drawbacks related to key areas in the Banjara community – 1
SWOT ANALYSIS OF BANJARA ARTS

STRENGTHS

- Heritage value associated with Banjara Craft.
- Availability of skilled artisans.
- Easy and cheap availability of labour and raw material.
- Demand in both domestic and foreign markets for the handicrafts which can be capitalized for generating higher margins and higher profits.
- Positive attitude of Banjara women towards making the products.
- Uniqueness of the embroidery.
- Recycling of products/apparel is possible.

WEAKNESSES

- Technical facilities for the development of new products are not available with the artisans.
- Lack of designing and product development facility.
- Illiteracy among the artisans which leads to exploitation of the artisans in the hands of the middlemen.
- Lack of awareness about current market trends.
- Lack of marketing opportunities.
- Inefficiency in sourcing wherein each artisan procures his own raw materials thereby increasing the costs of procurement.
- Poor economic condition of the artisans.
- Lack of government initiative and guidance to understand the needs of the artisans.
• Untapped export markets as the Banjara artisans are not exposed to the procedures for exporting their products.

OPPORTUNITIES
• There is a huge scope for promotion of this craft and creating employment for women.
• Potential for revenue generation in domestic and export markets.
• Potential for product diversification as per current market trends.
• Linkages with corporates to enhance the efficiencies of the sector through better funding and marketing platforms.
• Potential for women entrepreneurship development.
• Profits through economies of scale by collaboration.

THREATS
• Competition is on the rise in the global markets especially in the fields of price and product design.
• High production costs affect the competitiveness of the products in the domestic as well as the foreign markets.
• Traditional use of the art is disappearing due to the lack of creativity and innovation that is out of sync with market demand.
• Lower monetary returns discourage the current generation to take up this craft as their profession and they are migrating to different higher paying jobs which can lead to the extinction of this craft.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS
BROAD STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS REQUIRED IN THE BANJARA CRAFT CLUSTER

There is a dire need of intervention in Banjara cluster. The focus of intervention should be capacity building of cluster like in terms of exploring new markets; improving infrastructure; product diversification and developing institutional linkages.

The foremost step in for the development of the cluster is the formation of an association and setting up of Common Facility Centre (CFC). The CFC will house a training center with modern technology and machines, common raw material bank and research and development studio. The CFC will provide assistance to the craftsmen in the following areas:

SETTING UP OF A MARKETING WING AT CFC WILL AID IN BOTH FORWARD AND BACKWARD LINKAGES

Fig 4: The various functions that will be performed by the Marketing Wing at CFC
SETTING UP OF A MARKETING RESEARCH AND DESIGN WING AT CFC

Craftsmen lack knowledge about tastes, preferences and spending behavior of the current customers. Even though artisans possess craft skills, they are unable to meet the needs of the modern-day consumer owing to the lack of design knowledge for making contemporary craft products. Artisans need to be provided with market intelligence and design inputs for them to produce market-relevant products.

Marketing Research Wing will assist the craftsmen in the following areas:
- Identifying new markets.
- Finding new customers.
- Seeking out new product niches.
- Analyzing product sales from past year (identifying weak/strong products to discard/continue/modify)

Design Wing will assist the craftsmen in the following areas:
- Product development and adaptation
- Product Innovation
- Incorporation of new materials
- Design based on market research findings.
- Prototype making.

CORPORATE INTERVENTION ROUTE

Corporate houses should be involved and encouraged to take up development of this community through adoption of the craft or cluster as part of their CSR mandate. Further, the new products can be promoted for corporate gifting purposes or sold through their retail stores wherever possible.

WORKSHOPS ON TEAM BUILDING, COMMUNICATION AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

To withstand competition from mechanized processes and deliver big orders as required in modern markets, artisans will have to collaborate among themselves to benefit from economies of scale. This process will require artisans to communicate and co-ordinate with each other as well as clients and meet their requirements within the specified time frame. The workshops will enable the craftsmen to develop negotiation skills, handle customers confidently and professionally.

E-MARKETING PLATFORM SHOULD BE PROVIDED FOR GREATER CONSUMER AWARENESS AND ACCESS TO THESE PRODUCTS.

Website for the cluster should be made for tapping new domestic and export markets.

VISITS TO CRAFT FAIRS AND EXHIBITIONS WILL BROADEN THEIR EXPOSURE AND AWARENESS ABOUT CURRENT CONSUMER TRENDS.

INFRASTRUCTURES AND TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT

In order to improve productivity and develop new products, proper infrastructure needs to be provided. Ergonomically suitable workstations need to be created. Proper infrastructure for technology support and training of weavers on how to adopt technology for the betterment of their products needs to be provided.

SETTING UP OF A RAW MATERIAL BANK

In order to bring in a higher-level consistency and standardization in products and improving
quality, raw material bank needs to be set up at the CFC.

**EMPHASIS ON FORMAL TRAINING IN THE CRAFT**

The vocational training on the craft needs to be incorporated in the school curriculum. The formal education system, including research institutes need to include teaching, training and skill development for the Handlooms in their mainstream activities thereby sharing the responsibility of introducing innovation in design and techniques.

**SETTING UP OF LEGAL CELL IN CFC FOR PROPER AND EFFECTIVE DISSEMINATION OF POLICY RELATED INFORMATION TO THE CRAFTSMEN.**

**SETTING UP OF A FINANCIAL WING IN CFC FOR BETTER FINANCIAL CONTROL AND GREATER ACCESS TO CHEAPER SOURCES OF FUNDS.**

Suggested actions to be taken on priority

- Training Program on Entrepreneurship Development
- Skill Up-gradation Training Program
- Design Development Training
- Training on Export Procedure and Documentation
- Joint Participation in Trade Fairs and Exhibitions
- Personal Counseling in solving problems
- Geographical Indication Registration of the Product of the cluster
- Organizing Design Development Library
- Promotion of Common Website
- Workshops on Technology Modernization
- Workshops on Marketing Strategy
- Developing Associations
- Publication of Common Brochure
- Common marketing activities for all the craftsmen engaged in the craft.
- Awareness and training program
- Common visits to other clusters for promoting a common brand.
- Development of a common Website for product awareness and e-commerce.

**FUTURE STUDY**

The objective of cluster development for Banjara Craft is to initiate a collaborative effort by all the stakeholders like the artisans, government bodies and other value chain partners to gain insights which can be used to remove internal and external barriers to the growth of the cluster which will result in rural livelihood generation thereby preventing urban migration and preservation of the craft heritage. Future study will be undertaken to prepare a detailed plan for the execution of the strategic interventions suggested.

**REFERENCES**


Websites
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