



AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER AWARENESS AND BUYING BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS HANDLOOM PRODUCTS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

Especially in hilly zones like Himachal Pradesh, the handloom sector plays a significant role in both rural employment and the preservation of India's traditional legacy. Despite cultural value of the handloom products, the industry faces several problems related low customer awareness and market competition. The current study aims to examine consumer awareness and buying behavior towards handloom products, concentrating on 4 p's of marketing and other factors. The study is descriptive and mainly based on primary data. The analysis has been done by using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation, and one-way ANOVA. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents have a high degree of awareness towards the various elements of Marketing Mix and marketing factors influence buying behavior.

Keywords: Handloom Products, Consumer Awareness, Buying Behaviour, Marketing Mix, Himachal Pradesh

1. INTRODUCTION

India is primarily an agrarian society. The agricultural sector of the country is essential for self-sufficiency and depends on local production and inputs. The economy of India's agrarian society has significantly benefited the majority of agriculturists, who comprise almost seventy percent of the nation's population. After the country's independence, the socio-economic structure has shifted significantly in terms of development, contributing substantially to the national economy. Industrialization and urbanization has replaced the traditional concept of ruralisation and indulgence of people in small scale industrial activities particularly involvement of agriculturists in parallel to the artisan and weaving activities in handlooms. People's search for job has gradually diminished due to the reduction of opportunities in rural areas. It is a reality that these activities have cultural, value-based, and other qualities that, if left unprotected, will force a large portion of the population to rely on limited resources, which will result in uneven growth. With this, the handloom industry and other rural sector activities should be considered a primitive area of study.

Consumer buying behavior is influenced by the multiple factors such as product's features awareness, accessibility, price, promotional activities and certifications such as and Handloom Mark. Due to limited consumer awareness about all these aspects, handloom products are frequently undervalued which restrict market growth. Marketing practices that enhances the consumer perceptions and boost sales includes effective promotional activities, better availability, and certification based assurance. Therefore, it is essential to know about consumer awareness and buying behavior in order to strengthen the marketing performance of the handloom industry. The purpose of this study to investigate empirically how consumer awareness and marketing factors affect the buying behavior with respect to handloom products in Himachal Pradesh.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ramswamy, (2012) in the study "Entrepreneurship and Marketing Challenges in Handloom Clusters", recognized that limited market access, poor distribution channels, inadequate promotional activities are among the main marketing obstacles for handloom clusters. The study highlights structural problems that hinder the effective marketing of Handloom goods, such as supply chain flaws and weaver's inadequate negotiating power.

Kumudha & Rizwana (2013) conducted a study on "Consumer perception towards handloom products" which revealed that consumers value the distinctiveness, quality, and sustainability attributes of handloom products but sometimes it cannot reliably distinguish between handloom goods from machine-made products. Due to this lack of authentication knowledge diminishes the perceived value of handloom goods and willingness to pay a premium is negatively impacted.

Sharma (2020) in the study "Role of Certification and GI Tags in Handloom Marketing", highlighted that certification techniques such as Handloom Mark and GI tags help as to indicate important quality signs that assist consumers to identify original handloom products and support their confidence while in making purchase decisions.

Singh & Gupta (2016) in their study on “Consumer awareness and purchase intention towards traditional textile products” empirically proved that consumer awareness considerably impacts purchase intent for customary cloths. The study also suggested that enlarged knowledge about product features, cultural significance, and originality converts into stronger purchase intention.

Das (2018) revealed in his study titled on “Marketing challenges of the handloom industry in India” found that price perception and product availability play a significant role in the purchasing process. Although, consumers may appreciate handloom features, price sensitivity and less availability in preferred channels discourage purchases. This highlights the conflict between perceived true value (craftsmanship) and monetary limitations.

Verma & Singh (2019) in their study titled “Promotional strategies and consumer behaviour in the handloom sector” found that promotional measures like exhibitions, melas and targeted promotional activities to have favorable temporary effects on awareness and sales. With the help of exhibitions not only increase visibility but also boost up direct sales and word-of-mouth.

Khan (2021) in his book titled on “Modern Marketing Practices”, discussed that marketing-mix elements such as Product, Price, Promotion and Place together impact consumer satisfaction and thus repeat purchase behaviour. This helps using a combined marketing-mix lens rather than studying elements in isolation.

Mehta & Kumar (2022) in their study titled on “Social influence and buying behaviour in traditional markets” concluded that a significant impact on purchasing decisions for traditional goods in their study. Interpersonal channels becomes the main sources of information trust in market with minimal formal advertising.

3. RESEARCH GAP

Although, detailed research on handloom marketing have been done, yet significant gaps exist. Research pertaining to Himachal Pradesh and GI-tagged products, such as Kullu shawls, is limited. The role of certification awareness as a bridge between product features and consumer behaviour or as a mediator of price sensitivity remains inadequately explored. Comprehensive models interconnecting consumer awareness, marketing elements, social influence, and their impact on purchase intention and behaviour are limited. Further, the majority of research is descriptive, with a lack of longitudinal or experimental studies evaluating the effects of promotional interventions like events or certification campaigns.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the level of consumer awareness towards handloom products in Himachal Pradesh.
- To analyse the influence of marketing mix elements and marketing factors on consumer buying behaviour.
- To study the relationship between consumer awareness and buying behaviour towards handloom products.

5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The current is focused the handloom sector in three districts of Himachal Pradesh: Kullu, Kinnaur, and Mandi, recognised for their traditional and GI-tagged products. It analyses consumers of handloom goods to assess their understanding of marketing mix elements i.e. product, price, place, and promotion and the influence of certification on purchasing decisions. The study also investigated marketing related factors such as product availability, promotion, and social influence that affect buying behavior of the consumer. This research concentrates on these districts to ascertain customer preferences, to examine the efficiency of existing marketing strategies and provide suggestions to enhance awareness level, boos up demand for authentic goods and promote the sustainable development of the handloom sector.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study is based mainly on primary data to analyse consumer awareness and buying behavior for handloom products in Himachal Pradesh. Data were collected through a field survey by using structured questionnaire. Respondents were selected by using convenience sampling method, allowing access to readily available consumers.

7. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study uses a descriptive and analytical research design. It is descriptive as it examines consumer awareness of handloom products, including marketing elements, certification, and promotions, across Kullu, Kinnaur, and Mandi. It is analytical as it explores how marketing factors—product, price, promotion, distribution, certification, and social influence—affect buying behavior.

8. TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES OF ANALYSIS

The study examines the collected data using several kinds of tools and techniques. To summarise and describe the basic characteristics of the data descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis are used. To ensure the consistency and dependability of the questionnaire, reliability analysis by using Cronbach's Alpha test, is applied. Furthermore, Simple Pearson's correlation analysis is applied to know the relationships between various factors, such as consumer awareness, marketing factors, and buying behavior.

9. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

RELIABILITY TEST AND VALIDITY OF INSTRUMENTS

Internal consistency, or how well every item in the instrument measures the same thing, is measured by Cronbach's alpha (α). It is commonly used to determine a psychometric test's reliability for a sample of participants. For the purpose of the current study, Cronbach's alpha reliability test has been applied for the current study to assess the data's internal consistency and dependability. The Cronbach's alpha test of reliability was the best option because the maximum replies were on Likert's five or three point scale. Typically, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient falls between 0 and 1. The following is a well recognised guideline for utilising Cronbach's alpha to describe internal consistency. However, the value of alpha may be artificially inflated if the test has more items. Therefore, care must be used while applying this general rule:

Cronbach's alpha	Internal consistency
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent
$0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$	Good
$0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$	Questionable
$0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$	Poor
$0.5 > \alpha$	Unacceptable

The application of Cronbach's alpha for the present analysis reveals that the instrument is reliable as the alpha value exceeds 0.7 in all cases. Particularly, the consistency is excellent in the context of awareness towards marketing mix elements and certification with an alpha value exceeding 0.9.

Table 1: Reliability Test

Variables	No. of cases	Cronbach's alpha
Awareness towards marketing mix elements and certification	20	0.920
Impact of marketing factors on the buying behaviour of customers	12	0.808
Buying behaviour towards handloom products	5	0.714

Table 2 results show that majority respondents are in 26–35 years age group highlighting that the consumer largely comprises of young and middle-aged people. There are little more female respondents (53%) than male respondents (47%). The respondents are well educated. 35.7% respondents are graduates and 31.7 % are postgraduates. Considering the rural aspect of the study the majority of respondents (70.3%) are residing in rural areas. In terms of income, the majority of the respondents are in the low income group (52.6%) earn below ₹1.5 lakhs annually.

Table 2: Demographics Profile of Sample Respondents

Classification of the respondents on the basis of Age			
Sr. No	Age Group	Frequency	Percent
1	Below 25	43	17.3
2	26-35	108	43.4
3	36-45	64	25.7
4	46-55	25	10.0
5	56 above	9	3.6
	Total	249	100.0
Classification of the respondents on the basis of Gender			
Sr. No	Gender	Frequency	Percent
1	Male	117	47.0
2	Female	132	53.0
	Total	249	100.0
Classification of the respondents on the basis of Education level			
Sr. No	Education level	Frequency	Percent
1	Below 10th	7	2.8
2	Plus Two	54	21.7
3	Graduate	89	35.7
4	Post Graduate	79	31.7
5	Any other (MPhil & PhD)	20	8.0
	Total	249	100.0
Classification of the respondents on the basis of Location			
Sr. No	Location	Frequency	Percent
1	Urban	43	17.3
2	Rural	175	70.3
3	Semi-Urban	31	12.4
	Total	249	100.0
Classification of the respondents on the basis of Income			
Sr. No	Income level	Frequency	Percent
1	Below 1.5 Lakhs	131	52.6
2	1.5-3 Lakhs	28	11.2
3	3-5 Lakhs	37	14.9
4	5 Lakhs and above	53	21.3
	Total	249	100.0

The results of table 3 demonstrates that consumers are highly aware of handloom products. The high mean score (> 4.20) indicates that respondents strongly agree that handloom products are renowned for their quality, durability, and varieties in design. Also, there is high awareness about the role of handloom products in reflecting local culture and heritage (Mean = 4.06). Negative skewness indicates that the respondents have a favorable attitude each arguments. Whereas acceptable kurtosis suggest a normal and trustworthy distribution of inputs inputs.

Table 3: Customer Awareness level towards the Handloom Products: An analysis.

Statements	N	Mean	S.D.	Skew.	Kurt.
Handloom Products known for their quality	249	4.33	.732	-1.349	3.544
Durable and long lasting	249	4.24	.812	-1.243	2.454
Wide range of the Handloom products is available	249	4.35	.673	-1.182	3.501
Reflect local culture and heritage	249	4.06	.900	-1.264	2.344

The table 4 results indicate that majority of consumer are aware regarding the pricing of handloom products. High value of mean (4.49) shows that positive view of pricing are reflected in the respondent's strong agreement that discounts and special offers are available. A generally positive view of pricing fairness and affordability is shown by the opinion that price matches

with the product quality and that products are available in wide range of price points. Further, are aware of value based pricing in handloom products moderately agree that traditional handloom designs are more expensive than machine-made products.

Table 4: Customer Awareness level towards the Pricing of the Handloom Products: An analysis.

Statements	N	Mean	S.D.	Skew.	Kurt.
Discounts And Special Offers.	249	4.49	.679	-1.744	5.260
Price matches product's quality.	249	3.93	.948	-.944	1.102
Available in different price ranges.	249	3.73	1.013	-1.020	1.085
Traditional designs often cost more than machine-made products.	249	3.63	1.028	-.670	.399

The table 5 finding show that consumer are very aware of handloom product distribution networks. The respondents believe that stores are easily accessible (Mean=4.04) and exhibit a high level awareness of local markets (Mean= 4.07). Further, It is also found that the stores are well organized and are customer friendly (Mean= 3.97). The negative skewness suggests a positive agreement among respondents.

Table 5: Customer Awareness level towards the Distribution Networks of the Handloom Products: An analysis.

Statements	N	Mean	S.D.	Skew.	Kurt.
Aware about the local markets.	249	4.07	.842	-1.274	2.939
Handloom stores are designed to be customer-friendly.	249	3.97	.915	-1.463	3.058
Showrooms are well-organized in layout.	249	3.90	.895	-.959	1.614
Outlets are conveniently located for customers.	249	4.04	.863	-1.149	2.328

From the table 6, it is revealed that respondents' shows very high awareness of advertisements (Mean = 3.89) and promotional offers (Mean = 3.92) as compare of government led promotional campaigns (Mean = 3.76). There is a scope to improve digital marketing as social media promotion is comparatively less well known (Mean = 3.68).

Overall, it is revealed by the results in comparison of digital platforms the traditional and institutional promotional network channel are better recognised, emphasizing the necessity to improve handloom product's promotion on digital platforms.

Table 6: Customer Awareness level towards the Promotion channels of the Handloom Products: An analysis.

Statements	N	Mean	S.D.	Skew.	Kurt.
Aware of advertisements related handloom products	249	3.89	.882	-1.343	2.752
Aware that social media is used to promote handloom products.	249	3.68	1.062	-.802	.546
Government campaigns promoting handloom products.	249	3.76	1.084	-1.001	.757
Promotional offers provided on handloom products.	249	3.92	1.002	-1.185	1.468

Table 7 highlights that majority respondent reveals high level of awareness regarding certification of handloom products. Handloom Mark mean score is 3.80, while GI-tagged scored slightly higher at 3.95, indicating that customers are judiciously aware about formal certification procedure used to recognize authentic handloom products.

The role of certification while doing purchase reveal strong agreement and similarity in responses and highlighting the importance of certification in building consumer trust and confidence (Mean =4.61). The negative value of skewness demonstrate that majority of respondents have a positive agreement with the statements, while the negative kurtosis values show that respondents responses were stable and sowed little variation.

Table 7: Customer Awareness level towards the Certification of the Handloom Products: An analysis.

Statements	N	Mean	S.D.	Skew.	Kurt.
Aware of the handloom mark used on Authentic Products.	249	3.80	1.071	-.913	.530
Aware of GI-tagged handloom products.	249	3.95	.951	-1.001	1.190
Certification labels help me identify authentic handloom products.	249	4.61	.489	-.456	-1.807
Certification increases my confidence in purchasing handloom products.	249	4.61	.489	-.456	-1.807

Table 8 results indicate that by scoring the high mean value the respondents have a very agreement regarding the product attributes influence on purchase decision. It is revealed that design and coloured scored the highest mean value (Mean = 3.96) suggesting that aesthetic appeal plays an important role in influencing customer purchases. Followed by the durability and product uniqueness of the handloom products highlights the product longevity and preference to distinct handloom product instead of machine made products. Due to the lower mean score of craftsmanship as comparison of other attributes indicating moderate agreement its role in purchase decisions.

Table 8: Influence of Product Attributes on customer buying behavior: An analysis.

Statements	N	Mean	S.D.	Skew.	Kurt.
Designs and colours of handloom products influence purchase decision.	249	3.96	.943	-1.133	1.776
Quality of craftsmanship to buy handloom products.	249	3.68	1.062	-.802	.546
Durability of handloom products affects my buying choices.	249	3.82	1.014	-1.035	1.176
Uniqueness of handloom products encourages over machine made products.	249	3.76	1.084	-1.001	.757

Table 9 results reveal that accessibility and availability have a very strong and significant role in influencing the customer buying behaviour regarding handloom products. A high level of agreement of among respondents is shown by the high value of mean (Mean = 4.61) having easy access to handloom stores. It is also found that the customer buying behaviour also influenced with online availability of products and through government or cooperative outlets.

Table 9: Influence of Accessibility and Availability of Handloom Products on customer buying behavior: An analysis.

Statements	N	Mean	S.D.	Skew.	Kurt.
Easy availability of products influences buying decision	249	3.92	1.002	-1.185	1.468
Availability in govt. or cooperative outlets motivates to purchase them.	249	3.80	1.071	-.913	.530
Online availability of products increases buying.	249	3.95	.951	-1.001	1.190
Easy access to handloom stores affects frequency of purchase.	249	4.61	.489	-.456	-1.807

Table 10 highlights very clearly a strong impact of social influence on customer buying behaviour. High mean scores (above 4.50) revealing the dominant role of family opinions, friends' suggestions, word-of-mouth, and social approval in determining purchase decisions. Negative skewness suggests responses are concentrated towards strong agreement, while negative kurtosis indicates a relatively uniform distribution of opinions, underscoring the consistent and pervasive influence of social factors.

Table 10: Impact of Social influence on customer buying behavior of Handloom Products: An analysis.

Statements	N	Mean	S.D.	Skew.	Kurt.
Opinions of family members influence buying decision	249	4.57	.519	-.563	-1.099
Suggestions from friends encourage me to purchase handloom products.	249	4.56	.529	-.564	-.983
Word-of-mouth plays an important role in choice of handloom products.	249	4.57	.511	-.484	-1.338
Social approval influences preference for handloom products.	249	4.57	.504	-.398	-1.611

The table 11 reveals a weak but positive association between the two variables correlation coefficient ($r = 0.320$). The results shows that there is a weak association between enhanced purchasing behaviour and better consumer awareness. In simple words, awareness affects the purchasing behaviour of consumer, but it is not importantly only the one factor. Other determinants such as marketing factors also have a big impact on purchasing decisions.

Table 11: Simple Correlation Matrix Analysis

Variables	1	2
Awareness	1	
Buying behaviour	.320	1

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Data collected through questionnaire.

Table 12 results ($r = 0.805$) show a strong positive relationship among marketing factors and buying behaviour. This suggests that customers are more willing to purchase handloom goods when they have positive views of their availability, price, quality, and promotion. The results clearly displays that improved marketing practices is closely related to better buying behaviour, even though it does not establish cause and effect relationship.

Table 12: Simple Correlation Matrix Analysis

Variables	1	2
Buying behaviour	1	
Marketing factors	.805	1

Source: Data collected through questionnaire.

From the table 12, the value $F=2.809$, $p= 0.062$ reveals that the consumer awareness regarding handloom products is comparatively similar across all three districts of Himachal Pradesh and the variation among district does not influence the awareness level of the consumer. In contrast, the results shows that there is significant difference in buying behaviour across the districts ($F = 4.579$, $p = 0.011$). This indicates consumer buying behaviour with respect to handloom products differs significantly from one district to another. This variable possibly due to difference in purchasing power, accessibility of handloom products. Similarly, the results shows that the perceptions regarding the marketing factors i.e. product, price, place, and promotion differ significantly across the districts.

Table 12: District-Wise ANOVA of Awareness and Buying Behaviour towards Handloom Products in Himachal Pradesh

Variables	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Awareness	Between Groups	1.807	2	.903	2.809	.062
	Within Groups	79.109	246	.322		
	Total	80.916	248			
Buying behaviour	Between Groups	1.544	2	.772	4.579	.011
	Within Groups	41.465	246	.169		
	Total	43.009	248			
Marketing factor	Between Groups	2.173	2	1.086	4.553	.011
	Within Groups	58.692	246	.239		
	Total	60.865	248			

10. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- The study found that majority of the consumers of handloom products are primarily young and middle-aged, with a little greater higher contribution from female and educated customers.
- The majority of consumers are from low income and rural areas, demonstrating the importance of handloom goods price conscious rural households.
- A high level of awareness is revealed by the consumers towards the quality, durability, design variety, and cultural significance of handloom products.
- The results demonstrates that people view the prices of handloom products are fair and reasonable, and customers are highly aware of discounts, offers.
- The easy availability and accessibility and well organized retail stores have a significant influence on buying behaviour. And the respondents show a high degree of awareness towards the distribution networks.
- The findings shows that there is an urgent need to strengthen online and social media marketing of handloom products. While, traditional and institutional promotional channels are better recognized than digital platforms.
- There is a considerable degree of awareness regarding certification and authenticity marks (such as GI tags and Handloom Mark) and certification significantly increases confidence in purchase.
- The study also shows that product features, especially products design, colour, durability, and uniqueness, have a big impact on people's decisions to buy goods.
- Study shows that the three elements which have the biggest effects on customer purchase decisions are accessibility, availability, and social influence (family, friends, and word-of-mouth).

11. SUGGESTIONS

- Handloom weavers and retailers should customize the products as per the interest of the young, educated, and female consumers.
- Prices should be fixed as per the value based technique and periodic discounts and offer to suit low-income and rural consumers.
- The study also suggests that a high focus should be concentrated to improve digital and social media marketing. It helps in enhancing the visibility among younger consumers.
- The government agencies and cooperative societies should take initiatives to strengthen online availability of handloom products along with physical outlets.
- Also, it is suggested that awareness campaigns should be organised by the govt. to highlight the importance of handloom mark and GI tag certification to build customer trust and reduce counterfeit products.
- While protecting the traditional craftsmanship, the product development should give priority to creative designs, colour combinations, durability, and distinctiveness of the products.
- To provide easy accessibility in both rural and urban markets, the networks of distribution should be strengthened, particularly in those areas where people shows less interest to purchase these products.
- Promotional strategies should actively leverage word-of-mouth and community influence, including local ambassadors, exhibitions, and fairs.
- District-specific marketing strategies should be adopted to address regional differences in buying behaviour and market accessibility.
- Policymakers should integrate consumer-oriented marketing interventions with existing handloom development schemes to enhance market reach and demand.



12. CONCLUSION

The study focus on marketing factors, certification and accessibility and availability to examine consumer awareness level and buying behaviour towards handloom products. It is revealed from the findings that majority of the customers are mainly young, educated, and price-conscious. And most of them are from rural areas and low-income groups. This denotes the consistent importance of these products for both cultural and practical use. Consumers presents that they are highly aware about the product quality, verities of design, durability, and cultural significance. They also perceive the prices of handloom products as reasonable and matches the quality, highlighting good value for money. Ease in purchasing these products from local and organized markets completely influences their decisions to purchase the goods.

The study highlights certification, particularly the Handloom Mark and Geographical Indication tag, as a key determinants in building consumer trust and ensuring authenticity. However, indicates a gaps in contemporary marketing strategies. In general, the findings of the study demonstrates that the marketing factors have a greater impact on the buying behaviour of the consumers than awareness alone, and geographical variations points out the necessity of area specific marketing tactics. The study comes to the conclusion that improving market access, certification awareness and marketing strategies are crucial for the sustainable growth of the handloom sector.

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