

India needs to focus on superior branding and marketing of handloom products

Handloom sector not only represents India's rich cultural heritage, but it also scores well in terms of fabric quality, comfort factor and environment friendly production process. Handloom weaving is a source of livelihood for 35.23 lakh weavers and allied workers and it is one of the largest economic activities after agriculture in terms of job creation.

Around 15% of the clothing output in India comprises of handloom and 95% of the world's hand woven fabric originates from India. Major export-oriented handloom clusters are located in Karur, Madurai (Tamil Nadu), Kannur (Kerala), Panipat (Haryana), Varanasi (UP), Bhagalpur (Bihar), Shantipur (West Bengal), Jaipur (Rajasthan), Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Warrangal, Poochampally (Telangana), Chirala (Andhra Pradesh), and Sampalpur (Odisha). India exports handloom fabrics, kitchenwares, floor mats, curtains, embroidered textile materials and other materials.

According to a study conducted by the Ministry of Textiles in 2016, Indian handloom sector can enhance revenue by creating awareness about its superior quality among young generation through special initiatives in branding, marketing across digital media, include social media and e-commerce.

The report found that although home furnishing products such as curtains and cushion covers are popular, handloom clothing materials have not been as popular among young generation because of lack of promotion and publicity.

The study recommended launch of Indo-western dresses using handloom material and create exclusive collections for casual wear. The report also made a case for introduction of branded formal shirts for men using handloom material.

Branding and marketing are also key components in popularizing handloom products. Handloom weavers in the country should make use of the India Handloom Brand (IHB) which was launched by government in August 2015. Weavers can acquire branding for their products under this initiative, which superior product quality and texture, use of good quality yarn and dyeing with safe non-carcinogenic dyes. So far, around 184 handloom products categories have been registered under India Handloom Brand initiative.

Government of India's Textiles Committee is also promoting handloom mark, which assures buyers that the products sold under this mark are genuine handwoven products and not a powerloom or mill made product. So far, around 22275 registrations have been issued under this scheme by the government.

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