

# Branding Handicrafts Products: a Study on Bangladesh

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## Abstract

*The aim of the study is to examine the branding of handicraft products in Bangladesh. This study has considered twelve districts in Bangladesh as the study area. Researcher has interviewed session with 6 branding and marketing experts first. Based on their opinions on how to brand handicrafts, structured questionnaires have been prepared to collect data from 40 respondents who are entrepreneurs, traders, marketers, suppliers, and other relevant people. Researcher extracts data on the perceptions towards various branding factors in categorical form. This study has used both qualitative and quantitative analysis to identify the impact of branding strategies on the demand for handicrafts. Exploratory factor analysis is used to sort out the statistically significant branding factors followed by multiple regression models to justify the relationship between different branding factors and the demand for handicrafts. This study reveals that the main four variables are handicraft studies, handicraft branding, handicraft promotion and handicraft branding patron associations. Multiple regression result shows that handicraft studies and handicraft branding have a large effect on increasing the demand for handicraft products. This is because handicrafts branding draw the attention to the potential customer about handicrafts products and the high possibility to increase the sales volume. This study recommends cumulative efforts from both public and private sectors to enlarge handicrafts market by incorporating handicraft as a course in each syllabus, advertising properly to encourage people to buy them and reminding the people that handicrafts was part of their ancestor's lifestyle. Entrepreneurs, government and related organizations can take these steps of branding to increase demand for handicraft products.*

**Keywords:** *handicraft; branding; promotion; marketing; communication.*

**JEL Classification:** *M31; M37; L67; J24.*

## Introduction

A brand's symbolic meaning derives from its underlying purpose and is expressed as a field vibration that radiates from the very core of a company. Keller and Lehmann understood that global branding is a strategy used to promote local products to the global mark (Aveline, 2020). According to The American Marketing Association (AMA) in the 1960s (Keller, 2001) a 'brand' is "a name, word, mark, sign, or design, or a combination thereof, intended to identify the goods and services of a seller or to differentiate them from groups and competitors." Mariotti (1999) defines a brand as "a simplified 'shorthand' description of a value packages that consumers and

potential buyers can rely on to be consistently the same (or better) over a long period (Revolution, 1998). Hand makes handcrafted products, often using simple tools, and is usually artistic and traditional. In the current context, it is sometimes called Handwoven Craft (Women's Handicrafts) because most of the handicraft products belong to women's artisans, and women have a dominant role in the handicraft products of the country's rich Indian cultural heritage. The Indian handicraft industry is a decentralized, unorganized, labor-intensive cottage industry. The sector has strong potential to provide massive employment in the rural sector. However, it now faces several problems, and significant competition from machine-made and electronic products, and technology and artificial intelligence, and a growing state of unemployment and underemployment (Yadav et al., 2020). Handicrafts have a traditional value in the culture and tradition of a nation. With increasing globalization and growing demand for home accessories, the global handicrafts market is expanding. Researchers identified handicrafts as key income generators in many countries as their consumption patterns represent both local and international tastes. The key to success is meeting the needs of global consumers and staying updated as an industry (Koswate, 2020). Khan, W. A. And Amir, Z (2013) published their research paper "Study of Handicrafts Marketing Strategy of Uttar Pradesh and its Implications" and observed that the handicraft sector depends on how the artisans can produce the handicraft articles and how they introduce it to the place, Price, production, and latest promotions. Handicraft is a product that, when a buyer likes it, he is ready to pay a price, which may be much higher than the standard price of the product. We can classify handicraft products based on price, export to domestic market, ease of maintenance, ease of storage, utilitarian value or decorative value and modernity or traditional orientation (Khan et al., 2013). P Mathew<sup>13</sup> (2011) said that our country is one of the most important suppliers of handicrafts in the world market but does not cash its opportunity by producing their experience and outstanding artisans (Mathaw, 2011). According to the research of (Aveline, 2006), today is the era of globalization and this has forced marketers to envision global branding. Because of their commonness and prevalence, addressing a successful branding strategy is essential to achieving sustainable competitive advantage in today's rapidly changing global marketplace. Hence, it is essential to understand the brand, to find out the significance of global branding. The international market for handicrafts is growing with global interest in products opening up new market opportunities for artisans (Ghaus, 2012). MSEs, who face various challenges that slow down their participation in the export trade, mainly dominated Tanzania's handicrafts sector. Professional and business development training programs, network connections, awareness of fair trade practices, level of equipment implementation, production capacity and quality and standards (Ipsos, 2012 hinder local traders). Other barriers are limited marketing, information and communication skills (Walonzi, 2014), lack of supporting institutions, promotional and conservation policies, low craft quality, inability of craft producers to access opportunities to up-grade their managerial skills and access business information., including a lack of competent craft development coordinators and designers (Machiao, 2013). Handicrafts activities occupy an important position in the economic structure of the state of J&K. Being environment friendly, these activities are best suited for the state as they are more labor intensive and less capital intensive, thus there is scope for large scale employment generation. Handicraft products of Kashmir have gained worldwide fame for their attractive designs, functional utility and high quality craftsmanship. However, the sector has suffered a lot due to lack of skilled workers' new technologies and absence of brand image because of the unorganized market (Bhatt et al., 2019). Albayrak, Mevhibe and Melda explain in their paper that it is important to make producers aware of geographical indications, as it is an important tool for branding and protecting Turkish handicrafts. It is important to make a world brand of handicrafts so by having a geographical sign of handicrafts that can help in the branding of Turkish handicrafts (Albavrak, 2012). Handicrafts that showcase local culture and heritage can beautify tourism development. Instead of relying solely on government initiatives, the development of handicrafts can be driven by entrepreneurs. Handicraft skills among people in rural areas can benefit from enhanced entrepreneurial skills, especially to improve overall socio-economic

status (Hasan et al., 2017). The strategy of attracting tourists to buy handicrafts is very important. Selling handicrafts in centers of tourist attraction instead of isolated places will make a lot of difference. The main market for Malaysian handicrafts is the domestic market (86.8%), compared to the international market (13.2%). Most handicraft manufacturers sell their products directly to consumers or through wholesalers and distributors. Some of them sell directly to retailers or employ a combination of channels (Amin, 2006). Despite the recent economic downturn, the significant growth of the global handicraft market and increased interest in global products has opened up more opportunities for artisans (Barber & Krivoshlikova, 2006). Fashion and global consumer tastes strongly influenced the home accessories market. It is no longer possible to view traditional artisanal products in isolation from global market trends and competition (Khan and Amir, 2013). As stated by Subramanian and Kavusgil, (1990), in most developing countries, the development of handicraft markets abroad requires a significant level of investment and is best done by government agencies. The emergence of dedicated public companies helping to grow the handicrafts sector presents a unique opportunity for Sri Lanka, if harnessed appropriately. As shown by Mahgoub and Alsud (2016) increasing globalization means that we cannot isolate traditional artisan industries and their products from global trends and international competition. According to Barber and Krivoshlikova, (2006), the growth of the international market for home accessories and the increased interest in global products has opened up new market opportunities for artisans. According to Bryson, (1988), firms in the modern era not only need effective strategies to position themselves in the market but also need to lay the foundations for implementing these strategies in a volatile corporate climate. Sri Lanka can establish the most promising export strategy to promote handicrafts, but to be successful, it is important to understand more about global competition and competitor behavior. Handicraft is a crucial part of Bangladeshi culture. It is not only an art form but also a traditional activity. Handicraft also provides bread and butter for many people. But nowadays it's losing its value because of modernization and lack of branding and promotion. People nowadays use modern items like modern furniture, ceramic and melamine utensils, clothes made with artificial fibers, processed food, and so forth. But still there is a time that people in our country and foreign tourist used and eager to purchase handmade clay utensils, bamboo and wooden furniture and tools, homemade seasonal food, and so forth. So how to create demand and make brand our handicrafts nationally and internationally is the goal of the research.

## **Objective of this Research**

The main objective of this study is to Branding of Bangladeshi Handicrafts Products in national and international market. The other objectives of the study are:

1. To explore the present circumstances of handicraft business in local and international markets.
2. To know how to brand handicraft products in local and international markets.

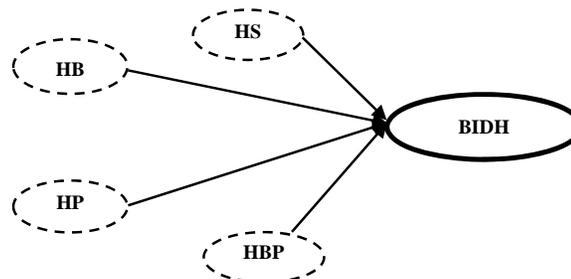
## **Current Status of Bangladeshi Handicraft**

Many well-known brands in Bangladesh have achieved success. For example, we can talk about Arang Brand, Bengal gallery which has already taken place in the minds of people. The present government has taken various initiatives for the advancement of this industry. BSCIC, SME Foundation, has played a vital role on behalf of the government and still working. Notable districts for handicrafts industry are Jamalpur and Jessore. The government is already working to set up a Nakshipalli in Jamalpur. Through this Nakshipalli, all the handicraft entrepreneurs and traders will serve their handicrafts together, which will attract local and foreign buyers. This industry is playing a vital role in eliminating unemployment. Governmental support, banking and financial helps and other NGOs have come forward. Socio-economic development through

this industry has had a huge impact. Through this industry, leisure time is going to be properly evaluated and several entrepreneurs are being created. Therefore, it can be said that it is possible to take Bangladesh far by properly using this industry. Bangladesh's name has emerged in the world through handicrafts markets. Bangladesh's handicrafts not only promise to increase foreign exchange earnings through exports but also empower women. In the international market, the demand for Bangladeshi handicraft products is increasing day by day, even during the pandemic (Shabuj, 2020). The market for handicrafts is now around TK 120 crore annually. At present, 15th Bangladeshi companies are exporting handicrafts to over 20 countries including India, USA, Canada, UK, Germany, Japan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Australia and the Netherlands. The sector directly and indirectly employs over 3 lakh people and 90 percent of them are women. They produce thousands of varieties of handicrafts in Bangladesh and the average price ranges from Tk. 1,000 to TK. 30,000 depending on the design and material (Sohel, 2021). Therefore, there is a demand for handicrafts and related products in the national and international market. There is a great potential to capture the competitive market by tackling all the challenges.

## Methodology

This research is mainly based on primary data. The convenience sampling methods have been used for collection of data because researcher has selected sample based on judgment and availability. Researcher includes 6 expert of branding in this study. Primarily, researcher has interviewed sessions to get the variable how to brand the handicraft products based on expert opinion and literature study. There are expert opinions and existing literature finds four principal variables. These are Handicraft Study, Handicrafts Branding, Handicrafts Promotions, and Handicrafts Branding Petron Association (Figure 1). Under the Handicraft Study, some variables like adding Handicrafts as a subject in syllabus, educate the people regarding handicrafts product, campaign in educational institutions, established Institutions for handicrafts. Under the Handicrafts Branding, some variables like advertisement, sponsoring the international and national events, establish a shop in tourist spots, ambassador resident. Under the Handicraft Promotions, some variables like digital advertising on quality products, organized national and international fairs, invite foreign investors, Handicrafts display in museums have been found. Under the Handicrafts Branding Petron Association, some variables like governmental Handicrafts programs, private sector initiatives, individual initiatives have been found. Based on these variables, researchers create a Likert scale questionnaire for those who are involved in the industry, like entrepreneurs, business executives, owner of shop, marketing people and others. Dhaka, Tangail, Narsingdi, Comilla, Kushtia, Pabna, Joypurhat, Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Jessore, Rangpur, and Sirajganj districts are taken as sample. The total population of the research is approximately 1200. The sample size is 40. Researchers have collected data through structured question. Researchers have analyzed collected data using STATA software and run a multiple regression. Based on the survey result, the researcher determined the key issues identified by the respondents.



**Fig. 1.** Factors affecting branding increase the demand of Handicrafts

Source:author creation.

## Hypothesis

This study considers 4 null hypotheses to be tested. The hypotheses are following:

H1: There is a relationship between handicraft study and branding increase the demand of handicrafts.

H2: There is a relationship between handicraft branding and branding increase the demand of handicrafts.

H3: There is a relationship handicraft promotion and branding increase the demand of handicrafts.

H4: There is a relationship between handicrafts branding patron association and branding increase the demand of handicrafts.

## Data Analysis and Findings

Different demographic data like profession of the respondents, gender of the respondents, respondent's types of business have been discussed.

**Table 1.** Demographic Summary Statistics

Variables	Scales	Freq.	Percent
<b>Profession</b>	Entrepreneur	20	50.00
	Owner of Shop	6	15.00
	Suppliers	4	10.00
	Marketing People	8	20.00
	Others	2	5.00
<b>Total</b>		40	100.00
<b>Types of Business</b>	Kantha	10	25.00
	Nakshi Kantha	10	25.00
	Jamdani	2	5.00
	Shital Pati	1	2.50
	Handloom	4	10.00
	Pottery	2	5.00
	Brassware Industry	6	15.00
	Date Palm Leaf Pati	2	5.00
Others	3	7.50	
<b>Total</b>		40	100.00
<b>Gender</b>	Male	16	40.00
	Female	24	60.00
<b>Total</b>		40	100.00
<b>Dependent Variable: Branding Increase the Demand of Handicrafts</b>			
BIDH	Strongly Disagree	2	5.00
	Disagree	3	7.50
	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	5	12.50
	Agree	20	50.00
	Strongly Agree	10	25.00
<b>Total</b>		40	100.00
<b>Independent Variables:</b>			
HS	Handicraft Study		
HB	Handicraft Branding		
HP	Handicraft Promotion		
HBPA	Handicraft Branding patronized Association		

Source: Calculated on the basis of the field survey.

Researcher divided profession into five parts based on the respondents like entrepreneurs, owner of shop, suppliers, marketing people and others. According to the table 1, it has shown that majority respondent's profession is entrepreneurs. Researchers found that out of total 40 samples, 20 respondents are entrepreneurs, 6 are owner of shops, 4 respondents are suppliers, 8 marketing people and two respondents are others. That is 50% approximately respondents are entrepreneurs 15% are owners of shops, 10% are suppliers, 20% are marketing people and others are 5% in this study. Researchers divided types of business into nine parts based on the respondents like Kantha, Kakshi Kantha, Jamdani, Shital Pati, Handloom, Pottery, Brassware, Date Palm Leaf Pati and others. According to the table 1 it is found that out of total 40 respondents 25% respondents are from Kantha business, 25% from Nakshi Kantha business, 5% from Jamdani, 2.50% from Shital Pati, 10% from Handloom, 5% from Pottery, 15% from Brassware industry, 5% from date Palm Leaf Pati and from others 7.5%. Researchers have included both male and female respondents in this study. Most of the respondents are female. From the table 1, researchers find that out of total 40 respondents, 60% respondents are female and 40% are male respondents in this study. The dependent variable is 'Branding Increase the Demand of Handicrafts. Based on the statement out of 40 respondents, 25% and similarly 50% respondents agree. 12.5% of respondents are neutral. 7.5% respondents disagree and 5% respondents strongly disagree.

Cronbach's Alpha test is considered as a measure of scale reliability. The required value for the acceptance of Cronbach's Alpha test is over 0.70. Otherwise, the value will be considered as questionable or poor (Islam, 2016). Here, the value of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.9240, so this value is reliable. KMO ranges from 0 to 1, but the world over accepted index is over 0.6 for KMO test. Here, the KMO is 0.8242, so this value is reliable (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Cronbach's Alpha and KMO Test

Cronbach's Alpha test	Alpha Value	0.9240	Accepted its over 0.70
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test	KMO Value	0.8242	Accepted its over 0.60

Source: Calculated on the basis of the field survey.

**Measurement of Scaling:** Items are measured with 5 points Likert scale: 1 for Strongly Disagree, 2 for Disagree, 3 for Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 for Agree, and 5 for Strongly Agree.

### Multiple Regression Model Results

Researcher has done all the factor analyses mentioned above for assessing the impact of various dimensions of Branding Handicrafts on Branding Increase the Demand of Handicraft. The variables of interest here in this study for Branding Handicraft are 'Handicraft Study', 'Handicraft Branding', 'Handicrafts Promotion, 'Handicraft Branding Patron Association' as explanatory factors. Branding Increase the Demand of Handicraft has been considered as a dependent factor. The summary statistics of all these variables are in table 1. Multiple Regression Result reveals what extent Branding Handicrafts variables can explain the perception of Branding Increase the Demand of Handicrafts. Table 3 shows the multiple regression results on perceived Branding Increase the Demand of Handicraft and branding handicrafts strategy.

**Table 3.** Multiple Regressions on Perceived Branding Increase the Sales Volume and Branding Strategy for Handicrafts

Variable	Variable Description	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	[95% Conf.	Interval]
HS	Handicraft Study	1.866***	.542	3.44	.764	2.967
HB	Handicraft Branding	1.741***	.601	2.90	.522	2.96
HP	Handicraft Promotion	.758	.575	1.32	-.409	1.926
HBPA	Handicraft Branding patronized Association	-.539	.686	-0.79	-1.933	.854

Constant	1.37***	.28	4.89	.802	1.939
Observation	40				R-Squared
	0.729				

Table 3 (cont.)

Dependent Variable: BIDH (Perceived Branding Increase the Demand of Handicraft)

*Source:* Calculated on the basis of the field survey.

In Table 3, coefficient of Handicrafts Study, one of the Branding Handicrafts Variables, seems significant at 1% level and shows a positive relationship with a coefficient of 1.866. Similarly, Handicrafts Branding exposes positive relation with the coefficient of 1.741 at 1% significance level. It depicts that Handicrafts Branding draw the attention to the potential customer about handicrafts products and the high possibility of increasing the sales volume. However, interestingly, Perceived Handicraft Promotion and Handicraft Branding Patron Association expose no significant result. This may be due to lack of understanding of the adequate promotion process or not getting good results through promotion, but effective promotion never fails. Again, if the government and private institutions come forward, the handicrafts will develop but it is not significant here because the previous experience of the respondents is not good. This empirical model has found to be explaining 72% of the variation perceived Branding Increase the Sales Volume by Handicraft Branding Strategy in table 3 (the R<sup>2</sup> values is 0.729).

## Conclusion and Recommendation

The importance of branding in the development of handicrafts industry is undeniable. Through branding, it can flourish this industry both at home and abroad. Modern generation of people doesn't know or know a little about our handicraft arts and crafts. So first we can teach them about our handicraft culture and the people related to them by starting a campaign, adding handicraft as a subject to study in schools and colleges. We already have dedicated institutions for handicraft and other forms of arts, but only a handful of people attend these institutions. We need to make handicraft a general subject or optional in every course. Proper advertisement needs to be done to encourage people to buy them. It should remind people that all of this was part of their ancestor's lifestyle. Even though the government has started many programs for handicraft and other products such as EPZs and separate handicraft industry, it is still not enough. Now we need the private sectors to take action. In terms of promotional activity, the private sectors can easily outrun the government. They can make an advertisement so much appealing to the public that almost everyone gets convinced. Besides, they must also conduct proper research on the demand for handicraft products. If people can be persuaded, they will buy them. In order to maintain a stable and running industry, financial aid is necessary. So aids like low-interest loans, tax reduction is necessary for keeping entrepreneurs interested in the business. After successfully covering the domestic market, it is time for the international market. We need to do everything mentioned before, but on a broader scale. In order to attract international customers, we must tick their interest. We all know there are a lot of museums dedicated to preserve and restore materials related to culture and heritage. We can also setup similar type of museums in our country or contact those museums to preserve our heritage and culture. Those way foreigners can know about our handicraft products. We can also setup small scale shops that only sell handicraft products in tourist spots. This will at least get the attention of foreign customers. We have to create an interest in international investors and show them we already have a great industry in our country and they won't be disappointed if they invest in our company and we will go internationally. After that, all we have to do is slowly enter the international market as a brand. We cannot expect to enter the international market easily. There will be obstacles to overcome. There will be competition, financial crisis, political disadvantage, laws, environmental barriers, and so forth. In order to create a good brand we need to keep our heads cool and keep a good pace with the help of good organization management, good financial decisions, realizing our SWOT. We can also alter the designs of the products a little to

be suitable for the buyers. Huge promotional activities will be required to maximize sales. For example: sponsoring in sports events, concerts, movies, reality TV shows, general advertisement, and so forth. If we take these steps, we can not only preserve our heritage and culture, but also make a profit out of it. A lot of other countries are already doing this regularly. For example: junk food and fast food is part of the American culture. So they have set up multiple fast-food chains all over the world. It's not too late to save our handicraft culture if we work hard and are smart.

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