

Preserving Tribal Heritage: Marketing Strategies in India

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Abstract

India has its own distinct traditions, languages, and artistic expressions. It has its rich Cultural Heritage. The cultural diversity of the Tribal Community continues to practice their traditions and still under threat due to adoption of other cultures, rapid modernization, and urbanization.

This paper highlights the challenges faced by these communities in preserving their cultural heritage and opportunities that Marketing Strategies can offer.

Hence, the efforts for sustainable development must prioritize the preservation of tribal heritage. Government of India is taking initiatives to give recognition to the tribal people, their arts, handicraft, and culture.

This paper also focuses on the initiatives for the tribal welfare schemes, education and scholarship programmes, healthcare initiatives and economic empowerment programmes, training programmes, which helps the tribal artisans to enhance their skills in their field.

Keywords: Tribes, cultural heritage, marketing strategies, handicraft

Introduction

Tribal society is often referred as “primitive society”. Tribe refers to a group of people who share a common ancestry, culture, language, traditions.

India has its unique rich cultural heritage and traditions. Indian tribal communities are very important part of India wherein rich cultural heritage, unique art forms (pottery decorated with intricate designs that tell stories of ancestors, weaving, jewellery making), music and dance forms (folk songs, traditional dances, instruments), festivals and rituals (harvest festivals, rituals). Heading towards modernization the concept of tribal marketing takes important stage as means to manifests a fine balance between traditions and economic advancement. Different marketing initiatives have been taken to promote tribes of India, there culture and traditions, showcasing their unique crafts, art, and cultural products through various offline and online platforms dedicated tribal markets (e.g. Tribes of India store at various cities and tribes of India online stores even on Amazon).

he government of India has also taken initiative to promote tribal culture by the scheme “Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojna”.

The cultural practices of these communities are the way of life that connects them to their history and environment. Their art and crafts are not merely decorative, they carry meanings and stories that are essential to their cultural identities.

India is a home for diverse range of tribes with their own unique culture, language, and traditions. Due to multiplicity of factors and complexity of problems involved, it is a herculean task to classify tribes into different groups. But still they are also classified on the basis of their territorial distribution, linguistic affiliation, occupation and economy, religious beliefs, cultural contact etc.

Kinds of Tribes in India their Art, Craft and Culture

There are many tribes in India and they are famous for their traditions, art, and craft, briefly some of them are explained.

1. According to regional classification the states of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh occupy a very important place in Tribal India.

M.P. as we all know is the largest amongst the states in terms of geographical area but major segment / area of the state is under forest cover which is one of the important reasons for tribal concentration.

- a) The **Bihls** (largest tribe in India) occupies the substantial are of M.P., Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat. It has a rich and unique culture. The Bhilala sub-division is known for its Pithora painting, and Ghoomar is a traditional folk dance of the Bhil tribe.
 - b) The **Gonds** occupies the second place. They are known to the people because of their colorful youth dormitories. Their art is quite different because of intricate patterns and designs based on nature and mythology. They primarily use natural colors made from charcoal, leaves, and flowers for their art work
2. Uttar Pradesh has traditionally been Centre of diverse castes, tribes, communities, religions and traditions. The tribes prevalent in Uttar Pradesh
- a) **Tharu** people have a rich cultural heritage, mainly in art and dance. Tharu art is usually seen on the walls of their homes in villages, where they create murals using natural pigments. This art form is not just decorative; it is a cultural expression that preserves the traditions and identity of the Tharu people.
 - b) **Bhoksatribe** of Uttar Pradesh is famous for its ironwork, who traditionally make iron tools and implements.
3. Bihar and Jharkhand Contains a tribal belt covering some of the largest tribes of the country such as:
- a) **Oraon** tribe is rich in its folk dance and wall paintings which depicts their gotra.
 - b) **Santhal** are the largest and one of the oldest tribes in India. They are perfect in the art of hunting and sericulture.
4. Andhra Pradesh has got a large tribal population.
- a) **Koya** tribe is famous for their art work like, Bamboo furniture, including mats for fencing, dust pans, and baskets
 - b) **Chenchu** tribes' traditional way of livelihood is hunting and gathering.

Cultural Heritage of Indian Tribal Communities

Tribal communities have unique rich cultural heritage. Their cultural practices are a way of life that connects them to their history and environment and are vital part of their identity. It includes

1. *Traditional art and Craft-*

It is an essential part of tribal culture which each tribe having its own art forms like pottery (decorated with intricate designs that tell stories of their ancestors), weaving (each tribe has its own patterns representing their identity), jewellery making (handcrafts pieces using local materials often with spiritual significance)

2. *Music and Dance forms-*

They are the most important part of tribal culture as they serve a means of expression and community bonding with folk songs (they often narrate historical events), traditional dance (every tribe has its own dance forms which is performed during special occasions showcasing their connection to the nature), instruments (Dhol is often used during performances)

3. *Festivals and rituals reflect their beliefs and traditions like harvest festivals, cultural exchange etc.*

Challenges faced by Indian Tribal Communities

Indian tribal community being a vital part of the society faces significant challenges that affect their socio-economic and cultural well-being. To enumerate the major ones-

1. **Land Alienation-** more than 80% people of these tribes are engaged in Agriculture and so the tribals are emotionally attached with their lands. Agriculture being the main source of livelihood these communities have been displaced from their ancestral lands which has ultimately led to the loss of cultural and traditional heritage as they had to adopt the new methods of living and forgo their traditional ways of livelihood.
2. **Poverty and unemployment-** these communities are the most backwards and marginalized groups in India with poverty on the higher side.
3. **Lack of Access to Education and Healthcare** – the average health of the tribal people is not very bad but it becomes often chronic after repeated infections. Major infection is caused by drinking contaminated water because of poor water supply in their area. It is often seen in many interior areas, tribals are reluctant to come forward for medical treatment because they have their own system of diagnosis and cure. Healthcare facilities are often inadequate, resulting in higher rates of diseases and malnutrition among the tribal population.
Education sector is no less many tribal children do not have the opportunity to go to school which ultimately leads to very low literacy rate.
4. **Economic Marginalization-** almost all the tribal communities rely on the traditional livelihood like agriculture and handicrafts but they face competition from large

industries this leads to limited economic opportunities for these tribes to even survive.

Not only this modernization has significantly affected their unique practices and skills which instead of being passed from generations is now declining. The push for development often comes at a cost to the environment. Deforestation is also an issue that arises from industrial activity in tribal areas.

Marketing Strategies in Preserving Tribal Heritage

Tribal heritage has miscellaneous approach and marketing plays a vital role in increasing awareness, giving recognition and patronage.

Different Marketing Strategies helps in different ways in the enhancement and development of tribal culture.

1. **Digital Marketing and social media:** We need to utilize social media platforms to promote tribal arts, their culture through stories to the mass audience. Develop beautifully written content about the tribal heritage and float in the social media platforms like Facebook, twitter etc, use hashtags to increase the visibility of followers.
 - a. Digital marketing can help in preparing documentaries and develop websites to educate people about the tribal heritage.
 - b. Even the travel bloggers, photographers can influence the people by posting their findings in the social media.
 - c. There should be dedicated online platforms exclusively for selling tribal art and crafts, allowing direct access to audience from all over the world.
 - d. Live demonstrations should be host online in form of workshops where artisans can demonstrate their craft-making process.
2. **Content Marketing and Influencer Marketing:** Create content to signify the complicate techniques and the cultural significance behind the different art and crafts. Partners with the social media influencers can promote tribal products with the elegantly written content about the tribal culture.
3. **Storytelling:** This is the oldest way to get people engaged in active listening, thus by sharing the stories of history and heritage of India and cultural heritage of tribes of India, people can be educated about its significance and importance of preserving the tribal traditions and culture.

4. **Youth engagement:** It's an initiative by the government to engage young people from the tribal communities in work, sports and provide them opportunities to learn and educate others and participate in preservation of their culture and traditions.
5. **Physical Marketing:** It is the traditional method of marketing like direct sales, trade shows, advertisements through pamphlets, billboards etc. physical marketing offers tangible experience which is impossible in digital marketing. Thus, few examples of physical marketing are:
 - a. Tribal craft fairs may be organized across different regions to advertise a variety of tribal art forms and provide direct interaction with artisans.
 - b. Through exhibitions at the museums and featuring tribal artwork, jewelry.
 - c. Another way is to set up small retail outlets in high-traffic areas to introduce tribal products to the mass.
 - d. Integrate tribal art demonstrations into local festivals and cultural events.
6. **Branding and Packaging:** By creating unique brand identity for product and services branding and packaging of the products help to promote the tribal art and culture.
7. **Education and Awareness among the youth:**
 - a) Organize workshops in schools and colleges to educate and increase awareness about tribal art and culture.
 - b) Enhance interaction between tribal communities and urban populations for better understanding and appreciation.
8. **Cultural Festivals and Events:** Large scale tribal festivals like "Aadi Mahotsav" can be hosted to celebrate various dances, music, cuisine, and tribal art forms. Collaboration with the various tribes of India to organize small regional festival to highlight unique tribal traditions and culture.
9. **Tribal Tourism:** To promote tribal culture tourism plays a very important role. Collaborate with tourism boards to develop tribal tourism circuits that highlight art and culture. It is necessary to develop responsible tourism packages that may involve local tribal communities as guides and performers, depicting their traditional practices, crafts, and narrate about their culture. Establish community-based tourism initiatives where revenue is directly shared with tribal communities.
10. **Government Initiatives:** The government of India has taken initiatives to preserve the rich tribal heritage.

- a) The Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY) : It is a programme that focuses on the improvement of the lives of tribal communities in India. The programme is also known as Van Dhan Vikas Yojana (VDVY). This program helps the tribal communities form mass and process forest produce. Even the program provides market linkages for tribal products through online platforms and other channels.
- b) TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India): This is another initiative of the government, developer and service provider, the objective of TRIFED is socio-economic development of tribal people in the country by way of marketing development of the tribal products on which their livelihood depends.
- c) Policy recommendation: It is important to assist the policies that support the preservation and promotion of tribal art and culture.

Tribes India Retail Outlets and on E-Commerce Platforms

Our government has taken vast initiative to promote and uplift the Tribal communities of India.

To acknowledge the unique jewelry, authentic handloom and exquisite art and craft various exclusive retail stores has been set up as “**Tribes India**” across the country. It gives wider exposure to the handcrafted tribal art, craft, organic products and culture.

TRIFED’s (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India) efforts for upgrading tribal income providing support to marketing development activities. This includes buying and marketing of handicrafts, handloom, and organic and natural produce from tribal artisans from different tribal regions of our country.

TRIFED plays an important role as a connector by providing platform where tribal artisans feel free to put up their masterpieces and produce for sale.

The boom of E-Commerce has opened a new world for the organizations and people to have wider connections. It is the future of retail trade. To make the tribal products available across the country and worldwide and to get provide more benefits to the tribal people, TRIFED went online (www.tribesindia.com). Just with a single click the tribal products can find larger audience in India as well as abroad.

To facilitate art lovers, ease their shopping experiences, e-commerce has made arrangements for buying products made by various tribes of India while sitting at their homes, ensuring genuine and authentic tribal products at their door steps. The online portals also promote Tribes India as a brand for tribal products.

The Union Minister for tribal affairs earlier launched ‘e-tribes: Tribes India’ an initiative for digital commerce at Tribes India outlet at New Delhi. In this initiative the minister also launched the Tribes India banner on *Snapdeal, Amazon, Paytm, flip kart* for marketing of tribal products through e-commerce portals assuming this to be a game changer for tribal artisans.

In order to ensure holistic participation of various sectors in the upliftment of the tribal population of the country, TRIFED has started industry associations also such as **FICCI, CII, ASSOCHAM and DICCI**. This is done to ensure that TRIFED’S team of tribal artisans from different parts of the country are in line with the current industry standards and ensure higher efficiency in the execution of the entire process of development and marketing of the handmade goods sourced from different parts of the country.

TRIFED in association with FICCI(Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries) is engaged in formulating plans for the promotion of tribal handicrafts and handloom products at national and international level. FICCI plans to contribute towards a meaningful change in the lives of the tribal craftsmen and craftswomen of India.

FICCI also showcase the tribal art, culture, cuisine at its mega events, exhibitions all over the world for greater integration of tribal culture especially focusing on the areas of food, processing, tourism, luxury and lifestyle.

TRIFED- FICCI association is planning to submit separate proposals to undertake joint products under the Market Access Initiative(MAI) Scheme of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for boosting the export of tribal products and organizing journalists visitprogrammes to be undertaken in identified Indian states with rich tribal potential for carrying the story of tribal product art and culture. Not only this it is also planning to organize capacity building and design workshops for necessary skilling interventions which will help the tribal products enter the global market.

CII (Confederation of Indian Industry)

TRIFED has entered into an institutional partnership with CII. It is engaged with the brainstorming a fresh approach to promote the handicraft and handloom produced by them. They are sharing CII trade fairs across the country. CII delegations all over the country will visit TRIFED -Tribes India showrooms for selecting customized gift

options products like file, folders, eatables etc.. for their meetings, workshops and conferences. TRIFED has also shared its design studio with CII so that the organization can select tribal paintings for decorating their offices.

ASSOCHAM (Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India)

To popularize tribal products at global level TRIFED in association with ASSOCHAM is promoting trade of high-quality handloom and handicrafts products.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is seen that tribal marketing is based on emotion and preserving tribal heritage is necessary for promoting cultural diversity in India and here marketing strategies play a significant role in this. Tribal groups have a deep connection to their land and nature. But issues like land alienation, lack of education, health problems make it hard for them to survive. To help these communities it is very important to focus on sustainable development that acknowledges their needs and rights.

Improvement needs to be done on education and healthcare to empower these communities.

Tribal land rights need to be strengthened and economic opportunities needs to be promoted through skill development. More collaborations and partnerships should be undertaken to promote tribal heritage. More funding by the government towards preservation of tribal heritage should be done.

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