

EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PROMOTING TRADITIONAL TEXTILE OUTLETS IN INDIA: A CASE OF KHADI PRODUCTS

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Abstract

History of Khadi Board is twinned with Indian history as it was a part of ‘Swadeshi Andolan’ to boycott ‘Videshi’ products. It initiated home-made dress material made of cotton. Though it had a twinkling history, the burgeoning level of Khadi Board in the post-independence era was flat or down sloped due to the lukewarm attitude of bureaucratic administrators of Khadi Board. This cause decline in awareness and preference among GEN Z . It reduce both brand equity of Khadi products and market share as well. Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) and Local Areas Social Media (LASM) are the two strategies prominent is social media in brand promotion and advertisement. But Khadi Board lack both to attract young generation.

Key words : Khadi board, Social Media, . Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM), Local Areas Social Media (LASM) , Gen Z

Introduction

Communication among different layers of stakeholders in a business whether it is internal or with external stake holders and the modes of communication are important in sustainability of a firm, especially in communicating with market participants. Social Media Communication has substituted all traditional modes of customer communications, like brochures, catalogues, fliers etc in physical form. Costumes are inevitable part in life in providing us safety to our body, give a face-lift in appearance and boost personality as well.

Khadi Board was established as per the bill ‘The Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act, 1956’ to provide training to the artisans and rural entrepreneurs and to encourage village industries. The criteria specified in the bill to support businesses with one lakh rupees investment (in hill area, one and a half lakh) and use methods without using electricity. Ministry of Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises of Government of India had introduced ‘Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI) on August 1, 2014 to assist for development of Development of Khadi, Village and Coir Industries. The objective of this scheme is to make the traditional industries and artisans to gain long term sustainability, sustained employment, and marketability of the products. It assists to provide common facilities, improved tools and equipment for artisans, training for artisans to build innovated and traditional skills, improved technologies, advanced processes, market intelligence and new models of public-private partnerships to regenerate traditional industries. The marketing and promotion of Khadi products are mainly done through exhibitions, khadi displays etc.

Khadi Board and CoVID 19

Khadi board had introduced two layered, hand spun and hand-woven khadi fabric masks for CoVID 19 protection and helped the artisans to earn wages. The Khadi board aimed to provide 12 lakhs masks from 2400 active Khadi institutions. Even when the world was shut down, the khadi artisans managed to serve the world with most critical product, mask.

The competitive advantage of Khadi Board is its large number of artisans who act as independent production cells with its limited capacity and skill, but Khadi board develops market through its initiatives. The competitive edge of Khadi products is its 'chemical free and natural' material compared to the commercial products (Saxena, 2020).

KRDP (Khadi Revival and Development Program)

KRDP focussed to revive Khadi Sector to ensure income for artisans and weavers and to reposition Khadi linking market requirements. Asian Development Bank support KRDP program to bring up Khadi as Global brand and to provide support to five identified traditional village industries such as homemade paper, honey, herbal and cosmetics, leather and agro-food processing industry.

Social Media handles of Khadi Board

The MSME has trending accounts in 'Twitter, Face Book, Instagram and You Tube. The impressions in Twitter account titled 'twitter.com/minmsme' is : 21,060 while the same for facebook.com/minmsme is Impressions: 6160 in May. The journal 'MSME Insider' brings out the developments in Khadi board activities, success stories, social media trends in twitter, facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. The 'twitter.com/minmsme' and 'facebook.com/minmsme' bring the latest initiatives in MSME development , especially focussing on the development of small industries in different platforms like national level seminars for developing awareness on entrepreneurship and self- employment as the MSMEs are the clusters of entrepreneurs engaged in production.

Khadi Institution Management Information System: e- marketing of Khadi Products

KIMIS (Khadi Institution Management Information System) is a single umbrella e marketing system which can be accessed from anywhere in the country for sale and purchase of Khadi Village industries products. The objective of KIMIS is to provide a e-catalogue of Khadi products and do buy or sell by-passing mediators.

The prominent textile products are classified into five. Viz, cotton, silk, muslin, wool and polyvastra. The Khadi products have prominent share in export as well, especially in cotton textiles (Busenna & Reddy, 2021)

Leading online retail sites that sell Khadi products

www.ekhadiindia.com is the official retail online website for online buying of khadi products, listed in 11 categories viz. accessories (belt, bag, etc), beauty (oil, creams, shampoos, etc), essentials (sanitisers, handwash and mask), fabric, gift and toys, grocery, khadi home, men, premium apparel, wellness, and women.

The online trading is done through 'www.aarmart.com' of Khadi Village Industries Commission as well and all sorts of products under Khadi Board are displayed in this website. The products in websites include, home and décor, clothing, home-linen, handloom mark, India

handloom brand, and artisan market. "Aarmart" is a unique online market that introduced bargaining or negotiation between buyer and seller to sell unique, exclusive or antique products. It persuades the customers who liked a product not to leave the search due to price, but to proceed to buy through online bargaining with sellers.

The www.khadinatural.com is a website of Khadi Natural, manufactures of Khadi Natural herbal shampoo's, Natural and Glycerine soaps, and Paraben free cleansers. It exports to 25 countries and sells in 18 states in India as well. It functions under Khadi Village Industries Commission.

Khadi products are available in online platforms like Amazon, Flip kart, Shop Clues, Purpll , Nykaa, Appollo Pharmacy, etc also.

Social Media Marketing and Customer Awareness

Social Media Marketing has emerged as one of the mode of promotions as the use of smart phones and increase in popularity for social media sites among the subscribers. Ministry of Micro-Small-Medium Enterprises use twitter.com/minmsme and facebook.com/minmsme as a platform for updating the activities intended to promote awareness on entrepreneurship and Khadi products. Social Media Marketing is a form of Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) in which subscribers can share their experience and views open in social media. The content can be informative, entertaining, and promotional to develop awareness among people (Aydin, Uray, & Silaharoglu, 2021). The Location Based Social Media (LBSM) helps to learn demographical pattern of social media subscribers and helpful to understand the local consumption (Ye, Zhao, Nguyen, & Wang, 2019). Internet is the backbone of social media and the main uses of internet include, mail (33%), surfing (26.8%), chatting (18.7%), social media (17%), and other (4.5%). 95.7% of the internet users have subscriptions in any of social media sites. It is a platform for promotion of many products and services. Social media is an effective tool for brand promotion (Yapa, 2017) as well (Siddiqui & Singh, 2016).

A few types of sites are, social networking sites (SNS), creativity works sharing sites, business networking sites, collaborative websites, etc. In Social Networking Sites, users or subscribers make their sites and contents to share their views. It also helps to promote brand, increase sales and cost of promotion (Sadek & Elwy, 2018).

This research analyses whether social media campaigns reach the target customers and their influence on their buying decisions

Need of research

Khadi Board use online retailing, Khadi outlets and exhibition centres for selling Khadi products. Still, the acceptance of Khadi products is not increasing. Hence, this paper analyses the effect of 'Location Based Social Media (LBSM)' on demand of Khadi products in local areas or in closes circles. Khadi Board uses social media like twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube for the promotional and awareness on Khadi products like seminars, entrepreneurial programs etc. But how effective these programs in reaching the difference of Khadi products from other commercial products to the customers. This is the research gap to be analysed.

Statement of Problem

The promotional and awareness activities of Khadi Board are formal and structured. But the

role as a carrier of key advantages of Khadi Products to the young generation is still in nascent stage. Hence, this research analyses the understanding of Khadi products, the online retail network of Khadi Products and social media updates in customers.

Research Methodology

The data was collected using a structured questionnaire whose validity and reliability was tested using test and re-test method. The respondents of this research are of different ages, income, education, and occupation and the number of respondents were 393.

In this research, the scale used is 11 point scale (0-10 point scale) to understand the variation more vividly.

The data is analysed at descriptive level and inferred based using mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis.

Objectives of research

- To understand the effect of social media updates on use Khadi Products
- To analyse the effect of online retailing on use of Khadi products
- To analyse effect of showrooms and displays on use of Khadi products

Data Analysis

Demographic description of respondents

Table 1

Demographic variable	Percentage	Demographic variable	Percentage
Age in years		Use of Khadi Products	
18-36	23	Yes	28
36-54	35	No	72
54-72	27	Response location wise	
72<	1	Urban	29
Gender		Semi urban	39
Male	46	Rural	32
	54	Response: retail formats of Khadi outlets	
Female		Online	14
Education		Exhibitions	31
School	24	Show rooms	17
Graduation	32	A combination of online and exhibition or showrooms	21
	18		
Post-Graduation		Visting of handles of Khadi board Media	
Vocational training	26	Yes	14
Visit to Khadi exhibitions		No	86
Yes	31		
No	69		

The demographic data itself reveal that the respondents who visited the social media handles of ministry of micro, small and medium industries (minmsme) is just 14% while those visited the exhibitions or emporiums are only 31%. An 83% of the respondents aware of the outlets or online platforms or exhibitions, showrooms and a combinations of any two formats while 17% of the respondents do not aware of Khadi websites or social media.

Table 2 : Awareness on Khadi Products, and awareness activities

Psychological Constrains	Mean	Standard Deviation
Awareness on nearest Khadi retail format	3.2	1.5
Awareness on Khadi products	4.5	1.6
Natural ingredients of Khadi Products	3.6	1.5
Khadi Products give life to many artisans	6.3	1.8
Frequency of visiting social media handles of Ministry of MSMEs	3.6	1.5
Frequency of buying Khadi Products	3.3	1.1
Preference towards Khadi Products	4.9	1.2
Awareness of different dress materials of Khadi Products	4.3	2.2
Awareness on other products of Khadi Board	5.2	2.3
Confidence in Quality of products	7.9	1.2

The data shows that the Khadi brand or products are not familiar to the respondents. The multiple phases of promotion or awareness development is not influencing the purchase decisions. The posts in the social media like twitter or Facebook are of event promotion or conference information etc. These sorts of information may not generate in interest in subscribers who are not associated or interested in these products. Instead, an effective strategy to attract neutral respondents who are not present users of Khadi Products to understand the Khadi Board, and its projects as well as products.

Online retailing of Khadi Products

The three online retail sites of Khadi Board are, www.ekhadiindia.com , www.aarmart.com and www.khadinatural.com . Only 29% of the respondents had visited these online retail sites at least once. Remaining respondents are not aware that the khadi products are available in exclusive online retail sites. A 41% of the respondents used to buy Khadi Products through online retail sites like, Amazon, flip kart, etc.. In Amazon, Flipkart etc, products of other brands are also displaced causing a competition. Hence, an effective product and brand promotion initiatives are important.

Table 3: Customer perception on Khadi products available

Psychological Constrains	Mean	Standard Deviation

Availability of the product that is searched	3.9	1.7
Choice	4.7	1.4
Price	5.2	2.5
Product certification	6.6	1.8
Available discount	4.6	1.7
Quality	6.3	1.6
Quality certification	5.9	2.2
Product information	4.6	3.2
Satisfaction level	6.2	2.3
Willingness to recommend to others	6.9	2.2
Product Uniqueness	7.2	1.6

Product availability and choice of products are limited, and it is a disadvantage comparing to other brands. Uniqueness and Quality are the key factors in product promotion.

Table 4: Customer perception on Khadi products available

Psychological Constrains	Mean	Standard Deviation
Accessories	5.9	2.7
Beauty	4.7	1.6
Essentials	5.6	2.5
Fabric	7.6	1.9
Gift & Toys	2.6	1.4
Grocery	3.3	1.9
Khadi Home	7.9	1.2
Men	5.6	3.4
Premium apparel	6.9	2.1
Wellness	6.3	1.2
Women	5.2	1.6

The data shows that the customer preference is high for accessories, fabric, Khadi home, premium apparel and wellness. The preference is less for gift and toys , grocery, beauty and women products.

It is interesting to note that the items having lower preference have strong alternative brands exists.

Discussion

The article is based on descriptive analysis alone based on, mean and standard deviation as the distribution of response about mean and the value of mean itself is a clear indication of the trend of responses. A ten-point scale is used in this research to understand the variation in responses.

A low mean of awareness on nearest Khadi retail format is a alarming sign, especially among

young generation (Gen Z). The pandemic has compelled to witness a paradigm shift in mode of purchase from retail shops to online sales to break the chain to ensure social distancing and long lock downs. The three online retail sites became prominent. The Khadi Board website shows that it had good orders for sanitisers and masks during pandemic and state governments-initiated purchase of these products. But this momentum was not seen among online customers as the demand for non-khadi sanitisers and masks were high on amazon, flip kart etc.

The social commitment of Khadi and their objective of promoting quality and un-adultized product are not reached to public. The promotional tools must emphasize this uniqueness to develop awareness on real mission of Khadi Board though it played a vital role during independence activities, especially ‘swadeshi andolan’. But, in post-independence, the Khadi board lost charm and remained as a ‘ rural development plan’ and was under the sickness of ‘Bureaucratic slowness and non-responsiveness’ though it could generate a lot employment opportunities for artisans, weavers and farmers. The focus is more on entrepreneurial development and fund usage than developing an effective market along with Government orders.

Though the online retail works are strong, they are not popular in Gen Z who use internet, social media, and online markets. The content and presentation must be designed to attract on line customers , especially adding more visual and videos of products in social media.

Conclusion

The Khadi Board has a long history, may be as the first mode of ‘social cause’ to boycott foreign products during independence war and a public involved manufacturing platform that can generate employment to millions of artisans, farmers and weavers. The promotional campaigns are not sharp enough to attract young generation. In this competitive market, Khadi products face latency as they are not promoted in the right track. Reduction is preference gap among Gen Z must be the first priority for Khadi Board. The ‘aur market’, a bargain-based initiative contain very low product range than regular website. This reduce the attraction to ‘aur market’. Though discounts are given in a proportionate way, the information is not conveyed to the customers. In brief, the Khadi board has to redesign its promotional strategy that the market share of the products increases.

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