ABSTRACT

Building a future for Indian crafts demands a coherence of heritage and economics. Most often debates focus on either cultural or commercial issues, seldom on the special need to integrate both. This study is mainly taken with the following objectives:

1. To understand the export problems faced by the Handicraft units of Kerala and to gauge the prospects of exports from these industries.
2. To suggest measures to improve the production and marketing of the handicraft industry in Kerala.
3. To identify the Crafts of Kerala that have export potential.
4. To identify the nontraditional markets for exports of handicrafts from Kerala.

The main problems that had been identified through the study, for the exports of Handicrafts from Kerala are:

1. Low critical mass of production
2. Low investments in fixed assets like machinery and tools.
3. Low working capital
4. Inadequate training of skills
5. Inadequate financial support
6. Inadequate and irregular supply of raw materials
7. Lack of organised marketing setup
8. Environmental problems connected to wooden handicrafts

There is good prospects of exports of bellmetal crafts, wooden crafts, cane and bamboo products and fibre products from Kerala to traditional markets like Europe and U.S.A. and to non traditional markets like Japan, South Asia and Middle East.

The main suggestions for developing exports of handicrafts from Kerala include:
1. Continuous and regular supply of raw materials
2. Adequate credit to small entrepreneurs
3. Popularise new designs
4. Training of skills to new entrepreneurs
4. Formation of clusters for various handicrafts
5. Development of marketing channels
6. Exhibitions within and outside the country

There is a scope for doing future research on similar crafts in neighboring states also.