Chapter 7
Findings, Suggestions and Conclusion

Marketing is a task of creating, promoting and delivering goods and services to consumers and businesses. The aim of marketing, apart from making selling superfluous also helps to know and understand the customer so well that the product or service fits him and sells itself. Handloom industry in India is an ancient cottage industry with a decentralized set up. It has proved to be a source of livelihood to millions of Indians, while many millions of people are depending upon the subsidiary occupations connected with the industry. With the passage of time the handloom products need the tactics of marketing and not selling to compete with the present market trends. In India, it is the handloom industry that is the most important amongst hundreds of small-scale industries. During the period of British rule in India, the handloom industry suffered a major set back. The British Government ruling in India was naturally more interested to make Indian markets outlets for products manufactured in England. Hence, every effort was administered to diminish and subside the Indian handloom industry. Post-independence, with the adoption of various policies during the five-year plans, the Indian handloom industry saw rays of hope. Assam has the largest concentration of weavers in India. Sualkuchi, of Kamrup district, has been identified as the most weaver concentrated area within the State. Handloom weaving is inexorably linked with the culture and tradition of Assam.
7.1 The findings of the present research study

1. Handloom weaving is an important and expanding industry in many districts of Assam. The exquisite designs on handloom fabrics determine the priority in position of demand. This factor holds true for both domestic and international markets of handloom products. It has been rightly remarked that a traditional design is an anthropologist's delight. It is also true that traditional designs are part of the cultural history of the people. Customers of different age groups look for designs that meet their tastes and preferences. The young shoppers look for patterns and designs that are fancy and modern. Whereas, the weavers of Sualkuchi are almost stuck to weaving only traditional motifs and patterns. Hence, to increase the market share, a little thought and modernization on the existing designs are required.

2. The handloom weaving industry of is deeply rooted in the socio-economic and cultural life of folk of Sualkuchi—the prominent silk weaving centre of Assam. There is no unanimously accepted opinion as regard the origin of the silk weaving industry but many historians suggest that different varieties of silkworms were discovered in Assam. Again, some historians are of opinion that it was the products woven at Sualkuchi that gained upper hand in the royal wardrobe of the Moghuls. The handloom weavers of Assam and that of Sualkuchi mainly suffered a lot under British rule. After independence, the Indian Government gave fair attention to the problems of weavers by giving special importance to the industry in different five-year plans.
Numerous institutions and boards like All India Handloom Board, Indian Institute of Handloom Technology and All India Handloom Fabrics Marketing Co-operative Society were established for the handloom industry.

3. Handloom weaving culture is Assam's heritage. The geographical condition, ethnicity and historical connections, singly or in combination, determine the economic, social and cultural activities—in a word the lifestyle of the people inhabiting the area, including their eating habits, daily round of activities, festivals and particularly the way they dress ordinarily and on special occasions as also how they weave them. Thus it is handloom, which gives an insight into the way of life of people. However, with the passage of time the prevailing fame of Sualkuchi’s handloom products are not being able to cope with new products entrant from other places of Assam into the local market.

4. Handloom fabrics woven at Sualkuchi are quite superior in quality. Even then the weavers are not being able to meet the local market demand, as there is not much technology changeover in the tools that they use while weaving. The weavers of Sualkuchi use only the fly shuttle loom where it takes three days to weave out ten meters of cloth. Upgradation of technology is a must for the handloom industry of Sualkuchi. Without which it will be unable to defend its heritage against competitors. The reluctance of the weavers should be removed and risk-taking ability should be encouraged for technology conversions. The irregularities observed in the warp or weft, the knots and the
iridescence need to be uniform to step aside as better product, which is possible only through higher version of technology.

5. The practice of handloom weaving is very old at Sualkuchi. But mode of weaving, designs, colours selection have not been upgraded much. The weavers, who are mostly illiterate or semi literate do not have any technical background to increase the methods of colouring, dyeing and designing. They have learnt the art of weaving by watching their parents and elders. In spite of being reputed for handloom weaving, Sualkuchi does not have its own calendaring and dyeing machineries.

6. In Sualkuchi, emphasize is only on weaving activity. The problem of availability of raw materials, which have become chronic, is not much thought of. It is yarn which is the basic raw material, that accounts for a considerable proportion of the total cost of production of handloom fabrics. In handloom industry of Sualkuchi mostly Muga and Mulberry yarn are required. Eri cloths are not vigorously woven in Sualkuchi like the other two items. However, the production of Muga has not increased proportionately with the rise in demand for it; rather it is on the decline due to felling of Muga worm feeding trees (Som and Soalu) for the purpose of getting more cultivable land. This results in steep rise in price of Muga cocoons and Muga yarn respectively. Similarly, the Mulberry silk yarn is also bought from Mysore and Bangalore. The cloths woven at Sualkuchi out of these yarn are sold in the name of "Assam Silk." The knowledge of non-availability of required amount of Mulberry silk yarn in Assam by the dealers of Mysore and Bangalore
make them charge exorbitant prices for yarn. Similarly, the art threads used while weaving are bought from Surat of Gujarat State.

7. The production of required yarn is not readily available because the farmers associated with the farming of such yarn plants have their own say. These farmers do not get a steady market all round the year and lack of adequate incentives from the State government is another factor. Most of these farmers are easy prey for middlemen and hawkers and thereby get exploited.

8. Both male and female weavers at Sualkuchi, irrespective of status, caste and creed, carry out weaving activities. The weavers very eagerly consider handloom weaving as a proud privilege. The weavers are mostly utilizing their skill to produce fabrics for women in particular. They fail to foresight that just a little mixing and matching of patterns, dyes and colours could create modern designs in non-traditional fabrics which would create bigger Indian and foreign markets for both genders.

9. The exposure of facts of Muga yarns—that of its immense possibilities and potentials, the Muga yarn and its fabric has become much sought after dress material even in the international arena. But environmental pollution has hampered the culture of Muga cocoons and growing of Mulberry trees and this has become a threatening aspect. Hence, the real scenario of Muga rearing in Assam is in jeopardy. Particularly in Sivasagar district of upper Assam, due to exploration work for natural gas, Muga rearing is suffering the most. Due to adverse change in environment, the chlorophyll of the leaves get depleted thereby affecting the feeding process of silkworms.
10. The handloom weaving activity has been mainly confined to the illiterate or semi-literate persons. It has been observed that except a few most of the educated family members of the traditional weaves' families have not kept weaving as future career prospect or subsidiary occupation. Only a handful of educated family members are willing to carry forward the tradition. The low return from investment in handloom weaving in today's market and losses during slack seasons (June to September) are the main reasons for such attitude towards weaving culture.

11. The handloom industry of Sualkuchi is also facing dearth of adequate skilled local weavers. The industry mostly relies on hired weavers who come from rural areas of Assam to Sualkuchi looking for work. Certain problems do arise for the loom owners after hiring these weavers. The hired weavers would work for a few months in a loom and after that taking some money as advance from loom owners they go home for good. In some case, these hired weavers take leave for any festive occasion and they go almost for a stretch of 25/30 days. Assam has two main Bihu-Magh Bihu & Rongali Bihu and Durga puja. If these three festivals are considered, than these hired weavers work for nine months in a year. This causes considerable loss to loom owners, as the loom remains idle.

12. Due to problems created by hired weavers or effect of slack seasons loom remain idle which results in loss for both weavers and loom owners. It is mostly during slack seasons, that the weavers, who are not under co-operative fold are exploited by the middlemen. During the
course of study it has been found that the weavers do not want to divulge at what cost they sell their products to middlemen. From the information gathered, during slack seasons (June-September), when the demand for traditional products decrease the weavers get pushed by circumstances to sell their products with even lower than normal market price.

13. Publicity and advertisements are still in the back burner for handloom industry of Sualkuchi. Publicity helps to attract buyers both within and outside the country. Apart from hoardings, websites are to be developed, organize frequent buyers and sellers meet, exhibitions and fairs must be organized by promotional and developmental organisations with adequate support from the government.

14. The handloom industry of Sualkuchi has also been inhibited in its growth mainly due to its weakness in marketing of products. Here, in Sualkuchi, the concept of marketing is seen as sales and distribution phenomenon. Selling has completely overlapped the core concept of marketing. Market research, product development, promotion and understanding customer need are yet to be understood and step into by the weavers. The benefits of market research like acceptability of product design and colour; means for productivity enhancements of the artisans/weavers through better tools and techniques and incorporating certain methods to improve the supply chain management to help in reducing the marketing cost are yet to be imbibed by the weaver sector of Sualkuchi.
15. The systematic marketing, that arranges all marketing activities in an integrated manner so that all the right from understanding customers behaviour to building relationship with customer is directed towards a unified objectives of marketing the product, is absent in the handloom industry of Sualkuchi.

16. The handloom industry of Sualkuchi has been facing several general as well as marketing problems that have hindered its growth. The marketing problems are more serious than the general ones. Even with such constraints, weavers require training and programmes for skill upgradation. The talent of the weavers is to be honed with such facilities that are not available at Sualkuchi handloom industry.

17. The new and young weavers' want more production and more earnings. Hence sentimental attachment to hand weaving will ultimately be overtaken by power-loom. Customers want better designed and quality products. In reality, hand woven or power-loom woven is not the main criteria once the cloths fulfills desire of the customers. The older generation of weavers take power-loom as a threat but it is a distinct possibility in a non-distinct future.

18. The problem of proper financial facilities is quite deep rooted. This resulted in lack of proper functioning for weavers' co-operative societies. Banks require many formalities to be observed which become a real pain for the loan seekers. Often due to shortage of securities weavers are not able to get loans from the banks.
19. Managerial ability to enhance professional management and marketing in the handloom sector of Sualkuchi has become mandatory. Without it the existing market can be carried on, but an environment of healthy competitive market cannot be ensured.

It is marketing and upgradation of technology that will help to overcome prevailing loopholes of the handloom industry. Simultaneously shortage and delay of raw materials especially yarn should be avoided, if not totally eliminated, through bulk storage and proper requirement estimation by respective weavers or societies.

7.2 Suggestions

The Sualkuchi handloom industry has occupied a place of pride in the socio-economic and cultural life of people of Assam. But the industry is facing lot of serious problems that have already been discussed. The handloom industry needs to be organized on proper footings to make is self-dependent, provide better scope of income and employment and also a source of earning foreign exchange rate. While preparing for the study, it has been found that to some extent the Directorate of Handlooms & Textile, Government of Assam has failed to create the necessary ambience in handloom industry that would have attracted the youths or new generation to take the Sualkuchi handloom industry on a more commercial and professional dimension. The following suggestions are put forward after considering all the findings in the study:
1. A full-fledged survey purely on different aspects of marketing of handloom products is necessary for assessment of existing situation and the future prospects.

2. Handloom weaving should be no longer see and learn art. Different training programmes should be implemented as regard weaving, designs, market survey and management. There has to be genuine concerned efforts towards skill upgradation on part of the weavers. Most weavers may have inherited a talent for weaving. However, skill has to be developed by training and practice. Most of the weavers require proper training, not only honing their weaving skills, but also in aesthetic perceptions, productivity enhancement and market orientation. Motivational training of weavers is also very important.

3. To overcome the obligations in financial procedures, certain conditions should be relaxed. Financial assistance should be made easily available but with stricter laws that if not re-paid within the agreed time between the loaner (banks/financial institutions) and loan taker (weaver/society).

4. Banking habits need to be encouraged amongst weavers that will simultaneously cultivate the saving habit. Interactions with banks in financial matters will teach them hard value of money and in time they will also become aware about the various offers/facilities provided by financial institutions.
5. Timely supply of raw materials by various agencies has to be ensured by concerned departments.

6. Muga and Mulberry yarn fabrics are mostly woven at Sualkuchi. The cost of these yarns, are always on the higher side often without any concrete reasons. Hence, Sualkuchi handloom industry should be formulated with specific Village Credit Plan, so that weavers can purchase the yarns comfortably.

7. If such credit plans are provided then monitoring should be implemented post sanction. This will help to evaluate how the money is utilised in the right track.

8. The national and international demand for Muga fabric is high. The tide of cocoon outflow from the state has somewhat been stemmed but complete value addition to this important farm sector product of the state is still not adequate. The turnover of the state’s handloom industry can increase many folds if the farm produce is completely converted into finished products. With blends, this can further multiply. Such a turnover will lead to significant rise in employment opportunities in the state.

9. The fly-shuttle is the main loom in Sualkuchi and is used to weave every product from fine cotton ‘Gamochas’ to the much heavier and difficult Muga and Pat fabrics. The products are often marked by an
erratic salvage, a clumsy float and irregular weaves. These first generation machines need to be further developed to meet commercial standards of productivity. A lot of technological change-over need to be done for the refinement and standardization of Muga and Pat yarn, especially in terms of denier, ply elongation and finish which are serious blockages. The weavers of the region must strive to adopt some of the latest and appropriate technologies like using improved tools and techniques, computer aided designs, electronic data interchange etc in the handloom sector.

10. To improve the quality of product, research and development are must. The weavers at Sualkuchi are not aware how to develop quality and design through research and development with minimum cost and efforts. In different states of entire North-east, each tribal and non-tribal designs can be further upgraded with the help of R&D. The Development Commissioner of Handlooms with collaboration of Indian Institute of handloom Technology can take the initiative to help the weavers.

11. The use of computer in designing is no longer an option but a necessity to meet global challenges. Designers/weavers can view, incorporate and edit weavers and all other patterns that are required for development of fabric. Hence it is very essential to train the weavers in this emerging area of computer-aided textile designing by proper action plan with immediate effect. This will open up a new horizon to the
handloom industry of not only of Sualkuchi but entire Assam. The Directorate of Handlooms and Textile should take lead in this direction.

12. It is heartening to know, during the study tour, young educated urban youths coming forward to invest their time, labour and capital in the handloom sector. A large number of tiny silk weaving, yarn related and associated units have mushroomed in urban areas like Guwahati, Palasbari, Udalguri, Kokrajhar, Goalpara etc. The much-needed support of private enterprises to the rural small-scale industries seems to be happening. The weavers of Sualkuchi should come into agreement with these units to get timely supply of materials instead of always depending on agencies outside the state.

13. The promotional and marketing organisations of the region must display the local handloom products in various airports, railway stations, bus-stands, commercial centers to assist the local artisans to get publicity and in the process get orders from traders, marketing organisations, export houses and tourist firms.

14. In this era of globalization and open economy, consumers today have a wide range of choice. They have the freedom to choose the right product from a wide range of products. Therefore, mere product will not serve the purpose- the product has to be acceptable to the customers. Similarly, at the time of determining the price for the product, it has to be determined in such a way that it is affordable to the customers.
While fixing the price, the disposable income of the customers should be analyzed. This will help in successfully marketing the products. At the same time successful marketing also calls for availability of product and the customers awareness of the product's quality, price and benefit. The producer and the marketing agencies should make thorough market survey to know the market requirement and customer's buying behaviour. Hence, marketing research should be used as an effective tool for planning and designing marketing activities in an appropriate manner. Market research will also assist in selecting the right means of selling and distribution, market selection, promotion and advertisement and to maintain a congenial relationship with the customers.

15. Production of yarn should be encouraged in private sector/self-help groups/non-governmental organisations etc that are technically trained under the supervision and technical support of government agencies.

16. The state government owned sericultural farms should be converted to commercial farms and more such farms should be established in collaboration with the Department of Social Forestry. These farms then should be allotted to commercial rearers through auction. Privatization will yield professionalism and thereby both rearers and weavers will benefit the outcome.
17. The Central Silk Board has always provided with new mode of tools and technique to ensure higher production of weavers without much physical strain and quality product. The research and development efforts of Central Silk Board has led to the standardization of a number of 'packages of practices' involving appropriate intermediate technology. The Directorate of Handlooms and Textile with co-operation of Central Silk Board should open 'Ideal Weaver's Co-operative Societies' to impart improved practical knowledge of weaving practices to weavers.

18. Though not many, few weavers' families of Sualkuchi are very eager to adopt a new mode of production to eject out of the system, which is losing both in production and profit. Some such progressive minded weavers families should be selected by the state government and after providing with necessary requirements, realizable targets should be drawn out for each family. The family with best performance should be acknowledged publicly with cash prize. This process will attract others into the profession and weavers will strive to produce quality products.

19. Certain initiatives should be compulsorily taken by the state government to improve the situation and shortage of marketing, raw materials and to increase production. The wastelands, available in and around Sualkuchi should be allotted on contractual basis to local rearers or the unemployed for silk production, whose job will be monitored. Only on satisfactory performance further extension of
contract should be allowed. A 'marketing cell' should also be established to ensure systematic marketing approach with incentive facility.

20. The Directorate of Handlooms and Textile need to be revitalized and reorganized. Each unit of the department should be given a target and politicizing should be completely avoided.

21. There should be expansion in the research and development services of Indian Institute of Handloom Technology and Weavers Service Centre and each of the development should be brought into focus of weavers. The communication gap between the research result and the weavers' sector should be avoided if not totally eliminated.

22. The state government should make it a mandatory policy to consult weavers and co-operative societies for any development and training programmes related to weaving and marketing of handloom products. There should be frequent meets between weavers and officers of handloom development where discussion and consultation can be done openly.

23. The network of publicity like radio, television, open meetings, demonstration should be used more often to make weavers aware of modern technology, techniques of marketing, availability and source of finance and raw materials and bridge the information gap.
24. Implementation of policies with positive outlook always gives good result. Motivated persons with trained knowledge and managerial ability are the need of the hour to appoint in handloom development departments as well as in production and marketing.

25. To generate interest, knowledge and produce future entrepreneurs in weaving sector, lessons on weaving technology, weavers, impact on culture and economy should be incorporated in higher secondary and degree level by the education department and Government of Assam.

26. It has become compulsory that to compete with the global market, quality assurance and fabric grading system is a must. Everyone is quality conscious nowadays. The availability of low cost products of the same kind has triggered this consciousness amongst the people. The tools and technologies are too costly to be afforded by a single handloom unit alone. Hence, co-operative societies and Weavers’ Service Centre should use this tools and processes centrally on regional basis. If such initiatives take place, the government will surely come forward to help in achieving this level.

7.3 Conclusion

The handloom industry had to suffer a lot during the British rule on account of policies pursued by the British Government ruling in India. History of handloom industry can be traced back to early days of its pristine glory. It may be recalled here that the handloom products of Assam not only remained
in India but found their way to other countries also. The handloom industry also underwent a precarious phase during both the world wars and trade depression of 1930, which indirectly proved beneficial to mill-made cloths. The unfair price competition between handloom and machine textiles resulted in the decline and decay of handloom during the period 1800 to 1913. The emergence of British mill textiles reduced the cost of cloths and import of cheap textiles caused the handloom to collapse as there was no technological improvement in the handloom sector which would help to reduce the cost of handloom and make it competitive with the imported textiles. During the pre-independence period the handloom industry had few positive impacts with the formation of Weavers' Co-operatives, appointment of Fact Finding Committee to study problems of the industry in detail and establishment of the All India Handloom Board. However, it is not to be forgotten that Assam handloom products mostly silk items have always retained an integral position in handloom industry in India. The handloom cloths woven by artisans of Assam has an all time appeal. It has also proved to be an indispensable part of the economic development of the State. The post-independence period brought rays of light for the declining handloom industry. Several new institutions like Development Commissioner for Handloom, National Handloom Development Corporation, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) came into existence as aid to the industry. The Five Years Plans provided direct patronage to the handloom industry to secure a firm foothold. The handloom industry should be regarded as a real survivor as it has withstood many unfavourable factors during the past two centuries. This industry has survived due to the skill of the weavers. To some extent weavers' lifestyle of
low standard living proved to be a blessing in disguise to cope with the stressed environment. Even today handloom industry faces many organizational handicaps. Up to the completion of the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) the co-operative coverage in Assam is only 33% which is far below the national coverage. Weavers are still experiencing exploitation by master weavers and middle-men. Though the malpractices are openly known yet they are the necessary evil solely because they fulfill non-institutional credit needs of the weavers. The weavers' co-operative societies lack strong organizational structure and management, yet for the Indian weaving industry they provide they the best hope. Even today the handloom industry continues to be the most important household industry providing employment (direct and indirect) to 23.22 lakhs of people in Assam as per handloom census report. It holds a crucial position in the socio-economic development of the state. Though this study is conducted by the research scholar at Sualkuchi, the prominent silk weaving centre of Assam, the handloom industry is scattered allover Assam.

Weak marketing channels and strategies have posed as a threat to the present handloom industry of Assam. If these marketing constraints are not removed then the weavers and their skill merely will not be able to hold the industry upright. The widely acknowledged problem of supply and demand of yarn makes it mandatory to regulate the price of yarn strictly and the channel of yarn distribution should also be brought under co-operative sector. Marketing of handloom products are primarily suffering due to poor performance of Apex Society; absence of diversified products; fair maintenance of quality and neglect on publicity aspect. The industry should
come to a position where it can achieve some more benefits and reach to a
certain level where it becomes able to run on its own. Otherwise no matter
what, assistance has always been provided by the state government, which
comes at a cost from the public exchequer. The spinning factories present in
Assam do not produce enough yarn. These mills somehow manage only one-
fourth of the demand of the total looms of the state. These mills do not have
the necessary infrastructure to provide yarns of higher counts. Cotton yarns
forms the major constituent. Requirement of cotton yarn is more than eighty
percent of the total requirement of yarn in Assam. Even the cotton yarns need
to be imported from outside the state, as the cotton mills at Chariduar and
Chandrapur had to be shut down. The Muga yarn is not readily available
during all seasons. The local production of Mulberry raw silk cannot meet the
demand of the indigenous weavers. A large quantity of raw silk is bought from
outside the state by the traders of Assam. A bulk quantity of raw silk is
consumed only at Sualkuchi. Therefore, weavers very often depend upon
private trades for yarn and are being exploited.

Selling of handloom cloths by independent weavers is always done
through middle-men and master weavers. The societies under the co-
operative fold get the assistance of selling fifty percent of their products
through the Apex Body. The handloom products of Assam being traditional
remain confined to the home state. The market remains limited as the
weavers are not able to maintain standard and cope with the changing habits
and fashion of people to produce cloth accordingly. The volume of business
handled by the co-operative societies at Sualkuchi is more in terms of
average production and average sales when compared to the averages of the
state. However, the profitability of the weavers' societies remains low. It was seen during the study that more capital has been employed to earn a similar rate of return when compared to the state average. The high price of the handloom products, lack of knowledge of customer's preference of colour and design, accumulation of stock and age old slow weaving techniques have cause societies to earn low rate of profitability. Many at times it has come to light that embezzlement of yarn stands as a barrier in proper functioning of the co-operative societies. The sizeable gap between demand and supply has become a constant problem. The weavers particularly of silk and Tassar yarn are compelled to depend upon private traders, even if at higher price. The lifestyle of weavers will not change if for his livelihood he needs to buy yarn at higher price and sell the finished products at a lower rate. The intermediaries involved in supply of yarn are to be removed then efficient spinning mills should be set up as an immediate measurement. Simultaneously yarn production in the state should be increased if the mills are to function regularly.

The weavers who operate outside the co-operative fold undertake many individual responsibilities, which they could have availed if they were under co-operative fold. For selling of the finished products they need to depend mostly on the external agencies. The organisation structure of the industry possesses different segments because of these external agencies. At present the handloom industry has the organizational structure that consists of master weavers, independent, co-operative and the corporate sector. The independent weavers are not completely 'independent' as they need to depend on intermediaries for credit facility and selling of finished goods. The
master weavers have their own workshops. They provide the weavers with raw materials who work in their workshops. The weavers return the products on completion and receive their wages or contracted amount. The master weavers also see that weavers do not fall short of cash advance or any requirement. The co-operative sector provides assistance in selling and financial need by smaller units of the industry. The corporate sector undertakes activities mainly for weavers outside the co-operative sector.

The only apex society in Assam is the Assam Apex Weavers and Artisans Co-operative Federation Limited (ARTFED). The Directorate of Handloom and Textiles is the guide to the weavers' co-operatives in the state. The co-operative sector though weak in performance, is the main hope for upgradation of weavers and weaving industry. However, all the segments supply the same type of loom and equipments to weavers. In Sualkuchi finer quality of handloom products are manufactured. This gives the weavers an edge over the others to accrue more income. Therefore, if the weavers come up with new variations in design and variance combined with quality they can develop their own market. These weavers should be made aware of this situation and move top such direction which would offer higher piece rate wages. On the other hand production must be increased to earn more on low piece rates of wages. The production can be increased only with implementation of higher version of technology. Upgradation of technology is a must for the handloom industry at Sualkuchi which has not been done for quite sometime. The throw shuttle and fly shuttle looms that are widely used need to undergo superior technology changeover. The reluctance of the weavers' conservative mind set should be removed and risk-taking ability
should be encouraged for technology conversions. The irregularities observed in the warp or weft, the knots and iridescence need to be uniform and in the process the unevenness will be removed. The weavers fear of unemployment that they apprehend by introduction of new technology are short term effects and will gradually disappear with the ambience created by the new superior technology thereafter.

The government policies adopted by a foreign government prior to independence was not conducive for development and growth of the handloom industry. The contribution made to socio economic development of India by the industry, has been duly acknowledged by the Indian Government post independence only. The Five Years Plans have accentuated policies for the entire textile industry. These policies emphasizes upon suggestions and solutions to reduce delay in supply of raw materials; year wise expenditure, employment to be provided; training programmes to be implemented; production to be achieved with each annual plan are prescribed. Rebate subsidy offer are designed for every year to increase sale of handloom cloths. The Office of the Development Commissioner for handlooms, All India Handlooms and Handicrafts Board, National Handloom Development Corporation have been set up in all states to provide assistance in the handloom sector. The efforts and assistance should meet the targeted productivity and the protective measures should be gradually stopped. The capital invested on protective measures can be utilised in increasing productivity and welfare of the weavers' sector. To certain extent the protective measures have made the handloom industry quite laid-back and resulted in lesser competitive. The subsidies and rebates are compensated
from the public exchequer and hence the handloom industry should be made more economically viable. Up till the Tenth Five Year Plan the handloom industry has not been able to achieve its required success in Assam. Hence government will need to formulate policies, keep providing capital from public exchequer, which will help to buy time to provide further opportunity to the industry to gain the necessary foundation to grow on its own strength. Till that phase arrives, the handloom products will remain dearer to customers.

Marketing of handloom cloths remain a special problem of the societies/weavers of Sualkuchi. The weavers are still weaving repeatedly same old designs which are not in tune with the changing tastes of the customers. Product development and diversification should be matched with the target customers. Marketing needs suitable strategies. If this is not done then the assistance provided to the industry will be a sheer waste of national resources. The marketing problems lingering on the handloom industry can be successfully solved only through the co-operative societies. The co-operatives possess a better stand in organizational resource position than an individual. A proper marketing strategy should be formed to increase the strength and courage of the co-operative sector. Even if the co-operatives have short-comings, like inadequate coverage, weak organizational structure, but it is the only hope to provide a supporting frame work for the existing marketing problems of the handloom industry. The marketing strategy should also make exploitation of its local existing market as another objective. The handloom cloths being mostly traditional has its market confined within the boundary of the state. Even then the demand of the customers cannot be met. Strength, weakness, threat and opportunity (SWOT) analysis should be done to study
how the external products that are from outside the state are capturing the local market. Accordingly competitive strategies can be derived to stand against them and capture more market share. The market strategy should also examine what the market segments, where the handloom products are displayed for sale, are in demand/need of. The knowledge about customer's choice, comfort and preference will surely help to create a better and competitive market. The handloom industry of Assam should become more creative to dust off the hackneyed ways of fabric development and keep abreast with the spirit of the times. The young generation today looks up to cheeky fashion designs and a totally new look is what appeals them the most. Causing a significant change on all dimensions of fabric formation viz., appearance, feel and technicalities are necessary. Blend is a major source of creativity and they can be used to give value to the material and restore its lost nobility.

There are micro and macro financial institutes to provide the industry specifically to facilitate credit assistance. Awareness of the weavers is equally important both for self and creation of product range in the market. Product diversification with quality is very much mandatory. Normal day-to-day handloom apparels or products are losing their grip fro the market as mill-made products give a stiff competition. The market for handloom goods should be developed with a whole range of products with regard to weaves, colours and designs and standardizing of the specifications for each product but also taking seasonal and cultural preferences into account. Apart from these the end customers should be given a reasonable price to purchase.
more of handloom products. Above all to awake a consciously sleeping market, aggressive publicity campaign is urgently required.

In this study the major problems of the handloom industry are highlighted while the minor ones are brought into focus. This small research might not be sufficient to uncover all loopholes of an industry that had an illustrious past. The numerous other problems can achieve solutions only with further research carried on to examine other dimensions. The study can be concluded by stating that the existing problems of marketing of handloom products calls for a change in outlook with a view to introducing and innovating technological and organizational upgradation to the weaving heritage of the people.