



Handloom weaver's profile and marketing perspectives: An empirical study of selected districts of Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

Handloom weaving in Himachal Pradesh is an important component of the state's cultural heritage and provides livelihood opportunities for rural communities. However, the sustainability of the sector depends on preserving traditional craftsmanship while improving market access and responsiveness. This study examines the socio-demographic and occupational profile of handloom weavers and their perceptions of selected marketing dimensions in Himachal Pradesh. The study was conducted in three selected districts - Kullu, Mandi and Kinnaur representing important handloom-producing areas. Primary data were collected from 379 handloom weavers using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyse respondents' characteristics, marketing channels and perceptions, while one-way ANOVA assessed inter-district differences. Chi-square analysis examined the association between weaving experience and income, and Pearson correlation assessed selected relationships between experience, income and marketing perceptions. The findings indicate substantial participation of women, a predominance of weaving as the primary occupation, and limited product diversification. Local markets emerged as the dominant marketing channel, while respondents reported favourable perceptions across all five marketing dimensions, with product quality recording the highest mean score ($M = 4.85$). Significant inter-district differences were observed in product quality, pricing, distribution and promotion, whereas aesthetic appeal showed no significant difference. A significant association was also found between weaving experience and income level. The study recommends strengthening market diversification, distribution and promotional capabilities, collective marketing, and appropriate digital marketing opportunities while preserving the quality and traditional identity of Himachal Pradesh handloom products.

Keywords: Handloom, weavers, marketing perspectives, market access, product quality, Himachal Pradesh

Introduction

The Fourth All India Handloom Census 2019–20 enumerated 26,73,891 handloom weavers and 8,48,621 allied workers, representing a total handloom workforce of 35,22,512. In Himachal Pradesh, the Census recorded 13,211 handloom weavers and 477 allied workers, highlighting the continued significance of handloom activities within the state's rural economy (Development Commissioner (Handlooms), 2020) ^[5]. Kullu Shawl and Kinnauri Shawl have also been registered under the Geographical Indications (GI) system, with Kullu Shawl registered in 2005 and Kinnauri Shawl in 2010 (Office of the Registrar of Geographical Indications, 2005, 2010) ^[11, 12]. GI recognition provides an important basis for protecting geographical identity and product authenticity; however, such recognition alone does not ensure effective market access, adequate returns or successful branding. From a marketing perspective, handloom enterprises differ considerably from standardized mass-produced textile businesses because their value is closely associated with craftsmanship, authenticity, design and geographical origin. Production is often small-scale and household-based, while access to remunerative markets may depend on appropriate marketing channels, market information, collective action, credit and promotional opportunities. Previous research on Indian handloom clusters has highlighted the importance of distribution channels, market information, collective organization and transaction costs in influencing marketing outcomes (Ramswamy & Jyoti Kumar, 2012; Faruque & Guha, 2024) ^[6, 13]. At the same time, the emergence of digital technologies and e-commerce has created opportunities for handloom producers to reach consumers

beyond traditional local markets, although effective adoption requires appropriate technological and organizational capabilities (Tarai & Shailaja, 2020; Yadav & Chopra, 2025) ^[1, 2, 18, 20]. Despite the cultural and economic importance of handloom weaving in Himachal Pradesh, empirical evidence integrating the socio-demographic and occupational characteristics of weavers with their perceptions of major marketing dimensions remains limited, particularly across different districts of the state. Existing studies have largely examined the socio-economic conditions, traditional products and general issues affecting the handloom sector, while comparatively less attention has been given to how weavers themselves perceive product quality, aesthetic appeal, pricing, promotion and distribution across different geographical settings. Against this background, the present study examines the profile and marketing perspectives of handloom weavers in three selected districts of Himachal Pradesh-Kullu, Mandi and Kinnaur. The study focuses on four interconnected aspects: the socio-demographic and occupational characteristics of weavers, their major marketing channels, their perceptions of key marketing dimensions, and variations in these perceptions across the selected districts. It also examines the association between weaving experience and income and the relationship of income and experience with selected marketing perceptions. The study contributes to the existing literature by providing district-level empirical evidence on the marketing perspectives of handloom weavers and by integrating socio-economic characteristics with multiple dimensions of handloom marketing. The findings provide useful insights for strengthening market access, product diversification,

promotional activities, digital marketing capabilities and collective marketing mechanisms while maintaining the traditional quality, authenticity and cultural identity of Himachal Pradesh handloom products.

Research Objectives

- To examine the socio-demographic and occupational profile of handloom weavers in the selected districts of Himachal Pradesh.
- To identify the major marketing-channel characteristics of the respondents.
- To assess respondents' perceptions of product quality, aesthetic appeal, pricing, promotion, and distribution.
- To examine whether selected perception dimensions differ across Kullu, Mandi, and Kinnaur.
- To examine the relationship of income and weaving experience with selected marketing perceptions

Review of Literature

The existing literature on the handloom sector can broadly be classified into four interconnected themes: (i) Socio-economic profile (ii) marketing channels (iii) product quality and design (iv) digital marketing and institutional support. Although these dimensions have been examined in different handloom-producing regions of India, comparatively limited empirical research has examined the marketing perspectives of handloom weavers across selected districts of Himachal Pradesh. The present study seeks to address this gap by examining both the socio-economic profile of weavers and their perceptions regarding major marketing dimensions.

1. Socio-Economic Profile

Socio-economic characteristics are important for understanding the livelihood conditions and marketing behaviour of handloom weavers. The Fourth All India Handloom Census 2019–20 provides an important official baseline for the sector and recorded 13,211 handloom weavers and 477 allied workers in Himachal Pradesh. Sharma *et al.* (2021) ^[16, 17] examined the socio-economic conditions of handloom weavers in Himachal Pradesh and highlighted weaving as an important livelihood activity and component of the state's cultural heritage. The study examined characteristics such as education, family structure, occupation, assets, indebtedness, weaving activity and raw-material procurement, while also emphasizing the role of tourism and cooperatives in sustaining the sector. In the other study, they examined the issues and prospects of the handloom sector, with particular focus on Kullu district. The study highlighted the importance of cooperatives, tourism linkages, product diversification and skill development in strengthening the handloom sector and recommended improved cooperative management and market integration. Bhardwaj *et al.* (2023) ^[3] further examined the socio-economic status of handloom workers in Himachal Pradesh using data from the Fourth Handloom Census. Their findings highlighted the predominantly rural nature of handloom activity, the substantial participation of women and the limited awareness of government schemes among workers. These studies collectively indicate that the socio-economic position of weavers is closely linked with the sustainability and development of handloom livelihoods.

2. Marketing Channels

Marketing plays a central role in determining the economic returns received by handloom producers. Faruque and Guha

(2024) ^[6] examined marketing-channel choice among handloom micro-entrepreneurs in rural Assam and found that retailer-based channels were more efficient than channels involving travelling traders. Their study also identified education, enterprise size, market information, group membership, access to credit and transaction costs as important determinants of channel choice. Similarly, Ramswamy and Jyoti Kumar (2012) ^[13] examined the Thenzawl handloom cluster in Mizoram and highlighted the importance of product mix, distribution channels, payment practices, exhibitions, fairs and promotional activities in strengthening handloom marketing. These findings suggest that effective marketing depends not only on production capacity but also on access to appropriate distribution channels, market information and promotional opportunities. For Himachal Pradesh, these findings are particularly relevant because geographical dispersion and dependence on traditional marketing arrangements may influence weavers' access to remunerative markets. However, the extent to which these factors influence the marketing perceptions of Himachali weavers remains insufficiently examined.

3. Product Quality and design

Product quality, craftsmanship, authenticity and traditional design are important sources of differentiation in handloom markets. Sharma, Kanwar and Rekha (2008) ^[15] documented the traditional handicrafts and handloom products of Kullu and observed that weaving gradually moved from subsistence-oriented production towards commercialization. The study also noted the adaptation of designs and motifs to changing consumer preferences while retaining traditional characteristics. The cultural and geographical identity of Himachali handloom products provides an additional basis for market differentiation. Kullu Shawl and Kinnauri Shawl have received Geographical Indication recognition, strengthening their association with regional origin and traditional production. Such identity can contribute to product differentiation when supported by authenticity, appropriate labelling and consumer awareness. The literature therefore suggests that quality, design, authenticity and geographical identity are not only cultural characteristics but can also serve as important marketing attributes. However, there remains a need to examine how handloom weavers themselves perceive these attributes and their contribution to market competitiveness.

4. Digital Marketing

Digital technologies have created opportunities for handloom producers to access consumers beyond traditional local markets. However, effective digital marketing requires capabilities related to product photography, online cataloguing, pricing, digital payments, packaging, logistics and customer communication. Tarai and Shailaja (2020) ^[1, 18] examined e-commerce integration in the handloom sector from the consumer perspective in Odisha and highlighted the potential of digital platforms to expand the geographical reach of handloom products. Yadav and Chopra (2025) ^[2, 20] subsequently examined barriers to e-commerce adoption among Indian handloom weavers and emphasized the importance of digital literacy, training, technological capabilities and cluster-level capacity building. These studies indicate that digital marketing can complement traditional marketing channels, but its effectiveness depends

on the technological and organizational capabilities of producers. For handloom weavers in Himachal Pradesh, digital platforms may provide opportunities to reach tourists, urban consumers and markets outside the state, although the adoption and effectiveness of such channels require empirical investigation.

5. Institutional Support

Institutional support is an important component of handloom development because individual weavers often face limitations associated with small-scale production, finance, market access and promotional capabilities. Previous studies have highlighted the role of cooperatives, exhibitions, fairs, training, design development and cluster-based interventions in strengthening handloom marketing. The studies of Sharma *et al.* (2021)^[16, 17] and Ramswamy and Jyoti Kumar (2012)^[13] suggest that effective cooperative organization and coordinated marketing activities can improve the market position of handloom producers. However, the effectiveness of institutional support depends on the quality of management, market orientation and the extent to which weavers can access available schemes and services. Therefore, institutional support should be considered alongside product quality, pricing, promotion, distribution and digital marketing when assessing the marketing perspectives of handloom weavers.

6. Research Gap

While previous studies have examined the socio-economic conditions, traditional products and general marketing challenges of Himachal Pradesh's handloom sector, limited empirical evidence is available on how weavers perceive specific marketing dimensions across different districts. This study addresses this gap by examining product quality, aesthetic appeal and design, pricing, promotion, and distribution and market access across Kullu, Mandi and Kinnaur.

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

The present study adopts a quantitative, descriptive and analytical research design to examine the socio-economic profile and marketing perspectives of handloom weavers in selected districts of Himachal Pradesh. The descriptive component is used to analyse the demographic and occupational characteristics of the respondents, while the analytical component examines their perceptions regarding different dimensions of handloom marketing. The study is based primarily on primary data collected from handloom weavers through a structured questionnaire.

2. Study Area

The study was conducted in Kullu, Mandi and Kinnaur districts of Himachal Pradesh. These districts were selected purposively because of their established handloom traditions and differences in product characteristics and market

environments. Kullu is particularly associated with Kullu Shawls and tourism-oriented markets, while Kinnaur is known for its distinctive traditional weaving practices and Kinnauri Shawls. Mandi also has household-based handloom activities and provides a relevant setting for examining the marketing conditions of weavers. The selection of these districts enables the study to capture variations in the socio-economic characteristics and marketing perspectives of handloom weavers operating in different local contexts.

Table 1: Selected Study Areas and Basis for Selection

District	Basis for Selection
Kullu	Established handloom tradition, Kullu Shawl products, geographical identity and tourism-linked markets
Mandi	Presence of household-based handloom activities and local market linkages
Kinnaur	Distinctive traditional weaving practices and Kinnauri Shawl tradition

3. Population and Sampling

The target population of the study comprises active handloom weavers in Kullu, Mandi and Kinnaur districts of Himachal Pradesh. The study employed a multistage sampling approach. The districts were selected purposively based on their relevance to the handloom sector. Within the selected districts, the sampling process involved the identification of relevant blocks and villages/panchayats where handloom-weaving activities were undertaken, followed by the selection of eligible handloom weavers.

A total of 379 handloom weavers were included in the final sample. Respondents were selected from the identified study areas based on their active involvement in handloom weaving. Because the districts were selected purposively, the sample should be treated as a study-specific sample rather than a statistically representative sample of all handloom weavers in Himachal Pradesh.

4. Data Sources and Data Collection

The study primarily relies on primary data collected directly from handloom weavers through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to respondents in the selected study areas through direct interaction. Where required, questions were explained to respondents to ensure that they clearly understood the statements before providing their responses. Secondary data were obtained from government reports, official publications, research articles, books and other relevant sources to provide background information on the handloom sector and to support the conceptual and empirical foundation of the study.

5. Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed based on the objectives of the study and the relevant literature on handloom production and marketing. The questionnaire consisted of four sections as presented below.

Table 2: Research Instruments

Section	Content	Response Format
A. Socio-demographic Profile	Age, gender, education and other personal characteristics	Categorical
B. Business and Occupational Characteristics	Weaving experience, occupation, product range, sales and marketing practices	Mixed format
C. Marketing Perspectives	Product quality, aesthetic appeal/design, pricing, promotion, distribution networks.	Five-point Likert scale
D. Open-ended Responses	Problems faced and suggestions for improving handloom marketing	Short-answer

The marketing perception statements were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. Higher mean scores therefore indicate stronger agreement with the respective marketing statements.

6. Variables and Dimensions of Marketing Perspectives

The study examines the marketing perspectives of handloom weavers through major dimensions relevant to the marketing of handloom products. These include:

- **Product Quality:** perceptions regarding durability, authenticity, craftsmanship and overall quality of handloom products.
- **Aesthetic Appeal and Design:** perceptions regarding traditional designs, motifs, colours and visual attractiveness.
- **Pricing:** perceptions regarding price competitiveness, production costs and adequacy of returns.
- **Promotion:** perceptions regarding exhibitions, fairs, local promotional activities, social media and other promotional channels.
- **Distribution and Market Access:** perceptions regarding availability of markets, intermediaries, transportation and distribution channels.

The present analysis focuses on the five dimensions for which perception scores are reported: product quality, aesthetic appeal and design, pricing, promotion, and distribution and market access.

7. Reliability of the Research Instrument

The internal consistency of the 20-item marketing perception scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha for the overall 20-item marketing perception scale was 0.83, indicating good internal consistency among the items included in the overall perception scale.

8. Data Processing and Statistical Analysis

The collected data were coded, tabulated and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were employed in accordance with the objectives and nature of the variables. The following techniques were used:

Table 3: Techniques of Data Processing and Statistical Analysis

Analytical Purpose	Statistical Technique
Socio-demographic and occupational profile	Frequency and percentage
Marketing perception	Mean and standard deviation
Ranking of marketing attributes	Mean score/rank
Comparison of perceptions across three districts	One-way ANOVA
Association between categorical variables	Chi-square test
Relationship between scale variables	Pearson correlation, where appropriate
Internal consistency of perception scale	Cronbach's alpha

For comparisons across the three selected districts, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed where the dependent variable was represented by an appropriate continuous or composite perception score. Where a statistically significant overall difference was observed, suitable post-hoc comparisons were considered to identify the specific groups between which differences existed.

The level of statistical significance was set at 5% ($p < 0.05$). Assumptions relevant to the statistical tests should be verified from the original SPSS output before final interpretation, particularly the homogeneity-of-variance assumption for ANOVA and expected-frequency requirements for the chi-square test.

Scope and Limitations

The study is geographically restricted to Kullu, Mandi and Kinnaur districts of Himachal Pradesh. Therefore, the findings primarily represent the experiences and perceptions of handloom weavers in the selected study areas and should not be generalized to the entire state without appropriate supporting evidence. The study is based largely on self-reported information and perceptions, which may be influenced by respondents' individual experiences and response biases. Further, the cross-sectional nature of the survey permits the examination of patterns, differences and associations but does not establish causal relationships. Despite these limitations, the study provides empirical evidence on the socio-economic profile and marketing perspectives of handloom weavers in selected districts of Himachal Pradesh and offers insights relevant to improving the marketing and sustainability of the handloom sector.

5. Data analysis and interpretation

Table 4: Socio-Demographic Profile

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 18 years	1	0.3
	18–25 years	36	9.5
	26–35 years	88	23.2
	36–45 years	138	36.4
	46–55 years	86	22.7
	56 years and above	30	7.9
Gender	Male	121	31.9
	Female	258	68.1
Educational Qualification	Illiterate	21	5.5
	Below Matric	259	68.3
	Plus Two	72	19.0
	Graduate	26	6.9
	Post Graduate	1	0.3

Source: Data collected through questionnaire (SPSS Output)

From the above table, the socio-demographic profile indicates that handloom weaving is predominantly undertaken by middle-aged respondents, with women forming a significant part of the workforce. The educational profile shows that most respondents have limited formal education, with below-matric education being predominant. This suggests that handloom weaving continues to provide an important livelihood opportunity for individuals with lower educational attainment, particularly women.

Table 5: Occupational and Business Profile

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary occupation	Weaver	310	81.8
	Retailer	47	12.4
	Exporter	9	2.4
	Other	13	3.4
Years of experience	Novice (1–5 years)	111	29.3
	Intermediate (6–15 years)	137	36.1
	Experienced (16 years and above)	131	34.6
Product pattern	Specialized only	279	73.6
	Diversified	100	26.4

Source: Data collected through questionnaire (SPSS Output)

The occupational and business profile shows that handloom weaving is the primary occupation for most respondents, indicating its continued importance as a livelihood activity. The respondents also have considerable experience in the sector, with a substantial proportion falling into the

intermediate and experienced categories, suggesting the presence of accumulated weaving skills and traditional knowledge. In terms of product pattern, most respondents focus on specialized products rather than diversified product ranges.

Table 6: Marketing Channels

Marketing channel	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Local markets	316	83.4
Retail stores	60	15.8
Exhibitions/Fairs	2	0.5
Wholesalers	1	0.3

Source: Data collected through questionnaire (SPSS Output)

The marketing channel profile indicates that local markets are the dominant avenue through which respondents sell their handloom products. Retail stores provide a secondary channel, while exhibitions, fairs and wholesalers have comparatively limited use.

Table 7: Perception Analysis

Variable	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Rank
Product Quality	379	4.85	.353	-2.023	2.104	1
Aesthetic Appeal	379	4.35	.483	.568	-1.492	5
Pricing of the Products	379	4.69	.467	-.923	-.937	2
Distribution Network	379	4.43	.501	.209	-1.801	4
Promotion Channels	379	4.62	.497	-.626	-1.285	3

Source: Data collected through questionnaire (SPSS Output)

Table 7 indicates favourable perceptions across all five marketing dimensions. Product quality received the highest mean score ($M = 4.85$), followed by pricing ($M = 4.69$), promotion ($M = 4.62$), distribution network ($M = 4.43$), and aesthetic

appeal ($M = 4.35$). The relatively small standard deviations indicate that responses were concentrated around the respective mean scores. The skewness values also indicate a tendency toward higher levels of agreement for several dimensions.

Table 8: One-Way ANOVA: Inter-District Differences

Marketing Dimension	Kullu Mean	Mandi Mean	Kinnaur Mean	F-value	p-value	Decision
Product Quality	4.83	4.85	4.90	4.246	.015	Significant
Aesthetic Appeal	4.40	4.29	4.35	0.811	.445	Not significant
Pricing	4.65	4.71	4.73	3.838	.022	Significant
Distribution	4.48	4.43	4.37	4.859	.008	Significant
Promotion	4.56	4.71	4.60	8.231	<.001	Significant

Source: Data collected through questionnaire (SPSS Output)

The one-way ANOVA results indicate statistically significant differences across the three districts in perceptions of product quality ($F = 4.246$, $p = .015$), pricing ($F = 3.838$, $p = .022$), distribution network ($F = 4.859$, $p = .008$), and promotion channels ($F = 8.231$, $p < .001$). No statistically significant difference was observed for aesthetic

appeal ($F = 0.811$, $p = .445$). Thus, the null hypotheses relating to product quality, pricing, distribution and promotion are rejected, whereas the null hypothesis relating to aesthetic appeal is not rejected. Because post-hoc comparisons are not reported, the specific pairs of districts that differ cannot be identified from the omnibus ANOVA results alone.

Table 9: Chi-Square Test: Association between Weaving Experience and Income Level

Experience		Novice (1-5 Years)	Intermediate (6-15 Years)	Experienced (16 Above)	Total	Chi-Square	df	p-value
Income	Less than 1.5 Lakhs	86	85	74	245	14.8186.022		
	1.5 Lakhs – 3 Lakhs	23	48	51	122			
	3 Lakhs – 5 Lakhs	0	3	4	7			
	5 Lakhs above	2	1	2	5			
Total		111	137	131	379			

Source: Data collected through questionnaire (SPSS Output)

The chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between weaving experience and income level

($\chi^2 = 14.818$, $df = 6$, $p = .022$). Thus, the null hypothesis of no association is rejected. The distribution of income

categories varies across experience groups. However, the result should be interpreted as an association rather than a causal effect, particularly because the study uses cross-sectional data. The small frequencies in the highest income categories also warrant caution when interpreting the chi-square result; the expected-frequency assumptions of the test should be verified from the original SPSS output.

Table 10: Correlation Analysis

Variable	Pricing (r)	Promotion (r)	Distribution (r)
Income	-.036	.004	.042
Experience	-.049	.049	.064

Source: Data collected through questionnaire (SPSS Output)

The correlation coefficients indicate negligible linear relationships between income and perceptions of pricing ($r = -.036$), promotion ($r = .004$) and distribution ($r = .042$), and between weaving experience and pricing ($r = -.049$), promotion ($r = .049$) and distribution ($r = .064$). Because the table does not report p-values, statistical significance of these individual correlations cannot be established from the reported output alone. The magnitudes of the coefficients nevertheless indicate very weak linear associations.

Summary of Findings

- Handloom weaving is predominantly undertaken by middle-aged respondents, with substantial participation of women and relatively low formal education. Weaving remains the primary occupation for most respondents, with considerable experience and traditional skills.
- Most respondents focus on specialized handloom products, indicating limited product diversification.
- Local markets are the dominant marketing channel, while retail stores and other organized channels are less frequently used.
- Respondents generally have favourable perceptions of handloom marketing, particularly regarding product quality, pricing and promotion.
- Significant inter-district differences exist in perceptions of product quality, pricing, distribution and promotion, whereas aesthetic appeal does not differ significantly.
- A significant association exists between weaving experience and income levels, although the cross-sectional design does not establish causality.

Discussion

The findings indicate that handloom weaving in the selected districts of Himachal Pradesh continues to be largely sustained by middle-aged respondents, reflecting the importance of accumulated experience and traditional knowledge in the sector. The predominance of middle-aged weavers suggests that weaving is not merely a source of current livelihood but also a skill developed through prolonged engagement with traditional production practices. At the same time, the substantial participation of women highlights their important contribution to household-based and traditional handloom activities. Women's involvement may also indicate the role of handloom weaving in supplementing household income while enabling them to remain engaged in home-based economic activities. The relatively low level of formal education among respondents suggests that handloom weaving remains an occupation accessible to individuals with limited educational opportunities. This may explain the continued reliance on

inherited skills and traditional knowledge rather than formal technical training. However, limited formal education may also create challenges in accessing modern markets, digital platforms, financial services and contemporary business practices. The finding that weaving is the primary occupation for most respondents demonstrates the sector's continued livelihood significance in the study area. Further, considerable weaving experience indicates the presence of a strong traditional skill base and the potential for preserving indigenous craftsmanship. However, dependence on traditional skills alone may not be sufficient to ensure long-term commercial sustainability. The findings therefore suggest the importance of combining the existing experience and traditional knowledge of weavers with opportunities for skill upgradation, market-oriented training, digital literacy and entrepreneurial development. Such integration can help preserve the cultural heritage of handloom weaving while improving the economic prospects of weaving households.

Policy Implications

The findings of the study have important implications for the formulation and implementation of policies for the handloom sector in Himachal Pradesh. The observed district-wise variations in product quality, pricing, distribution and promotional practices indicate that handloom policies should recognize the diverse conditions under which weavers operate. This highlights the need for a shift from a uniform policy framework towards region-specific and market-oriented policy planning, particularly in Kullu, Mandi and Kinnaur. The study further indicates that the long-term sustainability of the handloom sector is closely associated with its integration into wider and changing markets. Therefore, policy frameworks should give greater consideration to market connectivity, value-chain development and institutional linkages, while simultaneously preserving traditional craftsmanship. The transition from dependence on local markets towards diversified channels, including organized retail and digital platforms, also has significant policy relevance. The findings also highlight the importance of strengthening the commercial identity of traditional handloom products. Quality, authenticity, traditional designs and aesthetic characteristics contribute to their market positioning. Accordingly, policies should seek to balance commercialization with the preservation of traditional knowledge and cultural attributes through appropriate mechanisms for standardization, certification, branding and product presentation. Finally, the findings underscore the need for stronger institutional coordination and capacity building. Effective sectoral development requires collaboration among government agencies, weavers' cooperatives, marketing institutions, financial agencies and other market intermediaries. Policy frameworks should facilitate weavers' access to market information, technology, finance and entrepreneurial opportunities, enabling them to respond more effectively to changing consumer preferences and market conditions.

Recommendations of the study

The Government and Handloom Department should strengthen market-linkage programmes, district-level marketing support, design development, branding and participation in suitable exhibitions and fairs. Weaver cooperatives and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) should promote

collective marketing, quality standardisation, common catalogues, branding and stronger bargaining power. Individual weavers should diversify their product range according to market demand while maintaining consistent quality, authenticity, proper labelling and transparent pricing. Digital and e-commerce support agencies should provide practical training in digital marketing, product photography, online cataloguing, digital payments and customer communication. Tourism and retail stakeholders should develop stronger retail and tourism-based market linkages to promote authentic local handloom products and expand their reach beyond local markets.

Limitations of the study

The study is limited to handloom weavers from Kullu, Mandi and Kinnaur districts; therefore, the findings should not be generalized to the entire state of Himachal Pradesh without further evidence. The study is based on cross-sectional data and therefore identifies associations rather than causal relationships. Since the analysis relies on self-reported responses, the findings may be subject to response and perception biases. In addition, the absence of detailed district-wise explanatory variables limits the ability to determine the specific reasons for differences observed across districts. Finally, the study does not report post-hoc comparisons or dimension-wise reliability statistics; therefore, further analysis may help clarify district-level differences and the reliability of individual dimensions.

Future Scope of the study

Future studies may extend the geographical coverage to other important handloom clusters of Himachal Pradesh, including Chamba, using an appropriate and verified sampling frame. Further research could incorporate consumer perceptions and willingness to pay to provide a broader understanding of market demand. Comparative studies may examine traditional and digital marketing channels using measures of sales, profitability and marketing efficiency. Longitudinal research could assess whether digital adoption, product diversification and improved market access contribute to better income over time. Future studies may also employ multivariate techniques to identify factors influencing weavers' income, marketing performance and channel choices. Value-chain studies could further examine the distribution of value and margins among weavers, cooperatives, retailers and other intermediaries.

Conclusion

The study concludes that handloom weaving remains an important livelihood activity in Kullu, Mandi and Kinnaur, with substantial participation of women and continued dependence on traditional weaving skills. Respondents report favourable perceptions of product quality, pricing, promotion, distribution and aesthetic appeal, while local markets remain the dominant marketing channel. Significant district-wise differences are observed in product quality, pricing, distribution and promotion, whereas aesthetic appeal does not differ significantly. The significant association between weaving experience and income indicates that income distribution varies across experience groups, although no causal relationship can be inferred. Overall, the study underscores the need to strengthen market access, product diversification, digital marketing and

collective marketing while preserving the traditional quality and identity of Himachal Pradesh handloom products.

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