Promotional Strategy to Rejuvenate the Channapatna Toy Making Industry

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ABSTRACT - The toy making industry of Channapatna needs no introduction. It requires locally available raw materials, locally available semi-skilled labourers and some marketing support from the powers that be. Once these are in place, the industry will be able to step on the gas pedal and market the toys even internationally. The international market has welcomed the toys but events beyond anybody's control including the Covid-19-driven lockdown have had a deleterious effect on the industry. It is an industry that can grow by itself without heavy investment or for that matter, without skilled workers. All it needs is some support from the government in the marketing arena and in the raw materials space. The ivory wood required for making the toys has been in short supply for various reasons; marketing support has not been adequate. Lucrative prices for the toys cannot be taken for granted. In the circumstances, is necessary to identify the measures needed to revive the fortunes of the industry which has been in a dormant stage to all intents and purposes. The researcher interacted with two categories of respondents associated with the industry to ascertain the measures needed to revive the fortunes of the industry, namely, the toymakers themselves and experts on the industry. The interaction led the researcher to conclude that the government should publicise the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. This will raise the off take of the toys from the market. Further, the government should put in place a minimum support price (MSP) mechanism in place to incentivise the growers to take up ivory would cultivation seriously. It will ensure that the industry does not fall short of the raw material it needs for toy making.

Key words: gas pedal; deleterious; dormant; ivory wood; lockdown; minimum support price.

1.1 Theoretical background of the topic

The Channapatna toy making industry has not been in the pink of health. All the same, it must be saved and promoted for a variety of reasons. Its outputs have earned a good name at the national and international levels and hence marketing them should not be difficult at all. It does not require a highly skilled workforce. It can make do with unskilled and semi-skilled labourers. The industry lends itself to innovation too. Most importantly, the products can be priced competitively and that should appeal to a vast customer base, present and potential.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Apart from the threat posed by the imported and cheaper Chinese toys, the Covid-19 pandemic has rubbed salt into the industry's wound. Now that the pandemic is on its way out at least in India, it is time that the powers that be devised measures to rejuvenate the industry.

1.3 Review of literature

In the following paragraphs, a few pieces of literature on the subject are reviewed.

1. Maya and Anisha(Maya & Anisha, 2020) aver that, the toy town of Channapatna, distant 60 kilometres from Bangalore, attracts tourists with its colourful and uniquely crafted wooden toys. Popularly called *Gombegala Nagara* which translates as "town of toys" in Kannada, the advent of these toys can be traced to the Tipu Sultan regime. Tipu invited the Persian artisans over to the town and requested them to impart the skill to the artisans of his town. The toys are made of wood alone. Vegetable dyes, which are harmless and thus completely safe to use, are used to colour the toys.

2. Roshni (Roshni, 2019) argues that with the livelihood of artisans across India taking a hit

owing to poor demand, inadequate marketing support, and exploitation by middlemen, the handicrafts sector cries out for some help from the government. The intricately woven *ikat* from Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, the boldly carved wooden toys from Channapatna in Karnataka, or the geometrically designed *Sholapith* idols from West Bengal – almost all of them have fallen victim to modern industry that arose in the West. According to Census 2011, there are over 68 lakh artisans in the country. 55 percent of them are women.

3. Dhanya and Samudhyata(Dhanya & Samudhyata, 2019) point out that the ivory wood used in toy making by the Channapatna toymakers grows copiously in dry geographies. It requires little by way of inputs. It is a common agro forestry species grown in and around Channapatna town.

4. Chithra(Chithra, 2017) reminds that the toys made at Channapatna are not mere toys – they are much more than that for the residents of the town and the residents of the villages in the vicinity of the town. They make all the difference between life and death to a big chunk of the populace. The toy making tradition has been allotted a geographical indication tag.

5. Ashwaq (Ashwaq, 2016)argues that a bunch of toymakers continues to take forward the tradition of making lacquer toys even as many call it a day, unable to face the stiff competition posed by Chinese toys. Many parents from Channapatna town forced their sons to take up toymaking when they realised that the sons were not interested in formal education. Channapatna town, after all, was reputed for the traditional lacquer toys like dolls, carts and rocking horses it turned out. In the days gone by, it had been a flourishing business. In 1987, around 5,000 workers in the town were engaged in toy-making. There were around 1,000 lathe machines, and every toymaker was making money. Initially, they crafted curtains, napkin rings and small toys like rattles. However, the designs were limited in number. However, in the early 1990s, the order book dried up and so did the export of toys. In the late 1990s, the industry re-embraced toy-making, though. Channapatna's toy-making art arrived allegedly in the 18th century when Tipu Sultan was gifted a lacquered-wood toy made in Persia. The then Mysore ruler was so impressed by the toy that he moved in artisans from Persia to train the local people. In 1996-97, India exported toys worth INR 245 crore, and imported toys worth INR 52.88 crore. In the post 2006-07 phase, the country's imports of toys exceeded the exports. The exports-imports ratio had fallen sharply from an impressive 4.63 in 1996-97 to a lacklustre 0.76 by 2007-08!

1.4 Research gap

As the researchers have rightly implied, the Channapatna toymakers have not been given their due although their toys boast of all the virtues. It is good tidings that some Good Samaritans and some not-for-profit bodies have chipped in too. It is time some specific measures were introduced by the government to rejuvenate the Channapatna toy industry and suggestions towards this end from the learned researchers would have complemented their otherwise valuable findings. It is this gap the present study seeks to bridge.

1.5 Scope of the present study

The study confines itself to 50 toymakers operating in and around Channapatna and 50 experts on Channapatna's toymaking industry.

1.6 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are to identify the measures needed to rejuvenate the debilitated Channapatna toy industry.

1.7 Hypothesis proposed to be tested.

The study proposes to test the following hypothesis:

"Government needs to assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry".

1.8 Research design

1.8.1 Research methodology

The study is descriptive in nature and has used the 'fact-finding' survey method.

1.8.2 Sources of data

Primary data has been collected from the respondents, viz., the 50 toymakers and 50 experts. Secondary data has been collected from leading journals, magazines, newspapers, the web sites of the Karnataka government and the financial press in hard as well as soft version.

1.8.3 Sampling plan

The researcher employed the non-probability sampling technique owing to non-availability of some population elements for collection of data, etc. The study seeks to feel the range of conditions or the nature of the phenomenon. Time constraints and the time limit for completing the study precluded the application of the probability sampling technique. Under this technique, the researcher chose the purposive or judgement sampling method since it guaranteed the inclusion of all the relevant elements in the sample. Probability sampling plans could not give such a guarantee (Krishnaswami, Ranganatham, & Harikumar, 2016). The researcher settled for two categories of respondents, namely, toymakers (numbering 50) and experts (numbering 50) eventually.

1.8.4 Data collection instruments

Interview schedules, specially drafted for the purpose, were administered to the respondents for collection of primary data.

1.8.5 Data processing and analysis plan

Non-parametric statistical units were used to test the association between some qualitative characters and conclusions were drawn based on formation of H_o and H_1.

1.8.6 Limitations of the study

Primary data has also been deduced through constant topic-oriented discussions with the respondents. It is possible that a certain degree of subjectivity, even if negligible, has coloured their views. But the researcher is confident that the level of subjectivity, if any, will be too insignificant to mar the accuracy of the findings of the study.

1.9 Toy makers

In the following paragraphs, the primary data collected from the 50 toy maker respondents is analysed.

1.9.1 Government should publicise the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.
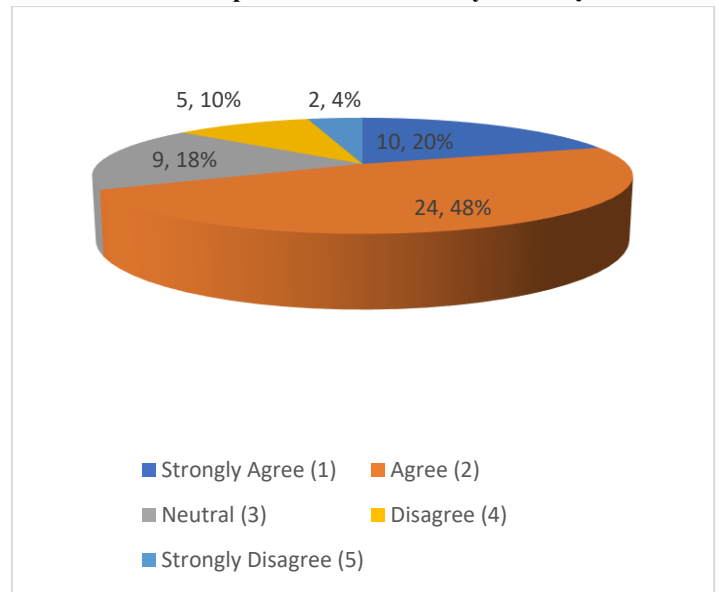
It is held in some stakeholder circles that the government should publicise the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. Hence the researcher sought to know from the respondents if they would agree with the statement that the government should publicise the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. The respondents' agreement / otherwise with the statement is expressed at five levels, namely, SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree and SD=Strongly Disagree. These levels are assigned the values 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, respectively. Their levels of agreement with the statement are reflected in the following Table and Figure.

Table-1.1 Government should publicise the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.

Levels of Agreement (Values)	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree (1)	10	20
Agree (2)	24	48
Neutral (3)	9	18
Disagree (4)	5	10
Strongly Disagree (5)	2	4
Total	**50**	**100**

(Source: Primary data)

Figure-1.1 Government should publicise the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.

(Source: Primary data)

20 percent of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that the government should publicise the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. 48 percent agree with the statement that the government should publicise the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. 10 percent disagree with the statement that the government should publicise the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. Four percent strongly disagree with the statement that the government should publicise the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. 18 percent remain neutral.

68 percent agree with the statement that the government should publicise the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.

1.9.2 Government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.

It is also held in some stakeholder circles that the government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. Hence the researcher sought to know from the respondents if they would agree with the statement that the government should government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. The respondents' agreement / otherwise with the statement is expressed at five levels, namely, SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree,

N=Neutral, D=Disagree and SD=Strongly Disagree. These levels are assigned the values 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, respectively. Their levels of agreement with the statement are reflected in the following Table and Figure.

Table-1.2 Government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.

Levels of Agreement (Values)	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree (1)	9	18
Agree (2)	23	46
Neutral (3)	11	22
Disagree (4)	4	8
Strongly Disagree (5)	3	6
Total	**50**	**100**

(Source: Primary data)

Figure-1.2 Government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.
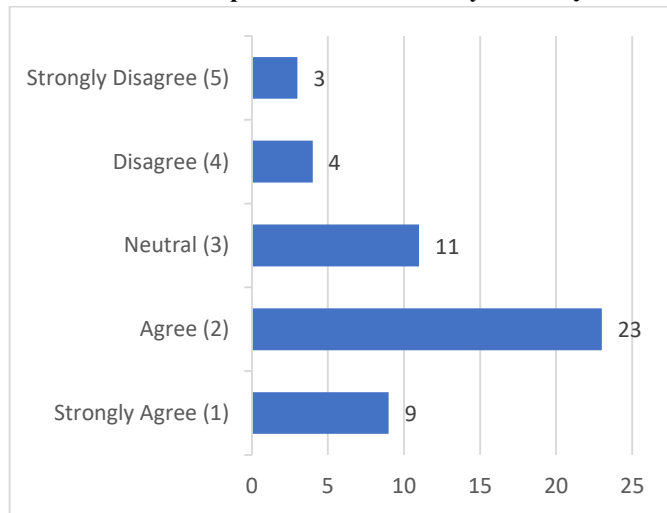
(Source: Primary data)

18 percent of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that the government should government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. 46 percent agree with the statement that the government should government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. Eight percent disagree with the statement that the government should government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. Six percent strongly disagree with the statement that the government should government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. 22 percent remain neutral.

64 percent agree with the statement that the government should government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.

1.10 Experts

In the following paragraphs, the primary data collected from the 50 expert respondents is analysed.

1.10.1 Government publicising the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys will revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.
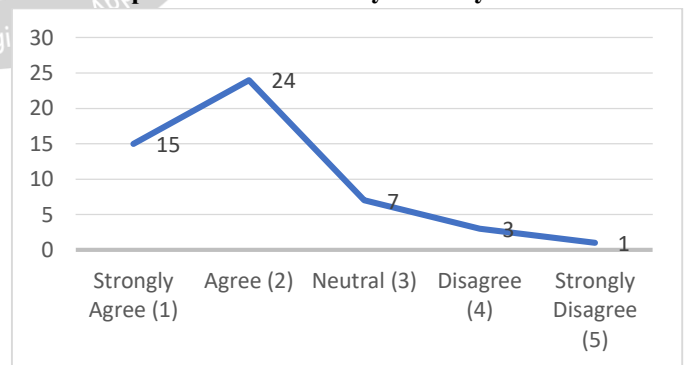
One school of thought has it that the government publicising the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys will revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. Hence the researcher sought to know from the respondents if they would agree with the statement that the government publicising the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys will revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. The respondents' agreement / otherwise with the statement is expressed at five levels, namely, SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree and SD=Strongly Disagree. These levels are assigned the values 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, respectively. Their levels of agreement with the statement are reflected in the following Table and Figure.

Table-1.3 Government publicising the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys will revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.

Levels of Agreement (Values)	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree (1)	15	30
Agree (2)	24	48
Neutral (3)	7	14
Disagree (4)	3	6
Strongly Disagree (5)	1	2
Total	**50**	**100**

(Source: Primary data)

Figure-1.3 Government publicising the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys will revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.

(Source: Primary data)

30 percent of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that the government publicising the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys will revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. 48 percent agree with the statement that the government publicising the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys will revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. Six percent disagree with the statement that the government

publicising the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys will revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. Two percent strongly disagree with the statement that the government publicising the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys will revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. 14 percent remain neutral.

78 percent agree with the statement that the government publicising the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys will revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.

1.10.2 Government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.
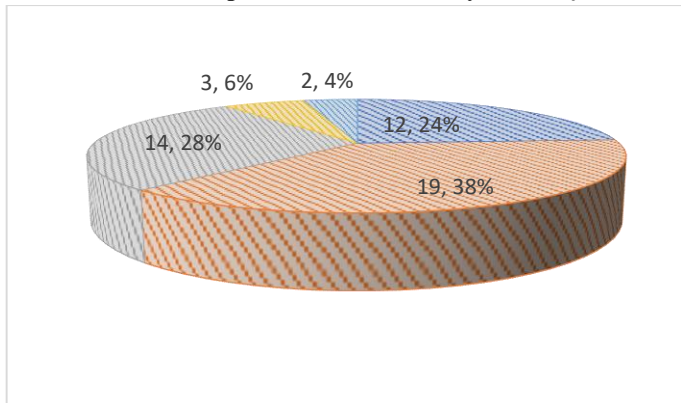
Another school of thought has it that the government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. Hence the researcher sought to know from the respondents if they would agree with the statement that the government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. The respondents' agreement / otherwise with the statement is expressed at five levels, namely, SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree and SD=Strongly Disagree. These levels are assigned the values 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, respectively. Their levels of agreement with the statement are reflected in the following Table and Figure.

Table-1.4 Government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.

Levels of Agreement (Values)	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree (1)	12	24
Agree (2)	19	38
Neutral (3)	14	28
Disagree (4)	3	6
Strongly Disagree (5)	2	4
Total	**50**	**100**

(Source: Primary data)

Figure-1.4 Government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.

(Source: Primary data)

24 percent of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that the government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. 38 percent agree with the statement that the government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. Six percent disagree with the statement that the government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. Four percent strongly disagree with the statement that the government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry. 28 percent remain neutral.

62 percent agree with the statement that the government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.

1.11 Summary of findings

In the following paragraphs, a summarised version of the findings arrived at in respect of the two categories of respondents is furnished.

1.11.1 Toymaker respondents

1. 68 percent agree with the statement that the government should publicise the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.

2. 64 percent agree with the statement that the government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.

1.11.2 Experts

1. 78 percent agree with the statement that the government publicising the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of the toys will revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.

2 62 percent agree with the statement that the government should assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry.

1.12 Conclusions

Conclusions relate to the hypotheses. They are answers to the research questions.

1.12.1 Hypothesis testing

As explained, the following is the first hypothesis proposed to be tested:

"Government needs to assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry".

Hence H_0 and H_1 are as follows:

H_0: "Government need not assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry"

H_1: "Government needs to assure a minimum support price to ivory wood growers to revive the fortunes of Channapatna's handmade toy industry"

Based on the primary data collected from the respondents, vide Tables: 2 and 4, a chi-square test was applied to ascertain the association, if any, between the two variables. The following Table reveals the computation made using MS-Excel:

	Category	Observed Values		
		Yes	*No*	*Total*
	Toymakers	32	18	50
	Experts	31	19	50
	Total	*63*	*37*	*100*
		Expected Values		
	Category	*Yes*	*No*	*Total*
	Toymakers	31.5	18.5	50
	Experts	31.5	18.5	50
	Total	*63*	*37*	*100*
		Yes	*No*	
	o-e	0.5000	-0.5000	
2		-0.5000	0.5000	
	(o-e)^2	0.2500	0.2500	
		0.2500	0.2500	
	((o-e)^2)/e	0.0079	0.0135	
		0.0079	0.0135	
	CV	*0.0159*	*0.0270*	*0.0429*
	TV			*3.8415*
	p			*0.8359*

The calculated value of χ^2 is *0.0429*, lower than the table value of *3.8415* for an alpha of 0.05 at one degree of freedom. Hence the null hypothesis is not rejected, and the research hypothesis is rejected. p=*0.8359*is the inverse of the one-tailed probability of the chi-squared distribution.

1.13 Researcher's recommendations

These are days when parents splurge on toys of every kind and every hueto mollycoddle their children. Taking advantage of this, any number of toymakers has been flooding the market with colourful toys. In the race to corner a market share, the toy makers at end to compromise on safety standards, often injuring the health of the users, which in this case are the children. Fortunately, parents, experts and the regulators have woken up to this risk. Yet some toymakers manage to palm off such harmful toys on unsuspecting parents. In the circumstances, the government should publicise the non-toxic and kid-friendly features of Channapatna toys. It should rope in the services of not-for-profit bodies in the exercise. Government should not hesitate to support the ivory wood growers with the minimum support price (MSP) mechanism given that the toys enjoy a good market nationally and internationally. This will help the growers to raise more ivory wood trees, supply the wood to the toymakers and help the toy industry grow in volume and value terms. The tree does not deplete the water table for its growth, does not exhaust soil nutrients, does not require chemical fertilisers and chemical pesticides, and can grow on its own with minimal human intervention. Alongside, financial inclusion will also have been achieved.

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