

PERTINENCE OF THE CHANNAPATNA TOYMAKING INDUSTRY TO KARNATAKA'S ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT

The Indian toy industry is estimated to be worth USD 1.5 bn, accounting for a mere 0.5 percent of the global market (INVEST INDIA, 2019). The toy manufacturers operate mostly from NCR, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and a few clusters across central Indian states. By default, the toys made at Channapatna, a town on the Bangalore-Mysore highway, represent the karnataka's toy industry. Also called lacquerware toys, Channapatna has become a household name in Karnataka and to a certain extent elsewhere in the country, owing to the town's association with the production of the uniquely designed and crafted toys. Several studies have dealt with the status of the Channapatna toy industry. They have discussed the problems the toymakers face in terms of availability of raw material, of marketing strategies to be followed and of new markets to be tapped, among others. Surprisingly, not many have dwelt on the pertinence of the industry to the state's economy and the country's economy and the resultant need to nurse the industry back to health for the purpose. The researcher interacted with toymakers and experts on the Channapatna toy industry to supplement his research into this aspect of the industry, namely, nursing it back to health against the backdrop of its importance to the economy of Karnataka state. The researcher concluded that, government should aggressively promote the production of the raw material, namely ivory wood. Growers of ivory wood should be assured of a minimum support price (MSP) for the purpose. The government should also prevail on the toymakers to market their toys online since the strategy holds immense potential for the toymakers. The government should rope in the services of Karnataka State Handicraft Development Corporation (KSHDCL) for exposing the toymakers to the online marketing format. The strategy would help the toymakers tap newer markets. Courtesy the latter, the toymakers would be in a position to diversify their product basket, by customising their toys to the requirements of the newer markets wherever possible.

Key words: customise; diversify; MSP; nurse; prevail; relevance; resultant; supplement

1.1 Theoretical background of the topic

The products turned out by the Channapatna toymaking industry is among the heritage of brands that our country cannot afford to ignore, much less lose. We need to keep the brand alive for many reasons. It is not to be regarded merely as emblematic of fine craftsmanship. Commercial passion and specialist knowledge should lead to revival and growth of heritage brands of the Channapatna toy kind. Some such brands need to be rediscovered and given a fresh lick of love. The Channapatna toy handmade toys deserve such a lick of love. While one does not grudge these statements about the Channapatna toy industry, one does rue the rather low level of significance being attached to examine the industry's pertinence to the economy of Karnataka state.

1.2 Statement of the problem

It is clear that there is a dire need to fully appreciate the role played by the Channapatna toy industry in the economy of Karnataka state in particular and that of the country in general. It is all the more relevant in the Indian milieu where the informal sector of the economy plays a significant role particularly in generating employment for the illiterate, semi-literate and vulnerable segments of the society, thereby leading to their emancipation.

1.3 Review of literature

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

1. In August 2018, the Prime Minister expressed the view that India should establish itself as a global toy hub (IBEF, 2019). The toy industry should increase its international footprint, achieve organic synergies across demographics, and leverage the copiously available raw materials and artisan skillsets for the purpose. Thus arrived the *National Action Plan 2018*. It seeks to promote the toy industry, bringing traditional handicrafts and handmade toys too, within its ambit. The Indian toy retail market was valued at INR. 16,000 crore (USD 2.2 billion) in 2018, accounting for less than one percent of the global market. Currently, 85 percent of the domestic demand for toys is met through imports. China accounts for 80 of the imports. The rest is sourced from Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Germany, Hong Kong, and the US. Compared to imports, India's toy exports are worth a meagre INR 730 crore (USD 100 million) in value terms. This embarrassingly large trade deficit must be viewed against the country's potential to achieve self-reliance in the

industry. The latter is likely to grow at 10-15 percent against the global average of five percent.

2. Government has approved the establishment of three toy manufacturing clusters in Madhya Pradesh, two in Rajasthan, and one each in Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu (Aspirant World, 2019). The clusters will manufacture toys made of wood, lac, palm leaves, bamboo, and fabric. The clusters will be developed under the existing schemes, like the Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI). Two toy clusters are currently being established in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh under SFURTI. SFURTI offers incentives like skill development, capacity building, creation of facilities (like common facility centres and rehousing facilities). It also extends marketing and e-commerce assistance to local industries. A study by Quality Council of India (QCI) revealed that 67 percent of imported toys failed a testing survey. This led the government to proactively encourage production of safe toys locally.
3. The scion of erstwhile Mysore royal family Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar and his wife Trishikha Kumari Wadiyar will install an online marketplace to promote the GI-tagged Channapatna toys (starofmysore.com, 2019). Channapatna town turns out dolls made of wood, tiny wooden utensils, brightly lac-coloured birds and animals. Hand-crafted and hand-painted by skilled craftsmen, the figurines were once in demand all over India. With the times changing however, the industry has been sliding downhill. What is distinct about these toys is that they are eco-friendly. Non-toxic vegetable colour dyes are used to make these toys.
4. Swedish furniture major IKEA intends to scale up sourcing of toys from India for its India operations (Business World, 2019). It seeks to generate around 12 percent of sales from toys targeted at kids. Presently it sources only cotton-based soft toys from India. It is serious about expanding into other categories like wooden toys. It is thinking of partnering with other toymakers, given its focus on the toy segment of its business. The company works with forestry-certified wood, in line with its policy of sourcing from sustainable sources. Under the FDI policy for single-brand retailers, 30 percent of the value of goods should be locally sourced. The requirement can be met as an average during the first five years. Thereafter it must be met annually. Through an amendment in August 2019, the government stated that all procurements made from India by a single-brand retailer for that brand will be counted towards local sourcing, irrespective of whether the goods procured are sold in India or exported. IKEA has been sourcing from India for its global operations for almost 35 years. It is networking with around 60

suppliers. The company opened its second retail store in Mumbai in December 2018 and will open its next store in Bengaluru.

1.4 Research gap

The reviewed literature has thrown valuable light on the country's toy industry in general and the Channapatna toy industry. As some researchers have mentioned, the national government and the state government have woken up to the need to revive the industry, given the potential it holds. As for the Channapatna toys, the workforce with the requisite skill sets is locally available. The raw material, namely ivory wood, grows on its own even on fallow land. Yet, 85 percent of the demand for toys in the country is met through imports! The industry abounds in anomalies of this kind. As another researcher suggests, the artisans should reinvent themselves since they must keep pace with the changing consumer tastes and preferences. While these views of the learned researchers deserve all praise, one does feel that the researchers could also have reviewed the industry against the backdrop of its relevance to Channapatna's economy and Karnataka's economy. They could have discussed how the stakeholders should go about the task of getting the industry back on the rails against the backdrop of its relevance to Karnataka's economy. Such a discussion would have added value to their otherwise valuable reviews. 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 objective of the study is to identify ways and means of nursing the Channapatna toy industry back to health against the backdrop of the industry's relevance to the economy of Karnataka state.

1.7 Hypothesis proposed to be tested.

The study proposes to test the following hypothesis:

“KSHDCL needs to expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms”.

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, Research Methodology, 2019). 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_0 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 In view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime.

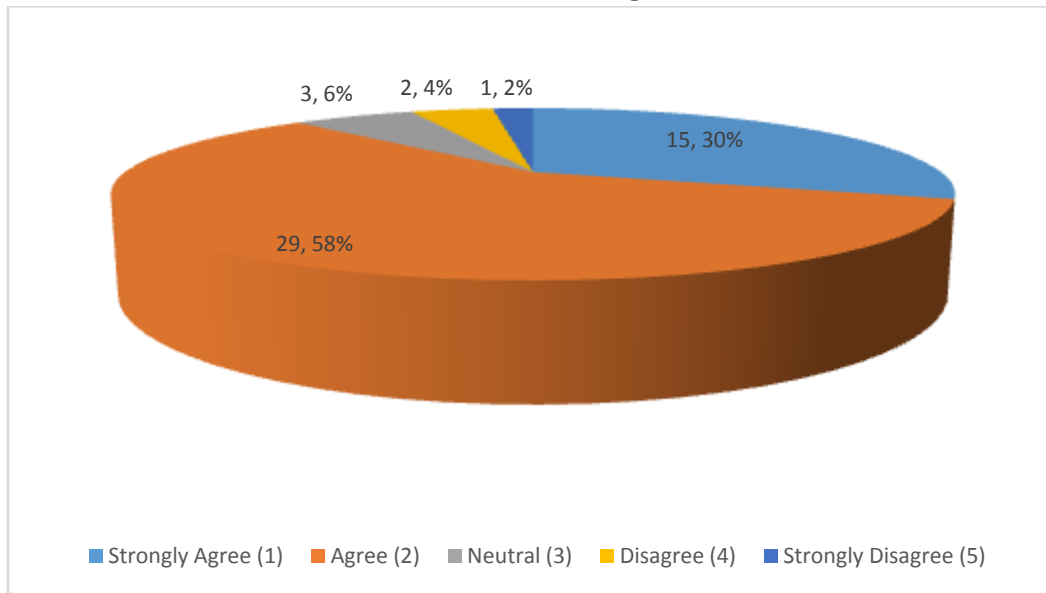
It is held in some stakeholder circles that in view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime. Hence the researcher sought to know from the respondents if they would agree with the statement that in view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime. 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 In view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime

Levels of Agreement (Values)	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree (1)	15	30
Agree (2)	29	58
Neutral (3)	3	6
Disagree (4)	2	4
Strongly Disagree (5)	1	2
Total	50	100

Figure-1

In view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime



30 percent of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that in view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime. 58 percent agree with the statement that in view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime. Four percent disagree with the statement that in view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime. Two percent strongly disagree with the statement that in view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime. Six percent remain neutral.

88 percent agree with the statement that in view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime.

1.9.2 KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms.

It is also held in some stakeholder circles that KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms. Hence the researcher sought to know from the respondents if they would agree with the statement that KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms. 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.

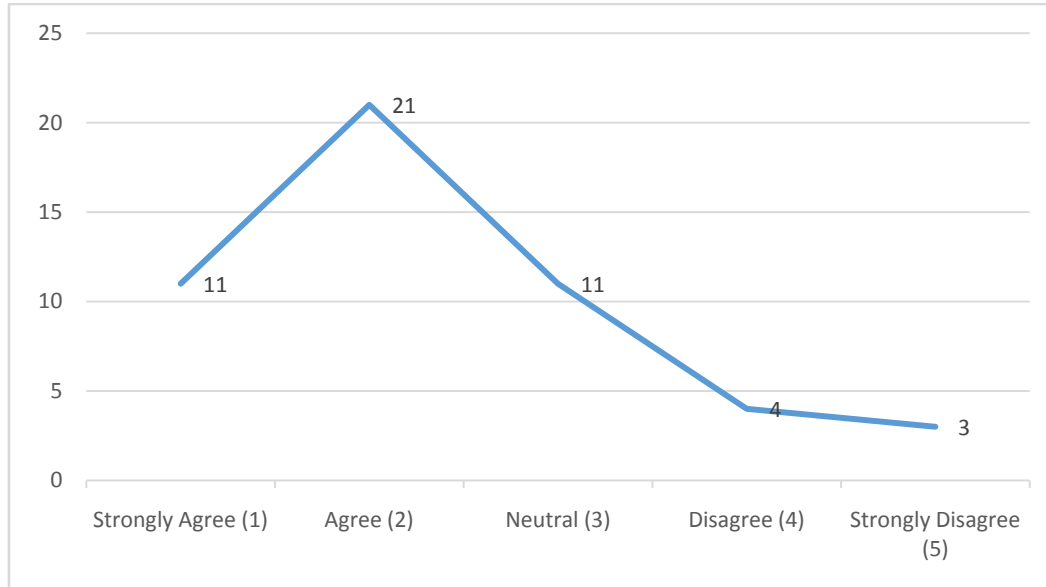
Table-2

KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms

Levels of Agreement (Values)	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree (1)	11	22
Agree (2)	21	42
Neutral (3)	11	22
Disagree (4)	4	8
Strongly Disagree (5)	3	6
Total	50	100

Figure-2

KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms



(Source: Primary data)

22 percent of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms. 42 percent agree with the statement that KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms. Eight percent disagree with the statement that KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms. Six percent strongly disagree with the statement that KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms. 22 percent remain neutral.

64 percent agree with the statement that KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms.

1.10 Experts

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

1.10.1 In view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime.

It is held in some stakeholder circles that in view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime. Hence the researcher sought to know from the respondents if they would agree with the statement that in view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime. 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.

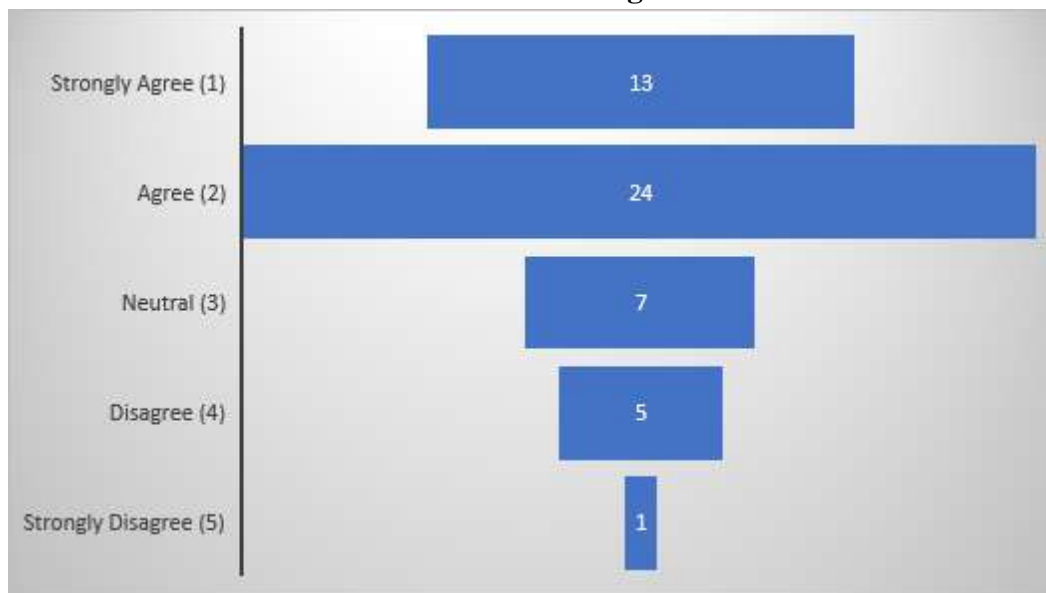
Table-3

In view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime

Levels of Agreement (Values)	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree (1)	13	26
Agree (2)	24	48
Neutral (3)	7	14
Disagree (4)	5	10
Strongly Disagree (5)	1	2
Total	50	100

Figure-3

In view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime



26 percent of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that in view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime. 48 percent agree with the statement that in view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime. 10 percent disagree with the statement that in view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime. Two percent strongly disagree with the statement that in view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime. 14 percent remain neutral.

74 percent agree with the statement that in view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime.

1.10.2 KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms.

It is also held in some stakeholder circles that KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms. Hence the researcher sought to know from the respondents if they would agree with the statement that KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms. 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.

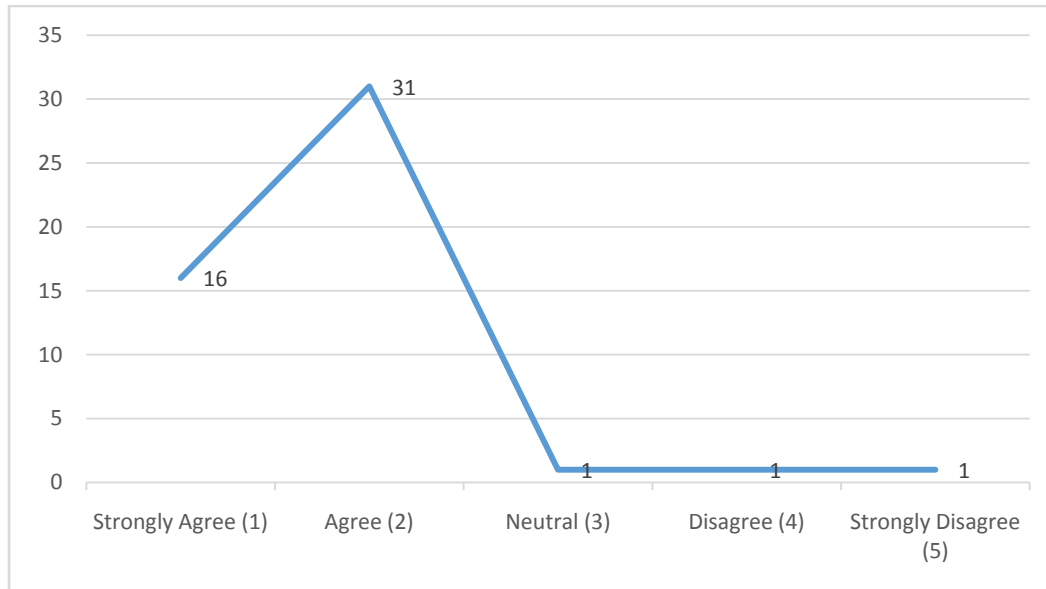
Table-4

KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms

Levels of Agreement (Values)	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree (1)	16	32
Agree (2)	31	62
Neutral (3)	1	2
Disagree (4)	1	2
Strongly Disagree (5)	1	2
Total	50	100

Figure-4

KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms



(Source: Primary data)

32 percent of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms. 62 percent agree with the statement that KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms. Two percent disagree with the statement that KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms. Two percent strongly disagree with the statement that KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms. Two percent remain neutral.

94 percent agree with the statement that KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms.

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

- ✓ 88 percent agree with the statement that in view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime.
- ✓ 64 percent agree with the statement that KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms.

1.11.2 Experts

- ✓ 74 percent agree with the statement that in view of the industry's potential to create jobs for the local semi-skilled workforce, growers must be incentivised to raise the acreage under ivory wood by bringing the latter under the MSP regime.
- ✓ 94 percent agree with the statement that KSHDCL should expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms.

1.12 Conclusions

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

1.12.1 Hypothesis testing

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

“KSHDCL needs to expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms”.

Hence H_0 and H_1 are as follows:

H_0 : “KSHDCL need not expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms”

H₁: “KSHDCL needs to expose the toy-makers to the on-line channel so they can penetrate the overseas markets and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms”

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:

		Observed Values		
		<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>Category</i>			
	Toymakers	32	18	50
	Experts	47	3	50
	<i>Total</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>100</i>
		Expected Values		
		<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>Category</i>			
	Toymakers	39.5	10.5	50
	Experts	39.5	10.5	50
	<i>Total</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>100</i>
		<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	
	o-e	-7.5000	7.5000	
2		7.5000	-7.5000	
	(o-e) ²	56.2500	56.2500	
		56.2500	56.2500	
	((o-e) ²)/e	1.4241	5.3571	
		1.4241	5.3571	
	<i>CV</i>	<i>2.8481</i>	<i>10.7143</i>	<i>13.5624</i>
	<i>TV</i>			<i>3.8415</i>
	<i>p</i>			<i>0.0002</i>

The calculated value of χ^2 is 13.5624, higher than the table value of 3.8415 for an alpha of 0.05 at one degree of freedom. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, and the research hypothesis is not rejected. $p=0.0002$ is the inverse of the one-tailed probability of the chi-squared distribution.

1.13 Researcher's recommendations

1. Government should support the ivory wood growers with the minimum support price (MSP) mechanism. Channapatna toys enjoy a good market nationally and internationally. Hence the industry should not be allowed to hobble for want of the raw material, namely, ivory wood.
2. MSP will raise the acreage under ivory wood and lead the toymakers to ramp up production volumes. The resultant cascade effect can trigger many welcome developments. When prompt raw material supply is ensured, the industry will grow swiftly, triggering a virtuous circle of rising production, rising sales volume, rising revenues, rising employment and rising economic prosperity for Channapatna, Karnataka and the country.
3. Ramped-up production volumes will help the industry price the toys competitively in the international markets too, thereby enlarging its patron base and generating precious forex assets for the country.
4. Copious availability of ivory wood at a competitive price will lead more toymakers to recommence or raise toy production and create more jobs for the locally available semi-skilled workforce. It can trigger the growth of downstream units too since many more things go into the toys than merely the ivory wood and labour / expertise. Alongside, financial inclusion will have gained steam unobtrusively, given that the workforce is mostly comprised of women from the marginalised communities of society.
5. Until the MSP regime stabilises, the government should put in place a stop-gap arrangement: It should entrust the Karnataka State Handloom Development Corporation Ltd (KSHDCL) with the responsibility of supplying ivory wood to the toymakers. This will ensure that once the MSP regime stabilises, the toy industry migrates to the MSP regime smoothly and seamlessly. The toy industry-driven economy of Channapatna will not suffer at all.

6. Government should prevail upon the industry to finetune its marketing strategy in line with the changing consumer demands and expectations. It should prevail on the industry to exploit the online marketing potential, like most trades / industries do these days. It should steadily expose the toymakers to the online channel, by roping in the services of agencies like KSHDCL. The exposure will help the toymakers penetrate the overseas markets effectively and competitively. In the process, the toymakers will have modernised and globalised their operations seamlessly. Further, it will ensure that the industry is disintermediated and the toymakers realise the proceeds from the sales fully.
7. The industry provides livelihood to at least 4,000 artisan families, thereby contributing its mite to Karnataka's economy. Hence a revived toy industry will contribute significantly to the economic uplift and empowerment of the vulnerable sections of society.
8. Toymakers should move beyond toys and make value-added products like trays and bead curtains. Government, by roping in the services of other agencies, should extend training support and technology support to the toy industry. When the toy industry the world over is chasing customisation, innovation, and modernisation, the Channapatna toy industry cannot vegetate. It must keep pace with the trend obtaining elsewhere, without of course sacrificing the basic features and uniqueness that characterise its toys, features that earned the GI tag for the industry. The strategy will work wonders for the toy industry and by extension, the economy of Channapatna and Karnataka.

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