

# Quality of Basket

from the perspective  
of Handicraft Exporter



# Product niche

In an economy that is as diverse and as complex as that of the artisan and design sector, it is critically important to define your product niche. This helps you

- a) Understand the specific dynamics that affect your product segment
- b) define the target market
- c) identify and respond to competition, build a brand
- d) become more focused when seeking growth opportunities- whether through distribution or an extended product range.





# The growing demand for high-end home decor and home textiles:

The good news is that while this trend was once only spoken of in relation to the Western world, Africa is now a contender for increased consumption of luxury goods and services. Countries such as Nigeria, Angola, Morocco and Kenya.

However very few artisans and designers realise this in their product offering. Could it be because it isn't such an obvious market segment to decipher? Or do we lack the capacity to deliver on high-end goods?

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# When creating a display, space is an important part of the product

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This is where exhibitors unwittingly sabotage a great product. Too often, space and product are seen as two separate entities, so that there is little thought and planning on how each will highlight the other. Have you ever walked right past a booth because there was too much going on? Or walked into one and felt an instant calm?



# Fairtrade principles are now one of considerations

There is a greatest need in consumer demand for ethically sourced products. Issues of health and safety of workers, environmentally sustainable production, fair wages and non-discriminatory practices have now become major considerations in purchasing decisions.

For producers, this means paying as much attention to the value chain as to the end product.







# Towards Simplicity

*(contemporary minimalism)*

The market for the indigenous (also known as ethnic or traditional) aesthetic is rapidly diminishing. The dominant trend was more minimalist – clean lines, well defined shapes and forms and toned down color schemes.

Where the indigenous element was evident, it has to include a modern, simple (contemporary look), a trend now referred to as - GLOBAL



# Co-creation is the new form of value addition

Consumers now have greater bargaining power. They expect more experience, less product and will naturally move towards producers that engage them in the creation process.

Similarly, buyers are looking for (among other things) a flexibility that allows their input in the design process.

While making the opportunity available, ensure that there are clear instructions on the process, outcome, costs and deliverables.



# Online presence: an asset or liability?

Maintaining an up-to-date and relevant online presence can be quite a task even for the best of us.

It is often the first point of contact for many a potential client, and so can work for you just as easily as it can against you.

You have to be consistent while putting out your content e.g Facebook, websites, whatsapp



# Distribution channels have shortened

There was a time when accessing export markets was impossible without the wholesale importer.

A significant development today however, is that the intermediaries have become redundant due to direct sourcing by independent retailers. Even though export agents in the country of origin are still considered a necessity, more and more producers are taking on the responsibilities that come with the safe and reliable movement of goods.



# Product development remains a major gap:

Product development (described as the process of design, creation and introduction of a new product to market) remains a challenge for many producers within the crafty industry.

For a variety of reasons: -

- a) lack of skilled people, limited funds and hard-to-come-by market information, the sector's ability to innovate as quickly as the market demands is severely stunted.
- b) Possible solutions lies in outsourcing, a cost effective strategy that has become increasingly popular in production. We see this as a future trend, as knowledge on intellectual property rights becomes more practice and less theory.



# Trade shows are worth the investment

As distribution channels become more varied and easier to access, many people question the longevity and future role of trade fairs. The argument- beyond the prohibitive cost- is that buyers will find you anyway, given the trend towards direct sourcing and the real-time opportunities the world wide web presents. However, trade shows present a more significant opportunity. They are the single largest gathering of industry players eg. Architects, interior designers, real estate managers, academics, design lovers, media owners...you are bound to encounter them all under one roof, and in less than a week! This is networking on another level.

















