

Study of the Efforts Being Made By The Chhattisgarh In Vocal For Local and the Impact of the Local Products on the Consumer of State

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Abstract: *The idea of “Vocal for Local” now holds greater significance in India to promote and encourage local products, boost local businesses, create new opportunities for jobs, and motivate local customers to choose local products. It has tremendous potential in fostering this project, owing to its cultural heritage and traditional handicraft, forest based products and agricultural produce, tribal art. The current study aims at analyzing the initiatives taken by the Government of Chhattisgarh and the other stakeholders for the promotion of the concept of “Vocal for Local” and its effect upon consumers perception, preferences, buying behavior and satisfaction level towards the local products in Chhattisgarh. The study focuses on the elements of products occurrence, quality, cost, reality, branding and advertising in the given context. Also discusses the problems the local producers face in selling the local products to the consumers and how they are comparing with the national products and branded products. It is a primary based research based study where data has been collected from consumers of Chhattisgarh with some secondary data obtained from Government Reports and Literature. The findings are hoped to provide some insight to the consumers towards local products, and a measure of effectiveness from consumer promotion. The study would definitely assist in framing policy and strategy for enhancement of local enterprises and sustainable development of the state of Chhattisgarh.*

Keywords: Vocal for Local, Chhattisgarh, Local Products, Consumer Behaviour, Consumer Awareness, Indigenous Products, Local Enterprises.

Introduction

The idea of “Vocal for Local” has become a crucial tool in the policy matrix India promotes and employs to support local businesses, introduce sustainable economic development, create jobs, protect traditional knowledge, and boost local production. It helps foster consumer awareness, consumer preference and consumer purchasing for locally produced products and those produced by their communities. This is not a matter of restricting customers with choice of imported or branded products that are produced on a large scale but to make consumers aware of the economic and social value of locally produced products. It also helps bring in the small farmers, artisans, craftsmen, self-help-groups, micro, small and medium enterprises and traditional communities into the formal economy. In this, the Government of Chhattisgarh has good scope considering its rich natural resource, rich Tribal tradition and resource, difference in irrigation methods, handicrafts, handloom products, difference in forest practices and unique culture of the people.

The indigenous produce of the State are known for Chhattisgarh and include various products that give a cultural and economic identity to the State. The products like khusha silk, traditional handloom, bell-metal and Dhokra handicrafts, bamboo products, terracotta products, tribal jewellery, wood crafts, processed agricultural products, forest produce, herbal products and various other traditional manufacture items give important livelihood opportunities to the rural and semi-urban sections of the society. A significant number of these products are linked to traditional skills which are passed down through generations. Producers also experience some challenges in accessing markets, standardizing the production of their goods, packaging, branding, access to finance, technological development, digital marketing, in-transit selling of goods, and access to bigger markets in the local areas. Therefore just because a product is made locally doesn't mean that consumers will use or buy the product. Product quality, product price, product reach, consumer confidence in the product, product attractiveness, and brand image are important variables affecting consumer's purchase decisions.

From a cultural and inclusiveness growth perspective, a movement of this nature called “Vocal for Local” becomes relevant for Chhattisgarh too in the light of its economic development. To put local products on the map and captivate the market, there have been several initiatives by government departments, local authorities, producer organisations, self-help groups, cooperatives, entrepreneurs and others to ensure that these products are visible and become interesting to the market. Local producers can learn to create opportunities for the consumers to access their distance areas through Exhibition; Fairs, Sale to the local markets; Brands, Geographical indication based promotion, Skills development programmes, Financial assistance, Entrepreneurship development and campaign. Locally, digital and social technologies have also opened new avenues for businesses that can connect directly with consumers, and to widen their markets. Therefore, if not successfully implemented, these measures could contribute to enhancing the awareness of the consumers towards the local products and to strengthen the linkages among the producers and consumers.

Consumer behaviour has a crucial role to play when it comes to the success of the “Vocal for Local” movement. Consumers' attitudes can be good in relation to local products; however, there are several factors that can affect the consumers buying behaviour. The price competitiveness of the product, the quality, its durability and availability, its packaging, its variety, its purchase facilitation, awareness of its origin, and its perceived authenticity are all potential factors that could shape consumer preferences. Changes in patterns of consumption with a focus on the digital space are found particularly with newer consumers and can be both challenges as well as opportunities to local products. Thus, understanding local ownership and the need for local vs. "recommended" ownership is key to effective promotions. Consumer perceptions also can be used to determine potential discrepancies between awareness and customer purchase behaviour.

Given this background, the present study focusses on the actions taken by the government of Chhattisgarh in the area of “Vocal for Local” and its impact on the demand for local products in Chhattisgarh state. The purpose of this study is to examine awareness of the local products, preferences, perceptions of consumers, consumer purchasing preferences, consumer satisfaction and willingness to buy local products. This also tries to determine the market factors driving consumer preference and hindrances to the growability of local products. The findings of the study should provide effective input to the policy makers, local producers, entrepreneurs, marketers and development agencies. Improving the acceptance of local products can be achieved through consumers' awareness, product quality, re-branding and packaging, digital marketing and product availability as well as good market linkages. Therefore, the “Vocal for Local” initiative can help boost the entrepreneurship in the village level in Chhattisgarh while preventing the loss of traditional livelihoods, promoting self-reliance and meeting the overall goal of inclusive and sustainable economic development.

Literature Review

The literature reviewed, on 'Vocal for Local', entrepreneurship, local development, handicrafts and skill development and consumer behavior indicates that promoting the indigenous products could contribute significantly to economic empowerment, employment, cultural preservation and sustainable development. Some other studies have tried other perspectives on these issues like women empowerment, skill building, HRM, indigenous production systems, rural e-commerce, consumption in rural areas, entrepreneurship and MSMEs. But, the synergic evaluation of the activity of government dubbed ‘Vocal for Local’ and how it has influenced consumer behaviour in Chhattisgarh has been hardly focused.

Women empowerment in handloom and handicraft Economics in Assam relation with cultural identity had been studied by Sarkar and Pradeepa (2024). The study suggests that Handloom/Handicraft products might be a source of livelihood to ladies' and also maintain the local culture alive. The present research findings are very important as the tribal handicraft, handlooms and traditional art of the state is equally strong in the state of Chhattisgarh. Such products promoted under “Vocal for Local” can help foster the economic engagement of local communities and help remain the indigenous identity.

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Bhowmick and Dwivedi (2023), studied the paraprismatic resilience and entrepreneurship of individuals in a limited resource context in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic. The way they work illustrates the need for adaptability, cooperation and community-based economic activities of entrepreneurs to lessen the impact of negative externalities. Cooperation and innovative business strategies are suggested to help build local entrepreneurs' and communities' resilience. In the context of Chhattisgarh's local SPs, this perspective holds significance for understanding how such producers can overcome the difficulties of markets and gain greater visibility their own sustainability through the use of producer groups.

Kshetri (2018) examined the concept of “geo-distributed” consumers and producers, which seeks to match geographically distant consumers with rural farmers, by leveraging digital platforms within developing countries. eCommerce can increase the reliability of rural populations to operate business in traditional markets better by reducing some of the obstacles faced in them, like reliance on intermediaries, geographical distance, and access to markets. Limited market access, distance and the use of intermediaries represent some of the traditional obstacles to rural markets, that can be overcome partly through the use of eCommerce, thus helping to enhance the readiness of businesses in rural areas. One of several delivery channels to help Chhattisgarh's Self Help Groups, small businesses, local artisans, and farmers participate in a bigger consumer market is digital commerce, especially in the space of ‘Vocal for Local’.

In India the concept and idea of entrepreneurship education and self-reliance in the era of “Vocal for Local” has been discussed by Sharma and Bakshi (2022). They cited the need for entrepreneurial education to help develop entrepreneurial capacities which would enable an entrepreneur to create innovative ideas and develop a local enterprise. By promoting entrepreneurship, alongside local production, the study implies that this can make a contribution to more economic self-reliance. This provides a sturdy foundation to delve deeper and explore whether any entrepreneurship and skill development support are provided along with the promotional measures put in place in Chhattisgarh.

The skill building programmes and the rural employment were studied and a key linkage identified between them is skill development by Rajan and Desa (2022). The findings indicate that when appropriately developed, vocational and entrepreneurship skills can play a role in the empowerment of rural people on the labour market and increase their income generating potential. The current study is relevant for the present research because production capacity, skills in product designing and capacity to manage quality control, packaging and capacity to market and promote local products through digital communication and entrepreneurship skills is required to promote local products.

Skill Development Initiatives and job opportunities in India (Ganeshan and Vethirajan 2020) were also investigated. Their findings highlight the need of interventions which focus on skills in order to strengthen employability and economic participation. As part of the local products, skill development could play a role in improving products quality, in the application of modern techniques in the production and in communication with the consumers whose demand is growing for adaptability.

Verma (2020) discussed about the role of MSMEs in poverty alleviation and rural development in India. The focus of this study is on the employment generation capability, income generation, entrepreneurship and economic development of region created by MSMEs. Rural residents' livelihood would be directly affected if there is an improvement in the capability of MSMEs as the many producers/enterprises operate under MSME. The outcome validates the posters' assertion that the 'Vocal for Local' must be perceived as the 'Vocal for Procurement' and essentially become a tool to "drive Local production and entrepreneurship".

Bianchi and Mortimer (2015) investigated what motivated consumers to eat local products, and found that there are a number of factors that affect consumer choices about local food. There are a number of factors affecting customer buying habits include perceptions of the locality, the quality, trust, authenticity, personal values and product attributes. This study is significant to the present study because it was done to assess how important it is to study consumer side factors and not only producers and/or government side factors.

One of the authors, Saini & Budhwar (2008) studied human resource management in the Indian SMEs. The importance of indigenous realities of human resource management in the SMEs was emphasised. They found that by studying Indian SMEs they learned that they play a special role in culturally unique environments, social and institutional environments. It is crucial for local business to understand these local, traditional conditions if they are to devise meaningful strategies for local business. This perspective can be extended to the rural industries and traditional farmers in Chhattisgarh that have cultural attitudes and manufacturing systems in their communities, that influence their operations.

Thakura and Sharma (2022) in particular studied the 'Vocal for Local' Campaign taking India as an example and discussed the concerns with regard to the imported brands. Their work has been taken as a direct conceptual base for the present research as their study has focused on the connection between the campaign of appeal and the home-foreign choice between home and foreign products. The study shows that increasing consumer awareness about the local products, and raising awareness about competition faced by local products is important.

Localized value chain and sustainable livelihoods w.r.t policy level has been studied by Verma and Choudhary (2018). They highlight the importance of more local production and values chain for a more sustainable rural development. By coordinating and optimising local value chains better, local producers can have improved access to markets, have fewer value chain steps and increase the value of the economic opportunity in the local communities. This could be particularly relevant if, say, in Chhattisgarh, the geographies have an influence on product supplies as well as on the local competition.

Research Gap

Along with local production, the studies conducted confirm that local entrepreneurship, skill development, local digital commerce, and consumption preferences are also factors in a sustainable local economic development. Most of the existing studies have focussed on one

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specific aspect, either women empowerment, rural entrepreneurship, skill development, e-commerce, MSME or local food consumption or larger campaigns “Vocal for Local”. It is observed that, there was no noticeable research so far to reflect on the efforts being made in the field of promotion of “Vocal for Local” and impact that has been generated on the awareness of consumers, perception, preferences, purchasing behaviour and satisfaction of consumer towards its products in Chhattisgarh. Moreover, it is compulsory to study region-wise study of Chhattisgarh due to its socio-cultural and economic peculiarities, like tribal, handicrafts, handloom, forest based and the industries based in the villages of Chhattisgarh. In a bid to fill this gap, the present research explores this aspect from two perspectives, the promotion of the local products by the producer and the response of the consumer to the products in the State.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the efforts made by the Government of Chhattisgarh and other stakeholders to promote the “Vocal for Local” initiative and local products in the state.
2. To assess the level of consumer awareness, perception, preference, and purchasing behaviour towards locally produced products in Chhattisgarh.
3. To analyse the impact of local products on consumers and identify the major factors influencing their purchase decisions, as well as the challenges affecting the acceptance and promotion of local products.

Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is **no significant relationship** between consumer awareness, perception, preference, and purchasing behaviour towards locally produced products in Chhattisgarh.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): There is a **significant relationship** between consumer awareness, perception, preference, and purchasing behaviour towards locally produced products in Chhattisgarh.

Research Methodology

The present study is a descriptive and analytical type of research to evaluate the efforts taken for the promotion of “Vocal for Local”, as well as consumer awareness and perception, preference and purchasing behaviour with locally manufactured products done in Chhattisgarh. This study is made up of Primary sources and Secondary sources. Structured questionnaire will be used for primary data gathering from the consumers of various areas of the Chhattisgarh who will provide their responses to the questions of awareness of the consumers regarding their local products, perception of the quality of their local products, their preferences for the local product, frequency of their purchasing of the products, their satisfaction over the product and their willingness to recommend and big purchase again the local products. A Likert type scale is appropriate for analyzing respondents' perceptions and attitudes towards local products. Appropriate sampling techniques will be used and adequate representation of various demographic groups will be considered including age, gender, education, occupation and income. Secondary data shall be collected from various sources like government publications, research articles, books, reports, policy documents, local websites, etc. regards the local

economic development and rural entrepreneurship in the context of “Vocal for Local”, MSMEs, handicrafts and handloom of Chhattisgarh. Primary data obtained will be tabulated, classified, analysed with frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Based on the level of measurement of the variables and the nature of the proposed hypothesis some suitable inferential statistical techniques such as chi-square test, correlation analysis, regression analysis etc. could be used to examine the proposed hypothesis and determine the relationship among the variables, such as: consumer awareness, consumer perception, consumer preference and consumer purchase behaviour. Cronbach Alpha will be used as an index of test–retest reliability for the questionnaire. The findings from statistical analyses will be interpreted and presented in reference to the aim of the study, the factors influencing production that contribute to consumer acceptance of locally produced products will be identified. This methodology is expected to systematically assess promotional campaigns and the responses to the promotion by the stakeholders and provide meaningful information to the policy makers as part of the Chhattisgarh's “Vocal for Local” initiative going to the local producers, local entrepreneurs and local consumers.

Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Consumer Awareness	400	1.00	5.00	3.82	0.78
Consumer Perception	400	1.00	5.00	3.76	0.81
Consumer Preference	400	1.00	5.00	3.69	0.84
Purchasing Behaviour	400	1.00	5.00	3.61	0.87
Overall	400	1.00	5.00	3.72	0.83

Analysis

The descriptive statistics indicate that the consumers hold positive level of their awareness, perception, preference and purchasing behaviour about the locally produced product in Chhattisgarh, as revealed at the international level. The level of consumer awareness showed a high MCA of 3.82, thus signifying that the consumers were fairly knowledgeable about consumer products and significance of local products. The consumer perception mean scores (Table shows 3.76) reveal that the attitude towards local products production is positive. Consumer preference and purchasing behaviour is correlated positively with mean scores of 3.69 and 3.61 respectively indicating that consumer with positive attitude expressed towards the local product is also indicated positively in the consumers purchasing behaviour. The overall mean score for the pupil rate is 3.72, this overall picture indicates a positive response. The moderate variation in respondents' answers could be due to the fact that the standard deviation for each of the individual tests ranges between 0.78 and 0.87. The descriptive results provide a tentative positive indication of the correlation between the two variable and the hypothesis should be tested formally with a proper correlation or inferential statistical test.

Table: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variables	Consumer Awareness	Consumer Perception	Consumer Preference	Purchasing Behaviour
Consumer Awareness	1.000	.624**	.581**	.547**
Consumer Perception	.624**	1.000	.672**	.613**
Consumer Preference	.581**	.672**	1.000	.698**
Purchasing Behaviour	.547**	.613**	.698**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.000	.000	.000
N	400	400	400	400

Interpretation

Results from Pearson correlation show that there is positive significant relationship between consumer awareness and consumer perception with the value ranging from 0.624 ($p < 0.01$), consumer awareness and consumer preference with the value of 0.581 ($p < 0.01$), and consumer awareness and purchasing behaviour with the value of 0.547 ($p < 0.01$). In the same way, consumer perception is positively correlated with consumer preference $r = 0.672$, $p < 0.01$ and consumer purchasing behaviour $r = 0.613$, $p < 0.01$. It is revealed that purchasing behaviour is found to be the highest correlation with consumers preference as $r = 0.698$ at $p < 0.01$. All values of significance are less than 0.01, so the relationships are considered to be statistically significant. Thus the Null Hypothesis H_0 is rejected and Alternative Hypothesis H_1 accepted. The results indicate that greater consumers' awareness along with good perceptions and preferences towards local products are significantly related to the consumers' purchasing behaviour in Chhattisgarh.

Overall Conclusion

The current study shows that the program 'Vocal for Local' has already immense possibilities to stimulate demand of the local consumers for the local products and to promote local entrepreneurship, job creation and to preserve the local culture and to strengthen the economic development process in Chhattisgarh. There is tremendous diversity in locally made products like Handloom Work, Handicrafts, Kosa Silk, Tribal Arts, Forest based Products, Agricultural Products, Traditional Crafts by the local artisans/self help groups/ MSMEs etc. and Rural Entrepreneurs etc. within the state. But the Government and other stakeholders have made attempts to promote local products and thus it has gained visibility and recognition. But the effectiveness of this campaign will depend on raising awareness of, preference for, and on purchasing and recommending locally grown food, as well as on production and promotion.

The study suggests that the knowledge, perception, preference and purchasing behavior of consumers are crucial interdependent eating points that affect the acceptance of local products.

In general, there is a positive attitude from consumers towards producing local commodities, as evidenced by the descriptive results. Consumers know the economic, social, cultural and employment benefits prior to the success of local producers. Meanwhile, positive awareness doesn't necessarily result in purchasing behaviour. The quality of the product, the price, its availability, its authenticity, the material used to pack it, the design, the convenience with which it can be purchased, its image and its accessibility are all important in the final decision.

However, the correlation also indicates that the relationship of variables "consumer awareness", "consumer perception", "consumer preference" and "consumer purchasing behaviour" is positive and significant. Specifically, the results of the correlation between consumer preference and consumer behaviour indicate that when the consumer preference towards local products is high, their purchasing intention is also high. This finding supports the alternative hypothesis of significant relationship between the consumer awareness about locally produced product, consumer perception of locally produced product, consumer preference for locally produced product and consumer purchasing behaviour towards locally produced product in context of Chhattisgarh. Hence, to make the consumer aware and create positive perception it would be very significant to gain consumer interest into buying the product(s).

There is also a focus on the development of local products through digital marketing, e-commerce, branding, optimizing quality, upskilling and linkage. It is necessary that we help local producers become more marketable both inside the cities and across the country, as well as to online marketplaces, and escape the traditional markets. Digital platforms may be a means to adding a value to an original local product, and get closer to the customer; also to communicating a cultural/geographical identity. The same holds true for skill development programmes that can improve the quality, innovativeness, product packaging and product marketing abilities and entrepreneurial skills of producers.

From the above it has become apparent that the initiative of 'Vocal for Local' in Chhattisgarh does not only belong to the promotional marketing programme, but rather a process of economic and social development of the region, which will be continued for a long period of time. If there is greater coordination, between government sector, local produce, MSMEs, artisans, self-help groups, financial institutions and the e-commerce platforms with respect to provision of supports, there will be greater value addition to local products. Quality and accessibility improvement and authenticity and cultural identity conservation, can gain market acceptance and consumer confidence. Therefore, if the local products of Chhattisgarh continues to receive proper promotion in the future, encourage participation in the digital market, and provide policy support and nurture entrepreneurs and educated consumers, it can become more competitive and play a significant role in promoting self-reliance, inclusive growth, rural livelihoods and sustainable development in the economy.

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