

Importance of the Information required by the Artisans of Clay-based Handicrafts of West Bengal for their Product Development

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Abstract

A Clay-based handicraft is an important sector of India's economy in India in general and West Bengal in particular. But this is very much unorganized in nature. Today's customers need artistic and sophisticated terracotta articles and for that besides raw materials, labour, money, market, training, skill etc, the proper information in every steps from raw materials preparation to sells/marketing are very much required for overall development the products. The present study has identified the preferential list of the subject matter of the information necessary for product development in each category and in overall clay-based handicraft of West Bengal.

Keywords:

Clay-based handicrafts, Terracotta, West Bengal terracotta

1 Introduction

A handicraft is an important sector that has played an important role in our country's economy not only in providing employment to a vast segment of craft person in rural and urban areas but also in terms of generating substantial foreign exchange for the country.

Beside different crafts of W.B., the craft of pottery is one of the oldest crafts of the human. In generic term, all handicrafts made up of clay, here termed as 'Clay-based Handicraft'. It include common household pottery, terracotta of sculptural and architectural value, common terracotta artistic figures, Clay dolls and clay models of realistic nature, Clay models of artistic nature, Clay idols and Clay images of god and goddess and lastly the ceramic items. The present study comprises three types of information sources- Documentary, Human, and Institutional. Only experts and trainer of clay-based handicrafts are included as human sources. However, all the common artisans of clay-based handicrafts of West Bengal may be treated as non-documentary human sources.

Different types of information are required for the overall development of the Clay-based Handicraft of West Bengal. The present study is an attempt to find out the preferential list of the subject matters required for the product development.

2 Scope of the Present Study

The present study encompasses the cluster areas of the five categories of clay-based handicrafts of West Bengal. The cluster areas under different categories surveyed are given below.

- a) **Bankura Terracotta:** This category includes the terracotta of Bankura district, which has distinct characteristics in comparison to other terracotta. The themes of all artifacts are of folk in nature. The main items are horse, elephant, Santhal family, flower vase, village folk etc. All items reflect folk touch in finishing. This category includes the terracotta of Panchmura, Sendra, Duishahar and Bibarda of Bankura district.
- b) **Other Terracotta except Bankura:** This category includes terracotta of West Bengal other than Bankura terracotta. The nature of the items is very abstract. Though the flower vases of Bankura Terracotta are also found in some area of West Bengal, still these areas are included in this category. This is because, except flower vase, all other artifacts are not so resemblance with the Bankura Terracotta. This category includes terracotta of Matigara of Darjeeling district, Baruipur and Budge Budge of 24 Parganas (S), Duttapukur of 24 Parganas (N), Subhasgunj of Uttar Dinajpur district.
- c) **Clay Dolls and Clay Models:** Clay dolls and clay models in this category are very sharp, beautiful and very realistic. Making clay figures involves a lot of detailing and has been done using hand since ages. All items look like real. This is a hereditary art form. The toys are smooth and shine due to the application of an extract of tamarind seed. It covers the Ghurni of Krishnanagar of Nadia district.
- d) **Ceramics:** It includes the artifacts produced by the combined effort of new ceramic technology and hands. It ranges from fine and glazed ceramic products for decoration, dolly, toys, wall hanging, household pottery and industrial application. Its items generally are very heat and temperature resistant. No such big clusters are there, it covers greater Kolkata.
- e) **Clay Idols and Clay Images:** This category is very different to other described above as far as their structure and mode of preparation are concerned. The items mainly include images of gods and goddesses. Here clay is applied on straw figures and then dried and finally painted and decorated. This category includes the area Kumartuli and Kalighat of Kolkata.

3 Methodologies used in the Present Work

The present research work is basically a survey work. It includes the survey of the artisans of clay-based handicrafts within a geographic region (West Bengal). This survey is done through the schedule made up of the questionnaire. Within West Bengal, some clusters have been selected for survey and study mentioned above. Sampling has been used for collecting data from the artisans through the structured schedules and informal unstructured interviews and discussions. The population has been divided into five sub-populations to constitute homogenous groups than the total population. Therefore, it may call stratified technique of sampling. In the next step, some clusters have been selected from each sub-population (Bankura Terracotta; Other Terracotta except Bankura; Clay dolls and Clay models; Ceramics; Clay idols and Clay images) purposively. As for example, Panchmura, Sendra, Bibarda and Duishahar, have been selected for sub-population 'Bankura Terracotta'. Therefore, it may call purposive sampling technique. At the end,

systematic sampling is used to select samples from every 20th artisan on the sample frame. The first sample is selected randomly from first 20 artisans. Therefore, it may call systematic random sampling. Therefore, the present

sampling technique is basically a combination of these four, it is *Stratified Purposive Systematic Random* sampling.

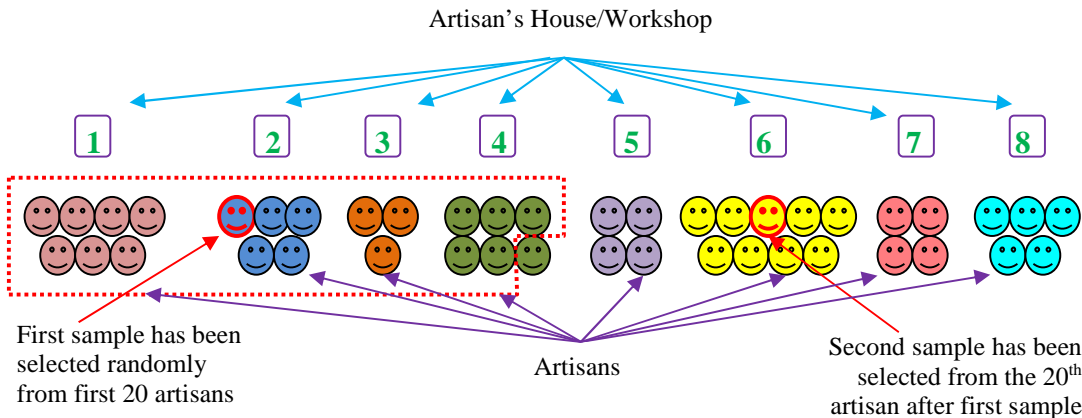


Figure-1: Sampling frame for systematic random sampling

The data collected from the artisans, regarding the subject matter of information required for the product development are analyzed with the help of bar diagrams. In each category, two bar diagrams are constructed:

1. Subject matter-wise distribution of Ranks provided by artisans
2. Rank-wise distribution of the types of information

In all the cases, the actual values (Frequency of responses) are also given on the top of each bar. Here the main intention is to find out the preferential list of subject matter required for the product development in each category according to the majority of the artisans from the statistical viewpoint. In this analysis, the mode is used as the tool for measuring central tendency of the frequency distribution.

4 Subject Matter of information Required for the Product Development

From the pilot study and literature review, six subject categories have been identified that are

very much needed for product development. These are

1. Use/application of the products and other aspects
2. Modern design and techniques of preparation
3. Marketing and selling of the products including export
4. Financial and other schemes
5. Clay testing and preparation
6. Modern packaging techniques

4.1 Preferential List of the Subject Matter of information Required for the Product Development according to the Artisans of Bankura Terracotta

From the figure-2 and figure-3, it is clear that the modal value (23) out of 60 respondents indicate the subject matter “Marketing and selling of the products including export” would be in first place in preferential list. Similarly modal values 22 in case of “Use/application of the products and other aspects”; 20 for “Financial and other schemes”; 26 in case of “Clay testing and preparation” place these three Subject matter of information in 2nd, 3rd, and 4th positions in the list.

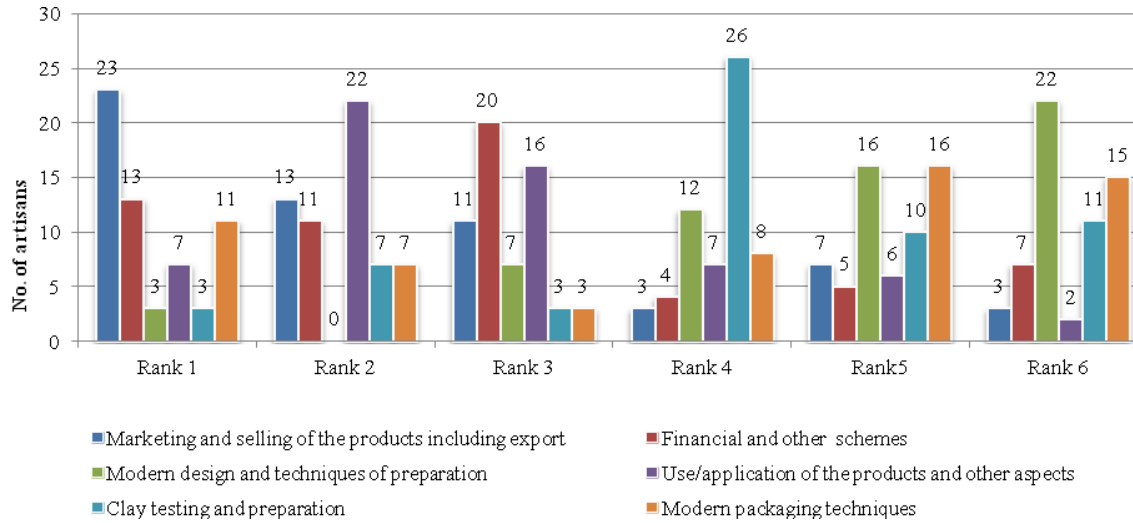


Figure-2: Subject matter-wise distribution of Ranks provided by artisans in case of Bankura Terracotta

In case of 5th position (i.e. rank 5) the modal value 16 is both for “Modern design and techniques of preparation” and “Modern packaging techniques”, but with the help of Figure-3, it is decided that modal value 16 is

for “Modern packaging techniques” as rank 5th. Mode 22, in rank 6th indicates the “Modern design and techniques of preparation” would be at 6th position.

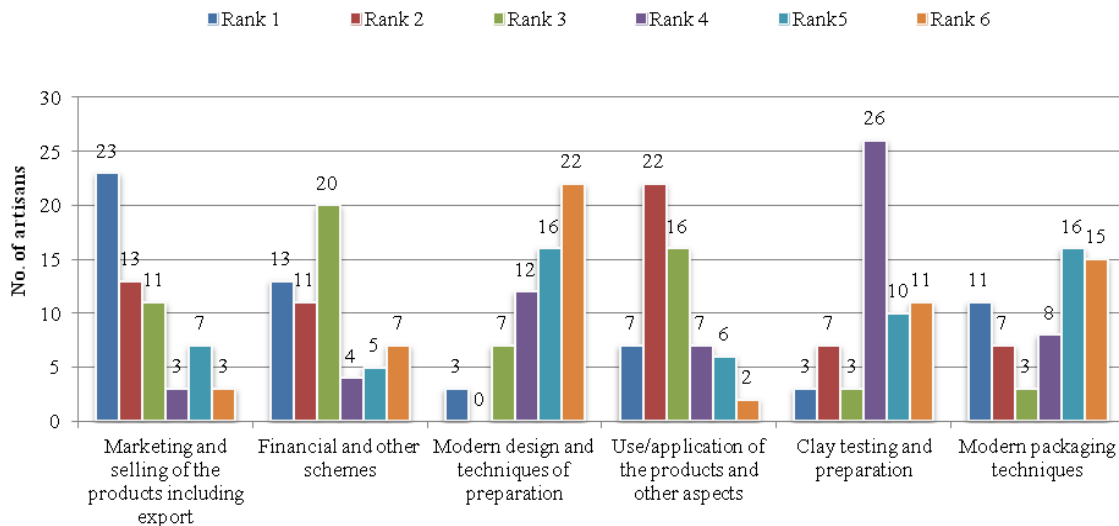


Figure-3: Rank-wise distribution of the types of information in case of Bankura Terracotta

4.2 Preferential List of the Subject Matter of Information Required for the Product

Development according to the Artisans of Other Terracotta except Bankura

From the figure-4 and figure-5, it is clear that the modal values out of 47 respondents indicate the following characteristics. Modal values 17 indicates subject matter “Marketing and selling of the products including export” would be in first place in preferential list. Modal value 16 in case of “Modern packaging techniques” is at rank 2nd, but modal value 19 indicates “Modern packaging techniques” is at 3rd position. Taking next to the modal values in the consideration it

may be concluded that “Modern packaging techniques” will be at 2nd position and “Financial and other schemes” having modal value 14 will be at 3rd position. Similarly modal values 15 in case of “Use/application of the products and other aspects”; 15 in case of “Modern design and techniques of preparation” and 15 in case of “Clay testing and preparation” will acquire the position 4th, 5th and 6th in the list respectively

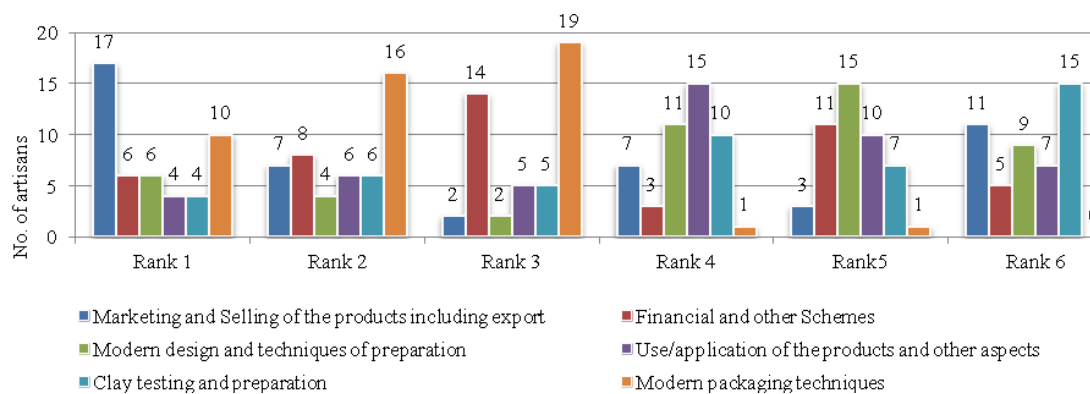


Figure-4: Rank-wise distribution of the Subject matter of information in case of Other Terracotta except Bankura

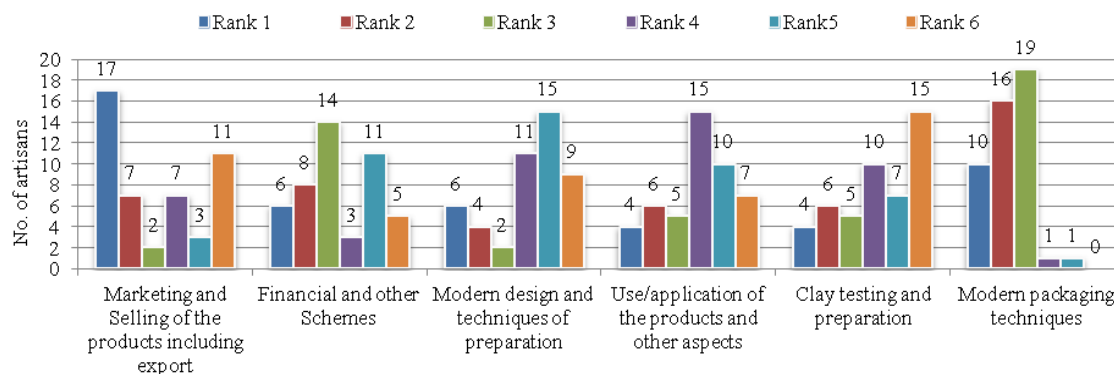


Figure-5: Subject matter-wise distribution of Ranks provided by artisans in case of Other Terracotta except Bankura

4.3 Preferential List of the Subject Matter of Information Required for the Product Development according to the Artisans of Clay dolls and Clay models

The figure-6 and Figure-7 shows the modal values out of 57 respondents that indicate the following characteristics. Modal value 23 indicates subject matter “Clay testing and preparation” would be in first place in

preferential list. Modal value 17 in case of “Modern packaging techniques” and similarly modal values 22 in case of “Financial and other schemes”; 19 in case of “Use/application of the products and other aspects”; 20 in case of “Modern design and techniques of preparation” will acquire the position 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th position in the list respectively. The 6th position

obviously for “Marketing and selling of the products including export”.

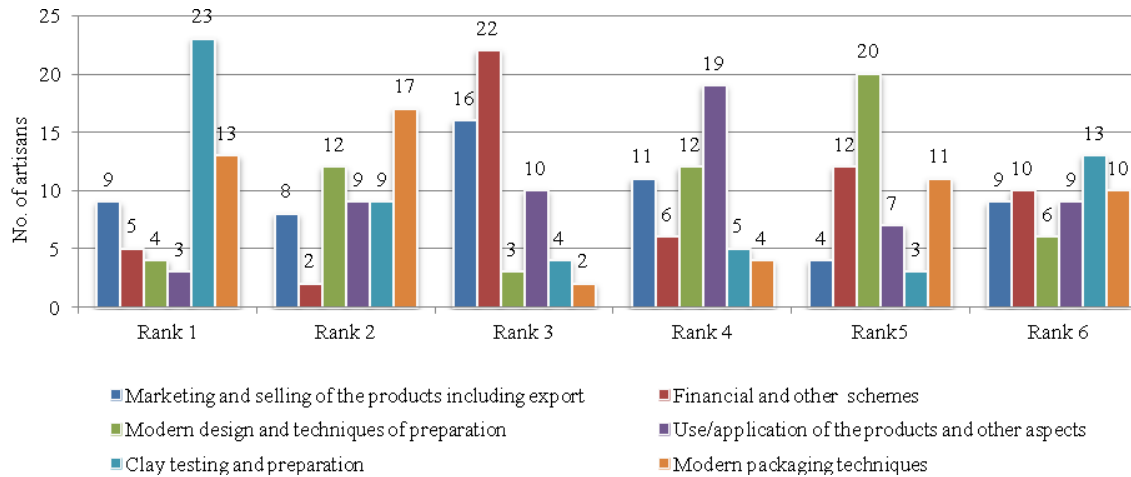


Figure-6: Rank-wise distribution of the Subject matter of information in case of Clay dolls and Clay models

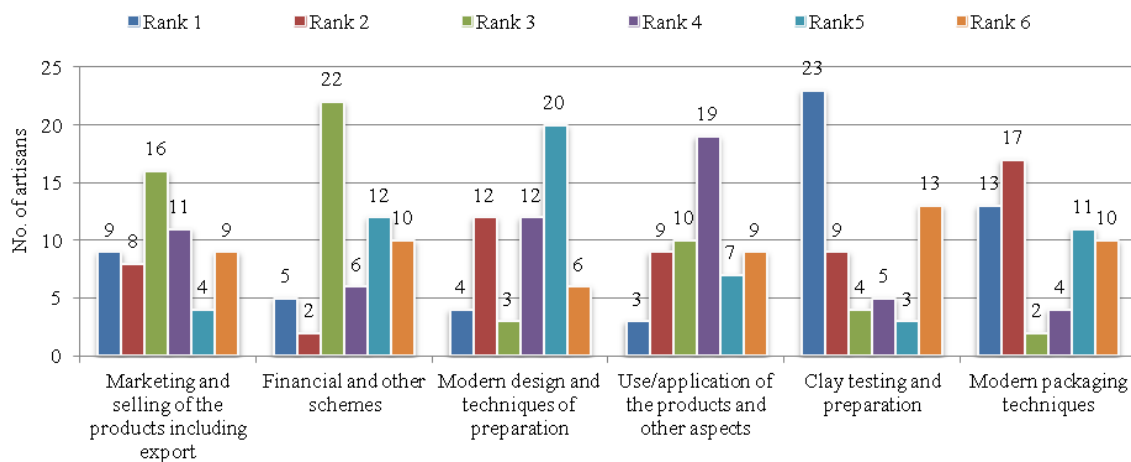


Figure-7: Subject matter-wise distribution of Ranks provided by artisans in case of Clay dolls and Clay models

4.4 Preferential List of the Subject Matter of Information Required for the Product Development according to the Artisans of Ceramics

From the figure-8 and figure-9 it is clear that the modal value (11) out of 35 respondents indicate the subject matter “Use/application of the products and other aspects” would be at 1st position. Similarly modal values 10 in case of

“Modern design and techniques of preparation”; 9 in case of “Marketing and selling of the products including export”; 9 in case of “Financial and other schemes”; 10 in case of “Clay testing and preparation” and 9 in case of Modern packaging techniques” will be at 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th positions respectively in the preferential list.

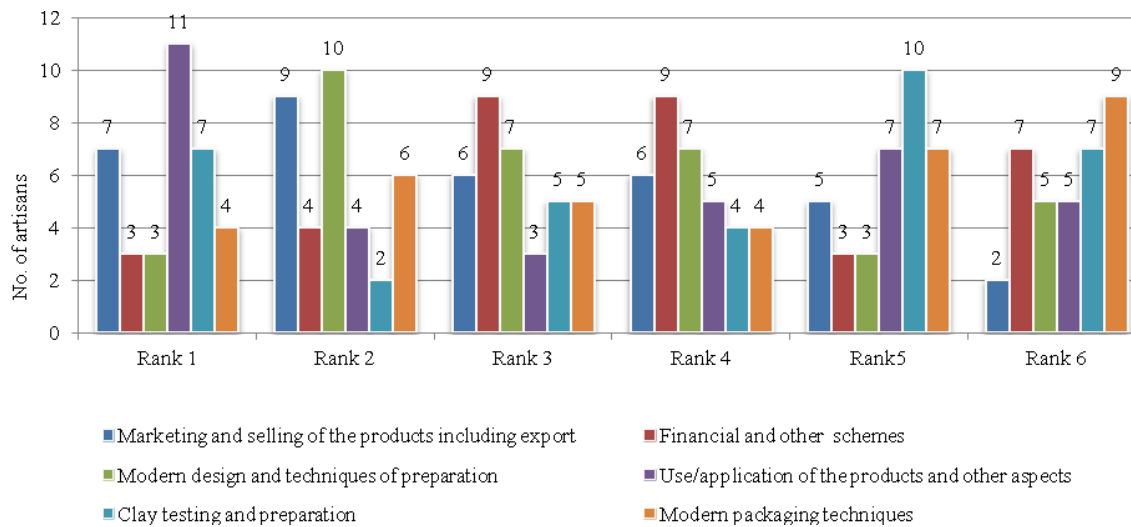


Figure-8: Rank-wise distribution of the Subject matter of information in case of Ceramics

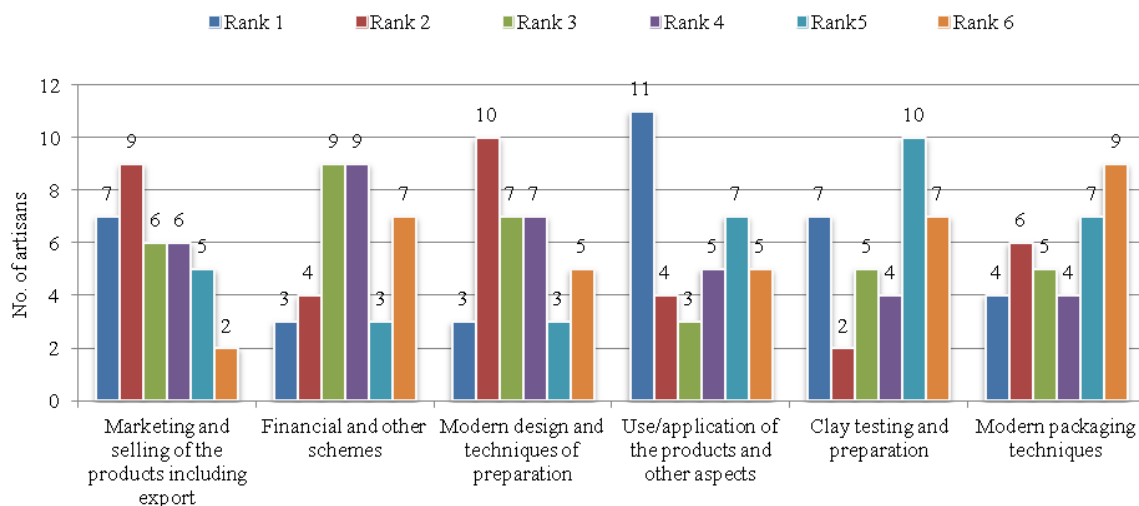


Figure-9: Subject matter-wise distribution of Ranks provided by artisans in case of Ceramics

4.5 Preferential List of the Subject Matter of Information Required for the Product Development according to the Artisans of ‘Clay idols and Clay images’

The figure-10 and figure-11 show the modal values out of 72 respondents, which indicate the rank of the subject matter. The modal values 24 in case of “Modern design and techniques of preparation”; 28 in case of “Clay

testing and preparation”; 22 in case of “Financial and other schemes”; 25 in case of “Marketing and selling of the products including export”; 24 in case of “Use/application of the products and other aspects” and 18 in case of Modern packaging techniques” will be at 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th positions respectively in the preferential list.

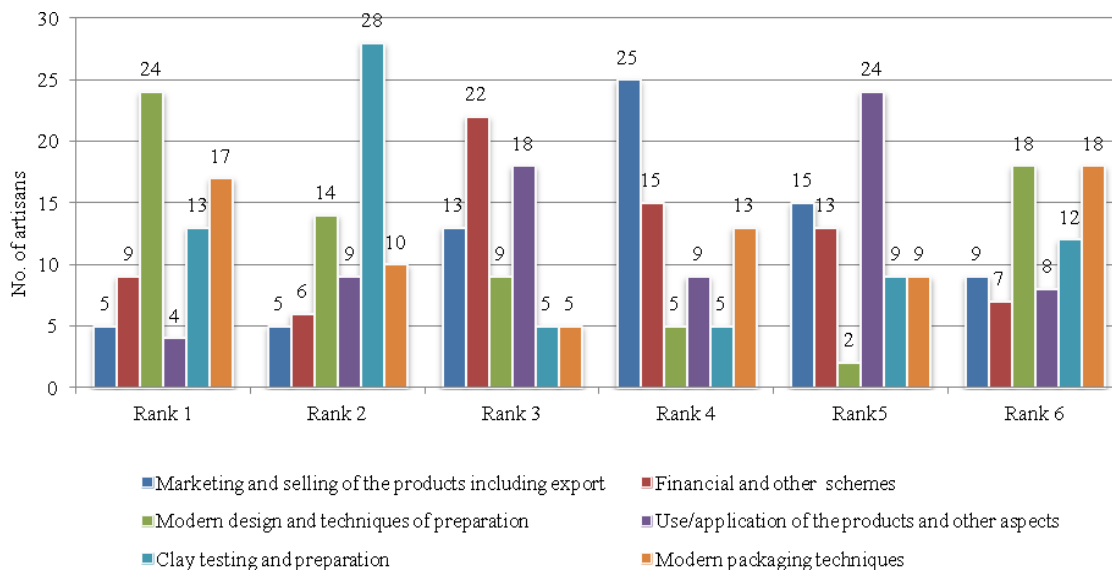


Figure-10: Rank-wise distribution of the Subject matter of information in case of Clay idols and Clay images

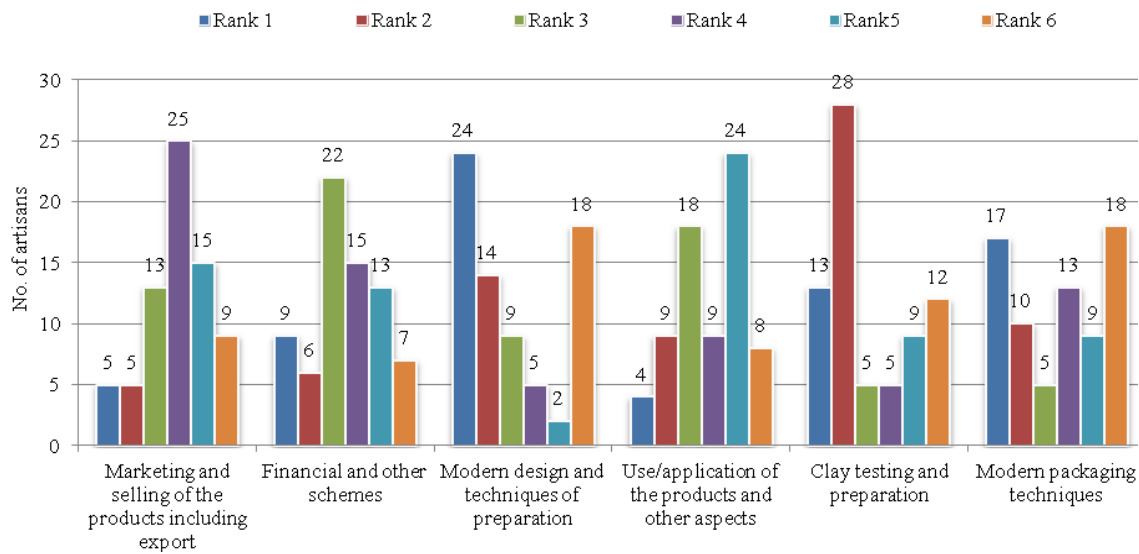


Figure-11: Subject matter-wise distribution of Ranks provided by artisans in case of Clay idols and Clay images

4.6 Preferential List of the Subject Matter of Information Required for the Product Development according to the Artisans of ‘All Clay-based Handicrafts of West Bengal’

From the figure-12 and figure-13 it is clear that the modal value (61) out of 271 respondents of ‘All Clay-based Handicrafts of West Bengal’ indicate the subject matter “Marketing and selling of the products including export” would

be in first place in their preferential list. Similarly modal values 56 in case of “Modern packaging techniques”; 87 in case of “Financial and other schemes”; 55 in case of “Use/application Of techniques”; 87 in case of “Financial and other schemes”; 55 in case of “Use/application of the products and other aspects” will place these three Subject matter of information in 2nd, 3rd, and 4th positions in

the list. In case of “Modern design and techniques of preparation” modal value 56

indicates 5th and modal value 60 indicates 6th positions.

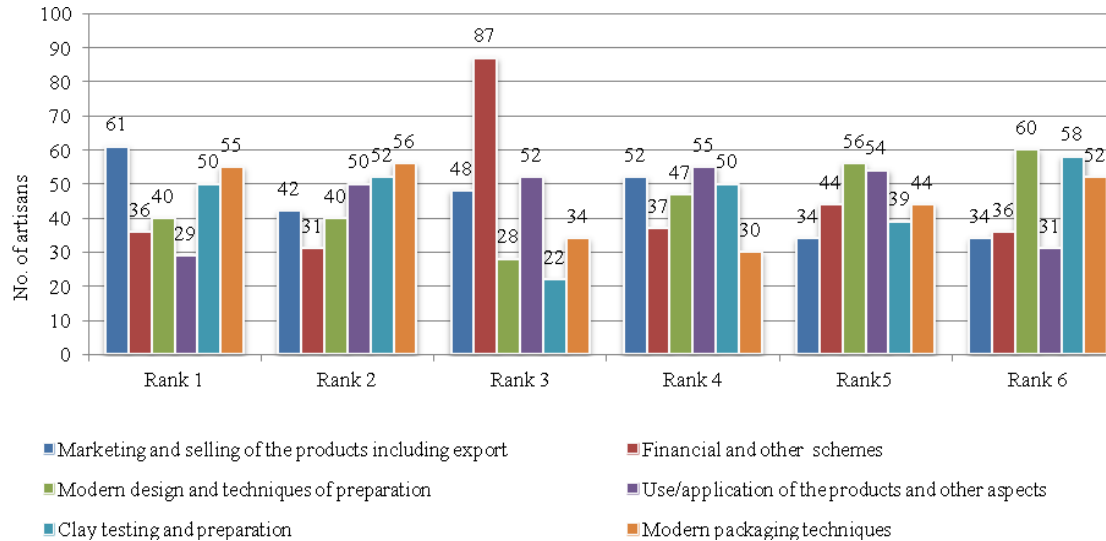


Figure-12: Rank-wise distribution of the Subject matter of information in case of All Clay-based Handicrafts of West Bengal

But in comparison with next to the modal values it may be concluded that the “Modern design and techniques of preparation” and “Clay testing and preparation” will be 5th and 6th positions respectively in the preferential list. But it is also need to mention here that except

“Financial and other schemes” at 3rd position, other information types and their positions are not so statistically significant. Still we may make a table (table-1) stating all categories and the preferential list of information types, so that one can get an idea easily.

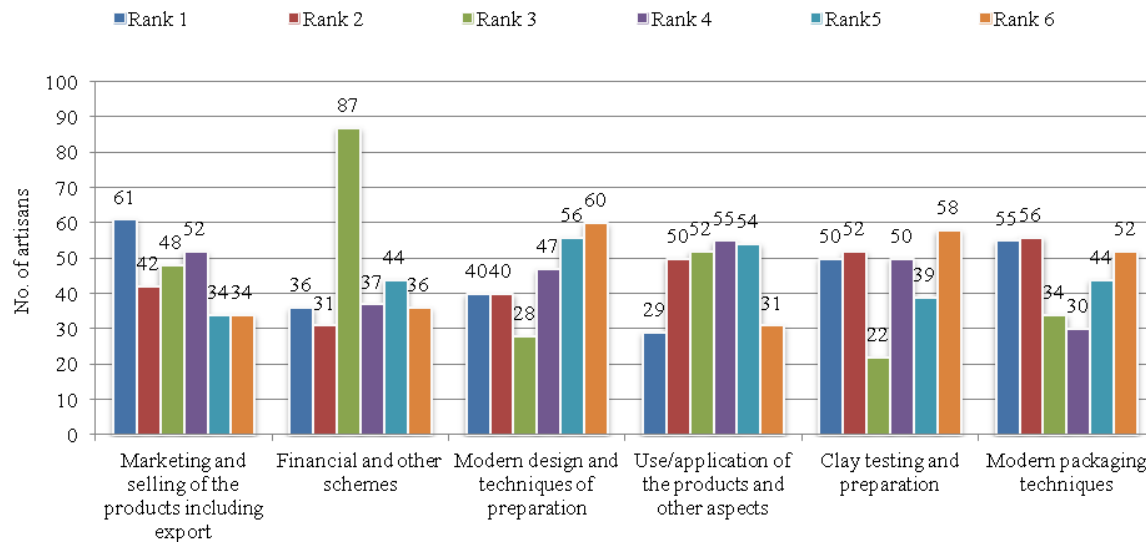


Figure-13: Subject matter-wise distribution of Ranks provided by artisans in case of All Clay-based Handicrafts of West Bengal

Table-1: Category-wise distribution of “the subject matter of information” with the Rank provided by artisans

	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6
Bankura Terracotta (N= 60)	Marketing and selling of the products including export	Use/application of the products and other aspects	Financial and other schemes	Clay testing and preparation	Modern packaging techniques	Modern design and techniques of preparation
Other Terracotta except Bankura (N= 47)	Marketing and selling of the products including export	Modern packaging techniques	Financial and other schemes	Use/application of the products and other aspects	Modern design and techniques of preparation	Clay testing and preparation
Clay dolls and Clay models (N= 57)	Clay testing and preparation	Modern packaging techniques	Financial and other schemes	Use/application of the products and other aspects	Modern design and techniques of preparation	Marketing and selling of the products including export
Ceramics of West Bengal (N= 35)	Use/application of the products and other aspects	Modern design and techniques of preparation	Marketing and selling of the products including export	Financial and other schemes	Clay testing and preparation	Modern packaging techniques
Clay idols and Clay images (N= 72)	Modern design and techniques of preparation	Clay testing and preparation	Financial and other schemes	Marketing and selling of the products including export	Use/application of the products and other aspects	Modern packaging techniques
All Clay-based Handicrafts of West Bengal (N= 271)	Marketing and selling of the products including export	Modern packaging techniques	Financial and other schemes	Use/application of the products and other aspects	Modern design and techniques of preparation	Clay testing and preparation

5 Conclusion

Clay-based handicrafts plays important role in India’s economy as general and West Bengal in particular. Originally, started as a part time activity in rural areas, it has now gradually transformed in flourishing economic activity due to significant demand over the year. Therefore some efforts should be taken to improve this industry. Besides raw materials, labour, money, market, training, skill etc, the proper information in every steps from raw materials preparation to sells/marketing plays vital role for overall development of the products. The present study has identified the preferential list of the subject matter of the information necessary for product development in each category and in overall clay-based handicraft of West Bengal. Necessary arrangement should be made to provide the required information to the artisans during their production chain.

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